

ORAL INTERVIEW
DR. CHARLES DUNAHOO
INTERVIEWED BY SHARON KRAEMER
MAY 6, 1993

SK: This is an interview with Dr. Charles Dunahoo, a Presbyterian minister for nearly thirty years, and one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church in America. Since 1977, Dr. Dunahoo has been a denominational employee, as coordinator of the PCA's Christian Education and Publications Division. The interview is being conducted at the PCA office building in Atlanta on May 6, 1993, by Sharon Kraemer, Associate Editor of the "PCA Messenger" magazine. This interview is being conducted for the oral history program of the PCA Historical Center in St. Louis. The basic questions were developed by the Center's director, Jerry Kornegay, to preserve valuable information on the early days of our denomination.

Dr. Dunahoo, please tell me what factors influenced your decision to enter the ministry.

CD: I grew up in the State of Georgia, and was moderately related to the church all during my childhood and youth period. My family was basically church-oriented, but none of us were true believers at that time. During my early teens, I sang in the adult choir of our hometown church in order to pay for my piano lessons. My music teacher happened to be the Presbyterian church's choir director, so I was introduced to Presbyterianism through that experience. And as a young teenager attending a two-week vacation Bible school, I memorized the Shorter Catechism and recited it at the end of that period.

And then later went through my high school years, graduated, [and] I went to the University of Georgia. And in the providence of God I was placed into a situation where I ended up rooming with a young man, Howell Cobb Ware, Cobby Ware, who is also now a PCA pastor, and very much involved at that time in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship movement. I began to participate in Bible studies in our dorm room. He was an upperclassman, and my big brother in our social fraternity. And in the Bible studies, I began to see people talking about the Lord in a very personal way that was a little bit foreign to me, though I didn't question or doubt particularly any of the things that were stated. But it didn't take me too long before the Lord began to show me that I knew a lot about Him, but I didn't really know Him personally. And so, one evening I was with a friend of mine who was also involved in the InterVarsity movement, and I confessed Christ as my savior, and God began to reorient my life. And I began to think from that point on what God would have me to do.

I was double majoring in journalism and music at that time. I was at the University on a music scholarship; I was studying conducting. And my church background was Methodist, though I had the experience that I mentioned a moment ago, in the singing in the

choir of the Presbyterian church. My mother and dad were Methodists; my grandparents were Methodist. But one day I was sitting at my desk, and looking across at my roommate's desk, and saw a little blue book on his desk, and it happened to be the Westminster Confession of Faith. And I said, asked Cobby, I said: "What's this?" And he said: "That's the Confession of Faith and the catechisms." And I said: "What's that?" And he explained to me that they contained the doctrinal positions of the Presbyterian Church U.S.. And as I began to read through and thumb through those things, I came to the Shorter Catechism. And this was five years later than the time I had memorized the Shorter Catechism, and as I began to read that, things began to come back to my mind. And so, as I began to understand that those formulated the doctrinal positions of the Presbyterian Church, I felt like that they expressed very clearly what I found when I began to read the Scripture. And so, even with my mom and dad's permission, I transferred my membership to the Presbyterian Church.

During that first year at the University, I grew tremendously in the Lord, in my relationship with Him. And during the summer between my freshman and sophomore year, I was asked through Cobby's influence, to join the staff at Camp Westminster, a camp which was near Atlanta, owned and operated by the Westminster Presbyterian Church. They needed someone to head up the athletic program, and because I had been very active in athletics in my childhood and teenage days, I agreed to do that. As a matter of fact, they made an exception to the rule to get me on staff. One of the rules was you needed to be a Christian for two years, but I had a lot of church background, and I had a lot of knowledge when I actually came to know Christ as my savior.

During that summer, we had the responsibility of leading daily Bible studies and speaking at the evening vespers service, and as I began to do that, people began to respond to my ministry. And through that experience, God began to draw me more and more to the ministry. So I went back to the University in the fall, and changed my major at that time to psychology, kept my music scholarship and played in the University band and orchestra, participated in the men's glee club. But I came to decide that the particular philosophy of psychology that was being taught was not for me, and so I ended up changing my major to philosophy, where I finally received an A.B. degree in 1962 in philosophy. During that time, I had done--through Cobby's influence--had learned about Columbia Theological Seminary, and my plans had been to attend Columbia Seminary following my graduation from the University of Georgia. I had also learned, and become moderately conversant in Reformed theology through the influence of some dear friends. I had a heart's desire to attend Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, but because the plans were for me to become the director of Camp Westminster, it looked as though it were a necessity for me to be in the Atlanta area during the school year.

So I went to Columbia Theological Seminary officially, but with the help of some good professors at Westminster in suggesting topics of study, books to read, etc., I did some study on my own in

the library in areas that were not the strong points of Columbia Seminary's curriculum.

SK: Very interesting. Question number two: what event or series of events during your church work has had the most profound impact on your life of ministry?

CD: I would say, first of all, probably certain individuals that have befriended me and tutored me or been, in a sense, a mentor, oftentimes unaware from their perspective. God has sent a number of individuals into my life that have been very significant. But as far as events are concerned, I would say that the most dramatic probably began with participating in the organizing of the Presbyterian Church in America. This was about six or seven years after my ordination that I began to be involved in that particular movement, and then later, of course, we officially organized our denomination. And that headed me in somewhat of a different direction, at least denominationally. I was pastoring a church in Montgomery, Alabama, for part of that time, and later in the Atlanta area, the Smyrna Presbyterian Church.

A second major impact--a third major impact that I would probably refer to is being called to serve as coordinator of Christian Education and Publications for the PCA. This necessitated my leaving the local pastorate, and began to travel and serve the church of our new denomination more widely, which again, put me into contact with a larger number of people from a variety of backgrounds. And that was--that's had a tremendous impact upon my life.

A fourth thing that I would certainly have to list would be the opportunity to work with the Billy Graham Association in their World Conference for Itinerant Evangelists on two separate occasions: in Amsterdam and the Netherlands. I was a member of their team of twenty counselor/consultants who were available to itinerant evangelists from all over the world. During both the conferences, two weeks each, in 1983 and 1986, I began to become aware of and acquainted with Christians from many different denominations, from all over the world. And actually, I mark this because it's probably the beginning of my becoming a world Christian in the true sense of the term. So those were very significant experiences for me. Participating in the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, especially the Manila Conference in 1989, was another conference that had similar impact upon me, as we met with Christians from 180 different countries from all over the world to talk about evangelism and church growth into the 21st century. I would probably point to those four things as the most significant events that have taken place in my life that have shaped my ministry since my ordination.

SK: Alright. Now Charles, do you wish to separately answer the question on what church leaders have had the most positive impact on your life?

CD: Certainly.

SK: Alright.

CD: In my early days, I became acquainted with a layman, a seminary graduate from Westminster who was a member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. Bill was in business; he and his father owned a manufacturing company, but he was a graduate of Westminster Seminary, and a brilliant individual--theologically, philosophically. We had the opportunity to work together one summer at Camp Westminster, and during that time, he really began to mentor me in the basic tenants of the Reformed Faith. And I came to understand what the Reformed Faith really was all about. This was the year before my entering Columbia Seminary. Bill Wilson is a ruling elder now in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and we have had the privilege over the years of serving as board members of Westminster Theological Seminary. God probably has used him in the most significant way in my life in my study, growth, and development.

As far as ordained personnel, I would certainly have to list Dr. Ed Clowney. Dr. Clowney was a tremendous help to me during my seminary and early days as a pastor, and encouraging me to study and to read in certain areas. Dr. Clowney is one of the most brilliant men I have ever known in our Reformed circles, and I've been a great admirer of his over the years for his time and impact on my life.

SK: And that friendship goes back to when?

CD: To, uh...through Bill Wilson, as a matter of fact. Bill was the first one to introduce me to Dr. Clowney. During my seminary days, we corresponded, and I was also working as a student assistant on the staff at Westminster Presbyterian Church while I was attending seminary, and we had him down to speak, and I finally met him personally during that time. And he gave me some good advice and suggestions regarding my theological studies and orientation.

A third person whom, believe it or not, I've never had the privilege of meeting personally, but we have corresponded many times, is Dr. Cornelius Van Til. And through his philosophical and apologetics studies, God has used his teaching and influence--and even encouragement. In a most significant way in own theological and philosophical development, I remember as a middler at Columbia Seminary--which by the way, by that time, the institution theologically had a very definite bent towards neo-orthodox theology, and I was deeply concerned about that, even in those days. But Dr. Van Til, after hearing my pleas and asking for help, sent me, I believe, everything he had ever written up to that time, and I began to wade through two boxes of books during the time I was in seminary, to see what it is I wanted to know that I didn't know. And it was very interesting as a philosophy major, and having done quite well, academically, in that area--it was not

until I really delved into Van Til's writings that I became a self-conscious philosophical thinker. And so, I would have to list him as one of the individuals that have had significant impact in my life over the years.

SK: My next question, Charles, is to ask you to expand a little bit about Westminster Presbyterian Church, and the camp--if you wish to say more about the camp--but I especially would like you to say a little bit about John Richardson and that friendship.

CD: As I stated in an earlier question, my first association with Westminster Church started in the summer of 1959, which was between my freshman and sophomore year at the University, and becoming a staff member at the camp that was owned by the church. When I entered Columbia Seminary, I had met Dr. John Richardson during those two or three years which I served on the camp staff, and we had discussed the possibilities, knowing that I would probably be entering Columbia Seminary, succeeding Dr. Knox Chamblin, now professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, as the camp's director. When I entered the junior class at Columbia Theological Seminary, I immediately, of course, began to attend the Westminster Church, to sing in the choir. It was not long after that that Dr. Richardson and the session asked if I would be willing to become the student pastor at Westminster. At that time, Dr. Richardson had a lay assistant that was the director of Christian Education. But I was asked particularly to work as the lay assistant, concentrating primarily on directing the camp in the summer and working with the young people during the year.

It was during this time that I also met my future wife. She was a member of the church, so that was one of the bright spots of my experience working there. So I continued in that capacity until I graduated from seminary, and following my graduation, the session called me to be the assistant pastor. And during that time, I had the seminary part-time experience and two years full-time working with Dr. John R. Richardson. Dr. Richardson was a great conservative, Calvinistic leader in the southern Presbyterian church, well known for his commitment to classical Calvinism, as I would call it, and conservative, orthodox Christianity. It was an honor and a privilege to be able to work with him. God had used him in so many significant ways in the life of our church. So I began to work as his assistant during those two years, and he was a great encouragement to me.

Also, during that particular time-frame, also I met Dr. Robert Strong, a close personal friend of Dr. John Richardson's, and probably should list him as another significant influence on my life. An older man who took personal interest in me and even would listen to my recorded sermons and evaluate them. I had thought he was probably one of the most outstanding preachers I had ever heard, and I was very honored through my contact with Dr. Richardson at Westminster Church to become acquainted with Dr. Strong and the impact he had on me and my preaching ministry.

Dr. John Richardson retired from active ministry about the

same time I left Atlanta and the Westminster Church and moved to Montgomery. From Dr. Richardson I received encouragement, a number of significant opportunities to preach and to minister, and those were particularly good days.

SK: Thank you. Alright. Now we'll--that concludes, sort of, the personal background, the introductory session, and now, Charles, we're going to begin to move into the real substantive portion of the interview. Question number five: you were ordained in 1965 by the Atlanta Presbytery. Were you aware at that time of the liberal trends in the PCUS?

CD: Yes, I was. As I mentioned in the previous question, in attending Columbia Theological Seminary, I was very much aware that the theological stance of that institution at that time was at best, neo-orthodox, theologically. There were some great men of God, like Dr. William Childs Robinson and Dr. Gutzke, that were on the faculty that I had developed personal acquaintances and appreciate with, and acquaintances with and appreciation for their ministry. But I was very much aware of the liberal trends in the Southern church when I was ordained. At that particular time, however, it seemed to be the best route to take, and my hopes and thoughts were that those trends were not irreversible.

SK: Alright. How did you become associated with those individuals who held a more conservative theological position?

CD: I guess I would have to date that back to my college days, because after I became a Christian, and particularly during my years of majoring in philosophy, I had come to the personal conviction that if I could not accept the authority of Scripture, then I couldn't be certain of anything about the Christian faith. And so I made a commitment to God that His word would be my authority for faith and life, and that I would test the things that I heard and learned by His, by that infallible rule of faith and practice. Going to Columbia Seminary as I did, I had an opportunity to study under some men that held to that position and some that did not. But meeting Dr. John R. Richardson and having the opportunity to work with him was a great encouragement to me, because he was one of the strong conservative leaders in the southern Presbyterian church at that time, and also my acquaintance with Dr. Robert Strong, who at that time was pastoring Trinity Presbyterian Church in Montgomery. And as I indicated in the previous question, we spent a great deal of time together over the years, and his encouragement to me was along those lines. There were others, but probably Dr. Richardson and Dr. Strong were the two most influential men in encouraging me along the more conservative lines, theologically.

SK: Alright. And your answer has been in the framework of post-seminary...

CD: Well, possibly I--my association with Dr. Richardson, of course, was also during my seminary days.

SK: Right. But I was thinking you might want to state again Dr. Gutkze and...

CD: Dr. Robinson.

SK: Yes.

CD: Yes.

SK: Alright. Well, Charles, if you don't care to add anymore to number six, the next question is: please tell me about your association with Presbyterian Churchmen United.

CD: That's an interesting epoch in my life. I had become more and more convinced that the liberal trends in the southern church in the late '60's, shortly into my ministry, were not reversible. And I had made a decision after having served as a commissioner to one of the Assemblies in the late '60's, to withdraw from the southern Presbyterian church. And my plan-- I was serving as pastor of the Oak Park Presbyterian Church in Montgomery at that time. During that time I had decided because of my connection with Dr. Van Til, Dr. Clowney, Bill Wilson, that I probably should move into the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. I had debated several theological issues on the floor of General Assembly, and coming away from that Assembly feeling like it was a hopeless course to change directions, so I gave my church in Montgomery my thoughts and three different alternatives that I had developed. One was to take them with me, one was to just withdraw and seek a call in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, or another was to stay in Montgomery and to start an Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Two of my dear friends, Dr. Robert Strong and Rev. Donald Graham, who was serving as the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, both out of Orthodox Presbyterian Church background, were not very encouraging in that direction, feeling that it would not be the best thing for me to do. But I had begun discussions with the Orthodox Church at that particular time, and I had felt that nothing was going to be done to try to reverse the trends in the southern church.

So during that time, a meeting was called in Atlanta to which I was invited. But my feelings were so negative at that time that I did not attend. This would be what would later become known as Presbyterian Churchmen United, the ministerial counterpart to Concerned Presbyterians, the laymen's organization that had been effective in changing some theological positions of presbyteries, including the one to which I belonged in Alabama. But I was convinced at that time I had to move in the near future. On a particular Saturday afternoon I was sitting in my study preparing for Sunday's sermons in Montgomery, my doorbell rang, and it was Dr. Robert Strong. And Dr. Strong said: "Don Graham and I have

just returned from a meeting in Atlanta, and we have adopted a document. Would you read it and see if you could sign it?" And that document was the official document of the Presbyterian Churchmen United, and it sounded to me as I read that, that finally there was going to be a call to action. And so I certainly concurred that I could agree with the document, and I would be willing to sign the document. Some 500 ministers actually ended up signing the document, all total.

As a result of that, and with the council of some of my friends, including Ed Clowney, I was encouraged to stay in the movement and seek to have some leadership as we thought about the possibility of organizing a new denomination. About a year or two later, I was approached with the possibility of becoming a member of the Presbyterian Churchmen United executive committee. Part of the rationale was they wanted someone under 35 at the time to represent the younger men. They felt like I was the viable candidate. I was also in the process of changing pastorates from Montgomery to Atlanta to the Smyrna Presbyterian Church. So I agreed and my name was put in nomination, and I was elected to serve with twelve other men on the Presbyterian Churchmen United in the summer of 1971. That's the counterpart, now, to the lay organization Concerned Presbyterians, and this is one of the four organizations that actually were influential in the organizing of the PCA, along with the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, and the Presbyterian Journal.

SK: Alright, very good. We've moved into number eight, your election to the executive committee. Would you please expand upon your role and responsibilities on that leadership committee?

CD: Well, basically, I attended the meetings, and most of the time we met with the executive committees of the other three organizations that I named. Generally, I worked in the areas of theology, along with Dr. Morton Smith, and particularly later in church polity. So, if I had any expertise to offer, it would have been in those two areas.

SK: Alright.

CD: Also, maybe I should list this as one of the responsibilities: there were many occasions where I had an opportunity to speak to groups and to churches about our continuing Presbyterian Church movement, as we called it at that time.

SK: Alright. Do you care to say anymore about that speaker's bureau, how it was organized, and your involvement?

CD: Among the participants in those four organizing groups, one of which was the Presbyterian Churchmen United, there were a number of us who volunteered and were willing to speak to groups of Christian people in churches regarding the continuing Presbyterian Church movement: the why's, the where's, etc.. And we had

opportunities because there were many people who were expressing concern about the liberal trends, and especially about the reuniting of the southern church with the northern church at that time, because the northern church in 1967 had adopted a new confession of 1967 that had supplanted the Westminster Confession, and that had concerned many people. And that was one of the tenants of our movement, so we had opportunities occasionally to speak to church groups about that, about the movement as a result of that.

SK: Alright. As the movement to establish a new denomination grew, a Committee of Forty was established. What was your association and activities with this group, and would you again make reference to date, what year it was?

CD: During--between 1971 and early '73, the four coalitions had attempted to work out an equitable plan with the leaders of the southern Presbyterian church to allow us an escape clause if merger between the north and south were to become an actuality. And they even allowed us one representative on the committee, their Committee of Twenty-Four that was seeking to organize this reunion. Colonel Jack Williamson was our representative; he was a member of the Concerned Presbyterians at that time, and a personal friend. And in early February of '73, attending a meeting in New Orleans at the same time our coalitions were meeting in Atlanta, Colonel Williamson learned that the escape clause would no longer be allowed. In calling that in to us at our meeting, we decided now was the time to act and to do something.

So we began to discuss the procedures and taking steps to organize a new denomination during the winter and early spring of '73. My church, the Smyrna Presbyterian Church and I were one among the thirty churches that call for the Convocation of Sessions to meet in Atlanta at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in May of 1973. At that meeting, many church leaders were present from over the south; the decision was made to launch the procedures for establishing a new denomination. And at that time, an organizing committee was elected, and I was chosen as one of the members of that organizing committee. It was that committee that planned the August '73 convention which met in Asheville, North Carolina at the Grove Park Inn, which laid out the principles and the foundation of the Presbyterian Church in America--what was later to become the Presbyterian Church in America. And it was at that meeting in Asheville where the call for the first Assembly to be held in December of '73 was issued.

SK: Alright. Charles, Mr. Kornegay's question refers to an advisory convention.

CD: Yes. As I indicated, following the Convocation of Sessions, which met in Atlanta in May of '73, the decision was made by the Committee of Forty, who was elected to be the organizing committee, called an advisory convention to be held at Asheville in

August of '73, which later led to the calling of the first Assembly in December of '73.

SK: And what were your activities on the administrative committee for that gathering?

CD: I had a couple of assignments at that particular time. I had also been appointed to be the constitutional documents committee chairman, especially to develop the polity, particularly the Book of Church Order for the continuing church. Dr. Morton Smith had been appointed to be the chairman of the part of the constitutional documents committee that was to formally recommend a doctrinal standard, namely the Westminster Confession, the Larger and Shorter Catechism. He did that at the first Assembly. My assignment took a four-year period, and as soon as Dr. Smith finished his assignment, we merged him into our committee so we were allowed to served together in the early years in developing the constitution of the PCA.

I was also elected at that advisory convention to be a member of the first Committee on Administration. The responsibility for that committee was to oversee certain administrative affairs of the new denomination. And I functioned in that capacity.

SK: Charles, I think it would be interesting and valuable for you to name some of the key people whom you had close dealings with. You've mentioned Jack Williamson and Morton Smith.

CD: Certainly Rev. Paul Settle would be in that list. Paul was a full-time employee of the Presbyterian Churchmen United, but was also very active in the organizing of the denomination and was to be called to be my predecessor, the first coordinator for Christian Education and Publications. We had quite a bit of contact during those early days. Dr. John Richards--not to be confused with Dr. John R. Richardson--Dr. John Richards at that time had pastored the First Presbyterian Church in Macon, Georgia, but had resigned to become a full-time employee along with Paul Settle, was another individual with whom I had frequent contact and at work. And I should mention the Rev. Gordon Reed. Gordon was the first chairman of the Committee on Administration, and it was our responsibility and privilege to hire a coordinator, and I served with Gordon in that capacity. And we were responsible for calling Dr. Dan Moore as the first Coordinator, and for hiring Dr. Morton Smith as the first Stated Clerk of the PCA.

SK: Alright. Is there anything else you would like to add about the establishment of the National Presbyterian Church? And that became official in December, didn't it?

CD: December of 1973. I would say that, in the letter to all churches that was presented to and adopted by the Assembly, our desire was truly to have a national church, though the major part

of our movement and its roots were in the southern Presbyterian church. We were thinking more broadly in terms of a national church, hence the reason for selecting the name. We were not aware at the time of doing that, of the conflict that could develop between our denominational name and the name of the local church in Washington, D.C., entitled the National Presbyterian Church. But I do think that's a significant aspect of our history because of the title National Presbyterian Church, definitely reflecting that desire to be a national Presbyterian Church.

SK: Charles, I know that you were privileged to have some face to face meetings with Francis and Edith Schaeffer, the founders of L'Abri. I think it would be valuable for you to say a little bit about them.

CD: My personal contact with Dr. Schaeffer was very brief and only on two or three very cherished occasions. I--and thinking back over an earlier question that you asked of influential people in my life--I am convinced I should have mentioned Francis Schaeffer, because in the late '60's when he published his first major book, The God Who is There, my interest in philosophy and apologetics seemed to cause me to identify with Dr. Schaeffer and his message. And I began to teach his books and use them in my training programs of young people and adults in the churches. But my first official contacts with him came after having become a denominational employee. The first opportunity we had to be together was in Pittsburgh in the late '70's where we planned a public meeting to present the Presbyterian Church in America. And I remember Dr. Schaeffer's address at that time was entitled "We Don't Have Forever." And even then, as a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, he began to talk to us about the possibilities of working more closely together as denominations. Another occasion with Dr. Schaeffer, personal contact, was in 1982 when the Joining and Receiving actually took place between his denomination and ours, and he was the keynote speaker. And the title of his message was "A Day of Sober Rejoicing." And I had the privilege of working with him in editing the message and preparing it for publication in tract form and for distribution throughout the PCA. And so that gave us a number of opportunities to talk about distribution and to review my edits and so forth.

It was during this time, too, that I had brief contact with Edith Schaeffer and I have come to appreciate her, and was probably instrumental in listing her as one of our keynote speakers at our first national conference for the Women in the Church [WIC], which because of illness, she had to defer at the last moment. But most of my acquaintance with them has been through individuals, through Dr. Everett Koop and others who have known them personally, and those brief encounters. But we corresponded numerous times.

SK: Charles, can you substantiate this? I heard years ago that near the end of his life--and Dr. Schaeffer died in May of '84--he

supposedly said that the formation of the PCA personally encouraged him more than anything else that was happening in western Christianity.

CD: He initially made a similar statement to Colonel Jack Williamson, especially at the time, in '82, of Joining and Receiving. And Jack Williamson quoted Dr. Schaeffer to me in that context. And so, in some of my conversations with him, both correspondence and by phone, I asked him that statement, that question, to which he gave an affirmative, that it was probably the most positive thing on the horizon, giving us the greatest opportunity to raise up a strong witness for the Lord at a very crucial time in history.

SK: Is there anything that you would like to add to the history section of the interview before we move into Christian Education and Publications?

CD: I would probably say that during the early days of forming the PCA, obviously there were a lot of strong emotions, people who joined with us and friends who did not join with us. We tried to be very careful to maintain an open position and open arms to any who were willing to share our like faith. The majority of us tried to make this as painless as possible, but also seize it as an opportunity to raise a witness for the Lord. And I believe Dr. Schaeffer was another influence who spoke at our second Assembly and had written numbers of articles and a book cautioning us not to make the same mistakes that were made in the '30's in the formation of several other Reformed churches, out of which came the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Orthodox Church. So I think there was a real effort in the PCA to maintain a unity of spirit.

Obviously, in a movement such as ours, there's always been great diversity, such as is going on in this present time, in 1993, as we talk. I think there are perceptions on the parts of some that felt that we dotted every i and crossed every t on every issue. We did not; we were a very diverse denomination in beginning. We did a number of things differently that maybe veered away from some of our Presbyterian tradition: we had some people who were stronger in some areas than others. We had some who joined us for various reasons. But I remember those early Assemblies when a number of potentially divisive issues were before the Assembly. Much time was spent in prayer and commitment to a unity of spirit and purpose, and to heed Dr. Schaeffer's warnings about division. I remember even the press, in some of the interviews that I participated in at that time, were saying that we were a schismatic movement and were predicting that we would split and splinter. By the grace of God, we remained together. And I think we have come to appreciate our diversity, while maintaining that unity among us. To which, again, I attribute a great, great deal to Dr. Schaeffer himself.

SK: I was reading somewhere recently that a few of our churches

lost million-dollar facilities, and some of the pastors maybe lost all of their retirement. Do you care to say anything about the cost and sacrifice?

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CD: --lity of a movement such as ours. In my own case, at the time of organizing the new church, I was pastoring the Smyrna Presbyterian Church in northwest Atlanta. We had quite a valuable piece of property, and had some real concerns that our property might be in jeopardy. However, we were in the State of Georgia, and an earlier Supreme Court decision in regards to two Savannah churches that had pulled out several years earlier had made a ruling based on the neutral principle of law theory that said the people who bought and paid for the property owned it. So our people had done that, but we still had some concern.

Now, in other presbyteries, there were churches that were-- church buildings and plants that were sacrificed. And then there were financial settlements that were made by many churches. But a number of our churches did have to relinquish their property to the presbytery, and that was one of the things, by the way, we carefully wrote into our early principles of formation, that specifically state that without permission of the local congregation, the presbytery had no control over church property. As far as the insurance, I was one of the ones that lost his retirement. I had about eight years of retirement that--almost nine--that were sacrificed. Because we came out in the early part of the movement, and at that particular time, the southern church pressed us with decisions that were premature. And so some of us did have to make premature decisions that did cost us our retirement, and so we did have to start over. As we organized and worked out a better arrangement of agreement, that did not happen to later pastors. But I was among some of the early few that did lose their eight or nine years of retirement.

SK: And of course, for older pastors, it would have been considerably more.

CD: Yes. For older pastors, it would have been. I'm not sure that we had many older pastors that had that experience. Most of the earlier ones were in another category.

SK: Charles, again I want to ask you if there is anything else that maybe questions haven't addressed which you would like to record for posterity regarding the early years of the PCA or those years leading up to the formation.

CD: Let me add one more, Sharon, and then we'll move on. I think what we tried to say, by and large, in organizing the PCA, is

that we don't want to be a protest movement. We don't want to give a negative message; we want to affirm. The whole concept of the continuing church philosophy was: "We want to affirm our historic biblical faith, not to alter or change it." So we tried to keep that a movement of affirmation. Now of course, in a movement such as ours, the negatives and the protest obviously crept in from time to time, and from person to person, but generally, my appreciation for the early activities of the continuing church was the affirmation--affirming, continuing concept.

SK: Alright. Part two of the interview will pertain to your involvement and commitment to the work of Christian education. First of all, your years with Atlanta School of Biblical Studies.

CD: I became the dean of Atlanta School of Biblical Studies in the fall of 1971, after having assumed a pastorate in the Atlanta area. The Atlanta School of Biblical Studies actually pre-dated the development of the continuing church. It was comprised of conservative people in the southern church who wanted to train laymen in areas of Bible: knowledge, doctrine, evangelism, Christian education, etc.. So we started this movement in Atlanta, and it was a lay movement during the years in which I participated. Later, the lay movement went by the wayside and it became an institution to train men for the pastorate. But during the early days, I was the theology professor and the apologetics professor in the curriculum, as well as the dean of students.

I didn't have anything particularly, or specifically to do later with Christian education; as a matter of fact, when I was approached in the fall of 1976 by the search committee of the Christian Education and Publications committee, seeking to replace Rev. Paul Settle, who had recently accepted a call to Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, I was a bit bewildered at that because I was not particularly, or did not see myself as an expert in Christian Education. But their desire for me to do that was based around my ability to work with the leadership and what they had seen in the early days of the church, and wanting someone in that position who could promote Christian Education and the denomination and work with the leadership, and then hire the staff needed to do the program. So after much prayer with my session, we felt that I should do that, and so in January of '77, I became the second coordinator of Christian Education and Publications for the PCA.

And during the first year or two, being a novice, I began to travel to churches as much as I could and meet with local church leaders and preach and get to know the people. And I began to survey during that time the particular needs in the areas of leadership, training, and Christian education. And it was those first two years that helped me formulate the core of the basic program that we have in place now. It was during that time also that I was responsible for, as the coordinator, for publishing the first edition of the "PCA Messenger," the denominational magazine, and also to begin to implement more fully a joint agreement with

the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Great Commission Publications, our joint venture in Sunday school curriculum. That had been established the year prior to my coming on board, but actually, mine was the first year of actually working with the process.

SK: Alright. What do you see as the most significant developments in Christian Education and Publications during your years as coordinator to date?

CD: In order to respond to that, I'll have to go back to the organizing of the PCA and Paul Settle's role as coordinator. When we organized the church, there were some in the movement who were very much opposed to having a Christian Education committee. Part of that was a reaction to the experience in the mother church, where the Christian Education committee had the reputation along with the Women in the Church movement, for leading the church farther and farther away from its historic position. And so, there were some who were even hesitant to join our movement after they found, after the advisory convention, that there would be a Christian Education committee. So we started out from a very negative position in the eyes of some people. And Paul Settle and his staff did an admirable job of beginning to move in a position direction. And when I came on board, by the grace of God, we tried to continue that movement.

And I would say that one of the most significant things that has happened is that, is to see the growing appreciation of the role of Christian Education and Publications in the life of the Presbyterian Church in America. God has given us opportunities to work with many, many local churches, not only in training their leaders in leadership responsibilities, but working with their Christian Ed. personnel, developing curriculum, and also to give oversight to the Women in the Church movement. I think, probably, I would have to point to the Women in the Church movement as one of the most significant things that has happened during my ministry. When I became coordinator, the Women in the Church, which was under the oversight of Christian Education committee, had a consultant, Mrs. Georgia Settle, and in coming on board, I felt that I wanted more hands on with that aspect of the ministry, so we did not immediately fill that position. And I became, in effect, the unofficial consultant in the Women in the Church, and we worked very closely with our local women. But later on, as the movement began to grow and develop, we were able to transfer responsibilities of Susan Hunt, who was on my staff at the time, to the role of consultant. But that was a very significant movement.

I think the "PCA Messenger," though it has not been without headaches along the way, has certainly been one of the areas that I've been pleased to work with. I believe it's offered a promotion and a dimension of covering the church news for the people that have been very helpful. And then, seeing our Christian Education committee began to work more broadly with the NAPARC Christian Education committees and worked in the National Association of Evangelicals--all of these have happened during the time that I've

been here that I think have been significant activities for Christian Ed. and Publications. And just the expansion of the staff, the growth of the bookstore, the establishment of the video library are areas that have been very instrumental in, I think, raising the vision of Christian Education for many. We're still not through with the task as of 1993, but I think we've made great headway in recent years.

SK: What are the future plans and direction of CE & P for the next ten years or so?

CD: At our September '92 Christian Education and Publications committee, we developed, adopted a five-year strategic plan, and in that plan, the direction for CE is multi-faceted. We want to continue to develop and expand our training, of course, and we'd like to do this in the form of what we would call the School of Christian Education and Publications, which would be primarily oriented to training laymen and particularly on a regional basis to multiply our ministry, to work with us and for us in training and equipped our church members and leaders across the country. We want to work more with training our multi-nationals. We have Dr. Dwight Linton on our staff, who is working with us primarily at this time with the Korean Presbyterian churches, and our desire is that we be a truly multi-cultural and multi-national church. And so we want our plans and programs to reflect that.

We want our women's ministry to continue to grow. The plan calls for a full effort to establish a national PCA youth ministry with a strategy plan now in place, and also to develop an effective Men of the Covenant--I guess you could say a parallel movement to the Women in the Church. We're living in days in which not only women are at a great crossroads, but so are men, and men need a great deal of encouragement in their multi-faceted roles, as do our women. And we want to be a part of encouraging the PCA to make a difference in those areas as we look to the future.

We also want to be part of training our people to be world Christians. We no longer have the privilege of living regionally. Christianity is a world religion, and our ministry goes all over the world. I had the privilege and opportunity of working with our missionaries, traveling to different mission posts in the world during my years as coordinator, and I covet those opportunities. And we want people to appreciate Christian Education and its role in the Great Commission, and its forward perspective.

SK: Charles, maybe you could expand upon that last phrase: "the role of Christian Education in the Great Commission." It seems that the typical PCA person does not know how many different ministry departments are under the CE and P umbrella.

CD: That's probably true. Most of the people, when you think of Christian Education, immediately think of the Sunday school. And of course, the Sunday school is a key result area, a key performance area, under the umbrella of Christian Education and

Publications, and its probably one of the best opportunities we have to disciple our children, youth, and adults. But that's only one facet of our ministry. We also have the responsibility of training church leaders. That has always been an assignment of the denomination of the Christian Education committee, and we tried to fine-tune that over the years, and particularly increase our--not only our training, but our consulting activities with local churches in helping them with strategic planning and long-range planning and human resource type of needs.

Our bookstore continues to expand and serve the church. We not only have in our bookstore materials that we personally recommend, but other materials that are frequently requested and ordered by local churches. We have over 300 churches now that are participating in our video lending library. We hope to see that expand in membership and in content. We have just completed our latest addition to that library: a series of eight lessons on officer training conducted primarily by Dr. Don MacNair and Colonel Jack Williamson and myself, that we hope will be a useful addition to the library. The Women in the Church are continuing to grow, and we're doing innovative and creative things with our women's ministry. I believe we, in my judgment, have the best approach to women's ministry of any evangelical or Reformed church that I know today. We try to help local churches understand how to utilize and free the gifts of the women to be used in the full sense, and not to be so tied to a traditional model of the role of the woman that her gifts are not utilized, but also to make a clear stand about the responsibility of the leadership of the church from an ordained position remaining the responsibility of the ruling and teaching elders of the church.

One of the things we are struggling with at this present time in our history is our publications. We want to do more in the audio-visual area of covering our church and keeping the mission and ministry of our church before the people. We want to continue to improve our publications; we're trying to devise a way to get the other committees and agencies more involved with us in the future, particularly in a denominational magazine. And we're discussing ways in which we can develop our own in-house magazine for the purpose of training leaders to think more Biblically and philosophically, theologically and more effectively.

SK: Alright. A couple of years ago, all of the committees and agencies were asked to look ahead to the year 2000 and to set some goals. From memory, what were the ways in which Christian Education and Publications as a division of the PCA is working towards that goal and trying to help the other program committees meet theirs?

CD: One of the key words that grew out of that "Vision 2000," as we called it, was helping our people to live Christianly in a pluralistic and humanistic society. That, particularly, has become a banner for us in the various departments of our ministry: our youth, our women, our training, our education and curriculum

department. Some of the stock in our bookstore would reflect that, as well as our lending library. Our goal is to help service the churches where needed in the PCA right now and on into the 21st century. We're doing everything we can to cause them to be effective in their disciple-making process. But from a world and life view, that seems to be the direction of our commitment at this point, to do what we can to help the churches of the PCA to develop a self-consciously Biblically Reformed world and life view. We want to do that in many different areas.

We also want to work alongside the Mission to North America in the new churches they've established, to come alongside those new mission works as quickly as possible, and help them with whatever resources we have available to enhance their ministry. We want to continue to work with our World Missions people. We have opportunities from time to time to do some training and some counseling and consulting with our Mission to the World staff, and also candidates for ministry and missionaries who are home on home assignments. We have an opportunity to meet with them and to work with them in a variety of ways. So we want to continue to help service the present churches and staffs and personnel as we approach the year 2000, and those new churches that will come along. We want to work more closely with our college in training our young people for ministry, especially in the area of Christian school education, church Christian education, and so forth.

SK: Alright. Charles, I know modernity is a subject that's very dear to your heart. You're extremely well read; that's commonly known by those who are even remotely acquainted with you. And you're frequently consulted about the latest books in the publishing world. Would you like to say anything about the seminars that you teach on modernity?

CD: Thank you, Sharon. I am very much concerned and interested in that topic, especially as it relates to, or is linked with cultural wars. I don't turn down many opportunities to speak to Christian groups about those subjects. As I mentioned earlier, my background had been in philosophy, and my interest in theology and apologetics and even psychology. I've been very much concerned over the years to see the influence of modernity in our society, which as Os Guinness has said, is definitely knocking us off course. I think many of our people, including Christian people who are not world and life oriented Christians, as I would like to see them be, are greatly under that influence. And I see inroads of it in the Presbyterian Church in America. And I'm convinced that ultimately if we're not aware of it and critical in the best sense of the term, it could lead us in a direction that we do not desire to go. In 1989 at the second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, there was a tract on that subject, and different speakers. But Os Guinness was the plenary speaker, and God really spoke to my heart again as I listened to him and some of his analysis, evaluations of global Christianity, of the definite impact that modernity, the influence of modern ideologies, and the new has had upon our

people.

And I think it has caused a syncretism of Christianity with ideologies of the world that have not been very encouraging. So I'm very much concerned that our people understand that, in particular as it relates to cultural wars. At this time in our history, a great deal of emphasis is being directed towards the subject of culture wars. And I believe one of the things that modernity and its offshoots have done is caused to us to confuse that, the area of culture wars, and many times we don't understand the battles, or we fight them the wrong way, or we end up fighting each other instead of the real enemy. So I have a real desire that our people understand what modernity is, what culture wars are all about, and what the role of the Christian should be in being a world and life oriented Christian in today's world.

SK: Alright. "The Messenger"--this is the month of May as we conduct this interview. In June and July/August, "The Messenger" will be putting out special issues in observance of the 20th anniversary of the PCA. What are your thoughts as the PCA reaches this significant milestone? Has the time gone fast!

CD: As a matter of fact, time does tend to move rather rapidly, especially when you get to my middle-aged position in life. And it's certainly done that, I believe, in the PCA. I think we are much further along in growth, particularly in numerical growth and size than any of us ever dreamed possible when we organized the church in '73. I think our...the way God evidently has blessed us has been encouraging to all of us. And so I think, looking back over our twenty years, I would say that we're much further along than I thought we would be at this particular time, as far as size is concerned. Looking back over the twenty years, I think there's still a great deal of what was present in our church that was demonstrated in those early assemblies. I mentioned, if you recall, the great unity of spirit and commitment that was obviously present, but also the present diversity in many, many areas. I think that is still there.

In 1982, when God brought the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod into our midst, it brought a little different historic background, but I personally have said publicly and privately that--in print, as a matter of fact, in "The Messenger"--that I think this was a broadening and a deepening of the foundation and the roots of the Presbyterian Church in America. And yes, it might have brought some...another aspect of diversity in our Presbyterian heritage, but I see that as a positive thing. And so, I think that during the past twenty years, I see a unity of spirit; I see a great diversity among our people. And it's amazing that we've stayed together as a denomination. Obviously, not everything that has happened has been to everybody's liking, and as our Confession reminds us, there's no totally pure church on earth, so we have to continually reform the church. So I've seen our denomination grow theologically, as well as numerically and globally.

SK: Ok. Charles, when the PCA was begun, there was great concern about concentration of power because of the excesses in the southern church. And for that reason, initially, the committee and agencies had their offices in different cities. Do you personally think it's been a very good thing for the PCA to have a headquarters building?

CD: I must say up front, in all candidness, I have not, I did not share the early feeling that the church offices should be in different locations. As a matter of fact, I was chairman of the subcommittee of the first Committee on Administration that recommended to the Birmingham Assembly that all the offices be located in Atlanta. At that time, they decided not to do that for at least five years, to declare a moratorium on that subject. My approach then is as it is now: the decision to do that was, from my judgment, was more of a pragmatic, stewardship decision. It'd been my experience in participating in the continuing church movement that 99% of all of our activities revolved around the Atlanta airport, and because the majority of our constituency then, and even now, is still in a 500 to 600-mile radius of the Atlanta area, that the pragmatics of travel and the ease of travel in and out of Atlanta, seemed to dictate that Atlanta was the best place, from a stewardship perspective, to place the offices.

Now there were other factors that were built into the church that almost discouraged working together among the committees and agencies, and a lot of that was reaction. I was-- as probably the youngest member of the organizing committee, I didn't have a lot of years of baggage and experience that some of my older brothers did. And many times in those meetings, I remember standing and saying: "Men, the problem is not the leadership, the organizational structure, it's the fact that they're departing from the Scriptures and buying into neo-orthodox theology." But as with any reaction movement--as I said early on, the PCA definitely was--that we tried to build in safeguards to protect things that in my judgment are not really, in the final analysis, protectable. So keeping the church pure, in my judgment, is not related to whether the offices of the agencies and committees are together in one location or separate. It does make sense for us to be here, because we are a national church and our staffs need to travel. So, it makes--we have, over the years, tried to steer away from the term "headquarters" because that does raise red flags in some people's minds. In my judgment, being together has offered us an opportunity to work together far more than our structure and our procedures have allowed us to do, and particularly with our method of funding and supporting the works of the church. It appears to me if I had any observation to make, which I have not hesitated to say over the years, that we have had to be so concentrated on our own particular ministries and raising our support, etc., that we haven't had the key and quality time to sit down as leaders of the church to think and work together. That would probably be the gist of my response to that, Sharon. I think it makes sense to be in Atlanta, given the makeup of our church. The year 2000, if our

church does continue to grow at 65 to 70%, or beyond that 600-mile radius of Atlanta, then we may want to think about another location. But Atlanta is a world-class city; it's not seen in people's eyes as a deep South place, and I think it does reflect the kind of image we believe God wants us to have as a denomination.

SK: Charles, I think it would be interesting to ask you to comment on several of the earlier coordinators, well-known names, who played very significant roles--specifically, Paul McKaughan and Phil Clark. And you might want to bring up Donald Graham again, and maybe Larry Mills.

CD: Yes. God has certainly raised up some gifted people to serve in various ministry positions in the PCA, and the names you've just mentioned would be among that list. I particularly grew in my appreciation of Paul McKaughan in the years we had to work together. He was probably instrumental, who do you remember to mention in influential people. But he was very influential and encouraging to me in expanding my horizons into becoming a world Christian. I appreciated his interest and encouragement to me over the years, and the opportunity to work with him. And I think he's a gifted man, and is playing a significant role in world missions today, globally even, as he's moved from us. But God certainly used him to give definite strategy and direction to our Mission to the World program.

I think about Phil Clark, Dr. Phil Clark, who came to us from the pastorate in Glendale, California. Phil came on board about two years after I did, but when we relocated our offices from Montgomery to Atlanta, the Mission to the United States office was also being relocated from Jackson, Mississippi to Atlanta. And so we came on board about the same time during that year, which would be 1979. We worked very closely together, spent a great deal of time together. He was a leader; he was respected. He had his own styles of doing things; not everyone always agreed--as is true with any of us in these positions. But it was a privilege to work with Phil during those days, as well as Paul.

Larry Mills, of course, we did not serve much together, but he was a gifted young man too, that God used early on, particularly in establishing new churches in our denomination. And I think Larry would certainly be one of those names that we would want to remember in the early days that was instrumental in sparking the growth and the expansion of the PCA. I think of Dr. Dan Moore, with whom I had the privilege of working as a member of the Committee on Administration and later as the coordinator of Christian Ed. during the time he served as the coordinator of the Administration Committee in helping us develop an insurance and annuity program, and some basic administrative aspects of our church that are still in place today.

SK: Have you often marveled at how God has raised men and women up and brought them from far corners of the country, just when it

seemed their particular gifts were needed?

CD: Obviously. That's the way He works. And I think the PCA story is an unfolding of that Godly methodology. I've seen that in so many occasions. I wondered, as an exception though, my role. I really questioned my call to this particular position. Ironically, I agreed to do this for three years; that was sixteen years ago. I don't know what happened along the line, but I felt like I knew nothing, or very little, about Christian education other than the general training that I had in seminary, but I did have a heart for that aspect of the Great Commission. But normally, God does bring very gifted people into those positions.

SK: Well, maybe I should make a closing statement. This concludes the oral history interview with Dr. Charles Dunahoo, coordinator of the PCA's Christian Education and Publications Committee. The interview has taken place in Atlanta.

END OF SIDE 2

END OF THE INTERVIEW