Quirks of Custom Balk Unity Hopes

By REV. DAVID CULL Summerville Presbyterian Church

The Stated Clerk of the Unit **ed Pre**sbyterian Church, **Dr.** Eugene Carson Blake embued with a concern for the unity of Christ's Church, and thoroughly realistic about the Church in the modern world, announced in 1961 in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral what was dubbed the "Blake Proposal."

The occasion was the Sunday sermon at the beginning of the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Churches. Blake made a bold proposal—that the Episcopal Church and United Presbyterians invite the Methodists and the United Church of Christ to form a new Christian Church,

This one man fermented and gave dynamic leadership to bring about the beginning of the most significant discussions of unity in Protestantism in the United States in our time.

One national news magazine (Time-March 26, 1961) cited the difficulty of Christians heeding Christ's teachings on unity in these words, "Quirks of custom and filigrees of doctrine, thunderbolts of power politics and showers of private relevations, have split and fis-sured the masonry of the Church time and again throughout the centuries."—into this miliu steps one man to throw a stone into a pool, the rings of which are still flowing out.

Dr. Blake chose these churches with care, for the Methodists are an earlier off-shoot of the Episcopalians, just as the United Church is a more free-wheling version of Calvanism than 1 the Presbyterians. The Baptists and Lutherans were omitted, although his hope was, and is; that they will come in. Chief obstacles for the Baptists are their zeal for congregational autonomy and intransigence Unity Spokesmam against infant baptism. Lutherans in the United States are in the midst of union negotiations themselves. (16 major Lutheran unions Since 1820)

Two Fraditions

The cornerstone of the Blake Proposal is the blending of two important and divergent traditions - the traditional catholic (not Catholic) with their em phasis on sacrament and liturgy, and the Bible-centered reformation churches, with their emphasis on preaching and "the all believers."

Dr. Blake did not give a detailed blueprint of the New Church, that was to immerge later. However, he did cite certain principles:

On the "catholic" side, the Church would have to manifest its historic continuity with the Church both before and after the Reformation.

"To this end, I propose that . . the re-united Church shall provide at its conception for the consecration of all its bishops by bishops and Presbyters both in the Apostolic succession and out of it from all over the world, from all Christian Churches which would au-thorize or permit them to take

The New Church must con fess belief in the Trinity and must administer the "two sacraments in stituted by Christ the Eucharist and Baptism." "It will not be necessary," he said, "for a precise doctrinal agreement to be reached about the meode of operation of the sacra

This question of the "pres ence of Christ" in the sacraments has been a subject of

Vatican Names Observers To WCC Meetings

Stockholm — (RNS) — The Roman Catholic Church will be represented at the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) next year by a number of "observer consul-tants," but Pope Paul VI has not been invited, the head of the WCC said here.

Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary, speaking at a press conference here contradicted reports that the Pope would attend the Assembly which will be held in Uppsala Sweden

Discussing the cordial relations that have developed between the World Council and the Vatican, Dr. Blake pointed out that the ecumenical advance would be reflected in the use of the term, "observer con**sul**tants" to designate Catholic**s** attending the meeting. At the last Assembly in New Delhi in 1961, they were merely called

"Unity is a key word in the ecumenical vocabulary, but it is not unity as an end in it-Dr. Blake said. "This unity must be reflected in mission, in service. It comes only by renewal. This thought is borne out in the theme of the Assembly: 'Behold, I Make All

Renewal, "at the least," he said, "means a new engagement of the church in the economic and social problems in the world. Some people may think we commit ourselves too much outside our real 'spiritual' domain. But Christianity is, in a way, the most materialistic now, when we discuss the obligations that rich countries have in the world today."

the very beginning, and became the Roman Catholic Church. Since 1962 these churches particularly "sticky" in the com- The reformers rebelled against have also joined the consulta-

val metaphysical thinking in really satisfactorily solve the pal Church, The A.M.&E. Zion problem, and failed to reach Church, and The Presbyterian agreement. The Reformation es- Church, U.S. (Southern), bringsentially set the patterns for the ing the total to nine denomi-Protestant groups which nations. emerged. These were the Luerans, the Calvanists, and the "Free Churches."

vho can celebrate the commun**ion** have been divisive problems. Blake hopes that this consultation could go beyond previous attempts to resolve these historic contradictions.

On the "reformation" side he suggested: The re-united church must accept the principle of continuing reformation under the Word of God by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. . .

sity of theological formulations needed discussion. of the faith and a variety of worship and liturgy.

be the most difficult task of separation between us." the century. It is easier and more satisfying to live one's religious experience in a familiar context of old and accepted beliefs. But the church, or communion, or denomination, is never self-sufficient, and must not succumb to this illusion.

Too Late to Delay

Dr. Eugene Carson Blake is It is not a question of timing. shown as he answered re-The peril is in delay. The situporters questions at a press ation reminds one of a sign conference during the annual you sometimes see on the corsession of the Consultation on rugated roads of Africa. It Church Union. Known as the reads, "too rough to go slow."

"father" of the Consultation because it grew from his 1960 Since 1962, when the consulcall for unification of four tation on Church union was major Protestant denomina- formed, the six churches (The tions, Dr. Blake said the unit | Christian Churches) Disciples ed church being sought by of Christ, The Evangelical Unit-COCU "had better" come into ed Brethren Church, The Methbeing in the 1970s. He was odist Church, The Protestant general secretary of the Church of Christ, and The Unit-World Council of Churches ed Presbyterian Church in the said that the structure of the U.S.A.) sent nine persons each proposed Church must be to form the consultation, repreinternational in scope and re- senting both lay and clerical gional in design. Representat members of the Churches. In tives of the 10 participating addition other denominations. denominations met at Epis such as the Northern Baptists, copal Theological School, have had a consultative rela-



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Church, including its worship, as a key to many problems of witness and teaching.

The usual nitty-gritty work From 1962-1965 a series of Therefore tradition and Scrip-

meetings of the consultation tures go together. In addition met to "hammer out" the plat- to this universal tradition are form of consensus of the the particular expressions of churches. These meetings are the individual Churches. This known by their meeting place, perhaps could better be called They are:

A Series of Meetings preliminary meeting, which es- the Scriptures. tablished the theme, "A United

He cited that the government Church, truly catholic, truly re- In regard to liturgy they conof the New Church be demo-formed and truly evangelical. cratic, rather than hierarchial. Here they said, "theological in- begin to see how to find a way The breadth of his vision was tegrity and meaningful witness revealed (the Church consultation has continued this spirit) that the meaningful witness worship may enrich and instruct us all in the worship of in that the re-united church no attempt to reach agreement a United Church." This study would include in its catholicity, in areas of theology, but rather reached agreement on certain and because of it, a wide diver- to locate and define areas which principles regarding worship.

these topics were considered: form." Here we see emerging History moves by the direc-Scripture, tradition and guar the broad respect for the varition of the Holy Spirit of God dians of tradition, the unique ous past traditions of the and one man, joined by count-ness of the participating church. "Unity does not preless others, high and low in es, and worship and witness of clude freedom nor require unithe structures of Protestantism the Church. They said, "we be formity." There is in light of who has taken seriously what lieve the consultation has this recommended that the ele-Methodist Bishop, John Wesley reached an important consentments of worship be agreed Lord of Washington, D.C. said sus on the initial question of upon in the United Church, but at the time of the Blake pro-authority in the Church . . . we that "three or four orders be posal: "It's a proposal of his find ourselves not ready to set forth." toric significance. We can no grapple with the sharp issues longer afford the luxury of our that in our history have been

Likewise tradition is recogand was an expression of it.

custom, and the consultation said "We have no doubt that such tradition must ever be 1962, Washington, D.C. - A brought under the judgment of

One is that because of its nature, worship can never be 1963, Oberlin, Ohio - where confined to "a single plan or

1964, Princeton, N.J. - They be the most difficult task of sparation between us." discussed "one ministry, one be the most difficult task of sparation between us." 'we are met once again to ex-This meeting affirmed clear-plore the establishment of

COURIER JOURNAL United Church. We intend to the ordained ministry, and this This raises the question of Friday, May 12, 1967 stay together. We intend to go must, they expressed, be a "how" the existing churches' forward together, We have seen united ministry. The consultand ministry shall become one in a vision of what the Christian tion agreed, "The New Testa-

ly that the Scriptures are God's community in every place ment and the history of the revelation and that Jesus Christ is "the center of the Holy Scriptures of beginning term for ministerial orders, they is "the center of the Holy Scripture of beginning term for ministerial orders, they is "the ordained ministry and ordinary to the ordained ministry and ordinary to the ordained ministry and ordinary in the ordained ministry and ordained ministry

plicated formulations of medie these definitions but did not tion, African Methodist Episco-tures." The Scriptures are the an agreement on the nature of clearly indicate the need for an agreement of the nature of clearly indicate the need for an agreement of the nature of clearly indicate the need for an agreement of the nature of clearly indicate the nature o "norm" of the total life of the the ordained ministry was seen ordained ministry." theology and practice in the These "orders," they agreed, must be based upon the witness dained ministry', but with many of Holy Scripture, the common questions and requests for fur-The consultation agreed that tradition, and "shaped by the

history and life of the Church the ministry of the Church was needs of the Twentieth Century clearly necessary to union. of consideration of advance thoughts and actions of men, was both for the Church and left to discuss and study, among is seen in this statement: "We writing, and vote brought dis but God's guidance of men. In the world, and it was not just them the key question, "What have reached the point where munion" and the question of cussion to a slow but sure sense who can celebrate the communion of consensus.

| A sense the New Testament was the few (professionals) but the form of action will be required to bring the ministers of the outlines of a United Church six churches to oneness of min-Still, within the Church are istry in the United Church?

nation. This flexible spirit was expressed: "We have arrived at much agreement on 'the orther study. One ministry is

(Continued on Page 7B)



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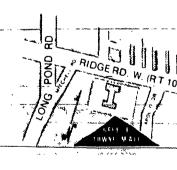
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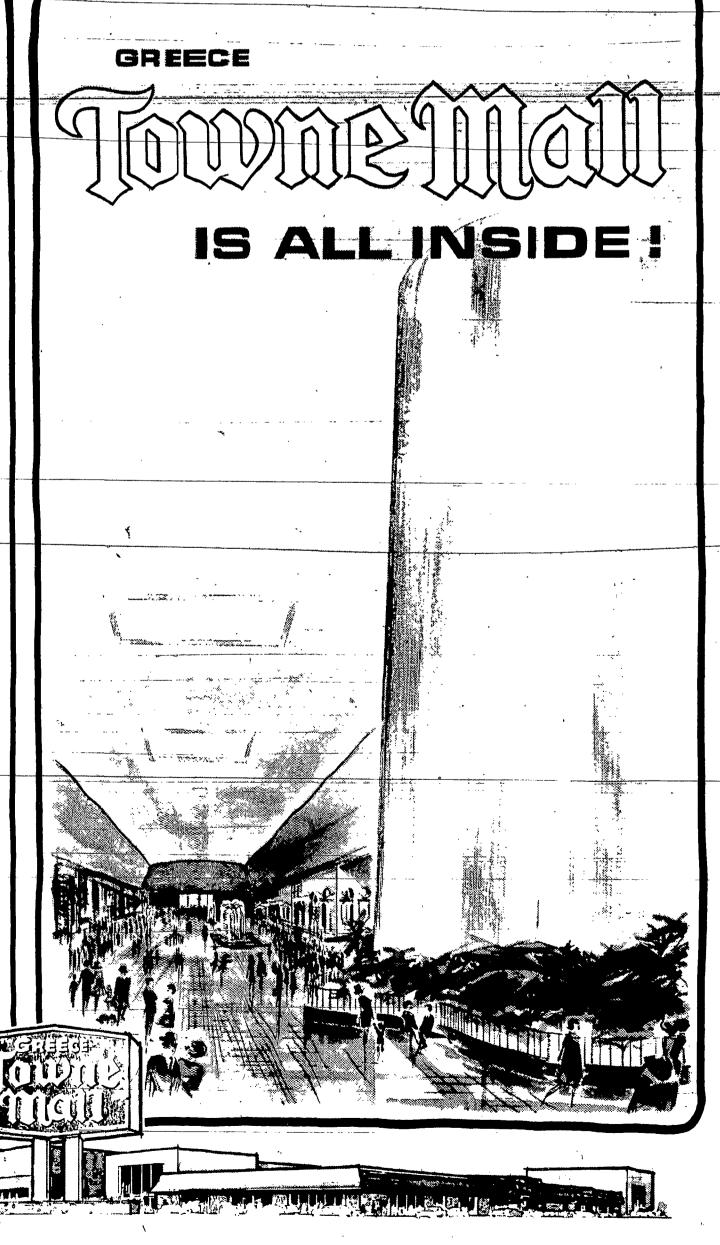


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the past ordination of the several churches. Some rite or service will symbolize the union of the historic ministry of the New Church.

which accepts the historic episcopate as symbol and agent of the continuity of the Church." Already at Princeton

they had agreed that the min-

istry should include the orders

of bishop, ministers (elders)

New Church will not repudiate

One thing is made clear. The

and deacons.

Dallas, Texas, 1966 — The final report for study by the churches was adopted by the consultation in Dallas, Texas, 1966. The report shall be debated in the nine denominations or as the commission put it for transmission to the constituencies of the participating churches for study and comment." By and large final agreement is reached as an extension of the previous meetings.

The preamble in one part sums, up the intention of the union in a terse sentence, "we resolve to attempt, under God a more inclusive expression of oneness of the Church of Christ than any of the participating churches can suppose itself alone to be.'

In the preliminary statement to the Dallas report, severa principles are laid down. One senses again that they set the climate for what is to follow

1. Obedience to mission must be the primary characteristic of the Church at every level This principle implies that "one ness" will exclude competition and overlapping in the church's mission task to the world. At base this is an article on ex pediency, which could be stated like this. "Our task is too great to duplicate or waste the en ergies of the Church.' 2. Mutual enrichment mus

be served and guarded. Qui only loss will be our separate ness, and our gains shall be the good and valuable thing coming out of our various tradi The consultation, encourage

a pressure towards "interplay" across traditional lines of ou various traditions. 3. Existing relationship

should be maintained and strengthened wherever possible This statement serves as a warr ing that the New Church should guard against weakening its re lationship with any presentl existing ecumenical groups such as local councils of church es, the National or World Cour

4. Maximum protection mus be given to existing diversitie and liberties. Here is seen a admintion to all parties in th United Church regarding free

Presbyterian Rite OK'd

Wayne, Pa. - (NC) - Arch hishop John J. Krol of Phila delphia granted permission for the wedding of two Presbyter ians to take place in St. Kath arine of Siena Catholic Churc

The unusual request for the use of the church was made b the Rev. William Dupree, pas tor of the Wayne Presbyteria Church, for two of his congre gation, William Raybock an Linda Merwyn. The Presbyterian pastor es

plained that his church is bein completely renovated and wi not be finished in time for th wedding, scheduled Aug. 27. nearby Methodist church als is being rebuilt and no Prote tant church in the area is larg enough to accommodate th number of persons anticipate at the wedding.

Ecumenical Bible in Italy

Italian—the result of collabor tion between Catholic, Orth-dox, Protestant and Jewis scholars-will be published th

The announcement was mac by the Mondadori publishing firm here. The "Ecumenic Bible" was prepared by a pl vate interreligious commission of nine that was organized 1959 The translation of the Scriptures was prepared undtheir direction by 36 biblic scholars chosen from amor various religious confession and communities of Italy.

The new Italian translatic has been variously dubbed tl "Ecumenical Bible" or "Rave na Bible," because the priva commission set up to realize tl project is called the Raveni

Doctor Named Replaces Priest

Paterson - (NC) - Bish Lawrence B. Casey has nam Dr. Andrew McBride as dire tor of hospitals for the Pate son diocese, a post former held by priests. Dr. McBride director of surgery at St. Je eph's Hospital here and a fe mer Army field surgeon.

Bishop Casey also mamed new moderator of the Dioces. Council of Catholic Men. Fath James J. Rugel, and a new rector of the Confraternity Christian Doctrine, Father Rie ard G. Rento.