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Mr. Williamson is an attorney-at-law and a longtime ruling elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenville, Alabama. He was elected Commissioner from East Alabama Presbytery to the last five consecutive General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. He frequently served on its committees and was a member of the Committee on Union with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America until his resignation from that committee a year ago. The Convocation of Sessions held in Atlanta on May 18, 1973 elected Mr. Williamson as Chairman of the Convention for Organizing a Continuing Presbyterian Church. The Convention elected him Convener of the first General Assembly. Mr. Williamson is a member of the Presbytery of the Evangel of the Continuing Presbyterian Church.

The subject of Mr. Williamson's address will be "To God Be The Glory."

To God Be The Glory

On this historic occasion, we gather at the call of Almighty God. We gather in the providence of our Father who are in heaven. We gather to worship and honor our Creator. Our chief end is "to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever."

We gather to continue a true branch of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We reaffirm our allegiance to Him as the sole Head of the Church and the sole law giver in Zion. We remember His promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Let us immediately declare the purpose of this Church, our portion of which today becomes a formal ecclesiastical entity. This Church exists merely for the sake of God. Its purpose cannot be merely human or humanistic as though to prepare a believer for heaven. Its purpose does not lie in us, but in God, and in the glory of His name. The origin of this Church is in God, its form of manifestation is from God; and from beginning to end, its purpose is and shall be to magnify God's glory.

Let us further declare its nature. This Church is a spiritual organism, including heaven and earth, but having at present its center and the starting point for its action, not upon earth, but in heaven. We are in this world but not of this world. We declare our devotion to the Church as a spiritual institution knowing that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of this world. Not until His second coming shall this organism manifest itself as the center of the cosmos. Now, here on earth, it is only as it were its silhouette that can be dimly discerned. In the future, this new Jerusalem shall descend from God, out of heaven, but at present it withdraws its beams from our sight in the mysteries of the invisible. And therefore the true sanctuary is now above. On high are both the Altar of Atonement, and the incense Altar of Prayer; and on high is Christ, as the only priest who, according to the ordinance of Melchizedek, ministers at the Altar, in the sanctuary, before God. We confess that Christ in human form, in our flesh, has entered into the invisible; and that with Him, around Him, and in Him, our Head, is the real Church, the real and essential sanctuary of our salvation.

But who are we who gather to form and continue on the earth a visible branch of the true invisible Church? We have been chosen, regenerated and called by God for this purpose. We are convinced and convicted of our calling and election by these words of the Apostle Paul:

"Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3-12)"

We are but a group of sinners saved by grace and sent out to be ambassadors for our Saviour Jesus Christ on this earth. We are a group of confessors who shall live in an ecclesiastical union in obedience to the ordinances of Christ Himself. This is no mystical, spiritual order gifted with mystical powers to operate with a magical influence on men. We are only regenerated and confessing individuals, who in accordance with scriptural command, are forming a society and therein shall endeavor to live in subordination to Christ our King. We are called to be a visible manifestation of the true Church on this earth. The Church of Jesus Christ is not a building, not an institution, not a spiritual order; but it is a group of living stones built on Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. We are then a group of regenerated and confessing individuals who have been united, not as we have seen fit, but according to the ordinances of Christ. We are a priesthood of believers. Do not misunderstand me. I do not say: This Church consists of a number of pious people united in groups for religious purposes. That in itself would have nothing in common with the true Church of Jesus Christ. It is true that the real, heavenly, invisible church must and will manifest itself in the earthly Church. If not, you have a society but not a church. But the real essential church is and remains the body of Christ which is composed of people who have been regenerated — "born again." Merely for pious, sincere people to get together in groups is not sufficient to form a true Church of Jesus Christ on earth. There you have a religious society but not a Christian Church. This is the great contradiction and danger of our generation in America. There are many religious societies in our land but far fewer real Christian churches. And Satan is using these religious societies to give a false sense of eternal security to their members. By them, many people are being misled into believing that to be "religious" is to be "Christian". People are being taught that to be "religious" and to be "Christian" are synonymous terms. We know this is tragic error. This is not to say that all these religious societies are bad. On the contrary, most of them are good. For the most part they are composed of sincere people who are in varying degrees committed to a cause. Some are totally dedicated and give their lives to such causes. They exhibit zeal and courage in support of their cause. They are sincerely convinced that they are right. They use "Christian" terminology in support of their cause. They are philanthropic and altruistic. The results of their efforts often bring good to many people. But their causes are always humanistic and secularistic. Whatever movement is the vogue of the day becomes the cause of the year for these religious societies. Many Americans become members of these religious societies as a fashionable facet of the good life. They call themselves "Christians". In this they may be absolutely sincere but are certainly wrong. As proof that religious piety, sincerity, and zeal do not make a person a "Christian", we recall the autobiographical account of the life of the Apostle Paul. As Saul of Tarsus, he was deeply and sincerely religious. He was a zealous leader in the leading religious society of his day. But he tells us

that he was certainly wrong. He did not become a "Christian" until the Living Lord Jesus encountered him on the road to Damascus. He was there "regenerated — born again"; and thereafter the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ became his only cause. Paul testified to his mission before King Agrippa, as Dr. Luke recorded, in Acts 26:15-18 as follows:

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Paul became a "Christian" through the regenerative power of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ; and thereafter he was called and sent forth as an ambassador of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He went about the then known world and preached this gospel and formed many true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ on this earth. This true church on earth then consists only of those who have been incorporated into Christ, who bow before Him, who live in His word, and who obey His ordinances. We do not claim to be perfect. Nor shall this Church be perfect. But we do assert that we have been chosen by His grace through faith to know Jesus the Christ as Saviour; that we have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit; that we have been called to proclaim His Word on this earth, to administer His sacraments to believers, and to exercise discipline in the body to preserve the purity of His Truth. As we stand before the face of Almighty God and know our hearts and minds, this is the necessity that is laid upon us. It is not that we would. It is that we must. Today we raise a fresh, clear banner of the truth of our Living Lord Jesus Christ before this watching world. It shall stand out distinctive in contrast to many false religious societies which bear His Name. It shall not be conformed to this world. It shall be a standard to which the "wise and the just may repair". Following in true apostolic tradition, we are but continuing a true branch of the Church of Jesus Christ on this earth. God being our helper, we can do no other.

But to understand this necessity which we feel God has laid upon us, one understands the principle that has motivated us. As an apologetic, we would lay this principle before the world. It is the practice of the principle of the purity of the visible church. In order that we might practice this principle, it has been necessary that we leave the visible church with which we have been associated. We have separated; but the principle is not separation. Separation is a negative idea. But our principle is a positive concept. Separation is merely the price we have had to pay for the principle. It has been a terrible price. Many have had to "let goods and kindred go". This separation has forced division among families, friends, and local congregations. It has been heartrending and with many tears. Separation from foes is not easy; but separation from fellow christian friends is traumatic. It was only after much prayer and with great sorrow

and mourning that we concluded that to practice the principle of purity in the visible church, we had to pay the price of separation. Before we came to the place where we had to make this horrible decision to separate from our mother church, we had to settle a prior issue. That issue was that the church we loved as an organization is not first; Christ is first. Therefore, once Christ is no longer King and Lord in a church, then that church cannot have our loyalty. Long ago faithful men saw our former church losing her first love. Liberalism and modernism were beginning to make significant inroads in the Presbyterian Church in the United States by the mid-1940s. We cannot possibly give credit to all who in the past three decades have fought so valiantly to return that beloved Church to her true mission. Such Christian soldiers are legion. But we must mention some of the major groups which have sought to defend the faith once delivered to the saints. Over 25 years ago a group of men from the Presbyterian Journal met at the Biltmore Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. We have recently read in the minutes of that body a list of the dangers they saw then before the Church. It was with prophetic insight that they wrote; for every danger they listed, save one, is now an accomplished fact in the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Through these years the Presbyterian Journal has been the focal point of leadership for those who wished to preserve the historic witness of the Reformed Faith in the Presbyterian Church in the United States. We frankly admit today that we are a product of their original initiative. Most of us are novices in the battle compared to those veteran defenders of the faith. We honor and respect these men; and we give thanks to Almighty God for their gallant faithfulness. They have indeed led us to this place and this hour. Praise God for each of them.

Then in the early 1960s, one man was called by God to begin in faith an independent evangelistic organization. Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship was born. These men have fearlessly preached the whole counsel of God as revealed in His Word. Many souls have been saved; and many quickened and nurtured in the faith. Praise God for each of them.

Then in 1964, a group of laymen formed Concerned Presbyterians. This group was dedicated to return our beloved Church to its primary mission of winning souls to Jesus Christ and nurturing them in the faith. They sought to inform the church of the trends toward liquidation of her historic witness; and they sought to arrest such trends through constitutional process in the courts of the Church. Again God raised up one man to principally provide leadership for this group. He enlisted a number of full time field men who went over the length and breadth of the Church warning individuals and groups of these trends. Many of these soldiers of the cross are here today; but some have remained behind to conduct a rear guard action for the many uninformed sheep yet languishing in uncertainty or unconcern. The contribution of this group is incalculable. Praise God for each of them.

Then in the late 1960s, over 600 ministers formed Presbyterian Churchmen United. They subscribed to a document they entitled a "Declaration of Commitment" and published the same in full page advertisements in the leading newspapers in the South. They fearlessly took a stand for the faith. Many have suffered ecclesiastical persecution. The course any church takes is predominantly set by her ordained ministry. In spite of the human threat of ecclesiastical oblivion, most of these faithful serv-

ants have stood firm and out front in the vanguard. They too have led us to this place and this hour. Praise God for each of them.

Finally, let us not forget those faithful who laboured in lonely places — many times in almost total isolation. Let us pay tribute to those great prayer warriors in the homes across this land. Those women who prayed while we fought, who spent many lonely nights while we traveled, who gave up the best years of the lives of their men, who kept informed so that they could educate the men, who built fires under the session through their ruling elder husbands, and who deserve as much credit for this hour as any man here. Yes — “they also serve, who only stand and wait.” Praise God for each of them.

For at least three decades, these and many more have attempted to stop the trends in the Presbyterian Church in the United States toward humanism, secularism, and syncretism. But their efforts have failed. Our beloved former Church has continued the fetish for ecumenism so that the form of unity regardless of the faith has become its goal. She is already linked in constitutional principle with the UPCUSA through union Presbyteries; and thus she has given approval to the doctrinal position of her sister body as expressed in the Confession of 1967. But her greatest deviation from her historic witness has been in her attitude toward the Scriptures. The true Church of Jesus Christ belongs to those who by the grace of God are faithful to the Scriptures. The higher critical theories of Scripture and the neo-orthodox view of Scripture have become the dominate and official position of the PCUS today. To them, the Bible is not the Word of God written—it merely contains the Word of God. To them, it is not absolute objective truth. For them, truth is subjective to the discovery of the mind of man. I believe it correct to assert that there is not one single professor in the four PCUS seminaries who holds to the doctrine of Scripture of our founding fathers. Men are consistently being ordained in PCUS Presbyteries who deny cardinal doctrines of Scripture. Universalism is being openly defended in the courts of the PCUS. As a result ethics and morality are determined by permissive situationalism. In his recent book “How is the Gold become Dim,” Dr. Morton H. Smith has catalogued in over 200 pages this decline in the PCUS as reflected in its Assembly actions. It has been my observation that wherever and whenever the inspiration and authority of the Word Inscripturated is attacked, the person and the work of the Word Incarnated is demeaned. The work of Jesus Christ in the world becomes equated with all the other noble causes laid before society. The zeal for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is lost and the temper of the times dictates the religious cause for the day. It appears to me that the PCUS is rapidly becoming such a religious society with tremendous potential for good community service but with only an incidental relationship to salvation of souls through faith in Jesus Christ.

But you ask, why did you not practice the principle of purity of the PCUS by discipling those who deviated from the proper position in regard to the teaching of Scripture and to the creeds? The answer is that the denomination is now so much in the hands of the liberals that it is officially and formally no longer possible to have a discipline trial, ever—even in theory! As we have pointed out above, truth to the liberal is subjective and relative. Hence we have no standard of objective truth on which to make a

judgment. Since these men no longer believe in truth, any concept of discipline in regard to doctrine has been unthinkable. Instead of discipline, there has been submitted the policy of pluralism. It is the great umbrella principle of covering almost everybody regardless of belief. It is argued that the church is big enough to accommodate varying points of view. They say that in love we will tolerate each other. It is a live-and-let-live philosophy. Each position has to make some compromise and concession to exist with the other. It is a tendency toward a growing latitudinarianism. This always leads to a low view of Scripture. And it gives to the watching world a multi-shaded view of Christianity. These may still talk about truth but tend less and less to practice truth. They practice tolerance, concession, compromise and accommodation. The world gets no clear and distinctive view of Jesus Christ in His Church. It is to restore this clear, distinctive, historic witness to Jesus Christ that we have felt constrained to separate from the PCUS.

In a word, my reasoning is that my vows of ordination as a Ruling Elder, as I understand them, required me to separate from my beloved church. It is with genuine sadness, many tears, and much soul-searching that I came to thus see my duty before my God. On ordination, I promised to study the peace, unity, edification and purity of the Church. For a decade now I have diligently sought to fulfill this vow at various levels in the Church. I reluctantly concluded that I

- (a) Could find little **peace** in a structure that in its official acts and doings is constantly and consistently contradicting my faith.
- (b) Could find little **unity** in a structure that advocates a pluralism and diversity that tolerates unbelief — for me “two cannot walk together less they be agreed.”
- (c) Could find little **edification** in a structure that continues to embarrass me in its official acts and doings and forces me to spend most of my time in negative reaction and apology.
- (d) Could find little hope for **purity** in a structure that permits unbelief to run rampant and has lost its will and ability to discipline.

Thus as I saw my duty, it is not that I wished to go but that I must. Others may see their duty differently. We must respect their views as “God alone is Lord of the conscience”; and we ask them to respect ours. We have thus made our decision. We settled the prior issue — Christ, not Church is first. We tried to return the church to its true mission. We could not. After years of much intensive effort, it became obvious to us that humanly speaking it would be impossible to recapture our church. Instead of being able to stop these trends, they seemed to get worse as the liberals intensified their efforts in reaction to our opposition. Suffice it to say that several years ago it became the consensus of our leaders that the historic witness of our beloved Church was gradually being liquidated; and for those who felt a duty to preserve it, division became the only answer. From that point in time on the issue of division has been settled; and the only issue has been timing and procedure. It was then we sought a method of peaceful realignment hoping that men of good

will would prevail. Not the only but the best method for such peaceful realignment seemed to be an acceptable escape clause in the plan of union with the UPCUSA. Our liberal friends promised this method; and we accepted their promises in good faith. But in February this year, they succeeded in closing this door by discarding the draft on the Plan of Union which they had promised would be presented to the 1973 General Assemblies for vote; and thus they delayed presentation of any plan indefinitely. Thus this method for constitutional division became no longer a viable possibility for the foreseeable future. The abandonment of this method by the liberals was an act of pure ecclesiastical expediency. They broke faith with us and forced us to move to an alternative procedure. Once the battle for doctrinal purity was lost, we were forced to decide what price we were willing to pay to practice the principle of purity in the visible church. We found it necessary to leave the visible organization with which we had been associated to preserve the principle. Separation became the price we had to pay to maintain the principle. But note well: We did so with tears — not with drums playing and flags flying. We claim empathy with the Rev. Dr. Thornwell who addressed the first General Assembly of our separated forefathers in 1861 with these matchless words:

“We should be sorry to be regarded by our brethren in any part of the world as guilty of schism. We are not conscious of any purpose to rend the body of Christ. On the contrary, our aim has been to promote the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. If we know our own hearts, and can form any just estimate of the motives which have governed us, we have been prompted by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God, and the efficiency, energy, harmony and zeal of His visible kingdom in the earth. We have separated from our brethren as Abraham separated from Lot, because we are persuaded that the interest of true religion will be more effectually subserved by two independent churches . . .

For the sake of peace, therefore, for Christian charity, for the honor of the Church, and for the glory of God, we have been constrained, as much as in us lies, to remove all occasion of offense. We have quietly separated, and we are grateful to God that, while leaving for the sake of peace, we leave it with the humble consciousness that we ourselves have never given occasion to break the peace.”

Now having declared our purpose and the nature of this church, and having explained who we believe we are and the principle which has motivated us, we would again state the commitment which binds us. We have committed ourselves to the rebirth and continuation of a Presbyterian Church loyal to Scripture, the Reformed Faith and committed to the spiritual mission of the Church as Christ commanded in the Great Commission. For us the Bible is both necessary and sufficient. Apart from Scripture man is hopelessly lost. Created in the image of God, man has fallen and darkness has engulfed him. Man in sin is not only spiritually ill, he is spiritually dead. He is not only confused in his pilgrimage through this world; he is lost. He is like a person in a forest, without a map, compass or guide and no idea which way to go. To be sure, there is revelation in creation. God continues to speak to all men in spite of their sin, but the consequences of sin are such that men cannot hear. Other sounds dis-

tract them and drown out the call of God. They hear His call but indistinctly. The calls of the world and self are too strong. Without some leading, they will never find their way to the Father's house. That is why salvation from God is necessary. Apart from it, the Apostle Paul declares in shocking language that men are "separated from Christ, alienated from the common wealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12). Thus we declare the necessity of Regeneration for real existence and of Revelation for clear consciousness. Thus we see the **Necessitas Sola Scripturae**, i. e. the need of scriptural revelation. To abandon or depreciate Scripture is tantamount to abandonment or depreciation of Christianity itself. In paradise, in the Garden of Eden before the fall, there was no Bible; and there will be no Bible in the future Paradise of glory. But in our present condition our immediate communion with God is lost. When the sun shines in your house, bright and clear, you turn off the electric light; but when the sun sets, this artificial light is kindled in every dwelling. So it is in our religion. When there is no mists to hide the majesty of the divine light from our eyes, what need is there for a lamp unto our feet or a light upon our pathway? But when history, experience and consciousness all unite in stating the fact that the pure light of Heaven has disappeared, and that we are groping in the dark, then, a different, or if you will allow the analogy, an artificial light must be kindled for us. Such a light God has kindled for us in His Holy Word. God regenerates us — that is to say, He rekindles in our heart the lamp sin has blown out. The necessary consequence of this regeneration is an irreconcilable conflict between the inner world of our heart and the world outside. Now, in the Bible, God reveals, to the regenerate, a world of thought, a world of energies, a world of full and beautiful life, which stands in direct opposition to this ordinary world, but proves to agree in a wonderful way with the new life that has sprung up in our heart. It is our only infallible rule of faith and practice, in the accepted and ordinary meaning of these terms. We believe that the Holy Scriptures fully contain the will and word of God and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation and sanctification are taught therein. We shall not consider any other writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those of divine Scripture. Nor shall we consider custom, traditions, councils or decrees as of equal value with the truth of God as found in the Scripture, since that truth is above all. The Word of God written is without error and our final authority. We are committed to a church loyal to Scripture. We are committed to a church loyal to the Reformed Faith — *Ecclesia Reformata*. By this we mean a church that has been renewed according to the Word of God. We shall attempt to recover Christianity in its original purity and to remove from it the beliefs and practices that have become attached to it in our day and generation without foundation in the Word of God. We acknowledge that this can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God. So we pray that His Holy Spirit shall so fully indwell us that this church shall be a clear reflection of the body of Christ. We believe that this faith is clearly and comprehensively systematized in the subordinate standards which are the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the **Larger** and **Shorter Catechisms**. We make no apology that this church will be thoroughly Calvinistic in doctrine and intensely Presbyterian in form of government. In the tradition of our forebears, we affirm with the Rev. Dr. Thornwell that

“the ends which we propose to accomplish as a church are the same as those which are proposed by every other church to proclaim God’s truth as a witness to the nations; to gather His elect from the four corners of the earth, and through the Word, ministers and ordinances, to train them for eternal life.”

We have heard the voice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ when he commissioned us for the primary mission of His Church, namely:

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Confident of the promise of His presence, we shall endeavor to strive for a new obedience to this great commission.

Having thus declared ourselves and our commitment, we would address specific groups of people with whom we shall have contact in our mission. For the purpose of illustration, we will liken our approach to five concentric circles. Each group shall be a different circle. From outside to inside, the circle of groups are:

- (1) All the people of the world.
- (2) All the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the earth.
- (3) The Reformed Family of Churches of Jesus Christ.
- (4) The Presbyterian Church in the United States.
- (5) Our Brethren in this Church.

For **all the people of the world**, we have this good news:

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

God loves you. It is not his desire that any of you should perish. He sent Jesus Christ His Son to this earth that you might be reconciled to God through faith in His Son. Jesus gave his life on the cross as an atonement for sin. This sacrifice was sufficient for all of you. God calls you to repent and believe this gospel. There is no other way to heaven. No man can come to God the Father except through God the Son. The alternative is eternal damnation in hell separated from God. We shall and do proclaim God’s truth to you regardless of your race, color, creed or national origin. Repent and believe this gospel.

To **all the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the earth**, we send greetings in the ties of Christian brotherhood and common mission. We desire to cultivate peace and charity with our fellow Christians throughout the world. We believe and profess one holy catholic and apostolic church. Our Westminster Confession beautifully sets forth this heavenly all-embracing nature of the church, when it says:

“The Catholic or Universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are or shall be, gathered into one, under Christ the Head, thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Thus the church is **Catholic** or **Universal** because there is only one church; and it is **Apostolic** because it has direct continuity with the church of the first century. It is indeed built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Jesus Christ himself as its chief cornerstone. It is the view held by some zealous Christians that theirs is the only true church, or that their members are superior to Christians in other churches. We do not hold this narrow concept. We would distinguish between mere religious societies that often bear the name "Christian" and the true churches of Jesus Christ on the earth. But we declare that the visible unity of the true body of Christ, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians; but all of these which maintain the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ on this earth. In His matchless name we greet you as brothers in Christ.

To the Reformed Family of Churches of Jesus Christ, we extend special greetings. We share with you the sharp accent on Jesus Christ at the heart of our tradition and the foundation of our ecclesiology. We share the view that the church is not only an organism, a fellowship of believers united to Christ, but it is also an institution in society. Like other social institutions it has certain distinguishing characteristics.

These have been called "marks." Where these were in evidence the church was called a "true church" and where they were not it was called a "false church" or a "sect". We know you agree that these "marks" are

- (1) that the church must preach the gospel,
- (2) that the church must properly administer the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and
- (3) that the church must exercise discipline in order to preserve the honor of Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

Since you agree with us on the major points of doctrine and polity, we see great possibilities for closer ties in the future. We seek the "oneness" of which Jesus spoke in John Chapter 17. We are convinced that there must be a unity of faith before a unity of form. We appreciate the assistance and encouragement you have already given us. We look forward to a closer relationship with you. We see in our mutual relationship the seeds of true ecumenicity. May God hasten the day.

To the Presbyterian Church in the United States, we acknowledge our continued love and concern for you. You are our spiritual mother, in your arms we were nurtured, under your ordinances we were baptized, in your courts we were ordained to serve our Lord and King, and to your visible organization we thought we had committed our lives. We could sever these ties only with deepest regret. We have done what we think our duty demanded. We have done what we think the honor of Jesus Christ acquired. We sincerely hope that our going may in some way recall you to that historic witness which we cherish as our common heritage. It is our prayer that God will use these days for self-examination and reform. Any such separation is traumatic; but in word and deed, we have attempted to show Christian charity for the sake of peace, for the honor of the Church, and for the glory of God. Without question, the most painful aspect of this separation has been to leave the communion with

many fellow believers with whom we have stood shoulder to shoulder in the ecclesiastical battles of the last three decades. We believe we have moved as Christian statesmen with honor. We know you agree with us in principle but disagree as to procedure. We respect your right to your judgment before God. We would prefer that you were with us today. We feel that it is here that you belong. Your absence makes us feel incomplete. We covet your continued fellowship in all areas possible. There are so many times and places where we can continue our warm fellowship and friendship — both public and private; and for our part we shall continue to expedite and cultivate these opportunities. We now extend to you our hands of love and good will and our open invitation and plea to join us soon. May God hasten that day.

To **our Brethren in this Church**, we rejoice with you in praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God for bringing us to this hour. Surely His Providence has taught us that we are in His will, under His control, and led by His Spirit. I counsel you that our attitude toward others is most important. Regardless of the attitudes or actions of others, we will remember that we represent the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King and Head of the Church. As his ambassadors to the watching world, we must let this mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus. Let men everywhere notice in us the three effects of nearness to Jesus — humility, happiness and holiness. History teaches us that in prior church divisions, those who come out tend to become hard. They tend to become absolutists even in the lesser points of doctrine. Francis Schaeffer points out that

“One must realize that there is a great difference between believing in absolutes and having an absolutist mentality about everything.”

True humility is the answer to this problem — for it is caused by thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. Our Lord demonstrated the proper approach when he washed the disciples' feet on the night he was betrayed. Now I'm not advocating “foot-washing.” But I am suggesting that we need the Holy Spirit to help us discern the difference between those things that are revealed in Scripture and those things that are the product of our human pride and opinion. In the former, we must not compromise; but in the latter, we must learn true humility to be in subjection to our brethren in the Lord. We must put away our former mentality of being suspicious of our fellow churchmen; and we must trust and believe our brothers until and unless they prove otherwise. Our Lord came to minister; and so must we. The grace of humility should abound in us. Also happiness should pervade our existence. We should rejoice and be exceeding glad. God has given to this select group an opportunity to witness to His glory the likeness of which men have not had in many generations. What a privilege it is to have been born for such a time as this. We have the answer to life and death — Christ is the answer. He came to give us the truly abundant life. Yes, there shall be trials and tribulations. But we should be of good cheer for He has overcome the world. We serve a risen Saviour. He is in this world today. He walks with us and talks with us along life's weary way. We must be happy and glad. And we should seek to be holy even as God is holy. We have set ourselves as spectacles before this watching world. We bear the name of “Christian.” But we must realize that every moment of every day, we stand

in the presence of God. Luther used to represent his sense of standing in the presence of God with the latin expression **Coram Deo**. We have a living encounter with our Creator. Before Ahab and Jezebel, the lone prophet Elijah exclaimed "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives before whom I stand." As individuals this concept that our whole existence is lived before the Lord forms the foundation for our holiness. Remember that perhaps of Christ the world's only view shall be what they see of Him in you.

Then brethren, in conclusion we must undergird this Church with a great outgoing of prayer. We know it is far easier to fight than it is to pray. But our battle is "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places." Only fervent prayer will prevail.

We must work. Remember that the true war-cry of the church is Gideon's watch word — "The Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." God must do it; but we are not to be idle. If we only cry "the Sword of the Lord", we shall be guilty of an idle presumption; and if we should cry "the Sword of Gideon" alone, we shall manifest an idle reliance on an arm of flesh. We must blend the two: We can do nothing ourselves, but we can do everything by the help of our God.

We must be confident of His promise. To the chosen children of Israel, the prophet Isaiah wrote the words of God that I believe apply to us, namely:

"You worry at being so small and few, but Abraham was only one when I called him. But I blessed him and he became a great nation." (Isaiah 51:2)

What a promise! What a God!

"And now we commend you to this God and the word of His grace. We devoutly pray that the whole Catholic Church may be afresh baptized with the Holy Ghost, and that she may be speedily stirred to give the Lord no rest until He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "Even so, come Lord Jesus." "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: To whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36)