

Committee IV presents

Material

Agenda T, 6 Report of "Committee on the revision of the Church Order",
appointed by Synod 1968

Information

The Committee on the Church Order informs Synod that there is a difference of opinion within the Committee, appointed by General Synod 1968 (Acts, art 179), regarding the interpretation of the mandate given by Synod ' 68:

- a.- just a correction as to the wording and outdated expressions and institutions ?
- b.- or a general revision ?

The Committee requests Synod, to continue the Committee, and to further define the mandate and authority of this Committee.

Observations

1. The mandate of Synod Orangeville 1968 was :
 - " a. to improve the wording of the draft-translation wherever necessary;
 - b. to revise the Church Order where such revision would profit the Churches (Art. 86 C.O.) "
2. Revision of the Church Order has been on the table of General Synods since 1954:
 - a. Synod 1954 stated the necessity of revision of the Church Order with regard to the " special Canadian situation " (Acts, art. 94) and took decisions.
 - b. Synod 1958 dealt with proposals of revision regarding nineteen articles of the Church Order. (See Acts, art. 60, 61, 72)
 - c. Synod 1968 discussed an overture of Regional Synod East, Sept. 1968, to appoint a Committee with the mandate: a general revision of the Church Order.
The grounds for this overture (" without pretending to be exhaustive ") were :
 - (1) several articles (5 mentioned) need corrections;
 - (2) several (ten are mentioned) should be changed ;
 - (3) some (four are mentioned) " could be dropped " ;
 - (4) additions might be advisable (seven were suggested)
3. Disagreement within the Committee may have been caused by the somewhat ambiguous character of the mandate, mentioned before:
 - a. at the one hand : " improve the wording of the draft-translation "
 - b. at the other hand : " revise the Church Order " .

We observed that the Committee in its report presents itself with a name different from the one given to this Committee by Synod 1968:

- not " Committee on Translation and Revision Church Order. " (Art. 180, e)
- but " Committee on the Revision of the Church Order "

completed ?

Committee IV is under the impression, that the Committee, appointed by Synod 1968 came to the conclusion:

if a (general) revision was meant, there is not much sense in spending energy on the present draft-translation.

Considerations

1. Art. 86 C.O. states - not only that "these articles may", but - that they "ought to be altered, augmented or diminished, if the profit of the churches demand it."
2. This "ought" needs stressing in order to prevent the danger that a partly out-dated Church Order might undermine its own authority in the churches.
3. It will be "to the profit of the churches" (Art. 86 C.O.) to have a Church Order that is clear, straightforward, understandable for everyone and in all its parts applicable to the life of the churches.
4. This "ought" thus understood, implies that a revision should not be limited to the correction of some out-dated expressions, but should be realized in a general revision as suggested to General Synod 1968 by Regional Synod East and decided upon by this Synod. (Art. 179 2, b)
5. Such a general revision has to strive for an undiluted preservation of the reformed character of the Church Order in its present form.
6. A Committee, preparing such a general revision, should have the authority to propose changes "even there where also in the past no proposals regarding changing of the Church Order ~~have been received~~ have been received." (Report Committee)
7. Because of the ~~xxxxxx~~ extent of such a mandate, a definite target-date should not be set.
However, the churches should be kept informed about the progress of the work.
8. In the meantime the churches maintain the Church Order as presently worded in the "draft-translation" provisionally adopted by General Synod 1968 .

Recommendations

1. Synod continue the "Committee on the Revision of the Church Order", appointed by General Synod 1968.

Ground: The mandate given in 1968, has not been completed.

2. Synod decide to give the following, more specific mandate to this Committee:
 - a. to undertake a general revision of the presently adopted Church Order, as much as "the profit of the churches demand it" (Art. 86 C.O.), with undiluted preservation of the Reformed character of this Church Order; paying special attention to suggestions, submitted in the past

by churches and major assemblies concerning change, correction, updating and/or deletion of articles, as well as profitable additions.

Grounds:

- (a) Art. 86 C.O. requires that the churches consider whether "these articles.... ought to be altered, augmented or diminished" for "the profit of the churches".
 - (b) several overtures, in the past presented to General Synods have not been dealt with, but were included in the mandate ~~of~~ given by Synod 1968 (Acts, art. 179, sub 2 b and 3)
- b. to keep the churches informed from time to time of provisional results, so that constructive criticism from the churches may be expected and digested.
- c. to report to the next General Synod on the progress of the work.