

NEWS LETTER

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A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Historical Commission is the most recent one set up by General Synod in 1965. Many of our pastors and lay people may wonder why this Commission was instituted. The answer is relatively simple. In our United Church of Christ we have two Historical Societies, the Congregational Christian Historical Society and the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, each serving the historical interests of our united constituency. The Commission was set up in order to bring about a kind of unity and coherence in this area of our work. It symbolizes that though our roots are somewhat different the present objectives are the same. As each family has a unique history, so our histories are separate and unique. The foundations of our history and the uniqueness of it have, however, a common root, namely the Reformation Church in the sixteenth century.

The separate but nevertheless united task is to give full credence to the work of the Fathers, to pay tribute to the faith they had and the sacrifices they made in order to develop not only a theology of their own but also to organize congregations and to build churches in the old and the new world.

The Evangelical churches in particular owe much to the religious concerns of the Congregational missionary enterprise for those who had penetrated the American frontiers. Thus is revealed a unity of concern and interest. This interest in each other has been reawakened in our time. We are thankful to God for it.

Both Historical Societies will from now on function under the guidance of the Historical Commission. However, each Society will continue to foster research in and give attention to the particular forces and circumstances which have made the rise of churches, theological movements and social concerns possible. What needs also to find emphasis is the missionary outreach of the church, be it in foreign missions or in the establishment of institutions, like schools and colleges or hospitals and orphanages.

Each branch of our United Church has a rich heritage. The Historical Societies under the guidance of the Historical Commission want to make certain that under the excitement of a new venture, a venture of faith, the great contributions of the Fathers are not lost or forgotten.

We hope most sincerely that our pastors and laity will support us in our task.

Rudolf G. Schade
Chairman, Historical Commission

MEMBERS OF HISTORICAL COMMISSION of the UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Rudolf G. Schade, Chairman; Rev. James F. English, Vice-Chairman; Rev. Ray Carlton Jones, Secretary; Rev. Mervin M. Deems, Rev. Frank Kostyu, Rev. William J. Rupp, Rev. Clifford O. Simpson, Rev. Frank W. Snider, Rev. Charles D. Spotts, Rev. Arthur S. Wheelock, Rev. Lowell H. Zuck.

Significant Anniversaries Ahead

The year 1967 will be a year of great significance for Protestant history: 450 years ago Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany; 150 years ago the E.K.U. (Evangelical Church Union) was consummated in Germany uniting the Lutheran and Reformed Churches; and 10 years ago the United Church of Christ was consummated in Cleveland, Ohio.

Suggestions have been made that these three events shall be properly observed in 1967, the year of the anniversaries. Could there be a better place than Cleveland? Here we consummated our union and established the United Church of Christ as a symbol that, while historical circumstances may have forced us for centuries to walk separately, the faith in Christ as Savior has united us forever. Watch for further announcements.

Rudolf G. Schade

Annual Meeting Reviews Work of E & R Historical Society

The work of the Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church was reviewed by the Executive Committee and presented to the membership of the Society at a two day meeting held at Catawba College, Salisbury, N. C., September 13, 14, 1965. The Southern Chapter of the Society was the host for this meeting.

Herbert B. Anstaett, Librarian of the Lancaster Central Archive and Library, presented his twenty-fifth annual report. He noted that the largest and most significant gift to the Society during the year was received from Charles Edmund Schaeffer. It consisted of thirty-five cartons of books and papers and several filing cabinets of manuscripts. This was the second noteworthy contribution of Dr. Schaeffer. In 1962 he gave a large collection of manuscripts and printed materials that related to his work from 1908

to 1940 as General Secretary of the Board of Home Missions of the Reformed Church in the United States.

Dr. Carl Schneider, curator of the Western Archives, housed at Eden Theological Seminary, reported on the continuing work of collecting and analyzing the materials deposited there. They have received much material dealing with the mission work and general history of the former Evangelical Synod of North America.

The Executive Committee adopted several suggested changes in the structure of the Society as they looked forward to the formation of the Historical Commission of the United Church of Christ. These changes do not imply change of function but only of terminology. The name of the Society was changed to "The Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society." The former Executive Committee will be known as the Executive Council and the former Steering Committee designated the Administrative Committee of the Executive Council.

Mr. Anstaett, who has been serving as the working executive officer of the Society for years, has been designated as "Executive Secretary and Librarian of the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society."

The following officers were elected for the coming year. Charles D. Spotts, President; Theophil Menzel, Vice-President; George H. Bricker, Treasurer; Rudolf G. Schade, Secretary; Herbert B. Anstaett, Executive Secretary and Librarian.

Christian Church Beginnings and Principles

Several people have reminded us that we should not overlook the history and influence of the former Christian Church that united with the Congregational Churches in 1931. Excerpts from a historical address delivered by Dr. William T. Scott at the annual meeting of the

Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society are therefore most appropriate:

The Christian Church was America's first indigenous denomination. It was formed by three distinct groups originating almost simultaneously immediately following the American Revolution. They should not be confused with the younger communion known as the "Disciples of Christ," with local churches and state organizations sometimes calling themselves "Christian Churches," and sometimes "Churches of Christ." Nor are the titles correct as used by some historians — "Christian Connection," or "New Lights." The denomination officially and generally accepted no title except "Christian Church" or "Christians" from the day of its founding in 1794 until 1931, when it united with the Congregational Churches. The strength of the Christian Church was chiefly in the South, New England, New York, and the Middle West.

The first movement that resulted in the formation of the Christian Church came from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1792-94 in Virginia and North Carolina out of the desire for a church of the people based upon scriptural rule, and as a protest and rebellion against the autocratic rule of Bishop Francis Asbury. The leader was James O'Kelly, a Virginian by birth, a Methodist lay preacher, and a soldier chaplain of the Revolutionary Army. He was a man of deep conviction, power, eloquence, and influence — attested to by Asbury and other contemporaries. O'Kelly was ordained an Elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church at its first General Conference in 1784, and served as the Presiding Elder in the extensive Southern District of Virginia and North Carolina from 1784 to 1792. As a leader there, he was regarded as hardly a second to Asbury.

Because of the dissolute life of many of the clergy of the Established Church of England, James O'Kelly early became an

agitator for the qualification of the lay preachers for authority to perform the sacraments and ordinances of the Church.

He participated in a Conference of the "Virginia brethren," held at Old Brokenback Chapel, Fluvanna County, Virginia, May 18, 1779, when he was ordained along with 17 other lay preachers "by the laying on of hands" of their own appointed Presbytery, "because the Episcopal Establishment is now dissolved, and, therefore, in almost all the circuits the members are without the ordinances, we believe it to be our duty." At the "General Conference" held in Baltimore in November, 1792, O'Kelly continued his attempt to democratize the growing episcopal organization of the Methodist Church sponsored by Asbury. Failing here in his "Right of Appeal" resolution, he and about 30 other Methodist preachers left the Conference. After unsuccessful attempts in 1792 and 1793 to gain some amendments to the Methodist discipline, the dissenters associated themselves as "Republican Methodists" for one year. On August 4, 1794, they assembled in General Meeting in Surry County, Virginia, near the historic James River, and just a few miles from the site of the Jamestown Colony. Here Rice Haggard, a Methodist minister (elder) who had left the Baltimore Conference with O'Kelly, and who was later to influence the Stone movement of "Christians" in Kentucky, arose before the assembly with an open New Testament in his hand and declared:

"Brethren, this is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, and by it we are told the disciples were called Christians, and I move that henceforth and forever the followers of Christ be known as Christian, simply."

The motion was unanimously adopted, and thereupon was brought into existence the Christian Church, the first democratically governed Church that arose indigenously on American soil.

When this first Conference of the Christian Church had completed its work two days later, they had given laymen equal representation with the ministers, leaving the decision as to matters of government and policy to the Conference itself, composed of both ministers and laymen. As to doctrine, they were primarily Wesleyan, but as to interpretation they left the individual the right and privilege to interpret truth as he might be led by the Holy Spirit. They were committed to the union of Christ's followers, a unity they said had been lost through "worldly pride, human doctrine, unapostolic measures, and a lack of love to God and sympathy for men." Said James O'Kelly, "Brethren, if we are Christ's, then we are Christians from His authority, His name and His divine nature."

This body of Christians covering most of the South continued to meet in annual "General" or "Union" meetings from 1794 until 1847 when the Southern Christian Association was organized, which in turn was succeeded in 1856 by the Southern Christian Convention, which has operated since that date with its district or local Conferences.

Widely different interpretations of theology existed amongst them in freedom. Never was their fellowship torn by bickerings and heresy trials. They based their fellowship upon the following six principles which were generally accepted from the beginning:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church.
2. The name Christian, to the exclusion of all party and sectarian names, sufficient for the followers of Christ.
3. The Holy Scriptures, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the only creed, a sufficient rule of faith and practice.
4. Christian character, or vital Christian piety, the only and a sufficient test of Christian fellowship and Church membership.

5. The right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience, a right and a privilege that should be accorded to and exercised by all.

6. The union of the followers of Christ, to the end that the world may believe.

Some Achievements of the Connecticut Missionary Society

By J. Chester Molyneux (Clerk, First Congregational Church, Jamestown, New York)

Surveying former "C.C." Year Books, were you astonished that Congregational Churches became so widely distributed over so many States? It was to be expected that by 1960, Massachusetts, home of the Pilgrims, would have 582 "C.C." churches, and nearby Connecticut, 305, out of a total of 5,458 "C.C." churches in all the States.

The puzzle is that also in 1960, New York had 314, Ohio 323, Wisconsin 178, Illinois 313, Iowa 185, Michigan 222, Indiana 137, Minnesota 148, etc., etc. Did this wide distribution "just happen"? Far from it! With the winning of the Revolutionary War and adoption of the Federal Constitution, the vista of a great new nation appeared. Agriculture would be the backbone. Ample lands for tens of thousands of family-operated farms was its necessary component. Many Revolutionary soldiers had seen lush acres available to the West, and were anxious to recoup fortunes after years of war. Others were prodded by the advertising of "cheap Western lands" available on easy terms.

The response was formidable. The great trek to the West began. Albany was but one of several gateways to the New West. Through Albany alone, for many years, each day flowed a continuous caravan of 500 or more sleighs and oxcarts carrying families to new homes in the West. Perhaps half a million emigrants a year passed through Albany alone!

Many new "Western" settlers were Congregationalists at home, or Congregational-inclined. Where good leadership was in the new communities, replicas of New England institutions were set up, including churches. But thousands wrote back home that churches, schools and those who could organize, were sorely needed. Then, as Dr. Oscar E. Maurer wrote, "The churches of Connecticut were not slow in answering the plea."

An extremely simple plan was devised. Clergymen were recruited for specified Western territory, and allotted what was a bare subsistence, \$300 a year (perhaps \$1,200 in today's dollar value?). The balance of their living would have to be earned by fees and offerings for preaching, marriages, baptisms and the like. The obvious hope was that by the end of a year in the field, the missionary preacher, having established his church, would be self-supporting. Then his \$300 allotment could be used to send another gifted man of God to the fields "ripe for harvest." Other home missionary societies with similar aims were formed in New England, but the Connecticut operations far outdistanced the rest.

For First Church, Jamestown, N. Y. (founded 1816), this writer became interested in developing a more complete story of its Connecticut Missionary founder John Spencer. With Dr. English's help at Hartford, we found nearly 50 of Spencer's report-letters, making possible a revealing story, mostly in his own words. And parallel, there emerged from the same archives, details of the whole Connecticut Society's work. *Supported only by the 300 Connecticut Congregational Churches, the Society in 100 years ending 1880 sent out 316 men who spent 1666 man-years establishing churches in the new "Western lands."* Through the work of these 316 Home Missionaries from Connecticut, churches were established in several states including Ohio, Missouri, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky,

New York, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska and Tennessee.

Among the many men sent to New York, just one man, John Spencer, was assigned to work in the "Holland Land Purchase" (a square, 100 miles on a side, or a total of 10,000 square miles). A veteran of the Revolution, serving at Bunker Hill at 18, he was 48 when he started his 18-year circuit-riding career in Western New York. In the 18 years of his missionary activity he established more than 50 churches of which 25 are still active.

Altogether the work of the Connecticut Home Missionary Society is one of the most successful enterprises in church history.

Forgotten Pioneers in the Christian Approach to the City

By Kenneth A. Coates (Parkrose Community Church, Portland, Oregon)

Some years ago *Christianity and Crisis* published this little jingle by St. Hereticus:

"Some people would prefer the
penitentiary

To singing hymns of the 19th century."

This jingle seems to me to represent a rather common attitude of 20th century churchmen to 19th century Christianity, not only its hymns, but its entire outlook and activity. How often we think of Victorian social blindness, of pulpit idols, of the social ineffectiveness of the Church, and so on. Nowhere does this seem more evident than in our thinking about urbanism and the Christian gospel. For this reason it was a most salutary and humbling experience for me recently to read two books representing late 19th century Christian thought about the city and its problems and the Church's response to the city. The books are *Modern Cities and Their Religious Problems* by Samuel Loomis, published in 1887, and *The Challenge of the City* by Josiah Strong,

published in 1907. Both Loomis and Strong were Congregational ministers, both serving as pastors for a number of years. Loomis eventually became a secretary of the American Missionary Association, and Strong the head of the American Institute for Social Service.

Both Loomis and Strong have a realistic and essentially healthy attitude toward the city. And, both see the movement toward the cities as irreversible. They mention as one reason for the growth of cities the attractive power and fascination of big city life, a "vague delight at being one in the midst of a great multitude of men and women." For the delights of the city people will endure poor housing, crowding, poverty, rather than move out. But the greatest reason for the growth of the 19th century city was the steam engine, bringing increased production, trade, railroads, and wealth. Strong puts it well, "The decisive causes are economic and they are absolutely compulsory." Both Strong and Loomis see the growth of cities as rapidly increasing and about eighty and sixty years ago respectively were prophesying that in a very short while America would follow Britain in becoming an urbanized culture. Loomis expresses the conviction of both men that Christian effort should be directed to making cities better places for human habitation, "not in checking their growth, but in quenching their iniquity."

Both Loomis and Strong are quite specific in pointing out the iniquity of the city: corrupt government, drunkenness, crime, poverty and pauperism, desecration of the Christian Sabbath, and the spirit of class hatred. Both see the failure of the Church to relate to the workingman, not only because of his foreign birth and Catholic tradition, but more particularly because workingmen "identify the churches with the capitalists." They see the Church in retreat from inner city areas, they sorrowfully chroni-

cle the decline in Protestant influence in the cities of America. Loomis comments, "We talk too much about family churches, and too little about missionary churches."

Both men make suggestions for a Christian strategy in the city. Strong's is largely in terms of the institutional church, the social service center concept of the ecclesia, and gives many examples of New York churches that were deeply involved in this type of program. It is Loomis' program, however, which is much more fascinating because it sounds like so much of the advice we hear today, even though his suggestions were made almost 80 years ago. Drawing on the experiences of the churches in London and the McAll mission in Paris, he suggests that instead of fleeing to the suburbs the Church recognize the changed conditions of affairs and stay put, hiring specially trained workers. He advocates multiple staff ministries, storefront missions, a variety of services, more frequent communion, a carefully thought out ecumenical approach, the better use of the parish system, and, most interestingly, the support of the inner city ministry by the whole Church in city and suburb. He speaks of home visitors, nursing helpers, art exhibits, concerts, involvement in social groups, and so on, so that you almost feel his book was written in the 1960's, not in the 1880's.

The basic weakness that I see in both men's presentations is that both presuppose that a social service approach is adequate to the problems of the city. This is a most important approach, to be sure, but it is not enough; we also need to deal with the principalities and powers. But I am sure we owe a much greater debt to Samuel Loomis and Josiah Strong and to our 19th century Christian forebears than we have previously recognized in our 20th century Christian approach to the city.

Consultation on Educational History

In the early summer of 1815 a group of laymen and clergy gathered in Boston and after a prayer meeting discussed the state of morals and society. Concluding the state to be "ruinous and destitute of the knowledge of true religion," they decided the remedy was to secure more and better clergy for the developing nation. These men formed the American Society for the Educating of Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry. Their vision and their passion was to excite men "of talent and hopeful piety" to achieve a "learned and competent education." That organization was the forerunner on the Congregational side of the present Division of Christian Education.

One phase of the celebration of this anniversary was a historical consultation held in Philadelphia, August 31-September 2, 1965. The planning committee had the conviction that the contribution to education of the four communions now part of the United Church of Christ is too little known and inadequately documented. Several papers were presented to a gathering of persons representative of these four traditions.

Edward Powers presented a paper on Congregationalism's contribution to education in the years before 1900 stressing the doctoral office, founding of the common school, establishment of colleges and academies, concern for an educated clergy and a literate laity, the achievements of the American Missionary Association, the education of women, and educational efforts with the American Indian.

Charles Spotts discussed the Reformed Church's educational heritage rooted in the Heidelberg Catechism and the theological heritage of Calvin, Ursinus and Olevianus. Elements in this heritage include the work of teacher John Phillip Boehm, development of parochial schools, theological education, development of charity schools, confirmation traditions,

founding of colleges and academies, development of Sunday schools, establishment of an educational and publishing board, development of lay training and leadership programs.

Carl Schneider assessed the educational contributions of the Evangelical Synod: roots in the continental unity of the Reformed and the Lutheran traditions; use of the Heidelberg and Evangelical catechisms; development of the parochial school (and later contributing to preparation of public school teachers), college, and seminary; legacy of confirmation instruction; development of a Sunday School, board of religious education and leadership training tradition.

Lucy Eldredge interpreted the Christian churches with their emphasis upon the Bible, Christian character, and Christian unity; their encouragement of the laity in the church; their contribution through college and seminary; their emphasis upon the role and education of women; the development of a board of religious education and a publishing house.

Mildred Widber stressed the role of Congregationalism after 1900 through academies, colleges, seminaries, encouragement of public school development, religious education in churches and state conference, development of the Congregational Education Society and the Congregational Publishing Society.

Next Annual Meeting of the Congregational Christian Historical Society

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Congregational Christian Historical Society at Wheaton College it was voted unanimously to hold the next Annual Meeting of the Society in the West Barnstable Church, West Barnstable, Mass. The reason for this decision is that in 1966 the West Barnstable Church will celebrate the 350th anniversary of its founding. Records show that Rev. Henry Jacob organized a

Congregational Church, in the year 1616, in Southwark, England, across the Thames from London. This is considered the mother church of Congregationalism. In 1634 Henry Jacob's successor, Rev. John Lothrop, sailed to Boston with thirty-four members of his church and settled in Barnstable, building their first meeting house on Lothrop's Hill where the present church building stands.

This church in West Barnstable with its continuous existence from 1616 can justly claim to be the oldest Congregational Church not only in America, but anywhere in the world. Our Society plans to mark this significant anniversary with a program worthy of the occasion. Dr. James F. English has been appointed Chairman of the Program Committee. The meeting will be held next spring, probably in April. The present Sanctuary of the West Barnstable Church is well worth a visit for it has been restored to its

original colonial design and stands as an authoritative New England meeting house of the first period. Make plans now to attend this noteworthy meeting.

We are sorry to record the death of Dr. Rodney W. Roundy who for many years served on the Board of Governors of the Congregational Christian Historical Society.

In the October number of the *Bulletin* of the Congregational Library the address delivered at our Annual Meeting in Plymouth by Dr. Frederick M. Meek is printed in full. This address on "The Ancient Landmarks of the Fathers" attracted great interest. It is based largely on the "Burial Hill Declaration of Faith" adopted on June 22, 1865. Copies can be secured by writing to Miss Corrine M. Nordquest, Congregational Library, 14 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. 02108.

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