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**THE  
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

MINUTES OF THE  
TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MEETING AT  
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MAY 17-23, 1945



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THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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**Thursday, May 17, 1945**

The Moderator of the Eleventh General Assembly, the Rev. Edwin H. Rian, opened the devotional service preceding the Twelfth General Assembly at 11:00 a. m., May 17, 1945, in the Library Auditorium of Westminster Theological Seminary, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mr. Rian preached a sermon on the subject "The Church's Commission," based on Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and 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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Following the sermon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered by Mr. Rian, assisted by the Rev. Richard W. Gray, and the Rev. Glenn R. Coie, and by Elders J. Kortenhoven, J. P. Walker, P. J. Vandenberg, and Matthew McCroddan.

**Thursday Afternoon**

The Twelfth General Assembly was called to order at 2:05 p. m. and constituted with prayer by Mr. Rian.

The roll was called by the Rev. LeRoy B. Oliver, Assistant Clerk of the Eleventh General Assembly.

**THE ROLL OF THE ASSEMBLY**

**Presbytery of California**

Ministers: Dwight H. Poundstone, Robert E. Nicholas.

**Presbytery of the Dakotas**

Ministers: A. Culver Gordon, W. Benson Male, Delbert E. Schowalter.

**Presbytery of New Jersey**

Ministers: H. Wilson Albright, Robert L. Atwell, Edward B. Cooper, Everett C. DeVelde, Leslie A. Dunn, Charles H. Ellis, John F. Gray, Richard W. Gray, Lewis J. Grotenhuis, Edward Heerema, John C. Hills, Clifford S. Smith.

Elders: Floyd C. Graf, Jesse Gump, James Harkema, Ph.D. (alt.), Matthew McCroddan, I. T. Mullen, S. Parker, Enno Wolthuis, Ph.D.

**Presbytery of New York and New England**

Ministers: Edmund P. Clowney, John J. DeWaard, Burton L. Goddard, Th.D., Herman Petersen, Raymond M. Meiners, John C. Rankin, Charles L. Shook, John H. Skilton, William Young, Th.D.

Elders: A. H. Squires, P. J. Vandenberg.

**Presbytery of Ohio**

Ministers: Martin Bohn, Lawrence B. Gilmore, Th.D.

**Presbytery of Philadelphia**

Ministers: Samuel J. Allen, Eugene Bradford, Gordon H. Clark, Ph.D., John P. Clelland, Glenn R. Coie, Calvin K. Cummings, Franklin S. Dyrness, Edwards E. Elliott, David Freeman, John P. Galbraith, Floyd E. Hamilton, Edward L. Kellogg, R. B. Kuiper, Arthur W. Kuschke, Rob-

seminary must be given under the auspices of the church. The mere fact that, in certain particulars, the type of teaching given is the type of teaching that may and should be given by the church and may also properly be conducted under the official auspices of the church does not prove that such teaching must be conducted under the auspices of the church. This does not follow any more than does the fact that the teaching of the Word of God given in the home and in the school is in content the same as may and should be given by the church prove that the family and the school should be conducted under the auspices of the church. A theological seminary is an institution which may quite properly be conducted, like other Christian schools, under auspices other than those of the church, and a great deal of its work is of such a character that the church may not properly undertake it.

It is highly necessary that the theological discipline preparatory to the discharge of the Gospel ministry be as comprehensive as that provided by the curriculum of theological seminaries. But the church may not properly undertake the conduct of such comprehensive, theological education. In the interest of the most effective instruction, however, it is well that the comprehensive course of study be conducted under unified auspices. Since comprehensive theological education may not be conducted under the auspices of the church and since it may properly be conducted under auspices other than those of the church, it follows that a theological seminary, affording comprehensive theological education under non-ecclesiastical auspices, is not only highly proper but also promotes the interests of effective theological education and guards the principle that the church must limit itself to those activities which Holy Scripture defines as its proper function.

JOHN MURRAY

### III.

#### THE PROPER AGENT OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN VIEW OF THE RELATION OF NATURE AND SPECIAL GRACE

The question whether or not it is the duty of the organized church to provide theological education for its prospective ministers may be approached from another angle: viz., the historic Reformed view of the relation of nature and special grace, or the natural and the spiritual.

It is a significant fact that Calvin and the sixteenth-century Calvinistic Reformers generally did not in their day favor ecclesiastical schools for the training of ministers. They found in existence three types of institutions for ministerial education. They were the universities of the day, so-called city or municipal schools, and ecclesiastical seminaries. The last of these were a Roman Catholic creation. The bishop schools of the seventh and eighth centuries were seminaries founded and controlled by the church. The Jesuits established many similar seminaries. In 1538 the cardinals recommended to the pope, as one of the best means of reforming the church, the restoration of these ecclesiastical institutions. Subsequently the Council of Trent did likewise, and it was this council which gave to the term *seminarium* the specific meaning of a church school for the training of clergymen. But the reformers, while upholding the universities and the city schools for the training of ministers, turned from the use of ecclesiastical seminaries. Calvin himself taught in the municipal Latin school at Geneva and labored for its expansion into a university. And when the reformers took over the ecclesiastical schools at Zurich and Strassburg they at once had these institutions secularized. This fact becomes the more significant when it is remembered that the reformers found extremely serious fault with the existing universities as hotbeds of the corruption that had gripped the church. In spite of this critical attitude they did not relinquish the universities as schools for ministerial training, nor did they demand of the purified church that it establish its own theological schools. It is not strange that August Tholuck begins his study of *Das Akademische Leben des Siebzehnten Jahrhunderts* with the meaningful observation: "It may surprise one that in the reformation

period the training of the future ministers of the church was entrusted to universities and not much rather to seminaries, as is deemed necessary by certain serious voices today"—vol. I, p. 1.

The views of Calvin and his associates concerning ministerial education are admirably stated by H. H. Kuyper in his *De Opleiding tot den Dienst des Woords bij de Gereformeerden*, vol. I, pp. 211-213. The following four heads are a paraphrase of Kuyper's summary.

1. Calvin c. s. never thought of establishing ecclesiastical schools, and where they found such schools in existence they secularized them.

2. Calvin c. s. considered university training essential for prospective ministers, and by universities they meant institutions of learning in which the science of theology was related to the other sciences.

3. Unlike Luther, who thought university training necessary only for doctors and exegetes but not for ordinary pastors, Calvin c. s. demanded university training for all ministers.

4. Calvin c. s. held that the universities at which ministers were trained should not be under ecclesiastical control.

The question arises what principle underlay this practice of the Calvinistic reformers. No doubt it was the characteristic Reformed conception of the relation of the natural and the spiritual.

Rome has always regarded the natural as of lower order than the spiritual and in need of control by the spiritual as a *donum superadditum*. Therefore it has come to the conclusion of the necessity of a totalitarian church. It would have the church control the state. It establishes parochial schools in which the church teaches mathematics, geography, geology, physics and all the other so-called secular branches. And by the same token it places the entire education of its clergy under the direct control of the church.

The extreme Anabaptists of the Reformation age, on the other hand, regarded the natural as ethically opposed to the spiritual. According to them saving grace does away with the natural. Therefore they deemed ministerial education not merely superfluous, but even evil. The minister, they held, should in his labors reply on the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. Their less extreme descendants in subsequent times were content with a mere theological training for their pastors to the exclusion of a liberal arts education. And even the theological training which they favored was usually superficial, of the present-day Bible-school type.

Both the Romish and Anabaptist views of the relation of nature and saving grace were rejected by Calvin and likeminded reformers. They regarded both the natural and the spiritual as divine creations. Therefore they insisted on doing full justice to both. They refused to sacrifice one to the other. To each they assigned its proper sphere. But at the same time they were careful to uphold the unity of the two. And this they accomplished by proclaiming the sovereignty of God and his Christ over both. It is the duty of the unsaved and the saved alike to obey the law of God. The state as well as the church is subject to the Word of God. Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth—Matt. 28:20. God has given him to be head over all things to the church—Eph. 1:22. He is not only head of the church but also prince of the kings of the earth—Rev. 1:5. In short, the Word of God comes with sovereign authority to all men and to the whole of every man.

From the Reformed conception of the Word of God it follows of necessity that there must be a science of theology. The Word of God does not operate magically but through the human intellect. Therefore it must be received and reproduced by the consciousness of man. This is the task of theology as a science.

It follows with equal necessity that the science of theology may not be divorced from the other sciences, but, on the contrary, must be brought into organic relationship to them. As Calvin has taught, the Word of God was not given exclusively for the realm of re-creation but also for that of nature, in order to restore to man that knowledge of God with which he was created in

the beginning. To be sure, the use of the Word is not the same in both instances. In the sphere of saving grace the Word is the sole source of knowledge, in the sphere of nature it renders possible the correct interpretation of general revelation. But even thus the so-called secular sciences must be dominated by the Word of God. Therefore theology and the other sciences need each other. Theology needs the other sciences, for without them it cannot fulfil its task of teaching the principles of the Word of God for every domain of human life and every branch of human knowledge. And the other sciences need theology because from it must be derived that knowledge of God without which no true knowledge can exist. In the words of Calvin: "If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture" - Institutes I, VI,2.

In his valuable work, already referred to, on Reformed ministerial education, H. H. Kuyper calls particular attention to the interdependence of theology and philosophy. He points out that, because theology would interpret the Word of God by and for the human consciousness, it needs a guide to acquaint it with the laws of this consciousness, and that, he says, is the function of philosophy. On the other hand he also insists that philosophy cannot operate properly without theology because theology is its only safeguard against paganism - vol. I, pp. 224f.

In the light of these considerations the following conclusions are warranted.

1. Ministerial education may not be neglected after the manner of the Anabaptists. On the contrary, prospective ministers of the gospel must receive both a broad liberal and a truly scientific theological education. Our American Bible schools can perform valuable service by training laymen for active participation in certain kingdom activities, but they are utterly inadequate for the education of an ordained ministry.

2. Theological education may not, after the manner of Rome, be confined to ecclesiastical seminaries. Against this arrangement two serious objections hold. In the first place, the science of theology is not the exclusive property of the church; it has an important function to perform with reference to the state and the so-called secular sciences. In turn, the secular sciences—philosophy, or sociology, for example—perform indispensable service for theology. It follows that to isolate the science of theology from the other sciences constitutes a denial of the organic unity of science. In the second place, while it is the obvious task of the organized church, through its offices, particularly the office of teaching elder, to teach the Word of God (Matt. 28:19,20), and, as pillar and ground of the truth, to uphold and defend that Word against false gospels (I Tim. 3:15; Phil. 1:7,17), to the practical ends of the persuasion of the unsaved and the sanctification of believers (II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 4:11,12), it is not the function of the organized church to teach theology as a science. This is particularly obvious in the case of such studies as the original languages of the Bible, on which, it is well to remember, the reformers placed tremendous emphasis, and church history, which presents a mass of extra-Biblical material. But it applies to the entire theological curriculum. For example, it is impossible to teach apologetics as a science without constant reference to the false philosophies of the past and the present, or to teach systematic theology as a science without frequent reference to the history of doctrine; nor is it the task of the organized church to teach the technique of preaching.

3. There is no room for ecclesiastical universities in which, again after the manner of Rome, the various sciences, theological science included, are taught by the church. A university of this kind does indeed constitute a recognition of the organic character of all science, but in such an institution the church still operates as the teacher of theology as a science. There is another grave objection to an ecclesiastical university. It is self-evident that the teaching of the secular sciences does not fall within the province of the organized church. When it undertakes such teaching it erases the God-appointed boundary between the

realm of nature and that of saving grace. A university controlled and operated by the church is a bold expression of that ecclesiastical totalitarianism which is so characteristic of the Romish system.

4. Nor may the science of theology be committed to a university under state control. Teaching is not at all one of the primary functions of the state. According to Scripture the need of the state springs primarily from the fact of the presence of sin in the world. But if sin had never entered the world, children would not be born with the ability to read and write nor with knowledge of the multiplication tables. In a word, they would still be in need of education. Besides, the state operates in the sphere of nature and has no right to pose as a teacher in the realm of saving grace. For the state to assume the teaching of theology is of the essence of state totalitarianism. It must be admitted that the sixteenth-century reformers, Calvin included, were not fully aware of this fact. Their failure to see it clearly was, no doubt, due to the prevalence of Erastianism in the Protestant communions of the Reformation age. However, Calvin already caught a glimpse of the necessity of the separation of church and state, and subsequently the Calvinists of many countries took a leading part in effecting this separation.

5. If neither the state nor the church may arrogate to itself the teaching of theology as a science, how is this important task to be performed? The fact that theological science and the secular sciences are alike subject to the sovereign Word of God, together with the correlative fact of the organic oneness of all the sciences, supplies the answer. Provision for the teaching of the entire complex of sciences must be made by that institution which Scripture itself charges with the task of education. That institution is the covenant family (Deut. 6:6-9; Prov. 6:20,21; Eph. 6:4). In other words, inasmuch as the science of theology directly concerns both the realm of nature and that of saving grace, it must be taught by that institution of divine origin which belongs to both these realms—the Christian family. And this is a way of saying that it is the duty of Christian parents to form voluntary associations for the founding and operating of Christian universities in which all the sciences, also theological science, are to be taught in harmony with the truth as revealed in the Word of God. Nor need Christian men and women who do not happen to be parents be excluded from membership in these associations. It is a commonplace in Calvinistic circles that the conduct of Christian schools is the task, not of the church as an organization, but of the church as an organism. That is quite correct. But it may not be overlooked that the church as an organism, when operating in the field of education, is nothing else than an extension of the Christian family.

6. That both the state and the organized church will have an interest in such a Christian university as was just described goes well-nigh without saying. The university will announce to the state the Christian principles of government and the state in turn has a right to insist that certain educational standards be met as a prerequisite for the power to grant degrees. The university will supply the church with pastors, and the church in turn will not only subject the graduate of the university to rigid examinations before ordaining them, but it will also desire a measure of influence on their training. The church has a perfect right to make suggestions and address petitions to the governing board of the university relative to the theological curriculum. Ordinarily it is desirable that the teachers of theology in the university be ordained ministers of the gospel who labor under the supervision of their several judicatories. When Calvin presented his *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* to the council of Geneva on his return to that city in the late summer of 1541, he requested that both the teachers and the students of theology be subject to ecclesiastical discipline. Again, the church should do all in its power to make certain that the constitution of the university is in harmony with the doctrinal standards of the church. But all this merely means that the state, the church and the family are interdependent. It does not mean that theological science is actually to be taught by either the organized church or the state. This is the function of a Christian university operated by Christian families in a voluntary association manifesting the church

as an organism. The Reformed conception of the relation of nature and special grace demands that conclusion.

In summary, prospective ministers of the gospel must be taught theology as a science; and, since theological science operates both in the sphere of nature and in that of saving grace, it must be taught, not by the state, which belongs to the sphere of nature, nor by the church, which belongs to the sphere of saving grace, but by the Christian family, which belongs to both.

R. B. KUIPER

The minority report of the Committee on Theological Education is as follows:

**MINORITY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO STUDY  
THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE MATTER OF  
PROVIDING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND THE MANNER IN WHICH  
THIS RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD BE DISCHARGED**

The charge given to the committee by the Eleventh General Assembly is most broad, for all manner of teaching on theological subjects may be termed "theological education". However, in the context of the action of the Assembly, as revealed in the Minutes, it is clear that by "theological education" the Assembly meant the education of students for the gospel ministry, and specifically that part of their education which is normally provided by a theological seminary. The Committee will thus confine its report to this phase of theological education.

The committee finds that, on the basis of the explicit teaching of Scripture and the good and necessary consequence of the teaching of Scripture, theological education may be provided by the church. The committee has met with one instance in the history of the church in which such a conclusion has seriously been challenged. In the controversy which arose around the establishment of the Free University in Amsterdam a different conclusion was championed by the founders of the University. In view of this and of the discussion in the Eleventh General Assembly and since that time, the Committee feels compelled to expound its position at length.

The Old Testament church assumed responsibility for at least the theological education of Samuel, and its activity in Samuel's case seems to indicate that this was an accepted procedure in training men for the active priesthood. In Old Testament times there were associations of prophets. Great prophets of God such as Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, as one of their prophetic functions, presided over and probably offered instruction in these "schools". There is no clear evidence that these "schools" were primarily schools for the instruction of those who were preparing for the prophetic office, although the "sons of the prophets" who frequented these "schools" probably included younger novitiates. Under the later Jewish economy there were doctors of the law who held classes in connection with the synagogues. These classes evidently were in subjects which relate to common grace as well as subjects more particularly in the realm of special grace. How these classes were related to the synagogues we do not know, but there was evidently some relationship between them. How these teachers were supported is not known, but it is quite possible that they were supported, wholly or in part, from funds collected in the synagogues. The numerous injunctions of the New Testament to teach the gospel indicate that one of the most important functions of the church is to teach. Every particular church must indeed be a teaching church.

Now, certainly, the church must teach every class of people within its constituency, in order that each group may spiritually be fitted for its own task in life. It must see that the necessary theological background for those who are engaged primarily in purely secular work is provided. It must see that the preparation in theological knowledge necessary for its elders, deacons, and Sunday school teachers is provided. As it must see that the limited theological education necessary for those who are engaged in a limited ministry of teaching in the local church is provided, so it must see that the complete theological