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THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

*A Presbyterian weekly magazine devoted to the
statement, defense and propagation of the
Gospel, the faith which was once for
all delivered unto the saints*

OCTOBER 1, 1952

BY THY SPIRIT

Most gracious God, would we confess
To all of our unworthiness,
Repenting self-exalted ways,
To stand before Thee stripped of praise,
What mercy, then would we behold
Within Thy wisdom manifold!
Yet, often, we are urged to try
A lethal plan that does belie
The instigators of a force
Which ever leads to death's remorse.
Rebuke us, Lord, while we thus boast
Of vain designs that tempt us most.
O, by Thy Spirit, crush our pride,
And bring us to Thee, purified.

—R. Ross Parkhill.

offensive warfare that divides and we are engaged in defensive warfare. It should also be stated that we are not fighting the Northern Presbyterian Church. Many of our best friends are in this Church. We love them but it is our conviction that we can work more joyfully and successfully as a distinct group rather than by being absorbed into a larger one.

"The Southern Presbyterian Church has a positive program. We are for evangelism. We are for World Missions. We are for Church Extension. We are for Christian Stewardship. We are for the Westminster Standards. We are for a fuller dedication of life to Christ. I ask for your prayers that all of us may be more diligent in implementing this positive program in the life of our Church."

—Reported by W.C.R.

The Church Union Issue

The issue of Church union is a question of uniting on the basis of a specific PLAN OF UNION. That Plan, as printed in three editions, differs radically from the fundamental positions now professed by the Presbyterian Church, U. S. In accepting the Plan of Union we give up our present positions and accept other and different positions, and that in matters of essential import.

First, our Church now accepts Jesus Christ as our one Lord, the sole King, the only Lawgiver in Zion. The Plan of Union commits us to two lords, namely, Christ and the majority vote of the united General Assembly. The USA Assembly of 1934 officially placed the mandate of the General Assembly "in exactly the same position" of authority as the Word of Christ establishing the Lord's Supper. The present Stated Clerk of the USA Church holds that "the Holy Spirit speaks through the actions and decisions of a Presbytery," and presumably much more through that of the highest presbytery, namely the General Assembly, and that "by Presbyterian definition" you are in the wrong when you are in the minority. The Confession of Faith, on the other hand, says that synods and councils have erred and do err and are not to be made the rule of faith and practice. Shall we continue to live under the sole Lordship of Christ or shall we put our heads under the yoke of the "accidental" majorities in a General Assembly in which we are a minority? At our ordination we approved of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., not of this radical change from the

fundamental principle of our Southern Presbyterian Polity.

Secondly, in an age of rampant unbelief, the Presbyterian Church in the United States has set up bulwarks against the intrusion of these denials of the faith into our pulpits and sessions. In particular, we have written into our ordination vows that if one changes his views after ordination, he will, on his own accord notify his presbytery of this change. Further, our General Assemblies have interpreted our ordination vows as involving accepting the full Biblical teachings as to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Plan of Union includes neither of these safeguards. Kierkegaard has a story of a new governor who took charge of a grand old fortress. The new commander broke down the battlements, filled up the moat, turned the castle into a country club—and the enemy captured it. At our ordination we promised God to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel.

Thirdly, our Presbyterian Church, U. S. recognizes that the local congregations own their local properties in fee simple, while the Plan of Union turns the ownership of all local property—after the merger is consummated—over to the presbyteries and ultimately to the General Assembly. Our Book of Church Order speaks of the congregations owning their properties, our congregations brought out their local properties in 1861, our Assembly of 1875 endorsed the principle that local properties are owned by the congregations, our Assembly of 1951 accepted as information a report to that effect, our Assembly of 1952 in finding a certain charter unsatisfactory in some phrases was led to that action by a speech in which the speaker declared that a statement that the local congregation held the property "in fee simple forever" would be satisfactory. Are we ready to turn over the ownership of local properties to a large organization in which our smaller group will be absorbed?

Fourthly, Church union can only be accomplished by dividing our present active, ongoing program and by splitting, perhaps disintegrating many congregations. The Word of God declares, "If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye." I Cor. 3:17, ARV and RSV. Fifty years ago the USA Churches absorbed the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Was that union successful? A Cumberland historian says that about a third of the old Cumberland Church was integrated into the USA Church, about a third is still the continuing Cumberland Church (or Churches), and

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about a third went to pieces. In considering the last part of that statement one may look at the figures gathered by Dr. C. Morton Hanna of Louisville Theological Seminary as to the net loss of the number of churches every decade since the Cumberland merger, that is, from 1910 to 1920 net loss in congregations 242, 1920-30 net loss 442, 1930-40 net loss 552. That the majority of these dissolved congregations were the older Cumberland Churches is brought out by a spot check from a study by the historian of Vincennes Presbytery of the USA Church. In 1905 there seems to have been nine Cumberland Congregations in Pike County, Indiana, namely, Petersburg, Bethlehem, Union, Olive Branch, Oatsville, Fairview, Iva, New Lebanon, and Algeries. Of these only the last named was able to stay out of the union and it is today a strong Cumberland Church and has established an additional congregation that is Knight's Chapel, C. P. Of the eight that went into the USA absorption only Petersburg is a USA congregation today. The others are now either dissolved or changed into United Brethren, General Baptist (2), Holiness (2), or Community. In the South the Cumberland Merger left a wake of bitterness due largely to the taking over by the USA Assembly of local properties where all of the members stayed with the continuing Cumberland Church. Similar is the story of Cumberland University at Lebanon. At the merger, this one University was denied to the continuing Church by the U.S.A. body which had many educational institutions of her own. Then the grand old university with over a century of gallant service was allowed to languish and die. When the local friends were unable to continue it, the Baptists took over. We do not insist that the Cumberland story is a perfect analogy. There are differences. We stress education more than our Cumberland brethren did in the past. But our demoralized control is not the centralized program of the U.S.A. organization, and absorption of our body or part of it into that program will not, in our opinion, be conducive to advance in stewardship, evangelism, local or world missions.

—Wm. C. R.

Do You Pray Daily For Those In Korea?

A missionary whose son is on duty in Korea recently returned home from the field and remarked a few weeks ago: "I have been amazed and appalled at the few references to and prayers for our men in Korea, and the situation there, which I have heard from the pulpits of our church."

It is perfectly possible that this particular individual just happened to miss such references as he traveled about the church but in any case it is probable that few of us have prayed for all involved in this situation as we should.

In praying for Korea we would suggest some specific subjects:

1. For our men who are fighting, that they may be kept and that God will use these trying experiences to draw many of them to Him. For those who are already Christians, that they may be kept through the terrible temptations they have to face.

2. For our Chaplains, that they may be truly men of God, gifted with the courage, wisdom and strength so necessary in their difficult assignments.

3. For the people of Korea who have suffered so greatly, especially for that great company of Christian people, so many of whom have lost all their earthly possessions.

4. For our missionaries and other missionaries laboring there in that war-torn land, that they may receive the needed reinforcements and that they may be given the added strength needed for the tremendous tasks and opportunities which confront them.

5. For Maj. Gen. William K. Harrison, chief negotiator of the truce talks. That this earnest Christian man may be able to demonstrate that God gives wisdom and strength to those who put their trust in Him.

—L.N.B.

Where Is Our Sufficiency?

How many of us can be trusted with success?

As we succeed financially, socially or professionally; as we make progress in educational and intellectual pursuits how easy it is to feel self sufficient!

Again and again pride in accomplishment, conceit in intellectual progress, bring in their wake complacency and a feeling that we are the captain of our own souls, the pilots of our destinies!

This is probably man's most dangerous state, for then God resists him, and destruction may be near.

The pagan financier, the godless artisan, the educated fool; all are to be pitied, but most tragic of all is the Christian who loses his or her perspective and begins to take pride in accomplishments in the realm of Christian endeavor, taking credit to self where the Holy Spirit alone should be praised.

The best of us is but a sinner saved by grace and anything which God may do through our efforts is always the work of His Spirit, not of man.

"Where is boasting then? IT IS EXCLUDED."
(Rom. 3:27).

God knows the deadly effect of pride and self-sufficiency and he has warned all of us against it.

When we realize our *complete* dependence on God and His Spirit; when we know there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved; when our trust is in Him only:

Then we are in a position to be used for His glory.

—L.N.B.