

Published West 1945

THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MINUTES OF THE TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MEETING AT
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MAY 17-23, 1945



Published by
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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-

lieved"; Acts 20:32: "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified".

In the other four instances the translation is by the word "commit"—Luke 12:48: "And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more"; I Peter 4:19: "Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator"; I Tim. 1:18, 19: "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience"; and our present passage.

In every instance without exception, including one in the same epistle as is the passage under discussion, it will be readily seen that the sense of the word is that of entrusting. This sense is sustained by the classical usage as set forth in Liddell and Scott.

Concerning the last clause, "who shall be able to teach others also", the "faithful men" are doubtless officers, or potential officers, of the church. Does not Paul tell Timothy himself that a bishop "must be . . . apt to teach" (I Tim. 3:2) and repeat the exhortation to Timothy personally in this very chapter, "And the Lord's servant must . . . be . . . apt to teach" (II Tim. 2:24)? The officers of the church then are entrusted, as has been indicated, and as this clause says, with the duty of teaching. But that teaching is the teaching of the content of the faith and of the graces and arts of the Christian life to the body of the church membership. The context of both I Tim. 3:2 and II Tim. 2:24 shows this. In the first passage the general qualifications of a bishop are being set forth. Bishops must all be "apt to teach". No one will contend that all bishops are called upon to conduct schools where either liberal, technical theological, or professional education of any sort is provided. Since Paul is talking about a necessary qualification of all bishops, the teaching must be, as indicated, that in the principles of spiritual truth and in the content of the faith, the teaching which is the duty of every teaching elder.

In the second passage, II Timothy 2:24, the words "apt to teach" occur in a context of qualities which are all directed toward the instruction of Timothy in the pastoral care of all Christians, not of students in particular. Indeed the phrase preceding "apt to teach" is "gentle toward all", emphasizing the inclusiveness of the body of those who are to be taught.

It is clear, then, that II Timothy 2:2 is not concerned with formal, systematic education of any sort, whether theological or general, but with teaching by the officers of the church, as such, for the purpose of conveying the content of the faith to the church members and instructing them in Christian living.

The conclusion from these facts is that an institution whose primary purpose is education in the broad principles of the liberal arts or in the technical matters of the vocation to which one has been called by God should be under the direction of, and should be supported by, the family. This applies to theological education as well as to all other education, when its purpose is to prepare men for that place in life to which God has called them to devote the major portion of their time, in other words when it is not such theological education as is given by the church for the spiritual welfare of all of its members irrespective of their earthly vocation.

Obviously, families must pool their resources in order to set up organizations for the conduct of schools and in order properly to supervise them. But the responsibility for the formation and direction of these organizations lies with the individual families, with the parents.

PAUL WOOLLEY

II.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE MATTER OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The terms of the commission given to this Committee by the Eleventh Gen-

eral Assembly obviously imply that the responsibility to be studied is the responsibility of the church visible, the church organized, in accordance with Christ's institution, for purposes of worship, testimony and edification and for the administration of order and discipline according to Christ's appointment.

Since the phrase "theological education" has not been restricted in any way it must be understood in a comprehensive sense. Hence the task assigned to the Committee is conceived of as involving a study of the responsibility of the church in the matter of theological education in every respect in which theological education may properly be conceived of as provided by the church.

The great commission given by our Lord to his disciples on the eve of his ascension, to wit, "Go ye therefore and disciple all the 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", includes teaching as one of the essential functions of evangelization. This teaching is directly a teaching of all nations to keep or observe all things Christ has commanded. Teaching to observe presupposes, first of all, teaching with respect to the content of Christ's commandments. When Christ's commandments are understood in all of their implications, the teaching enjoined must include the whole Word of God. Teaching the whole Word of God is, therefore, an integral part of the evangelization committed to the church. All preaching of the Word of God must be didactic in character.

To the church is also committed what may be regarded as a more specific function of teaching. When the Apostle Paul says that Christ gave "some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers", it is apparent that, whether "pastors and teachers" refer to the same persons and specify the two functions performed by the same persons or to two distinct classes of persons, the function of teaching in distinction from the function of pastoral oversight is accorded a very distinct and important place in the work of the church.

It is also significant that one of the qualifications necessary for a bishop is that he be apt to teach. And Paul charged Timothy that he should commit the testimony of the gospel to faithful men who would be able to teach others also.

It is too apparent to need detailed demonstration that from beginning to end the work of the church in all of its phases is either grounded upon or consists in teaching. The church should always be a teaching church. What the church is to teach is the Word of God.

Teaching the Word of God may properly be regarded as "theological education". Theological education is instruction in theology, and theology is simply the exposition of the truth God has revealed respecting Himself and His manifold relations to men and to the world. All proclamation and inculcation of the Word of God involves the exhibition of the truth of God and therefore involves theological education.

This theological education that constitutes so considerable a part of the work of the church, while it is a feature of the proclamation of the gospel to all men, has, nevertheless, particular relevance to the membership of the church. The church itself must constantly grow in knowledge of the Word and of its implications for faith and life. The Word of God has application to all of life and to every sphere of human vocation. It is the infallible rule of faith and of practice. If the teaching given by the church is to fulfil its task and purpose, if it is to be effective to the end for which it is given, it must take all authorized measures to insure that the Word of God dwells plentifully in all and bears fruit in every station of life in which the members of the church find themselves. The church must, therefore, take into account the multifariousness that exists within the church, the variety of age, of education, of vocation and the difference of sex. In other words, the teaching must be conducted in a way that will meet the peculiar needs of the various classes and groups of which the total membership of the church is composed. In the nature of the case, therefore, a rich variety must characterize the teaching discharged by the church, if the knowledge of the Word is to be properly advanced and its implications fruit-

fully applied. Children will be taught the Word in a way adapted to children and in ways adapted to the needs and attainments of the differing groups among such. Parents will be taught in the Word as the Word bears particularly upon the privileges and duties of parenthood, mothers as the Word of God bears upon the duties of motherhood, fathers as the Word of God bears upon the duties of fatherhood. Business men will be taught in the way adapted to bring the Word of God most effectively to bear upon the conduct of business, professional men in the way that most effectively bears upon the pursuance of professional life, labourers in the way that most effectively secures the interest of truly Christian labour.

The church in its teaching function must not only teach the Word of God as it bears upon the various spheres of life; it must also have very jealous concern to teach the Word of God as it bears upon the life of the members within the sphere of the church itself. The members have not only to know the Word of God and apply it in the life of this world but also most specifically in the discharge of their obligations as members of the church. There is a variety of function and obligation here also, just as there is in life as a whole. The teaching of the church must again appreciate that variety.

One class within the membership of the church consists of those who rule the church, the elders. The future of the church requires that the elders be well instructed in the Word of God and particularly as the Word of God bears upon the faithful discharge of the office of elder. The teaching given by the church must therefore take the most earnest care to insure that elders are thus instructed.

No concern of the church is more paramount than the intelligence, soundness, godliness and competence of those who are the official ministers and teachers of the Word of God. For no class within the membership of the church should the church have more earnest and watchful care; the ministers of the Word will always be the barometer of the church's character and effectiveness. If the teaching imparted by the church must take concern for the peculiar needs of children, of parents, of business men, of professional men and of labourers, how much more must it take all proper measures to insure that the ministers of the Word be instructed in the Word of God and particularly as the Word of God bears upon the sacred task that devolves upon them.

The church should not only exercise this care respecting those who are ministers but also for those who are preparing to be such. They constitute a distinct class within the membership of the church. It follows, therefore, that the church has a very distinct responsibility in insuring that those who are candidates for the ministry receive that instruction in the Word of God that is peculiarly fitted for the vocation to which they are called. The church therefore surely has a responsibility in the matter of the theological education of those who are candidates for the gospel ministry. To exclude this responsibility would lead to the absurd conclusion that the one class of members excluded from the teaching the church must render is the class composed of candidates for the ministry, the very class in the future of which the church has the most jealous concern.

The limits that circumscribe this responsibility must, however, be carefully observed. The teaching responsibility of the church confines itself to the teaching of the Word of God. It is neither the responsibility nor the prerogative of the church to undertake other phases of teaching that are indispensable to the preparation for, and the effective discharge of, the gospel ministry. This is just saying that a competent ministry must be equipped with learning of various kinds which it is not the responsibility of the church to give. Obviously the ministers of the Gospel should be able to read, write and count. But it is not the responsibility of the church to provide elementary school education. Ministers of the Gospel should be equipped with the attainments of higher learning in arts and literature. But it is not the responsibility of the church to provide such. It is the responsibility of the church to exclude from the office of the holy ministry those who are illiterate, but it is not the responsibility of the church to provide the means whereby that illiteracy may be remedied.

This same distinction applies within the sphere of what is often called theological education; to be specific, within what is included in the curriculum of theological seminaries. There is much within the scope of the theological education provided by theological seminaries that does not come within the scope of the theological education that is the responsibility of the church. For example, seminary training usually includes, and should include, training in public speaking and in the proper use of the voice in public speech. But such training is no part of the theological education which it is the responsibility of the church to provide. Again, the seminary curriculum invariably includes the history of the church since the apostolic age. It will be conceded that this is a most essential part of the training of a minister of the Gospel. It must also be granted that the history of the church can be most effectively used in teaching the Word of God. But since the teaching of church history is not teaching the Word of God, it is not a part of the teaching committed to the church. Furthermore, a knowledge of the original languages of Scripture is a requisite part of the equipment necessary for the teaching of the Word of God given by the church. But imparting a knowledge of these languages is not teaching the Word of God and is not therefore part of the responsibility devolving upon the church. These examples are sufficient to show that much of the curriculum of theological seminaries is outside the sphere of the education that is the responsibility of the church.

There are, however, several phases of theological education conducted ordinarily by theological seminaries that quite properly come within the scope of the theological education which it is the duty of the church to provide. For example, a great part of the work of the Old and New Testament departments is taken up with the interpretation and exposition of the Word of God. Such interpretation and exposition is quite properly the function of the church and may with propriety be given under its official auspices. Again, Systematic Theology largely consists in the systematic presentation of the truth revealed in Scripture and is therefore the type of teaching that quite properly belongs to the theological education given by the church. Apologetics, also, insofar as it includes the defense of the Christian faith and the exposition of Christian philosophy, is properly the type of teaching that falls within the theological education given by the church.

The conclusion at which we arrive, therefore, is that certain phases of a seminary curriculum fall quite properly into the category of the theological education conducted by the church and that other phases of such a curriculum are no part of the church's responsibility.

It is highly important to remember, however, that though the church is obligated to teach the whole counsel of God, it does not follow that the teaching of the whole counsel of God may be given only under the auspices of the church. There are other auspices under which it is just as obligatory to teach and inculcate the Word of God. Such teaching should be given by parents in the instruction and nurture of their children. But the life of the family is not conducted under the auspices of the church. Such teaching should also be given in the Christian school in all of its stages and developments. The Christian world and life view as set forth in Scripture is the basis of the Christian school, and so the whole range of Scripture truth must, in the nature of the case, be presented if the education given is to be thoroughly Christian in character. But the Christian school, whether at the elementary or the secondary or the university stage, should not be conducted under the auspices of the church. The teaching of the Word of God given in the family and in the Christian school will indeed, as regards content, coincide with the teaching given by the church, but this coincidence as regards content does not in the least imply that such teaching should be given under the auspices of the church.

In like manner a theological seminary should teach the whole counsel of God. A great deal of the teaching must therefore coincide with the teaching given by the church, and, furthermore, a great deal of it is the teaching that may properly be conducted by the church and under its official auspices. It does not follow, however, that the teaching of the Word of God given in a theological

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