

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN GEORGIA ON SECESSION AND SLAVERY

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## THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN GEORGIA ON SECESSION AND SLAVERY.

Notwithstanding the fact that the two questions to which the following paper is devoted were settled through the arbitrament of war more than half a century ago, it is considered proper to now make public the attitude taken by one branch of the Christian Church in Georgia at the time when those questions were so prominently in the minds of the people of the whole country, and the actual causes of the four years' terrible struggle between the North and the South.

Before the year 1867, what is now known as the Presbytery of Savannah was known as the Presbytery of Georgia.

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Georgia held in the month of November, 1861, in Darien, a committee consisting of Rev. R. Q. Mallard and Rev. D. L. Buttolph, was appointed to consider Presbytery's relations with the Old School General Assembly, and also the action of said General Assembly at its late meeting in reference to the State of the Country, which committee brought in the following paper which was unanimously adopted:

"RESOLUTIONS OF WITHDRAWMENT FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Whereas, the State of Georgia, upon just and necessary grounds, which, as loyal citizens, we cordially approve, did, on January 19, 1861, withdraw, in the exercise of her own state sovereignty, from and forever cast off all political connection with the United States of America; and said State did, on February 8, 1861, with other Southern and South-western States, unite in the formation of a new government entitled the Confederate States of America, wholly independent of the old confederation, which action we also cordially approve, and to which State and Confederation we hold ourselves loyal citizens and pledged to the extent of our utmost ability in dependence upon the favor of God to sustain and defend; and whereas, it has been the custom of all Protestant Churches to conform their Ecclesiastical connection to the metes and bounds of their civil and political, for most satisfactory reasons of propriety, expediency, harmony and safety,

RESOLVED, That the Presbytery of Georgia does now dissolve all connection with and separate itself entirely from the General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, and is no longer in any form or manner subject to the same.

RESOLVED, further, that the Presbytery of Georgia condemns the action of the last General Assembly on the political state of the country in resolving to sustain the government of the United States in its execrable war upon the Confederate States, in violation of their own constitution and utter disregard of its provisions—in violation of common justice and humanity and of the right of a people to self-government and of withdrawal from a compact denied and broken to their political degradation and ruin, and, above all, in violation of the principles and spirit of the religion of the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—and the said action forced through the Assembly in the face of the solemn protest of the few Southern members present and of a minority of Northern members of weight and influence, and in the absence of the great body of Southern members which, had they been present, would have cast the said action out of the Assembly. This said action the Presbytery of Georgia condemns both in letter and spirit as unwise, unchristian, and tending to schism, and furnishes sufficient ground for our withdrawal, if none other existed.

RESOLVED, In said withdrawal, That we have a just right to our proportion of all property now held by the said General Assembly, and shall in due time, upon ground of Christian equity, insist upon a division of the same.

RESOLVED, That we hereby adopt and adhere to our former standards, the Confession of Faith, Form of Government and Book of Discipline, with such alterations in phraseology as our new circumstances shall require and our coming General Assembly shall determine.

RESOLVED, That, we do now appoint, according to our right of representation in our former connection, Commissioners to meet Commissioners from all the Southern and South-western Presbyteries who will convene in Augusta, Georgia, December 4, 1861, for the purpose of constituting a General Assembly of the Confederate States of America, and do empower them to act in concert with that body in framing all measures necessary to the complete constitution, organization and efficiency of said Assembly.

In accordance with the last resolution Dr. Charles C. Jones and Mr. A. Mitchell, (Elder from the Darien and Harris Neck Churches) were appointed principals and Rev. F. R. Goulding and Mr. T. S. Mallard (Elder from the Waltherville church) alternates to represent the Presbytery of Georgia in the proposed General Assembly to be held in Augusta.

The Presbytery again met on Saturday, November 8, 1862, at Bryan Neck, when the following resolutions were adopted. The Dr. Talmage referred to was the Rev. S. K. Talmage, D. D., the second president of Oglethorpe University, which shortly after suspended operations, and has just recently been re-organized and located near Atlanta. Dr. Talmage was the uncle of Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage of Brooklyn Tabernacle fame. The resolutions were as follows:

RESOLVED, 1st, That Presbytery has read with pleasure and approval the recent letter of Dr. Talmage, published in some of the secular papers in relation to the repealing of the law prohibiting our slaves to read.

RESOLVED, 2nd, That they rejoice in the belief expressed by Dr. Talmage that there will be an application at the approaching session of the Georgia Legislature, from a source entitled to a distinguished consideration, for a repeal of the law prohibiting the right to teach our negroes to read the Sacred Scriptures.

RESOLVED, 3rd, That the Presbytery of Georgia indulges the pleasing hope that the day is not far distant, if indeed it has not already dawned upon us, when the entire slave code of our own and other Confederate States shall be thoroughly revised, and every Statute inconsistent with our character as a Christian nation, with the teachings of God's Holy Word, and with the high and solemn obligations of God's special providence now renewedly imposed upon us, that so nothing may impede us in the diligent and faithful discharge of our solemn trust, assured that we need fear nothing from the full enjoyment on the part of our slaves of all the rights and privileges guaranteed to them in the Word of God, and that the more fully their minds and hearts shall become imbued with its sacred teachings, from whence we derive so clearly our sanction and authority for the institution itself, the better will our slave population be enabled to glorify God, and the more faithful and useful to ourselves will they become.

RESOLVED, 4th, That it is due if only to consistency, that, referring as we constantly do to God's Word for our sanction and authority in regard to the institution of Slavery, we should seek in all respects, as in the sight of God, and exposed ever to the full scrutiny of an enlightened, discerning and censorious world to limit and regulate the institution by the infallible teachings of that Word itself, and so remove from ourselves and the institution the most serious of the allegations it has been customary to employ in opposition."