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THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MINUTES OF THE
EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Meeting at
Westminster Theological Seminary
Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.
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Minutes
of the
Eighth General Assembly
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Tuesday, June 3, 1941

The devotional service preceding the assembly was opened at 11:00 a.m., June 3, 1941 in the auditorium of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, by the Rev. Paul Woolley, moderator of the seventh general assembly. Mr. Woolley preached on Isaiah 40:17, 11, "All the nations are as nothing before him," and "He will feed his flock like a shepherd." Following the sermon the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered by Mr. Woolley, assisted by the Rev. Arthur O. Olson and the Rev. Glenn R. Coie.

The assembly was called to order by Mr. Woolley at 2:00 p.m. and was constituted with prayer by the Rev. Dean W. Adair.

The roll was called by the clerk of the seventh assembly. The roll of the assembly is as follows:

Presbytery of California

Ministers—Glenn R. Coie, Dwight H. Poundstone.

Presbytery of the Dakotas

Minister—Thomas M. Cooper.

Presbytery of New Jersey

Ministers—Edward B. Cooper, Alexander K. Davison, Leslie A. Dunn, John P. Galbraith, Lawrence B. Gilmore, Donald C. Graham, Richard W. Gray, Lewis J. Grotenhuis, Edward Heerema, Walter C. Jent, Clifford S. Smith, William T. Strong, Bruce H. Wideman.

Elders—S. W. Gibson, Matthew McCroddan, Bert L. Roeber.

Presbytery of New York and New England

Ministers—Dean W. Adair, Martin J. Bohn, Bruce A. Coie, Marvin L. Derby, John J. DeWaard, Burton L. Goddard, L. Craig Long, Raymond M. Meiners, John Murray, Arthur O. Olson, Peter Pascoe, John H. Skilton, Daniel Van Houte.

the Committee shall give careful consideration to any advice the Presbytery shall offer, and the Committee shall comply with the advice of the Presbytery if it has sufficient funds, and such advice is not out of line with the aid being given in other fields under similar circumstances.

On motion the Committee determined to reply to Paper No. 1, a proposed overture from the Presbytery of the Dakotas, referred to this Committee by the Seventh General Assembly, by recommending that the Eighth General Assembly propose to the Presbyteries an amendment which would change Chapter XVIII of the Form of Government, by deleting the words "or to supply vacancies", and by adding the words "in extraordinary circumstances" after the words "And the General Assembly may, of its own knowledge", so that the sentence will read "And the General Assembly may, of its own knowledge, in extraordinary circumstances, send missions to any part to plant churches, provided always that such missions be made . . ."

ROBERT S. MARSDEN,

Secretary.

The committee to study texts and proof texts reported. On motion the report was received and the recommendations ordered considered *seriatim*.

On separate motions the recommendation that in any printing of the confession of faith and catechisms by The Orthodox Presbyterian Church the proof texts be cited rather than quoted, and the recommendation that proof texts be not appended to the other constitutional documents were adopted.

The report is as follows:

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TEXTS AND PROOF TEXTS

At the Seventh General Assembly of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church it was provided "that as a preliminary step towards the printing of the doctrinal standards, a committee of three ministers be appointed, which shall be charged to study the texts and proof texts of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and that the Committee consider the advisability of preparing proof texts for the other constitutional documents, and that it report its recommendations to the Eighth General Assembly" (Minutes of the Seventh General Assembly, p. 35). "The Moderator appointed the Rev. Messrs. Murray, Young and Stonehouse as the Committee" (id. p. 36).

The Committee respectfully submits the following report to the Eighth General Assembly.

A. TEXT OF THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS

The ascertainment of the correct text of the Confession of Faith is made relatively simple by the painstaking researches and publications of William Carruthers and S. W. Carruthers. The edition of the Westminster Confession of Faith by William Carruthers, first issued in 1883, proceeded a long way in the correction of numerous errors which had, in the course of editing and printing, crept into modern editions of the Confession. This work of correction was carried still further by his son, S. W. Carruthers, and the result of his

labors is made accessible to us in his publication *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1937). In this work we have a critically edited text of the Confession together with a history of the origin of the errors. It is the judgment of the Committee that this edition provides us with the best text of any modern edition and therefore should be followed rather closely in any printing of the Confession of Faith that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church may undertake.

The question of the correct text of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is also greatly simplified by William Carruthers' publication in 1897 of a facsimile of the first edition which was ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, 25th November 1647. This edition, however, had no proof texts and the spelling is, of course, archaic. Any printing of the Shorter Catechism that might be undertaken should be based upon this facsimile of the first authoritative edition.

In the matter of the text of the Larger Catechism we are not so fortunate. We do not have a critically revised text and we do not have a facsimile of an authoritative edition. The Chairman of the Committee has had some correspondence with S. W. Carruthers who says that "the only authoritative edition . . . is the limited edition printed for members of Parliament." Of this edition there is a copy at Union Theological Seminary, New York. This copy could no doubt be consulted and any printing that might be undertaken could be based upon it.

The Committee respectfully reminds the General Assembly that any edition of these Standards that would have regard to purity of text and accuracy in printing will require much exacting and prolonged labour.

B. PROOF TEXTS OF THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS

The Westminster Assembly appended proof texts to all three of these documents. Revision of these proof texts was authorized by the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. on two occasions, in 1794 and 1894.

In 1792 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. appointed a Committee "to select and arrange the Scripture texts to be adduced in support of the articles in the Confession of Faith" (Minutes of the General Assembly, 1792, p. 59). The Committee submitted its report to the General Assembly in 1794 and the report was approved. It should be noted, however, that the revision of proof texts only concerned the Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism. The Shorter Catechism was printed without proof texts, and the following footnote was inserted at the beginning. "The Shorter Catechism is, simply, an abridgement of the Larger; so that the proof of both must be the same. The reader, therefore, who desires to see the Scripture authorities for any doctrine taught in this catechism, will turn to that doctrine in the Larger Catechism, which may very easily be done, and there he will find the necessary texts fully referred to, or inserted. It was judged unnecessary to print the very same texts twice over" (The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., Philadelphia 1841, p. 377. See also Minutes 1891, p. 131). An examination of this revision of the proof texts for the Confession and Larger Catechism will disclose that the departure from the work of the Westminster Assembly, particularly in the proof texts for the Confession, was in some respects quite radical.

In 1888 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., in answer to an overture from the Presbytery of Philadelphia, appointed a Committee of seven to revise the proof texts of the standards. In 1889 the Committee reported progress and was enlarged to the number of nine. In 1890 the Committee submitted to the General Assembly a revision of the proof texts of the Confession of Faith, and expressed the hope that the work on the Larger Catechism would be completed by the next Assembly.

In 1891 the Committee reported that it had completed the revision of the proof texts of the Larger Catechism. The Committee also stated in its report that, "Westminster Texts were restored, where they seemed better, or even as good as those that were substituted for them in our book. For it is desirable, as far as possible, to have the original texts, and thus, also, the same proofs as are printed by other Presbyterian Churches that have the Westminster Standards and retain the Westminster texts" (Minutes 1891, p. 131). The General Assembly of 1891 instructed the Committee "to prepare Proof Texts for the Shorter Catechism so that when this Committee's work is finally adopted by the Assembly, the Church shall have for the children a form of the Catechism with Proof Texts appended" (Minutes 1892, pp. 12f.).

In 1892 the Committee reported progress, particularly in the work of providing proof texts for the Shorter Catechism, and the Committee was continued.

In 1893 the Committee reported that it had completed the work of preparing proof texts for the Shorter Catechism and that it had finished all the work immediately set before it. The Committee recommended that 7000 copies of the Shorter Catechism with the proof texts proposed by the Committee be printed under the direction of the Board of Publication and Sabbath-school work.

In 1894 the Committee reported that the Shorter Catechism with proof texts was printed and that 7000 copies were distributed about January 1, 1894 as a sample of the Committee's whole work on the proof texts. The Committee having now submitted a finished work proposed that the time had come for final disposition of its work and that it be discharged. The General Assembly, on recommendation of the Committee, adopted the proof texts for the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism as prepared by the Committee.

The Committee appointed at the Seventh General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has given this matter of proof texts earnest consideration and study in the course of the past year. The work of the Committee has very largely been confined to the proof texts for the Confession of Faith. It has found that further revision of the proof texts could be made, and it has tentatively conducted such revision for the first eight chapters of the Confession. In conducting this work it has sought to adhere as closely as feasible to the proofs adduced by the Westminster Assembly, but it has also found the revision by the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. in 1894 exceedingly helpful. On the whole, the Committee has found that the number of proof texts deemed either necessary or desirable tended to increase rather than to diminish.

The Committee recommends that in any printing of these standards undertaken by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church the proof texts be cited rather than quoted. The reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

- (1) It will greatly reduce the cost of printing.
- (2) This procedure will eliminate the almost insuperable difficulties entailed in certain cases in the determination of exact text and most adequate translation.
- (3) The Church could hope for the publication of these Standards at a very much earlier date because both the expense of publication and the amount of labour involved would be greatly reduced.
- (4) In any revision that may be made the method of citation rather than of extensive quotation will make it practicable to adduce a greater number of proof texts.

C. PROOF TEXTS FOR THE OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

The Committee does not deem it advisable to append proof texts to the other consti-

tutional documents, particularly for the reason that, while there is much in these constitutional documents that has been directly based upon Scripture, yet there is also much that falls within the principle stated in the Confession of Faith, Chapter I, Section VI, to wit, "there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

JOHN MURRAY,
Chairman.

On motion the committee on texts and proof texts was continued until the next assembly and was empowered to make recommendations concerning the texts and proof texts to the next assembly.

On motion Mr. Stonehouse was excused from further service on the committee.

On motion Mr. Skilton was elected to fill the vacancy on the committee, and by further motion the committee was empowered to fill any vacancy which may occur in its membership.

On motion the assembly determined to hear the report of the commission on the Iglesia Cristiana Puertorriqueña.

On motion the report was received and its recommendations ordered considered *seriatim*.

On separate motions the recommendations were adopted.

The report is as follows:

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE IGLESIA CRISTIANA PUERTORRIQUENA

The commission elected by the Seventh General Assembly to communicate with the Iglesia Cristiana Puertorriqueña held several meetings throughout the year. It communicated by mail with representatives of this church and interviewed a representative sent to this country. The commission is of the opinion that the ministry and membership of the Iglesia Cristiana Puertorriqueña is largely composed of earnest Christians who, out of worthy motives, desire to be united with The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The commission is also of the opinion that it would be impossible to receive this denomination into our fellowship at this time, since we are convinced that many of its ministers do not meet our educational qualifications and that they lack a clear and consistent conception of the Reformed faith. The representative of this church led the commission to believe that the church would welcome instruction in the principles and practices of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. To this end, the commission recommends:

1. That the matter be referred to The Committee on Foreign Missions and that that Committee be instructed to consider carefully the advisability of sending one or more missionaries to Puerto Rico with the principal purpose of instructing these people to the end that they may be received into The Orthodox Presbyterian Church at some later time.