

**The
Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

**MINUTES OF THE
SEVENTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**MEETING AT
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

MAY 25-29, 1950



**Published by
THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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SEVENTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
CHESTNUT HILL, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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THURSDAY, MAY 25th

THURSDAY MORNING

The Moderator of the Sixteenth General Assembly, the Rev. Dwight H. Poundstone, opened the devotional service preceding the Seventeenth General Assembly at 11:00 a. m., May 25, 1950, in the Library Auditorium of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mr. Poundstone preached a sermon entitled, "The Message We Preach," based on 1 Corinthians 1:23,24. Following the sermon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered by Mr. Poundstone, assisted by the Rev. Lawrence R. Eyres and the Rev. Lester R. Bachman and by Ruling Elders George O. Cotton, Thomas G. Kay, C. Muller and Justus L. Bryan.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON

The Seventeenth General Assembly was convened at 2 p. m., Thursday, May 25, 1950, with prayer by Mr. Poundstone.

The roll of commissioners follows:

THE ROLL OF THE ASSEMBLY

Presbytery of California

Ministers: Lawrence R. Eyres, Dwight H. Poundstone, Delbert E. Schowalter.

Presbytery of the Dakotas

Ministers: Melvin B. Nonhof, Arthur O. Olson, Edward Wybenga.

Elders: George O. Cotton, V. Robert Nilson.

Presbytery of New Jersey

Ministers: William Harlee Bordeaux, Th.D., Ralph E. Clough, Bruce A. Coie, Leslie A. Dunn, Robert W. Eckardt, Charles H. Ellis, Theodore J. Georgian, Richard W. Gray, Lewis J. Grotenhuis, John C. Hills, Jr., Edward Kellogg, Meredith Kline, James W. Price.

Elders: Justus L. Bryan, Jesse J. Denton, Wilfred Moses, Willard G. Neel.

Presbytery of New York and New England

Ministers: John J. De Waard, Herbert Du Mont, Raymond M. Meiners, John Murray, John H. Skilton, Charles E. Stanton, Robert L. Vining.

Elders: Alexander Muir, C. Muller.

Presbytery of Ohio

Ministers: J. Lyle Shaw, Ph.D., D.D.

Presbytery of Philadelphia

Ministers: Robert L. Atwell, Lester R. Bachman, John W. Betzold, Eugene Bradford, J. P. Clelland, Glenn R. Coie, Raymond Commeret, Calvin K. Cummings, Clarence W. Duff, Edwards E. Elliott, David Freeman, John P. Galbraith, William C. Goodrow, R. B. Kuiper, Arthur W. Kuschke, Robert S. Marsden, Le Roy B. Oliver, Henry D. Phillips, Leslie W. Sloat, Ned B. Stonehouse, Th.D., Henry Tavares, C. Van Til, Ph.D., Paul Woolley, Edward J. Young, Ph.D.

Elders: Charles Anderson, T. F. Armour, Robert F. Cole, William B. Gaillard, A. Eugene Hayman, Jr., Thomas G. Kay, Walter T. Oliver, Howard Silbert, Murray Forst Thompson (alt.).

However even if the Constitution of the American Council met with complete approval there would remain the practical difficulty of what appears to be the settled policy of the Council to make pronouncements which cannot be shown to be warranted by the Word of God and are therefore beyond the legitimate sphere of the Council. As instances of such pronouncements we cite: the Council's advocacy of universal military training in peacetime; its petitions to the United States government for intervention in Korea and Greece; the resolution passed by the Seventh Annual Convention in Philadelphia, October 28-31, 1948, "We call upon the representatives of freedom-loving nations for a complete and frank showdown with Russia"; the demand made in the election campaign of 1948 that John Foster Dulles not be appointed Secretary of State; the resolution passed at Atlanta, Georgia, May 6-9, 1948, "The F. E. P. C. is a vital part of the communist program . . . In the name of civil rights, the proposed Civil Rights program will destroy America's most fundamental civil liberties"; and a continuous identification of modern capitalism with the teachings of the Bible. It is not that we necessarily disagree with the positions taken in these resolutions, but we hold rather that the moral and spiritual issues are not sufficiently clear on the basis of Scripture to warrant adoption of such statements by a council of churches. By such actions as those mentioned above, the American Council of Christian Churches has become embroiled in politics in a way beyond the province of the church and unless this policy were revised membership in the Council would inevitably involve our church in action and propaganda of a partisan political character.

We recommend that the General Assembly urge the American Council to desist from the issuance of such political pronouncements, and to give serious consideration to the suggested constitutional amendments.

V

SOLICITATION OF FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SENDING A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TO THE SECOND PLENARY CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Your Committee wishes to express appreciation to those individuals and churches who have been most helpful in contributing to this fund. It was estimated that \$500 would be adequate for all expenses of one delegate. At the present time, the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension reports total receipts of \$365.75, and the expectation of further receipts.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the
Committee,

NED B. STONEHOUSE, Chairman

A MINORITY REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SEVENTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

I, the undersigned, a minority of the Committee on Ecumenicity elected by the Sixteenth General Assembly, respectfully submit the following minority report to the Seventeenth General Assembly. In doing so I wish to express my agreement with the greater part of the report of the Committee. I am deeply gratified that, both in the enunciation of principles and in the application of these principles, agreement covers so large an area. I am convinced that the report of the Committee makes an estimable contribution to the clarification and resolution of those questions which were referred to the Committee by the Sixteenth General Assembly.

My dissent from the report of the Committee respects only some specific points. I particularly dissent from the provision made in the first part of the report whereby an instrument of cooperation is accorded the proximate right to act upon the inclusion or exclusion of Churches. Since an instrument of cooperation is an instrument erected by the cooperating Churches I do not deem it to be a proper function of the instrument of cooperation to act upon the inclusion or exclusion of Churches. I consider that the utmost of prerogative which an instrument of cooperation might perform in such a matter is to consider the qualifications of such Churches as might seek to cooperate with the other cooperating Churches and make recommendations accordingly to the cooperating Churches. It would be the prerogative of the cooperating Churches to act upon the inclusion or exclusion of Churches.

Furthermore, I consider that a succinct statement of principles which should govern the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in cooperating with other denominations is a *desider-*

atum, and that, in accordance with these principles, a sharp line of distinction should be drawn between cooperation on the part of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with Churches of like purity in faith and practice, on the one hand, and cooperation with non-Reformed Churches, on the other. This distinction is sometimes liable to be blurred in the first part of the Committee's report and the application of this distinction to the question of the American Council of Christian Churches is not as apparent as I deem necessary.

Hence, in order to serve the end of validating my objection to the provision which accords to an instrument of cooperation the proximate right of acting on the inclusion or exclusion of Churches and in order to provide a succinct statement of principles, particularly in their application to membership in the American Council of Christian Churches and the International Council of Christian Churches, I submit the following observations:

(1) The Orthodox Presbyterian Church may cooperate with other Reformed Churches of like purity in faith and practice in the discharge of those functions which are most specifically the functions of the church. The ways in which such cooperation may be conducted are varied and it would be impossible to reduce them to one stereotyped pattern. The method of cooperation would be dictated by the nature of the particulars in which cooperation would be conducted and by the circumstances and conditions whether local or denominational.

(2) Such cooperating Churches may erect and, in certain cases, might be required to erect an "instrument of cooperation" for the actual execution of *certain* cooperative enterprises. There are obviously limitations to the functions which might be committed to an *instrument* of cooperation. For certain functions would have to be performed by, and directly under the auspices of, the courts of the respective Churches and could not even be executed by an instrument of cooperation. The administering of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline would be cases in point.

(3) The Orthodox Presbyterian Church itself, whether it be the General Assembly, in cases of denominational cooperation, or the Presbyteries and Sessions, in cases of local cooperation, must determine with what Churches it may thus cooperate. It is not the prerogative of the instrument of cooperation to determine this; the existence of the instrument of cooperation presupposes that the Churches concerned have decided to cooperate and have determined to erect this instrument of cooperation to carry into effect certain purposes or projects.

(4) Neither the A.C.C.C. nor the I.C.C.C. falls into this category because they comprise and intend to comprise in their membership Churches of non-Reformed persuasion.

(5) The Orthodox Presbyterian Church may cooperate with non-Reformed Churches in matters which are not specifically the functions of the Church but which are essential to the discharge of these functions. These may be called "essential incidentals". They comprise such activities as the securing of property in which to conduct the God-given obligations of the church, the making of representation or protestation to civil authorities in reference to the rights of the church, and the securing of the right to enter various fields in order to fulfill the Lord's commission.

(6) Such cooperating Churches may erect an instrument of cooperation in order that such an instrument may more effectively perform the ends in view.

(7) Such an instrument of cooperation must be erected by the Churches cooperating and the Churches must determine what the character of the instrument is to be, how it is to be constituted, and what functions it is to perform.

(8) The Orthodox Presbyterian Church must determine with what Churches it is to cooperate. It may not commit the determination of that question to any other organization nor to the instrument of cooperation. It must not assume the risk of finding itself in cooperation with a denomination with which it did not itself decide to cooperate.

(9) Such an instrument of cooperation as may be erected by such cooperating Churches may not carry into execution any of those functions which are specifically the functions of the church but only *certain* functions as have been defined above in terms of essential incidentals. It may not conduct, for example, evangelism.

(10) If the A.C.C.C. and the I.C.C.C. could be construed simply as instruments of cooperation, they would fall into this second category, namely, instruments of cooperation for cooperation with churches other than Reformed.

(11) Neither the A.C.C.C. nor the I.C.C.C. conforms to the prescriptions outlined above for the reasons given in the report of the Committee, to wit, that the functions per-

formed by these Councils are to a very considerable extent those which would apply to cooperation with Reformed Churches of like purity in faith and practice with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

(12) If the I.C.C.C. were permanently to follow the pattern laid out in the present form of its constitution the Orthodox Presbyterian Church would not be warranted in being a member of it.

(13) In the matter of cooperation with other Churches and in devising instruments of cooperation which will carry into effect certain tasks which the Churches cooperating may perform together, the minority considers that it is necessary to rethink the whole question lest we become involved in the pattern of those organizations which have grown up in the last half century which have loaded themselves, or have been loaded, with prerogatives which trespass upon the functions which are to be performed by the church itself and not even by an instrument of cooperation. It appears to the minority that neither the A.C.C.C. nor the I.C.C.C., however noble the intentions of those who established them, has proceeded on the basis of those principles that should guide the Churches concerned in erecting an instrument or instruments of cooperation.

Respectfully submitted,
JOHN MURRAY

A MINORITY REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SEVENTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

I, the undersigned, a minority of the Committee on Ecumenicity elected by the Sixteenth General Assembly, respectfully submit the following minority report to the Seventeenth General Assembly. In doing so, I should like to indicate my complete accord with much in the official report of the Committee, whose work may well prove to be of considerable profit to both the American and the International Councils of Christian Churches. Both these Councils being composed of fallible men, notwithstanding their regeneration, it is but to be expected that mistakes of judgment shall from time to time be made. Nor is it my opinion that the Constitution of either organization as formulated at this moment is the ultimate in excellence or perfection. Therefore, I view with appreciation the well-meaning attempts of any Christian men to make recommendations designed to achieve a more perfect instrument in each of these aforementioned Constitutions.

I concur fully with the Committee sentiment that "Our Church has rightly felt itself under obligation either to join the (American) Council or justify its refusal to do so." Tho this may be said with intent to honor the American Council, the end result is that of doing much harm to the Council; for, it is tantamount to saying, "Our report reveals such serious defects in the Constitution and practice of the American Council as justifies the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and by necessary inference, would justify all other Bible-loyal Protestant churches, in standing aloof from the American Council of Christian Churches." With this conclusion I cannot agree, for I am persuaded that *facts* will not sustain so serious and unfavorable a verdict. One could quite as easily build this case: That because of the imperfections in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, those unaffiliated but of Reformed persuasion are justified in refraining from uniting with our denomination.

It is my deep and unalterable conviction that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church erred in not identifying itself years ago, in the so-called "formative years," with the American Council; and, that the failure of our Church to apply for General Constituent Membership during these past three Assemblies constitutes a continuance of that mistake. In the light of what the American Council may be fifty years from now, it is still in the formative period. For a more effective combatting of the forces of modernist unbelief and championing of the cause of the historic Christian faith, it is my opinion that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church should immediately seek membership in the American Council of Christian Churches. By such action, our Church would encourage other churches free from the blight of modernism to do likewise, and an increasing number of our members who have desired this relationship for years would thereby be encouraged. Above all other considerations, it is our considered opinion that the presence of our denomination in the American Council of Christian Churches would be to the advantage of the church universal, and would bring glory to Christ, its exalted Head.

Respectfully submitted,
WM. HARLLEE BORDEAUX