

The Standards Of
The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod
and
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

A Comparison and Study
Joint Meeting of Midwestern
Presbytery, RPC,ES, and The
Presbytery of the Midwest, OPC

Covenant Presbyterian Church
St. Louis, Missouri
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Comparison of Westminster Confession of Faith
by
Professor Paul Woolley

	<u>Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod</u>	<u>Orthodox Presbyterian Church</u>
I, 1	inexcusable	unexcusable
5	for	of
9	may	must
III, heading	decrees	decree
V, 6	occasion	occasions
VII, 3	incapable	uncapable <i>incapable</i>
	offered	offereth)
	"eternal" omitted before "life"	
X, 3	incapable	uncapable x
4	to	unto
XI, 1	not	nor
XVI, 4	"as" omitted	
XIX, 6	<u>words</u>	works <i>misprint</i>
XX, 1	a willing	willing
2	in	if
	commandments	commands
	"of" omitted before "an implicit faith"	
XXI, 5	<i>and</i> <u>"An"</u> inserted before "vows"	
6	"in" inserted before "truth"	
XXII, 3	"yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority" <u>is inserted</u>	
6	"the" omitted before "obtaining"	
XXIII, 2	occasions	occasion
3	"of" omitted before "infidelity"	
4	"the" added before "people"	
	to him	to them
XXIV, 2	"a" added before "legitimate"	
XXV, 2	together with	and of
XXVI, 3	property	propriety
XXVIII, 5	to	unto
XXIX, 2	the elect	His elect
XXX, 3	"the" omitted before "Like"	
XXXII, heading	Man	Men

Mostly misprints or language usage adjustments.

Some comparisons based on unknown and remote sources

Comparison of the Forms of Government and Books of Discipline of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
 Prepared by the Rev. Kenneth A. Horner, Jr. and the Rev. George W. Knight, III,
 for the Committee on Fraternal Relations of the Reformed Presbyterian Church,
 Evangelical Synod and the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of
 the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

I. Form of Government

Historical background. The O.P. Form was adopted in 1937 and last revised in 1957. A Second Revised Version of 1967 is now before that denomination for study and will be coming before one of the next Assemblies for adoption. The old E.P. Form was very similar to the original O.P. Form. The R.P. Church, G.S. had its own Form which had been adopted in its latest edition in 1957. A joint committee of these two churches prepared a new Form of Government which was proposed as part of their plan of union in 1964, and as revised in May, 1967, by the 145th General Synod is the present Form of the RPC, ES.

Differences.

<u>RPC, ES Form</u>		<u>OPC Form</u>
I, 4, p. 2f.	<u>Scriptural basis for congregation, presbytery and synod (assembly)</u>	Not given
II, 4, p. 6f	<u>Associate Members</u>	No provisions
II,8,b, p.12 (unamendable & irrevocable)	<u>Property belongs to congregation</u>	XXV,4,p.40f
II,10,d,p.17 (By 2/3's vote of congregation; consent not needed)	<u>Removal of an Elder</u>	XIII,5 & 6, p. 16f (By Session with consent or Presbytery w.o. consent)
II,11,d, p.21	<u>Task of Deacons</u>	VI, p.6 (take care of poor)
III,1, p.23 (3 ministers)	<u>Constituency of Presbytery</u>	X,2, p.10 (4 ministers)
III,1, p.23	<u>No. of Elder Delegates to Presbytery re size of church</u>	No provision
No provision	<u>Collegiate Churches & Representatives to Presbytery</u>	X,3,p.10
No provision	<u>Power of Presbytery re Congregation</u>	X,7,p.11 "to visit particular churches for the purpose of ..."
IV,1,p.31ff.	<u>Provision for Representative Synod</u>	Amendment to XI, 2 (See Minutes of 38th GA, p.31f

Doctrine of reserved powers FOG commended to new union.

*Term eldership provisions vary
Trustee board & eldership intertwining.*

RPC, ES Form

OPC Form

IV, 2, p. 33	<u>Quorum for Synod or Assembly</u>	XI, 3, p. 12 (20, 1/2 ministers)
No such chapter	<u>Chapter on Ministers Laboring in Other Churches</u>	XIX, p. 33ff
Not provided	<u>Congregation expresses desire to vote for a pastor before actually balloting for a particular man</u>	XV, 4, p. 23
V, f, p. 60f	<u>Procedure for calling a Pastor In regard to Presbyteries</u>	XV, 10, p. 24f & XVI, 2, 3, p. 29
V, q, p. 61	<u>Minister may not candidate from another denomination without first being approved by a presbytery</u>	No provision
V, h, p. 50 (Inspiration of Scripture specified; original language exam may be waived upon receipt of transcript; brief written statement of belief)	<u>Licensure requirements</u>	XIV, 5, p. 19 (Not spelled out; no provision; no such requirement spelled out)
V, l, p. 52	<u>Licensed for only two years and thereafter for only one year at a time</u>	No provisions
V, o, p. 53 (church sacraments & his- tory of denomination speci- fied; church government not specified as such)	<u>Ordination requirements</u>	XV, 11, p. 25 (Items not specified but general statement about "other branches of learning")
V, p, p. 54 (Presbytery or a Com- mittee thereof)	<u>By Whom is a Minister Ordained?</u>	XV, 11 & 12, p. 25 & XV, 14, p. 27 (By Presbytery)
V, 3, p. 43ff (For all ordained officers & for trustees)	<u>Ordination Vows</u> (Differences are shown by underlinings)	XV, 12, p. 26f (Ministers only)
1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, <u>inerrant in the original writings</u> , the only infallible rule of faith and practice?		1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt <u>the doctrinal standards of this church,</u> <u>the Westminster Confession of Faith,</u> and <u>Catechisms, Larger and Shorter,</u> as <u>em- bodying</u> the system of doctrine taught in holy Scriptures, <u>to the maintenance of which this church is bound before God by solemn obligation?</u>		2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church, as <u>containing</u> the system of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures?

*OPC Form of government will prevail
Dr. Harris thought form of subscription most
controversial.*

O.P.s have no provision as to where minister's membership shall reside. old USA church said presbytery was court of original jurisdiction for minister.

e. Do you acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Redeemer and Head of this church, and do you accept the Presbyterian Form of Church Government as derived from the Holy Scriptures?

3. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

4. Do you promise such subjection to your brethren as is taught in the Word of God?

4. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

5. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry (or of elder or deacon) from love to God, and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the gospel of His Son?

5. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God, and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the gospel of His Son?

6. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace of the church; whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

6. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity and peace of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

7. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in your personal and family life, as well as in the public duties of your office; endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life; and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer /or (in the case of licentiates, deacons, or trustees), in which God shall call you to serve? /

7. Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all relative duties and the public duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your conversation, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?

8. Are you now willing to take the responsibilities of a pastor for this congregation, agreeably to your declaration when you accepted their call, and do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them, as God shall give you strength?

8. Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation, agreeably to your declaration when you accepted their call? And do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them as God shall give you strength?

For candidate other than a pastor, or for an elder or deacon the following is substituted:

9. Are you now willing to undertake the work of the Christian ministry /or an elder, or a deacon or a trustee/, and do you promise to discharge the duties which may be incumbent upon you in this character as God may give you strength?

XIII, 3, p. 15f (Elders and Deacons)

The O.P.C. form for elders and deacons consists of the first three used above for ministers and two others as follows:

4. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this congregation, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?
5. Do you promise to study the purity, peace, and unity of the church?

*O.P.s will send only 1/2 ministers to Gen. Assembly this year.
R.P.C., E.S. will send only 300 to general synod.*

OPC has 198 ministers

RPC about $\frac{1}{3}$ larger.

Membership of RPC some larger.

II. Book of Discipline

14924 in USA in OPC. OPC 11,000

RPC & OPC have each about 121 churches for OPC
132 RPC

Historical Background. The O.P. Book was adopted provisionally in 1937 and was adopted in a revised form in 1940. The Book now in use in the RPC, ES was originally adopted in 1938 and this E.P. Book was adopted as the Book of Discipline for the united RPC, ES. This Book and the O.P. Book are almost identical except for certain minor variations. A proposed Book of Discipline was submitted to the RPC, ES for study in 1967 and is still under study.

Differences. The two Books currently in use in both churches are in format and content virtually the same, except for slight differences in vocabulary and arrangement. There are, however, a few matters of substance in which they are different and these are listed.

O.P. Book

R.P. Book

I, 4, p. 43

(Both communicants & baptized members)

Who is subject to discipline?

I, 4,

(Communicant members)

II, 1, p. 44

(individual under judicatory to which he belongs; higher judicatory over lower)

Original Jurisdiction

II, 1,

(Elders, deacons, & communicants under session; minister under presbytery)

No specific provisions

General Review
(Removal of Non-Judicial Causes from a Lower to a Higher Court)

IX, 1-4,

No provisions

A Complaint by 1/3 or more arrests execution of judgment

IX, 10,

No provision

Petitions, Memorials, (and Overtures) X, 3-6

New larger catechism will be neutralized regarding millennial question.

The Larger Catechism

Q. 86. What is the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death?

Original Form:

A. The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory;¹ waiting for the full redemption of their bodies,² which even in death continue united to Christ,³ and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls.⁴ Whereas the souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness; and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, until the resurrection and judgment of the great day.⁵

1. Luke 16:23, Luke 23:43, Phil 1:23, II Cor. 5:6-8 2. Rom. 8:23, Psa. 16:9
3. I Thess. 4:14 4. Rom. 8:23 5. Lu 16:23,24, Acts 1:25, Jude 6

RPC,ES Form

A. The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness,¹ and received into the highest heavens,^m where they behold the face of God in light and glory,ⁿ waiting for the full redemption of their bodies,^o which even in death continue united to Christ,^p and rest in their graves as in their beds,^q till at the return of Christ they be again united to their souls.^r Whereas the souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, till the resurrection and judgment of the great day.^s

¹Heb. 12:23 ^m2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23; cf. Acts 3:21; Eph. 4:10. ⁿI John 3:2; I Cor. 13:12. ^oRom. 8:23; Ps. 16:9. ^pI Th. 4:14. ^qIsa. 57:2. ^rJob 19:26,27
^sLuke 16:23,24; Acts 1:25; Jude 6,7.

Q. 87. What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?

Original Form:

A. We are to believe that, at the last day, there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;¹ when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which are laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ.² The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, and incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body;³ and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonor by him as an offended judge.⁴

1. Acts 24:15 2. I Cor. 15:51-53; I Thess 4:15-17; John 5:28,29 3. I Cor. 15:21-23, 42-44; Phil 3:21 4. John 5:28,29; Dan 12:2; Matt. 25:33

RPC,ES Form:

A. We are to believe, that at the last time there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;^t when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls for ever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ.^v The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body;^w and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonour by him, as an offended judge.^x

Larger catechism in q. 86-87-88-89 are recommended in form of millennial neutrality.

^tActs 24:15. ^vI Cor. 15:51-53; I Th. 4:15-17; John 5:28,29. ^wI Cor. 15:21-23, 42-44; Phil. 3:21. ^xJohn 5:27-29; Matt. 25:33.

Q. 88. What shall follow after the resurrection?

Original Form:

A. Immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgment of angels and men,¹ the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord.²

1. II Pet. 2:4, Rev. 20:11-13 2. Matt. 24:36,42,44, Luke 21:35,36

RPC,ES Form:

A. After the resurrection of the just and the unjust shall follow the final judgment of angels and men.^y The day and hour of the coming of the Lord no man knoweth that all may watch and pray and be ready.^z

^y2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6,7,14,15; Matt. 25:46. ^zMatt. 24:36,42,44; Luke 21:35,36

Q. 89. What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?

Original Form:

A. At the day of judgment, the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand,¹ and upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences,² shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them;³ and thereupon shall be cast out from the favorable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever.⁴

1. Matt. 25:33 2. Rom 2:15,16 3. Matt. 25:41,42 4. Matt. 25:46, II Thess 1:8,9
Luke 16:26; Mark 9:43; Mark 14:21

RPC,ES Form:

A. When they are judged, the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand,^a and, upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences,^b shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them;^c and thereupon shall be cast out from the favourable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever.^d

^aMatt. 25:33. ^bRom. 2:15,16. ^cMatt. 25:41-43. ^dLuke 16:26; 2 Th. 1:8,9.

Shorter Catechism:

Both denominations have adopted the Shorter Catechism in its original form

← Note