

Report of the Committee on the
Translation of the Heidelberg Catechism,
appointed by Synod of Orangeville, 1968.

~~S-B-1971~~

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2 pages

Esteemed Brethren:

Synod of Orangeville, 1968, appointed the undersigned together with the Rev. C. VanSpronsen in order

to be diligent with respect to all aspects of a new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, and to report to the churches in due time.

Since the Rev. VanSpronsen left the country as Missionary for Brazil the undersigned decided to continue without his help.

We could be brief in our report. To the best of our knowledge no new English translation and publication of the Heidelberg Catechism appeared since Synod of Orangeville dealt with the 400th Anniversary Edition and the Thomas F. Torrance translation. All that became available in this respect was a draft translation of Lord's Day 1 to 8, presented to the Christian Reformed Synod, 1970, and published in the Acts of this Synod. A Committee of this Synod is still working on the completion of the Catechism text. We therefore cannot make any definite recommendation as to this new translation.

However, having studied the draft translation of the first eight Lord's Days (see Acts of Synod 1970 of the Christian Reformed Church, pp. 462-7), we should like to make some remarks regarding the matter of a new translation, and to bring them to the attention of Synod.

1. As to the draft presented to the Christian Reformed Synod, although it is in some respects an improvement upon the original text, we fear that it will not be met with unanimous approval in our Churches. In several places it can be questioned whether the new translation is indeed an improvement upon the text which is now in use. To take a few examples from the first Lord's Day to support our opinion that in some ways the translation is inferior to the present text:
 - a. We wonder why in Lord's Day 1 the expression
"and delivered me from all the power of the devil..."
should be replaced by
"and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil..."
Stylistically it seems to us an unnecessary alteration, while at the same time we feel that the word "power" is to be preferred over "tyranny" (original German "gewalt"; Latin "potestas"); and the word "all" is missing altogether, although it occurs in both the German and Latin texts.
 - b. The following sentence is translated in the draft:
"He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair..."
We wonder again why the original expression
"and so preserves me that...not a hair..."
has been replaced.
Here also the alteration was, in our opinion, not required for the sake of clarity, and we feel that the word "preseves" gives a fuller idea of what is meant by the German "bewart" and the Latin "conservat" than the verb that has been substituted.
2. When comparing the draft mentioned under 1 with the present text the question arose whether the Churches really need an altogether new translation. We came to the conclusion that it might be possible to maintain the present text which is in use in our Churches, except that certain "difficult" words and expressions be changed, and that some of the too complex sentences be recast. Thus a text of the Catechism could be obtained which remains in close harmony with

the original German text but which is at the same time more easily understood and memorized. For this purpose the draft of the Christian Reformed Church, as mentioned above, could be very helpful.

We therefore wish to recommend to Synod that

Synod decide to appoint Deputies with the mandate:

I to revise the text of the Heidelberg Catechism

- a. by replacing 'difficult' and anachronistic words and expressions;
- b. by recasting sentences which are too complex.

Deputies shall take care that they adhere closely to the original German text.

II to report to the next Synod, and to send copies of a draft text of the Heidelberg Catechism to the Churches at such a time that it can be examined and judged by the Churches before Synod convenes.

With Christian greetings,
respectfully yours:

F.G. Oosterhoff

H.A. Stel