

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**MEETING AT
GLENSIDE, PENNSYLVANIA**

JUNE 5 - 10, 1961



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MINUTES OF THE
TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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June 5-10, 1961

MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 5

Ruling Elder David L. Neilands, Moderator of the Twenty-seventh General Assembly, opened the Worship Service preceding the Twenty-eighth General Assembly at 8:00 o'clock, June 5, 1961, at Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Glenside, Pa. Mr. Neilands spoke on the theme: "God Delivers His People," basing his meditation on Exodus 40:17-38. The Rev. Edward J. Young administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, assisted by the Rev. Messrs. Jack J. Peterson and Robert H. Graham and by Ruling Elders Willard E. Neel, Lambert Van Eerden, Harry Greiner, and George E. Smith.

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 6

The Twenty-eighth General Assembly was called to order at 9:07 o'clock and was constituted with prayer by Mr. Neilands, following a devotional service at 8:40 o'clock led by the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas.

The roll of commissioners follows:

Presbytery of California

Ministers: Henry W. Coray, Edwards E. Elliott, Edward L. Kellogg, Paul M. Lovik, Robert E. Nicholas, Arthur O. Olson, Dwight H. Poundstone, Salvador M. Solis.

Ruling Elders: David L. Neilands, George E. Smith, Clarence P. Taylor.

Presbytery of the Dakotas

Ministers: Carl A. Ahlfeldt, Elmer M. Dortzbach, Jonathan D. Male, Russell D. Piper, Donald F. Stanton, Laurence N. Vail.

Presbytery of New Jersey

Ministers: W. Lee Benson, W. Harlee Bordeaux, Th.D., Calvin A. Busch, Thomas S. Champness, Jr., Leonard F. Chanoux, Ralph E. Clough, Edmund P. Clowney, Raymond E. Commeret, John Davies, Everett C. DeVelde, Leslie A. Dunn, Meredith G. Kline, Ph.D., Le Roy B. Oliver, Jack J. Peterson, Arthur B. Spooner.

Ruling Elders: Richard A. Barker, Floyd C. Graf, Garret A. Hoogerhyde, Paul S. MacDonald, Ernest J. Muller, Malcolm L. Woodruff; *alternate*: Edward A. Haug, Jr.

Presbytery of New York and New England

Ministers: Herbert V. G. DuMont, Theodore J. Georgian, Burton L. Goddard, Th.D., John C. Hills, Jr., Ronald E. Jenkins, Raymond M. Mciners, John Murray, Charles G. Schauffele, Laurence C. Sibley, Jr., John H. Skilton, Ph.D., G. I. Williamson, George J. Willis.

Ruling Elders: Charles A. Embrey, John Garland.

Presbytery of Ohio

Ministers: Calvin K. Cummings, Arnold S. Kress, Thomas E. Tyson, William Young, Th.D., B.Litt. (Oxon.).

Ruling Elders: J. E. Atwell, John C. Smith.

Presbytery of Philadelphia

Ministers: Robert L. Atwell, Lester R. Bachman, Robert W. Eckardt, Charles H. Ellis, F. Clarke Evans, Henry H. Fikkert, John P. Galbraith, Robert H. Graham, Robley J. Johnston, George W. Knight, III, Robert D. Knudsen, Ph.D., Arthur W. Kuschke, Jr., Luther Craig Long, Ph.D., John J. Mitchell, William J. Rankin, Cromwell G. Roskamp, Leslie W. Sloat, Ned B. Stonehouse, Th.D.,

TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Accountable		19,861.48
Disbursements		
Rayner Dalheim Co.	9,000.00	
Preparation of copy	116.00	
Copyright permits	16.50	
Promotion Expense	106.15	
Committee Expense	201.41	
Postage, etc.	75.91	
Miscellaneous	66.17	9,582.14
Cash on Hand 5-4-61		10,279.34
		\$19,861.48

BALANCE SHEET

Assets	
Cash in Phila. Nat. Bank	1,295.91
Cash in Phila. Savings Fund Society	8,956.30
Petty Cash	27.13
	\$10,279.34
Liabilities	
Demand Loans	7,025.00
Surplus	3,254.34
	\$10,279.34

On motion the recommendation that the Committee be continued was adopted.

On amended motion the Committee was instructed to provide leather-bound copies of the hymnal in accordance with its promise, if the churches expecting such copies do not release the Committee from this obligation.

On motion the Assembly determined to proceed to the next item on the docket.

Mr. Clowney, a member of the Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church, presented the report of the Committee as follows:

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO CONFER WITH REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

The Committee reports that several meetings of the Committee were held since the Twenty-seventh General Assembly and that on November 19, 1960, a conference with the corresponding Committee of the Christian Reformed Church was conducted.

The Committee wishes to draw the attention of the Assembly to twelve propositions presented to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1944 in a "Report of the Committee on an Ecumenical Council of Reformed Churches and Correspondence with Other Churches" and with the substance of which the Synod expressed agreement (*Acts of Synod 1944*, p. 85). Of special significance is proposition 11 which reads as follows:

All truly Reformed churches on our North American continent should, as a matter of scriptural, i. e., divine requirement, be confederated. Accordingly steps should be taken, in due order, to bring this imperative confederation about. These churches have no right in the sight of God to remain ecclesiastically divided. To prevail upon them to unite may be a stupendous task, but it

should not be evaded and shirked by the Christian Reformed Church, since God in His grace has given it the conviction that this labor of love is its bounden duty. The least that can be done is to do what our hand now and here finds to do and to do it with all our might, in reliance upon God's grace and the operation of the Holy Spirit and in love to our brethren in Christ" (*Acts of Synod 1944*, p. 360).

The Committee has adopted the following statement respecting the biblical basis for ecclesiastical union and respectfully submits the same to the General Assembly for its consideration.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR ECCLESIASTICAL UNION

In ecclesiastical union two denominational communions join in submitting to one common form of government. Since ecclesiastical jurisdiction includes the maintenance of spiritual discipline, unity in polity requires agreement in the standards of faith and worship which such discipline maintains. Hence unification in polity, when properly sought and achieved, involves also unity in faith, discipline, and worship.

As we take account of the diversity that exists between denominations arising from differences of ethnic identity, cultural background, and historical circumstance the most conclusive evidence derived from Scripture is required to support the position that the obliteration of denominational separateness is an obligation resting upon these Churches of Christ. The differences that exist often manifest the diversity which the church of Christ ought to exemplify and make for the enrichment of the church's total witness. If ecclesiastical union impairs this diversity, then it may be achieved at too great an expense and tends to an impoverishment inconsistent with the witness to Christ which the church must bear.

Though the diversity which manifests itself in differentiating historical development might appear to make ecclesiastical union inadvisable or even perilous in certain cases, yet the biblical evidence in support of union is so plain that any argument to the contrary, however plausible, must be false.

I. *The Ethnic Universalism of the Gospel*

In Christ Jesus there is now no longer Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free (*cf.* Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The New Testament does not suppose that the differences natural to individuals nor those arising from ethnic identity, cultural background, and historical circumstance are to be obliterated by the gospel. But it does mean that the unity in Christ transcends all diversity arising from language, race, culture, history. What is more, this unity embraces and utilises all the diversity that is proper and that is created by God's providence. If we should maintain that the diversity is in any way incompatible with the unity of which the church is the expression, then we should be denying *that* unity which the ethnic universalism of the gospel implies. Implicit in the universalism of the gospel is the same kind of universalism in that which the gospel designs, the building up of Christ's church.

II. *The Universalism of the Apostolic Church*

The church of the apostolic days embraced all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. There is no evidence in the New Testament for the diversification of distinct denominations and anything tending to such diversification was condemned (*cf.* I Cor. 1:10-13). The emphasis falls upon the oneness of faith (*cf.* Eph. 4:5) and the oneness of the fellowship of the saints (*cf.* Eph. 4:2-4, 11-16; Phil. 2:2, 3; 4:2).

III. *Jesus' Prayer for Unity* (John 17:20, 21).

It is a travesty of this text, as of all others bearing upon the unity of the church, to think of the unity for which Christ prayed apart from unity of faith in the bond of truth. Verse 21 must not be dissociated from verse 20. To divorce the unity for which Christ prayed from all that is involved in believing upon him through the apostolic witness is to sunder what Christ placed together. Furthermore, the pattern Jesus provides in this prayer — “as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee” — makes mockery of the application of this text when unity is divorced from the characterisation which finds its analogy in trinitarian unity and harmony.

But while these and other distortions of this text are to be shunned, the prayer of Jesus does bear upon our question in two respects.

1. The fragmentation and consequent lack of fellowship, harmony, and cooperation which appear on the ecclesiastical scene are a patent contradiction of the unity exemplified in that to which Jesus referred when he said, “as thou, Father art in me and I in thee.”

2. The purpose stated in Jesus' prayer — “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” — implies a manifestation observable by the world. Jesus prays for a visible unity that will bear witness to the world. The mysterious unity of believers with one another must come to visible expression so as to be instrumental in bringing conviction to the world.

IV. *The Unity of the Body of Christ*

The church is the body of Christ and there is no schism in the body (cf. I Cor. 12:25). As in the human body, there is diversity in unity and unity in diversity (cf. I Cor. 12). The point to be stressed, however, is the unity. If there is unity it follows that this unity must express itself in all the functions which belong to the church. Since government in the church is an institution of Christ (cf. Rom. 12:8; I Cor. 12:28; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7; I Pet. 5:1, 2), this unity must be expressed in government. The necessary inference to be drawn is that the government should manifest the unity and be as embrative in respect of its functioning as the unity of which it is an expression. A concrete illustration of this principle is the decree of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:28, 29; 16:4).

V. *The Kingdom of Christ, etc.*

Christ is the head of the church. So ultimately there is the most concentrated unity of government in the church of Christ. He alone is King. Any infringement upon this sovereignty belonging to Christ is a violation of what is basic and central in the government of the church. It follows that all government in the church must adhere to the pattern of a cone which has its apex in Christ.

Christ also instituted the apostolate with authority delegated from him (Matt. 16:18, 19; cf. Jn. 20:21, 23; Eph. 2: 19-22). This apostolic authority is exercised now only through the inscripturated Word. But in the sphere of delegated authority the apostolate is supreme and will continue to be so to the end of time. This is the way the Holy Spirit, as the vicar of Christ abiding in and with the church, exercises his function in accordance with Christ's promise. He seals the apostolic witness by his own testimony and illumines the people of God in the interpretation and application of the same.

Subordinately, however, in terms of Matt. 16:19, the hegemony of the apostolate is undeniable and it exemplifies the descending hierarchy which Christ has established.

There is also in the New Testament institution the delegated authority of the presbyterate, always subject to the apostolic institution, to the Holy Spirit who inspired the

apostles (Jn. 16:13; 20:22), and ultimately to Christ as the King and Head of the church, but nevertheless supreme in this sphere of government.

Since all office in the church of Christ can be fulfilled only by the gifts of the Spirit, this structural subordination of the government of the church to the rule of

Christ functions in living reality as a fellowship of the one Spirit. Every one who has the Spirit of Christ is thereby called as a good steward of the manifold grace of God to minister his spiritual gifts to all the saints, so far as he is given opportunity. In particular, those whose gifts are for rule in the church must exercise such gifts in the communion of Christ and his church.

When these principles of gradation and communion are appreciated and when coordinated with the other considerations already established, especially that of the unity of the body of Christ, we appear to be provided with a pattern that points to the necessity of making the presbyterate as inclusive as is consistent with loyalty to Christ and the faith of the gospel. In a word, we are pointed to the necessity of unity in government, a unity that is violated when Churches of Christ adhering to the faith in its purity and integrity are not thus united.

The Committee recommends:

1. That the General Assembly advise the Presbyteries to exchange delegates with the Christian Reformed Church on the Presbytery/Classis level wherever this is possible;
2. That the Committee be continued.

Respectfully submitted,

John Murray
Chairman

On separate motions the recommendations of the report were adopted.

Messrs. Atwell and Clowney presented their resignations from the Committee. Mr. Galbraith presented his resignation as an alternate member of the Committee.

On motion the Assembly proceeded to the election of two members to fill the existing vacancies on the Committee.

The following were nominated for election to the Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church: the Rev. Messrs. Stonehouse, Knight, Galbraith, Woolley, and Champness. A ballot was cast.

The tellers reported the election of Messrs. Stonehouse and Woolley to the Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church.

On motion the Assembly determined to proceed to the next item on the docket.

Dr. Stonehouse, Chairman of the Committee on Correspondence with Other Churches, presented the report of the Committee as follows:

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CORRESPONDENCE WITH OTHER CHURCHES TO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In accordance with the authorization of the 1960 General Assembly the Committee has appointed delegates to the 1961 general assemblies or synods of the following bodies:

Bible Presbyterian Church, Inc. _____	Rev. Albert G. Edwards
Christian Reformed Church in North America _____	Rev. Ned B. Stonehouse
Reformed Church in the United States, Eureka Classis _____	Rev. John C. Verhage
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, General Synod _____	Rev. Paul Woolley
Synod of the Reformed Church of North	

America (Covenanter) _____	Rev. Calvin K. Cummings
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