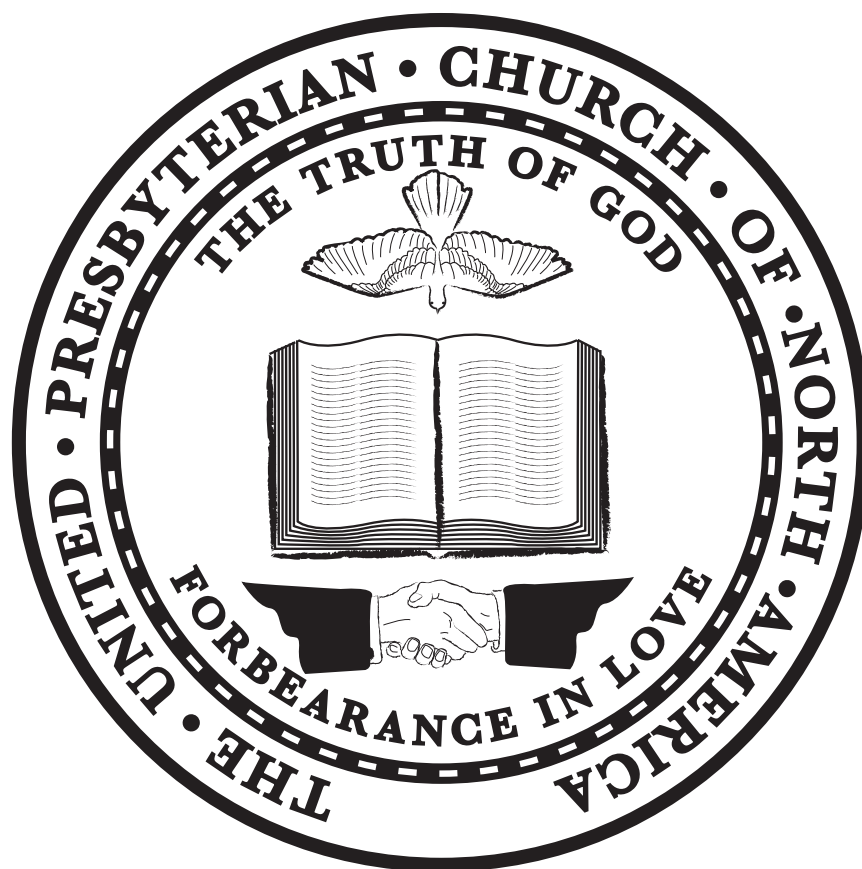


Truth and Love is a tribute to the United Presbyterian Church of North America 150 years after its founding and 50 years after it merged with the Presbyterian Church, and a reference work containing a directory of ministers and congregations.

Truth and Love: The United Presbyterian Church of North America:
A Fifty Year Retrospective

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Truth and Love

**The United Presbyterian Church of North America
A Fifty Year Retrospective**

by

Rev. Thomas Matthew Gilliland, Jr.

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**©Thomas Matthew Gilliland, Jr.
ISBN 978-1-60145-529-1**

**United Presbyterian Conservancy
of
North America**

upcna.org

**Printed in the United States of America
May 26, 2008**

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Dedication



A book such as this must be dedicated to the Glory of God. Let it also be in memory of the members, ministers, elders, and deacons of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

In particular this volume is meant to honor the women of the manse. Wives and mothers, like my own mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, who saw their role as a calling and a ministry and who made contributions to the life of the church which were often overlooked. God blessed their gifts, and we must remember them.

Special Thanks



Thanks to Ruby Gilliland and Lisa Tipton for help in proofreading the directory, to the congregation of Clover Hill Presbyterian Church for their love and support and to my wife, Kathleen Christy, who is my inspiration.

Preface



For most of my life I have been interested in our family's history and genealogy, which is intimately tied to the story of the United Presbyterian Church of North America. My father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all ministers in that church, and most of my ancestors were members, many of them serving as elders. As 2008 approached I felt that there should be a memorial to the Old United Presbyterian Church fifty years after the merger that ended its existence as a denomination.

I am not a scholar, except in the sense that every Presbyterian minister is expected to be a scholar, and in 1958 I was only seven years old. But I was born in Tanta, Egypt in a mission hospital and baptized into the United Presbyterian Church. I was raised in the afterglow of a small but significant denomination. Besides, an academic study is not what I envision, but rather a tribute. Looking back at the church I was born into, I feel both love and a yearning for what has been lost. There are thousands of others who share those sentiments. To them, and the saints of the church who made the United Presbyterian Church of North America what it was, this volume is dedicated. May the church of our mothers and fathers truly rest in peace.

In order to appreciate this volume it is important to understand that I am writing in a personal and familiar way. While there has been every effort to be accurate there has been no effort to be impersonal. The first person will not be avoided, and opinion will not be withheld. Some of the most vital information about this church is subjective. As a small American denomination among many it is a historical footnote. As the center of faith and culture for thousands of families it is an unforgotten and beloved icon, which can never be replaced. Since I have already committed the sin of sentimentality let me further insult academic standards. At least in this text there is only one United Presbyterian Church, and no further modifier will be deemed necessary in order to refer to it. If either of the other churches bearing this title is referenced it will be made clear that they are in fact, very different churches. Finally let me apologize in advance for mentioning my own family and our connections within the United Presbyterian Church. These inclusions are not motivated by ego but by the desire to paint an accurate picture of the denomination. Interpersonal relationships were key to its character. Our family is typical of many of its members

and ministers, and is meant to be representative of them all. Since the facts of my own family's connections were most readily available I took the liberty of using them as an example.

Two sorts of readers are anticipated for this work. First, will be people with a connection to the United Presbyterian Church. Those who served or were members of the denomination, and the descendants of those people, have an obvious interest in its history and heritage. It is hoped that this volume will remind them of old friends and good memories. This denomination has often received less respect than it deserves. To have the opportunity to correct the record is an honor. For those who are researching family history I hope that this book will be a valuable tool. It is hoped that in addition to serving as a reference work it will give you some insight into the importance of the denomination in the lives of your ancestors. As you memorialize your family please honor the church that helped to make them a special people.

Second, are those who are interested in church history by vocation or avocation. Let me offer a word of explanation to them. This work was intentionally a sketch rather than a history, a tribute rather than an analysis. Somewhere between an academic study and a popular history, it will probably please no one. If anyone else had proffered a memorial volume such as this, I would have been quite satisfied. Hearing of none I have offered my own efforts as an inadequate memorial to the wonderful people of the United Presbyterian Church. Feel free to critique my answers, but please take my questions seriously. Has this denomination been given credit for the important things it has done and for its distinctiveness as a denomination? Has its size blinded historians to the role it played in a specific cultural and historical niche? If this little study does nothing else I hope it will encourage historians and authors not to conflate the history and achievements of the various branches of the Presbyterian tradition. To attribute the work of the United Presbyterians to another, very different, denomination is neither accurate, nor respectful. It would also be refreshing to see the United Presbyterians treated with the same appreciation as the Quakers, for instance, a body of similar size which also strongly opposed slavery. Any reexamination of the role of this denomination in American history would amply reward my small effort in remembrance of those Scotch-Irish Americans who made up the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

The Historical Background

Introduction



Outside Darlington, Pennsylvania is an old burial ground called Seceder Cemetery. There, the weathered headstones of my ancestors mark the graves of the first of my family to come from County Londonderry in Ireland to Beaver County in Pennsylvania to begin a new life in a new land. They were Seceders, members of the Associate Synod, dissenting Presbyterians who had a very clear religious identity as keepers of a faith handed down from generations of Scotch-Irish forebears. They did not come alone. Hundreds of stones on that hill record the names of families who made the spiritual pilgrimage to these shores. The names evoke the history of Scotland and Ireland and bring back ancient feuds and battles, both of faith and arms. They had been subjects of the Crown, had paid tithes to the Church of Ireland, but had worshipped as Dissenters. Their children heard their stories and continued their traditions. With their Covenanter cousins they formed a small American denomination, which was literally tied to the lives of those families. This is the story of that church.

The question of what makes a story important is an interesting one. The histories of the World Wars or Civil Rights in America are of obvious significance. Biographies of politicians, composers, or scientists are more esoteric but intriguing to many. Scholars may write papers like *Wrestling with silence: Emily Dickinson's Calvinist God*¹ or *Huguenots and Camisards as Aliens in France: 1589-1789, The Struggle for Religious Toleration*² and people may even read those papers. But what makes a particular story worth telling? It may be such a personal passion that the author must tell it. This is such a story for me. The story of the United Presbyterian Church is the story of my family and our life in three nations, our spiritual struggles, our successes, and our tragedies, and I must write these words even if they are never published, but I think it is larger than the story of my family. It is the story of thousands of similar families. Those families, like mine, deserve a memorial to their faithfulness. Is the story more important yet? Does it have a deeper significance that needs to be uncovered? I think it does. Scotland and Ireland are both nations with self-esteem issues that have lately been addressed.

*How the Irish Saved Civilization*³ and *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*⁴ have offered reassessments of the importance of these cultures to Western Civilization. The number of people actually involved in making the contributions discussed in those books was small, even smaller than the number of dissenting Presbyterians. It is difficult to evaluate the influence of the Dissenters on our society because their primary effects were local and for the most part unrecorded. They weren't known as great scholars, as social activists, or dynamic leaders. They were known as a very devout and faithful people, who shaped communities at the most fundamental levels and at a critical time in American history. They were Scots Presbyterianism, distilled to its essence and carefully aged in the oak groves of Ireland and America. They baptized the frontier with the Water of Life and broke it with the Catechism. They were a humble people who served their God with energy and patience until they gave up their ecclesiastical existence for the sake of Christian unity. That is a story that begs to be told and retold until we understand the kind of faith that formed it. Please listen to the story.

Reformation



Of course, the United Presbyterian Church was Reformed. That is true of a number of denominations but particularly of ours. The Reformation in Scotland was shaped intellectually and theologically by John Calvin and culturally by John Knox, and finally taught polity by Andrew Melville. Those three leaders had a profound effect on the people of Scotland and the development of their church. The Scots as a people not only welcomed the Reformation, they made it a part of their national identity. The certainty of the doctrine, the form of governing, the emphasis on education fit something in their psyche and the people and the faith became one. Not that there was unanimity in matters of doctrine. In all populations there is a mathematical distribution of characteristics, including faith. There were those who never accepted the reforms, those who embraced Reformation as a political expediency or a welcome change, and those who were willing to die for its principles. The remarkable thing is that so many Scots were so deeply committed to such a clearly defined theology and polity, and that it played such a pivotal role in the history of Scotland and its people.

In an ideal world Scotland would have peacefully evolved into a Presbyterian nation with a sympathetic government and Crown. Calvinists, of course, are quite aware that the world is anything but ideal. Without reciting the detail that has discouraged many Presbyterians from knowing their own history, let us say that the Crown tended to be both fickle and ambivalent about the Reformation. Those monarchs who were Roman Catholic were of course opposed to the reforms introduced into the Church of Scotland, but even the Protestant rulers preferred bishops to presbyteries. In one sense this vindicated the polity of the Presbyterians since it revealed an obvious preference for the more easily manipulated bishops. In pragmatic terms, it meant years of struggle to secure a polity that was obviously more representative and independent. In these struggles the Presbyterians fought a continuing battle against erastianism, prelacy, and patronage. In plain English they fought the Crown, the bishops and the aristocracy for control of the church.

This is not the place to recount the story of the Reformation in Scotland. John Knox himself has told that tale and many learned men and women are retelling it even now. Just to list the principles of the Reformation is a difficult task. Its slogans are well known: *Sola gratia* (“by grace alone”), *Sola fide* (“by faith alone”), *Sola scriptura* (“by scripture alone”), *Solus Christus* (“In Christ alone”), *Soli Deo Gloria* (“Glory to God alone”). In those slogans lie the ironies of this new understanding of the Christian faith. First of all they are in Latin, the language of scholars, the language of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus the Reformation, a movement in defiance of Rome was forced to begin its reforming with the fabric of a Roman church. It evolved quickly but remains a reformed and not a new church. The slogans also point to the complexity of this new theology. One sees “By Grace Alone” as a clear and comprehensive vision of the Gospel. But immediately the Reformation adds “By Faith Alone.” Each time the picture starts to become clear another brush stroke is added. How all that togetherness can be so alone is a mystery, but Calvin embraced the mysterious. These slogans are very like Reformed doctrine; just when we think we understand it we hear the voice of Calvin urging us on to explore the implications of what we believe. Today there are many views on what the essentials of the Reformed faith are, and even disagreement over whether those essentials can, or should be, defined.

Precursors: Culdees and Lollards



In the glens and moors of ancient Scotland, there was plenty of tinder to spread the flames of the Reformation. When the Scots still worshipped in oak groves and had never heard the Gospel a missionary came from Ireland and planted a church on the island of Iona. From that holy spot Saint Columba sent out evangelists into the wild lands of Scotland. Through them, the Scots came to believe in the Church of Jesus Christ. Those missionaries have been called Culdees by some, and at one time they were seen as the precursors of Presbyterianism. That view has fueled some interesting academic controversy, but this is not the story of the Culdees or even St. Columba. This much is clear: the Scots were evangelized by missionaries who had a tradition different from that of Rome, and that independent tradition existed until at least the twelfth century. The lingering effects of that church and its independence are uncertain, but its linguistic echoes are still heard in Scotland today.

Much later the supremacy of Rome was again challenged by another group of missionaries with an equally strange name, the Lollards. They were followers of John Wycliffe, and armed with his English translation of the Bible they traveled through England and Scotland teaching a biblical Christianity. Since their faith was shaped by Scripture more than by church tradition they anticipated the Reformation in many ways. The Lollards were influential in parts of Scotland, particularly in those areas which would be central to the history of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.

Without making unsubstantiated claims, let us say that Scotland had known a faith which was independent of Papal authority. When John Knox came to the Scots with a call to repentance that required no confessional and a promise of salvation that required no absolution he was not the first to do so.

Legal Philosophy



John Calvin was a lawyer before he was a theologian. His legal training included Renaissance thinking on the exegesis of texts, which he later applied to scripture. Western legal systems are of course based in part on Judeo-Christian moral principles. Theology itself, particularly in questions of soteriology, often has a legal element in

The United Presbyterian Church of North America

An American Church



From 1776, when America ceased being a colony of Great Britain, all the churches of the new nation had to redefine who they were and how they would be governed. Presbyterians generally were somewhat less concerned with breaking their ties to the Old World than were some other denominations. Scotland had its own history with the English and while not exactly neutral might be sympathetic. Nevertheless, it was necessary to become an American church even though it wasn't clear what that might be. Disagreements over the Burgess Oath were fairly easily resolved but Covenanting was a more complex problem. While even within the dissenting Presbyterian bodies there was some question as to the relevance of the practice in their new context, they were conservative by nature and held to their old confession and covenants. It was made more difficult by the fact that the United States had chosen a radical form of religious liberty. The government was neutral on the question of religion, which produced the envisioned freedom, but made any imitation of the Solemn League and Covenant impossible.

One of the difficulties in adapting to new thinking lay in the education of ministers. Even while in Scotland and Ireland, the Dissenters were often cut off from the seminaries of the mainline church. Education then took place as a kind of apprenticeship with students learning from those pastors who were recognized as qualified teachers. The traditions of a classical education were carried on, but there was no cross-fertilization from the academic world. The intellectual give and take which we associate with seminary education was absent. Neither the Scottish Enlightenment nor the Great Awakening had much effect on these conservative Presbyterians. While those movements were so different from the Dissenters' philosophy that they would not likely have been embraced, they never even had the opportunity of producing a reaction. In essence, the ministers of the dissenting Presbyterians were preserving the doctrines of their great grandfathers. This was a phenomenon that was to be repeated in the life of this church.

The imperviousness of the Covenanters and Seceders to the Great Awakening is hardly surprising. Although they were clearly evangelical, they were suspicious of the overwrought emotion of revivalism. There were also clear signs that this movement tended to discount theology for the sake of experience. As guardians of Calvinistic orthodoxy it would not do to water down the faith just to attract converts. The case of the Cumberland Presbyterians was particularly to the point. Even the Presbyterians objected to the suspension of the educational requirements for ministers by that new denomination. The Dissenters were also quite critical of their theology. If you look at the history of this period, it becomes obvious that the Reformed Presbyterians and the Associate Presbyterians were doing their best to hold to their historic faith while most of American Presbyterianism moved away from them. It became inevitable that they would be thrown together as the most similar of the country's Reformed Churches.

To present a fair picture of these antecedent denominations it must be admitted that there was a certain amount of theological wrangling and political maneuvering prior to their final merger to form the United Presbyterian Church. Without seeking to present them as perfect churches let me offer a few words of explanation. The earliest problems they faced had to do with procuring ministers. As long as the clergy had to come from Scotland or Ireland there was a shortage which produced many consequences in the life of the church. Rapid growth of church and nation exacerbated the first problem and caused others as well. Many of the new churches were on the frontiers. In those days, when travelling from the seaboard to Kentucky or Ohio was a difficult and dangerous trip, communication and perspective became serious issues for the church. But finally let me point out that by and large the disunity in these denominations consisted of the refusal to merge rather than outright schism.

In fact, these two small Reformed churches were seeking unity and achieved it in 1782 with a merger that created the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. In many ways, that union was seen as the precursor to the final creation of the United Presbyterian Church. It was the refusal of several churches and ministers to enter the new denomination that necessitated the later merger. From the content of the church's directory of ministers, it is quite clear that the churches and ministers of the antecedent denominations, and especially the Associate Reformed Presbyterians, were seen as an integral part

of the United Presbyterian Church. In light of that inclusion John Cuthbertson, who came to America in 1751 as its first dissenting minister is listed, as is John Anderson who founded Service Seminary the first seminary west of the Allegheny Mountains. Although neither of these ministers, and many others listed in the church's manual, were ever United Presbyterians they are still considered a part of its ecclesiastical family.

The Merger



If you look at the history and the records of the Associate Reformed Presbyterians and the Associate Presbyterians, you sense that they were not denominations in the modern sense of that term. That was partly because they had not achieved critical mass. It was also because the work of the church was seen in a different way than it is today. Congregations and their pastors or missionaries in the field were the cutting edge of the church. John Pressly pastored a church, taught in the seminary, and started a magazine called *The Preacher*, which would eventually become *The United Presbyterian*. He sold subscriptions himself for one dollar a year and wrote and published the magazine as well. The Presbyteries and Synods of the church were truly courts and not program agencies. They settled disputes, set doctrine, and directed the churches in their mission. Even mission work consisted primarily of appointing missionaries to particular fields of service.

In coming together to form the United Presbyterian Church the church attained the numbers needed to be a modern denomination. But more than that, it embraced a bold new model borrowed from the booming business world of the mid-nineteenth century. Pittsburgh would be the place of its birth and the inspiration for its new vision. It would appoint boards to oversee its new work in a pragmatic and efficient way. While this new church was unabashedly old fashioned in its theology, it was up-to-date (for 1858) in its outlook and organization. This dichotomy is interesting. The Westminster Confession talked about theology and sacraments but failed to mention boards and budgets. These Dissenters had steadfastly resisted pressures to modernize their faith, but here was a part of church life that was unimagined by Westminster, and they were free to improvise. It was their way of becoming an American denomination without surrendering their faith. They set up boards for Foreign Missions,

Home Missions, Church Extension, Mission to the Freedmen, and Education. All those boards would make a mark on the life of the church and its mission.

There was something else that marked the birth of this new American church. There had been little place for ceremony in the life its predecessors. There had been occasions when they had to meet on the moors in secret but even in the best of times it had been apparent to everyone, including themselves, that they were a small and insignificant, if faithful, band of believers. They had their presbytery and synod meetings, they had celebrated communion with crowds of people, but all had been subdued and simple. They truly preferred it that way, and yet, every people needs a way to mark their own significance, an opportunity to symbolically announce their presence to the world. In joining to found the United Presbyterian Church these Scotch-Irish Presbyterians found their first real opportunity to be ceremonial, even theatrical. And they had the perfect backdrop for their very public birth. Pittsburgh was a Presbyterian city. It was exactly 100 years old in 1858 and although it was already becoming a melting pot for new Americans from every corner of Europe and beyond it was also in many ways a Scotch-Irish city. In addition to all that it was at the heart of what would become the United Presbyterian Church. So Pittsburgh was chosen as the site for the merger and May 26, 1858 as the date.

On that day the Associate Reformed Synod walked across the bridge from Allegheny City and met the Associate Synod at the corner of Seventh and Smithfield Streets. It had been raining the day before, and the streets were mostly packed earth, so they would have been muddy at the time they met, but they walked on the cobblestones of Liberty Avenue as they moved toward the City Hall in Market Square. It was the largest hall in Pittsburgh, and they filled it completely. There were a number of addresses but everyone was waiting for the moment of union. When it came, the crowd was hushed so that they could hear. The moderators, Dr. McLaren of the Associate Reformed Synod and Dr. Cooper of the Associate Synod approached each other. Although it was, in a way, a personal moment, they spoke with their pulpit voices so that everyone could hear. As they shook hands Dr. McLaren said, "In the presence of this assembly, in the presence of the members of this Synod, in the presence of Almighty God, I extend to you, my brother, the right hand of fellowship, in love indeed, and may this Union be to the Glory of God forever! Amen."¹ The nature of the new church was

foreshadowed in the mention of love and fellowship. That this was a momentous occasion was obvious and the sacred moment continued with Dr. Cooper's reply:

Most cordially I reciprocate this expression of my dear brother's heart. In the name of the Associate Synod of North America, I give a brother's hand a brother's heart. Let our hands thus linked together be the token and the emblem of this union. Here let us pledge our mutual fidelity and our mutual love. Let us bury in a common grave our past differences. Here we have unfurled our banner, on one side inscribed "The Truth of God," and on the other, "Forbearance in Love." Let us follow our glorious Captain, and seek to glory only in His cross.²

Then the gathered representatives of the new church sang the 18th and 19th verses of the 72nd Psalm to the tune Coronation. These United Presbyterians had been raised on David's words, and the notes of Coronation were etched on their hearts. Together the people of the church raised heartfelt voices in the first Psalm sung by United Presbyterians.

**"Now blessed be the Lord our God,
The God of Israel,
For he alone doth wondrous works,
In glory that excel.
And blessed be his glorious name
To all eternity:
The whole earth let his glory fill,
Amen, so let it be."**

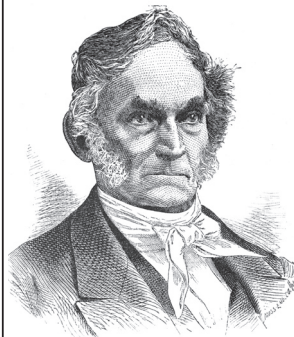
Then in a very Presbyterian way the Union was consummated by the election of a moderator, Dr. John T. Pressly.



Four Servants of the Church

John Cuthbertson, born in Ayr, Ayrshire, Scotland, April 3, 1718; education private; theology with Dr. John McMillan; licensed Ref. Pres. of Scot. (Cov.), April 29, 1746; ordained same court, May 8, 1747; supply in Scot., 1747-1750; mission in Ireland., 1750-'51; first Covenanter miss. to America, 1751-1774; pastor Middle Octorara, PA, Mar. 10, 1774-Nov. 1, 1782; [A. R. Ch., 1782]; pastor Lower Chanceford, PA, Mar. 20, 1783-until his death, Mar. 10, 1791. His extant diary records all the societies and members among whom he labored.

John Anderson, born of Scotch parents at Brampton, England, 1748; education Glas. U.; Hall; licensed Seces. Pres. Scot., 1774; to America, 1783; ordained Phila. Pres. (A.) Oct. 31, 1788: pastor Mill Creek and Hannon's Creek (now Service and Frankfort Springs). Beaver Co., PA, Oct. 14, 1792-until his death, April 6, 1830. Prof. of first theological school, from 1794-1819, located in a log cabin on his farm at Service, PA. A remarkable man; small of stature, unattractive in appearance, irascible temper, timid to an extreme, painfully sensitive, and exceptionally absent-minded; yet a profound theologian, methodical teacher, and a practical preacher, distinguished for piety and prayer. D.D., Jef. C., '08. Mod. Synod A. Ch., 1806. Publications: *Essay on the State of Religion in Scotland*, 1782; *The Divine Ordinance of Singing Praise*, 1791; *The Appropriation Which is in the Nature of Saving Faith*, 1793; *Letters on the Union of 1782*, 1803; *Precious Truths*, 1806; *Notes to Brown's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1807; *Dialogues on Church Communion*. 1820; *Alexander and Rufus*, 1820; *Catechism on Covenanting*. 1827.



John Taylor Pressly, born in Abbeville, Abbeville Co., S. C., Mar. 28, 1795; Transyl. U. '12; N. Y. Sem.; licensed 2nd Carolinas Pres. April 9, '15; ordained same Pres. (A. R. of So.) as pastor Cedar Springs, S. C., July 3, '16-Nov. 10, '31; also prof. theo. '25-'31; [A. R. Ch., '31]; prof. Al. Sem., Allegheny, Pa., '31-also pastor 1st ch., Allegheny, Pa., Aug. 23, '33-until his death, Aug. 13, 1870. Editor *Preacher*.

A man of large physique and commanding appearance; a teacher of wonderful clearness and definite system; a preacher of peculiar interest and extraordinary power. D.D., Jef. C., '32. Mod. Gen. Assem., 1858. Member Bd. For. Miss., '59-'61; of Bd. Home Miss., '68-'70; President and Cor. Sec., Bd. Ch. Exten., '59-'70. Mod. 1st Synod of West, '64. Publications: *Baptism*; *Psalmody*; *Church Fellowship*; *The Grace of Christ*; numerous lectures and articles.

John McNaugher, born in Allegheny, Pa., Dec. 30, 1857; ed. Westm. C., 1880; prof. Westm., 1880-1881; Xe. Sem.; post-graduate, Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland; licensed by Al. Pres., April 1, 1884; ordained by Mansf. Pres. as pastor Fredericksburg, Ohio, April 22, 1885-1886; prof. of Ch. Government, N. T. Literature and Crit., A., 1886; member Bd. of Publication, 1898; member Executive Commission Alliance Reformed Churches, 1896; delegate to Ecumen. Miss. Conf., 1901; delegate to Pan Presbyn. Council, 1904; A.M. Westm., 1883; D.D., Westm., 1889; LL.D., Mon. 1906; Litt.D., Mus., 1937; LL.D., U. of Pittsburgh, 1938; prof. of N. T. Literature and Exegesis, Al. Sem., 1887; 1943; president, 1909-1943; president, Emeritus, 1943-1947; corresponding Sec. Bd. of Publication of U. P. Ch., 1913-1944; member since 1898; chairman, Committee on Confessional Statement, 1919-1925; Revision Committee on Book of Government and Worship, 1919-1925; mod. General Assembly, 1929-1930; pres'd. Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyn. System, 1921-1925; delegate Pan Presbyn. Council, Liverpool, 1904; New York, 1909; Pittsburgh, 1921; Cardiff, 1925; Boston, 1929; Belfast, 1933; Montreal, 1937; member Presbyn. Alliance Commission, 1896-1947; member Advisory Committee on Revised Standard Version of New Testament; author of *The U. P. Church-Its History and Mission*, 1899; *The History of Theological Education in the U. P. Church and Its Ancestries*, 1931; *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 1938; *Quit You Like Men*, 1940; *Jesus Christ, the Same, Yesterday, Today, and Forever*, 1947; also numerous brochures; editor of *The Psalms in Worship*; *Bible Songs*, 1901; *Psalter Hymns*, 1911; *The Psalter of the U. P. Ch.* (new version), 1912, *Bible Songs* #4, 1917; *Evangelistic Songs* #2, 1919; *Children's Praise* #2, 1921; *The Psalter Hymnal*, 1927; *Bible Songs Hymnal*, 1927; retired in Pittsburgh, 1943; died, Dec. 11, 1947.

Truth and Love



On the seal of the United Presbyterian Church are the words “The Truth of God” and “Forbearance in Love.” It would be easier to treat these slogans separately, but it would also be inaccurate. They are two parts of one idea, two sides of one coin. This new denomination was committed to the Truth of God. In today’s church, the word truth is out of favor. In popular culture, there is frequent discussion of truth at various levels of sophistication. People are still sworn to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” but the meaning of truth has changed. Isaac Asimov has put it this way: “If it is self-consistent, that is all we have a right to demand of any system of thought. ‘Truth’ and ‘reality’ are theological words, not scientific ones.”³ But even in theological circles the concept of truth is suspect. Part of the reason for that is the extensive discussion of the nature of knowledge in modern theology. Modern understanding of epistemology finds little place for the concept of truth. Like many trends in theology, however, there are more mundane reasons for changing tastes. Experience has shown that many individuals and groups claiming to possess truth are also arrogant, condescending and unwilling to tolerate any other understanding of what the truth might be. That does not represent my view of the United Presbyterian Church, and that is why both parts of their slogan must be discussed together. It is significant that the phrase is “The Truth of God.” The truth being discussed belongs to God, and is not something we can claim to possess. Truth is certainly a central biblical concept, and those churches adhering to the Westminster standards have a very high view of scripture. It is also a sophisticated view of scripture, admitting the necessity of interpretation and the difficulty of that task. The truth referred to is first of all the truth of God’s Word, and then by derivation the truth which the Westminster standards distilled from scripture. The church’s confessions are clearly subordinate to scripture and ultimately amendable by God working through the Spirit in the church. While some may still object to the use of the word truth, the United Presbyterian understanding of that term is certainly a legitimate and measured use of a very biblical concept. But that was not enough. Forbearance in love was seen as a fitting companion to the truth of God. It is as if the denomination was well aware of the stereotypical abuses of the truth and had pledged itself to avoid them. These Presbyterians had experienced abuse from

kings and bishops and even their own Kirk. They had no desire to participate in those sins themselves, and they saw forbearance and love as the perfect antidotes to any tendency to treat others as they had been treated. There was some debate about the phrase at the time it was chosen, but it was explained as a continuation of the church's previous spirit. In other words, it represented the relationship of love and trust found within a family.

What was the truth of God that was proclaimed by the United Presbyterian Church? Throughout the history of the denomination there was a deep respect for the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. It was felt that they reliably defined the theology of scripture. There was a problem, however, shared by all the American Presbyterians. The twenty-third chapter of the confession was on the subject of the Civil Magistrate. Although it had represented something of a compromise at the time it was written, it clearly spoke to an established church, which was subject in certain matters to secular authority. Not only was it completely out of step with the American church-state paradigm, but it also ran counter to the high church position of the United Presbyterians. All American Presbyterians modified that chapter in one way or another, by either adding their own testimony or, in the case of the United Presbyterians, rewriting the chapter. The importance of this matter was finessed by many Presbyterian denominations, as if this were simply a matter of a changed cultural setting, as in the case of the Burgess Oath controversy. The matter was more serious than that. The Westminster Confession claimed to be not simply a statement of the contemporary theology of the church in Great Britain, but rather a statement of the theology set forth in Scripture itself. When the American church rejected Chapter XXIII, they were saying in effect, you were in error. While the Confession itself was clear as to its subordinate nature, many Presbyterians seemed to develop a rather unreformed esteem for the Westminster Standards that practically canonized them. The United Presbyterians were criticized in some circles for their tampering with Westminster but in many ways it was a more honest approach to the problem. Even with the rewritten chapter the church continued to hold Westminster as their theological standard. Having admitted its fallibility; however, they added their own testimony to the Confession at their formation with eighteen "Declarations" designed to supplement Westminster. "[This] Judicial Testimony covered important subjects which had not

been embraced in the Confession, or not sufficiently elaborated to meet present circumstances.”⁴ Clearly no repudiation of Westminster (other than Chapter XXIII) was intended by the declarations but rather an elaboration and interpretation.

The nature of the emendations was quite apparent. From the first the United Presbyterians were pragmatic and evangelical. They were less concerned about neat theological reasoning than about the effects of that theology on the life and mission of the church. This was apparent from the very first declaration on Plenary Inspiration.

Of the Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures

I. We declare, That God has not only in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments made a revelation of His will to man as the only rule of faith and practice, but that these Scriptures, viewed as a revelation from God, are in every part the inspired Word of God, and that this inspiration extends to the language as well as to the sentiments which they express.⁵

This statement goes beyond the Westminster Confession in explicitly citing the language of scripture as having been inspired by God. The paragraph is quite short and simply doesn't deal with any of the difficult issues raised by this doctrine. The motivation for the declaration was that Westminster's chapter on scripture "is not a sufficient testimony against certain errors of the present day."⁶ Scripture was central not only to the theology of the church but to its worship and more importantly, its evangelism. This declaration was an answer to those who dismissed certain parts of scripture as unreliable or unacceptable. Rather than being a change to Westminster, it was seen as closing up a loophole that had been exploited by those with a "loose" view of scripture. In examining the "Argument and Illustration" which accompanied each of the Declarations it becomes quite clear that all of them were seen as being in accordance with the Confession.

Of the eighteen Declarations the last five dealt with what came to be called the denomination's "distinctives." These doctrines were associated with the church through its early history and became a sort of trademark. These were the distinctive articles:⁷

XIV Of Slaveholding

This declaration made explicit the church's stand on slavery, and condemned it as a sin. Those who continued to hold slaves were ineligible for membership. At the time this was one of the strongest repudiations of slaveholding in American Christendom.

XV Of Secret Societies

This was the United Presbyterian ban on associations with secret oaths, which of course included many well-known fraternal organizations. Although it was later relaxed, many members of the church continued to honor its intent till the end of the denomination's history.

XVI Of Communion

This article established what is called closed communion as the standard for celebration of the Lord's Supper. It was based not on Westminster's treatment of the sacraments, but on the Communion of the Saints. In that light the doctrine made sense in requiring submission to the church's discipline in order to receive its sacraments.

XVII Of Covenanting

This made Public Social Covenanting a duty of the church. In reality, by 1858, social covenanting had become largely moribund, but many members of the church had come out of the covenanting tradition and it was considered an important historical stance of the dissenting Presbyterians. Perhaps more important was the fact that not all Reformed Presbyterians had joined in the union that created the denomination. There was still hope that those Covenanters could be brought into the church eventually.

XVIII Of Psalmody

Probably the most distinctive of the distinctives, this article committed the church to use Psalms exclusively in its singing, rather than popular hymns. This made United Presbyterian worship instantly recognizable. It was based on the idea that only those things endorsed by Scripture should be used in the worship of God. Although it was eventually abandoned, it was probably the most difficult of the distinctives to change.

Through the War between the States, the Spanish American War, the dawn of the twentieth century, the First World War, and the beginning of the Roaring Twenties the United Presbyterian Church lived with the Westminster Confession as interpreted by its Declarations. Not only had the world gone through huge changes during that time but the church's big sister, the Presbyterian Church, was being torn apart by controversy. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy is not a part of this story, and that is a key point. In rehearsing the history of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and delineating its family tree most of the schisms, mergers, and controversy took place in the Presbyterian Church before its merger with the United Presbyterians. This is not to claim that the United Presbyterian Church was without any theological diversity, but the unity it found within its standards was strong enough to protect it from much of the turmoil its sister church was facing.

In spite of that basic unity much had changed since 1647, and the Westminster Confession, while still representing the true exposition of biblical theology to the church, did not comprehensively address the faith of the church in the twentieth century.

Confessional Statement



A committee was duly appointed to begin work on a new statement of faith.⁸ After six long years of work, prayer, and consultation; the Confessional Statement was submitted.

The United Presbyterian Church of North America declares afresh its adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, as setting forth the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures, which are the only infallible and final rule of faith and practice. Along with this it affirms the right and duty of a living Church to restate its faith from time to time so as to display any additional attainments in truth it may have made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, by constitutional action consummated June 2, 1925, it adopted the following Confessional Statement. This Statement contains the substance of the Westminster symbols, together with certain present-day convictions of the United Presbyterian Church.⁹

It is clear that the Confessional Statement was conceived as a restatement of the truths of Westminster to which the church still adhered. At the same time the denomination affirmed its right to express its current faith as guided by the Holy Spirit. In a purely objective sense the committee that wrote this statement was no different than the Westminster Assembly: a group of expert and respected divines entrusted with the task of committing to paper the biblical faith in a relatively brief and systematic form. Subjectively Westminster had become a touchstone for the Reformed tradition and any tampering with it was seen as sacrilegious by many Presbyterians. It was only later that the church face the brunt that critique.

The Confessional Statement was different from the Westminster Confession in several ways. It was much briefer, which of itself raised questions in many minds about its ability to encapsulate the Reformed faith. Its brevity was partly a function of its format. Westminster was organized with multiple subsections in most chapters, while the Confessional Statement consisted of a collection of single paragraphs. The Statement also avoided much of the jargon in Westminster in favor of a plain English explanation of the faith.

The real question of course is whether the Confessional Statement departed from the Westminster Standards. There were those both inside and outside the United Presbyterian Church who made that charge. The two main areas which were called into question were Election and Atonement. These, of course, are important and distinctive elements of Calvinist thinking, and so are exposed to careful scrutiny by critics. They are also some of the most difficult and controversial tenets of Calvinism and are often ridiculed and condemned by Christians of other traditions. The Confessional Statement in general tends to soften the presentation of Reformed theology motivated by the emphasis on pragmatism and evangelism.

Election is at the heart of Calvinist thought since it flows from the conviction that God is absolutely sovereign. Westminster clearly proclaims that God elected, or chose, certain people for salvation before the beginning of the world and without reference to any of their future actions or faith. While this is a biblical concept and a necessary inference of God's sovereignty, it is immensely unpopular with most lay people and many ministers. Without a complete and sympathetic understanding of the entire Calvinist system it can seem unfair and counterintuitive. According to this principle, for instance, those not

chosen by God and dying in infancy would be condemned, not quite a sentiment to include on a sympathy card. That great Presbyterian social critic Mark Twain commented on it. “It has taken a weary long time to persuade American Presbyterians to give up infant damnation and try to bear it the best they can.”¹⁰ In writing the Confessional Statement’s article on Election, the committee composed the following short paragraph:

WE believe that the Eternal Father, before the foundation of the world, in His own good pleasure gave to His Son a people, an innumerable multitude, chosen in Christ unto salvation, holiness, and service; that all of these who come to years of discretion receive this salvation through faith and repentance; and that all who die in infancy, and all others who are given by the Father to the Son and are beyond the reach of the outward means of grace, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Holy Spirit, Who works when and where and how He pleases.¹¹

The possibility of analyzing the Confessional statement in detail was considered but deemed inappropriate for this volume. If, however, the previous paragraph is compared with chapters three and ten of the Westminster Confession it will be evident that the thinking and even much of the language comes from that source. The emphasis is, by design, shifted to the more positive elements of the doctrine. It is also much shorter than the parallel sections of the older confession. Rather than arguing at length for its orthodoxy it might be mentioned that they were seeking to limit exactly those kinds of arguments. The hope was to channel that energy and intellect into the evangelistic mission of the church.

Forbearance in Love



Throughout all the doctrinal clarification that the United Presbyterian Church went through, the church continued to embrace forbearance in love. The roots of this may have come from the Westminster Confession itself. In speaking of predestination it advises that the “doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care...”¹² Calvinism is a rigorously logical system, which only holds together as a whole. To those who

do not comprehend all its tenets it can seem a heartless and cruel doctrine. Those who are new to faith are the very persons most likely not to understand the teaching of the Reformation, and the United Presbyterians, being so pragmatic and evangelical, were especially concerned about them. Forbearance and love moved them to pass a remarkable statement.

RESOLVED, THIRD, That inasmuch as on the consummation of the union of the Associate and Associate Reformed Churches, it was “agreed between the two Churches that the forbearance in love which is required by the law of God, will be exercised toward any brethren who may not be able fully to subscribe to the standards of the United Church, while they do not determinedly oppose them, but follow the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another,” it is the judgment of this General Assembly that this same gospel principle, which the fathers avouched in the day of their solemn covenant, should rule in the hearts of their children as they interpret and apply the distinguishing testimony of the Church in the case of those who now seek admission to her communion. FOURTH, That maintaining this historic position of the United Presbyterian Church, fortified by the deliverances of former General Assemblies, we affirm it to be the right and duty of sessions to receive into full membership those who apply for such privilege, even though they may not be able fully to subscribe to her standards, provided they give evidence of sincere and humble faith, and covenant to seek the peace, purity and prosperity of the Church, and to preserve inviolate their allegiance to Jesus Christ.¹³

This deliverance would seem to fly in the face of the stereotypes of a conservative Calvinistic church. It shows a willingness to truly unite the two slogans of the church even though that unity obviously requires not only forbearance but patience, and a commitment to shepherd those new members of the church through a process of growth that could take many years. This statement was also interesting in that it dealt specifically with members of the church, setting up a system which held ministers to a higher standard.

The real challenge to the confessional stance of the denomination came from its repeated attempts at merger with other Reformed bodies. There were almost continual efforts directed toward that goal, with the most ambitious attempt being a union with the Presbyterian Church in the thirties. Since that merger was unsuccessful there is little need for comment except for two points. The first concerns the matter of the Confessional Statement. The Presbyterians were clearly sceptical of it and felt it compromised Calvinistic orthodoxy. That was ironic in that their own denomination had practically been torn apart by the heterodoxy of its membership. "From these criticisms it becomes clear that a very strange situation obtained. United Presbyterians were regarded as doctrinally sounder in membership than the Presbyterian Church in the USA, but at the same time as having a confessional statement much less orthodox than the Presbyterian Church (USA)."¹⁴

A second point of interest involves the lobbying of John McNaugher, the Moderator of the General Assembly in 1929. He addressed the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (US), encouraging them to consider merger. Time Magazine ran an article on the Presbyterians and reported that "it was difficult to override the prudent arguments of Dr. John McNaugher, president of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Moderator of the United Presbyterians and their emissary to Charlottesville—that if the Southern and United Presbyterians joined now, they could dictate terms of merger with the Northerns." The article concluded with an interesting take on the dynamics of the situation. "In theology this organization is more conservative than the other two. Their Moderator, Dr. John McNaugher, was snubbed at Charlottesville too late for the United Presbyterians to deny their eagerness to merge with the Southern Presbyterians."¹⁵

The push for union continued with ultimate success in 1958. The merger affected the doctrinal standards of the church by discarding the Confessional Statement and reverting to the Westminster standards alone. Although many had questioned the Presbyterian Church's real acceptance of that confession even in 1930, those reservations were put aside for the sake of church unity. Even Dr. McNaugher had been willing to give up his beloved Confessional Statement so that the churches could become one.

This rejection of the Confessional Statement for the supposed enshrinement of Westminster appears hypocritical in retrospect. Less than ten years after the merger, the United Presbyterian Church (USA)

adopted a new confession that made no attempt to adhere to the theology of Westminster. Even worse was the decision to incorporate the new confession into a *Book of Confessions* and to change the ordination question concerning the confessions to this accommodating statement: “Will you be instructed by the Confessions of our Church, and led by them as you lead the people of God?”¹⁶

That the church could be so disingenuous I know from personal experience. In 1981 when I was a new pastor in Kiskiminetas Presbytery, we gathered to discuss the overtures from General Assembly before we voted on them. I remember meeting with a small group in a church lounge. One of the overtures would have strengthened ordination question three to read: “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?”¹⁷ There was an older and more liberal pastor in our group and I remember him talking about how contradictory and out-of-date the confessions were. We couldn’t possibly promise to “receive and adopt” them in good conscience. The overture was in due course voted down. Being a new pastor I’m not sure I said too much, and I never would have remembered this scene except for an interesting coincidence. The following year we met again. There was an amazing sense of *déjà vu*, same room, almost the same group, I think it was even the same convener. The big item in 1982 was reunion with the Presbyterian Church (US). Of course that brought huge changes for both denominations which included a new *Book of Order*. In that document was included the revised ordination question which had just been voted down. As we began our discussion the convenor said the change in the ordination question was really very little to ask for the sake of this wonderful reunion with the Southern church. As he said that I looked at that same older more liberal pastor sitting across from me and as our eyes met we both smiled a knowing smile. In my judgment, that change in the ordination question is a documented example of institutional hypocrisy. Like the supposed protection of orthodoxy in the 1958 merger, it meant nothing to the majority of the denomination, and we have seen the results of that cynicism.

Calvinism is an interesting doctrine, or rather set of doctrines. Many of us believe that it represents one of the best attempts to translate biblical truth into a systematic theology. Of course, Calvin

taught many things, and most of them are part of an orthodoxy that is quite catholic in nature. Some of what he taught was not exactly original; he would certainly acknowledge Pauline and Augustinian theology as precursors, but his beliefs were stated with a rigor and logic that was startling. His views on salvation are at the heart of his teaching, and its most controversial element. One of the most curious characteristics of Calvinism is that, assuming its truth, a person's salvation is completely unrelated to acceptance of its tenets. In light of that, some of the bitter controversies over the more esoteric elements of the theology are of questionable utility.

Very little has been written on the Confessional Statement, and much of that is negative. One of the more critical assessments was authored by James T. Dennison, Jr.¹⁸ His theses as I understand them are three: The United Presbyterian Church slowly abandoned its Reformed principles and became more liberal; John McNaugher was not fully committed to the Westminster standards and orchestrated their abandonment; The Confessional Statement was not Calvinist in its theology. In a tribute to the United Presbyterian Church, it seems appropriate to offer a rebuttal to those charges.

There is no question that the denomination changed over the years, as did all the Presbyterian bodies. This was especially true of their so-called distinctives, but those doctrines were not directly related to the issue of their Calvinism. The Declaratory Articles which were a part of the founding documents of the denomination clearly indicated a desire to interpret the Westminster Confession in a certain way. The seventh article in particular, Of the Gospel Offer, indicated an evangelical interpretation of Calvinism which was present from the beginning of the United Presbyterian Church. As to the question of John McNaugher's commitment to, and respect for, Westminster, this quote is informative:

Taken in its compass the Confession incloses the full summary of the Reformed faith. It is the ripest fruit of Reformed creed-making, a transcript of Reformed thought as it was expounded by its best representative in the middle of the seventeenth century....No Calvinism is purer, more devout, more catholic than the Calvinism of the Confession.¹⁹

This is certainly an endorsement of Westminster. It can hardly be claimed that there is only one possible interpretation of every tenet of Calvin's doctrine. Most of McNaugher's version of Calvinism however, did not consist of altered doctrine but rather of a different presentation of that creed. He clearly stated that "Nothing is said of reprobation or preterition for the reason that this is a necessary inference from scriptural doctrine of Election, and calls for no distinct mention. One of two contraries implies the other."²⁰ The logical necessities of election were clear to him but he chose to speak only of its positive elements. To make that a rejection of Calvinism seems a rigid and arbitrary standard. McNaugher's problem with Westminster was a practical one. He believed that the people of the church were neglecting the standards to the detriment of the denomination. As evidence he cited the sale of only 324 copies of the standards in the decade previous to the formulation of the Confessional Statement.²¹ His attitude suggests that if the Confession had been more widely known and used in the church he would have been satisfied with it. Having used the Westminster Confession with congregations I am sympathetic.

Determining whether the Confessional Statement of 1925 meets Calvinistic muster is difficult. First, there is the question of its constitutional status. It is frustrating that so many authors state that the Statement replaced the Westminster Confession as the standard of the church. Any fair evaluation of the church's creed must credit the official statements of the denominations. The preamble to the Confessional Statement was widely discussed and voted on separately. As it has already been quoted, I will simply note that it specifically affirms the Westminster Standards "as setting forth the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures." It does indeed require deference to the Confessional Statement over the Westminster Confession. Those who claim that is tantamount to a rejection of the old confessional standards should do so with care. Following that logic would mean that accepting the Westminster Standards "as setting forth the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures" is a rejection of scripture as the primary standard of the church. In approving the Confessional Statement and its preamble the denomination was affirming the primary role of scripture with the Westminster standards as a kind of authoritative interpretation of scripture and the Confessional Statement as an authoritative interpretation of Westminster.

It is fair to say that there was dissatisfaction with the tone and language of Westminster. The committee walked a very fine line in attempting to preserve the Calvinism of the Confession while couching it in simple, positive, and evangelical statements. Obviously, some were unconvinced of the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the Statement, but the denomination itself approved the document as containing “the substance of the Westminster symbols.” The considered action of a General Assembly should not be lightly set aside. Beyond defending the Confessional Statement it is important to see what forces were at work in crafting it. The evangelical faith of the United Presbyterian Church was compatible with Calvinism but demanded that its theology be expressed in a way that emphasized the Gospel. Westminster represented a profound and impressively logical system of Biblical theology. It did not provide the intellectual framework for evangelical preaching and mission. To explain the theology of the church it is important to link it to the preaching of the church.

In understanding the faith of the United Presbyterian Church in general and John McNaugher particularly, it is necessary to focus on the view from the pulpit. Remember that Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary was known for its commitment to preparing pastors, and especially equipping them to preach. In looking out over a congregation a Calvinist preacher is certainly aware that both the elect and those who will never truly know Jesus Christ comprise its members. But there is no way to know who belongs to which group. The message, and more important, the offer of salvation is made to all without distinction. That was an important point for the denomination and was included in both the Declaratory Articles and the Confessional statement in sections on the Gospel. To make that invitation with conviction and honesty it is necessary to believe “that it contains a free and unconditional offer of salvation through Christ to all who hear it.” Even though only the elect will respond to the message it is made in good faith. This perspective is very different from that of the Westminster Confession, and it certainly emphasizes different aspects of the doctrine. Total Depravity and Perseverance of the Saints fit easily into a sermon dealing with our sin and helplessness and our need of God’s grace. Unconditional Election and Limited Atonement are almost impossible to fit naturally into an evangelistic homily. The critique of John McNaugher for failing to proclaim the doctrines of Calvinism in his sermons fails to understand his approach to preaching. My father told me that he was

taught in seminary (perhaps by Dr. McNaugher) that every sermon should present the Gospel whether it was an evangelistic message or not. To proclaim, even in the most sophisticated manner, that salvation is simply in God's hands and there is nothing we can do to secure or refuse it, is not the kind of preaching the United Presbyterians envisioned in their pulpits. The tension between systematic theology and proclamation of the Word is apparent in scripture and has always been a dilemma for pastors. Paul, the protocolvinist of scripture, and its greatest evangelist gave us this poetic version of predestination:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.²²

Paul was not exactly a systematic theologian, but that passage should be orthodox enough for most Calvinists, and the need to argue for the orthodoxy of a biblical author illustrates the very problem being discussed. Two chapters later Paul is speaking as an evangelist and assures us that, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." That is a statement that might give Calvinists pause. But then Paul raises a series of questions that are very United Presbyterian, if I may say so.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"²³

Those two passages, taken together, encompass the thinking of United Presbyterians. Of course we are predestined to call on the name of the Lord, but how will it happen? The tension between those aspects of faith is real, but it is resolved by a proper understanding of

the relationship between preaching and teaching. To confuse the two is a serious error and a hindrance to fruitful ministry.

It is difficult to sum up what the United Presbyterian Church was, and what it believed. Although it was far more homogenous than was the Presbyterian Church, there was certainly some diversity among its churches and pastors. As it slowly lost its so-called distinctives it appeared, even to a John McNaugher, that there was little difference between the two churches. Yet to those in the trenches of the church, pastors and members of small churches dotting the landscape of middle America, there was a strong sense of what it meant to be United Presbyterian. It seems clear that however they would have described their denomination, they would have insisted on its distinctiveness.

Conservatism was an important part of the church's character. The less political definition of that term connotes being marked by moderation or caution. The denomination's philosophy went beyond that in seeking to retain the best of the past while being open to new ideas. Wallace Jamison stated that, "...the United Presbyterian Church is a paradox. While it has taken great pride in its inherent conservatism, its official pronouncements have often been amazingly liberal."²⁴ That surprised me until I read his footnote which explained, "They are liberal not in the modern restricted sense of denying basic Christian doctrines but in the classic sense which implies freedom from prejudice and narrowness, freedom to engage in broad and enlightened thinking, freedom to change."²⁵ That is an excellent description of the church I knew and loved. It continues to describe conservative Presbyterians today, caught between unthinking fundamentalism on the one hand, and social and theological liberalism on the other. It was, and is, a difficult beachhead to hold in the religious turf wars of the twenty-first century.

The church was largely unconcerned with being fashionable or trendy. It prided itself on rejecting unbiblical and unwise tendencies in the contemporary church. For that reason many outside the denomination saw it as a bland or quaint organization, not one to be taken seriously. The view from within suggested the solidity of the rock on which the whole Church is built. To paraphrase John McNaugher's comment on the Confessional Statement, the United Presbyterian Church carries all the old-fashioned evangelical verities, maintains Calvinism in its unimpaired integrity, and stresses important beliefs hitherto neglected and guards against recent errors into which so many are drifting.²⁶

Truth and Love is a tribute to the United Presbyterian Church of North America 150 years after its founding and 50 years after it merged with the Presbyterian Church, and a reference work containing a directory of ministers and congregations.

Truth and Love: The United Presbyterian Church of North America:
A Fifty Year Retrospective

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