

AGENDA

Synod Christian Reformed Church

*To convene June 10, 1942
at Grand Rapids, Mich.*

[PART I: REPORTS]

Office of the Stated Clerk
737 Madison Avenue, S. E.
Grand Rapids, Mich., U. S. A.

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PREFACE

THE Synod of 1926, p. 174 of its "Acta," and reiterated by the Synod of 1937, p. 111, decided that hereafter its Agenda should be published in two parts, the first, to contain the Reports, to appear as soon as possible after January 1st; the second part to contain the Overtures to be laid before Synod, to be published on or before May 1st. The present volume is PART I. The second part is to appear on or before May 1, 1942. Classical stated clerks, please send us the overtures, the names of all the delegates, and the ADDRESSES of the elders by the first day of April, 1942. Synod is to convene June 10, D. V.

January 14, 1942.

Henry Beets, S. C.

737 Madison Ave., S. E.,
Grand Rapids, Mich., U. S. A.

AGENDA

PART I

REPORTS

REPORT I.

TRANSLATION "CONCLUSIES VAN UTRECHT"

At the 1940 Synod two translations of the "Conclusies van Utrecht" were submitted (see Art. 87, Acts of 1940). Synod then decided "to postpone the adoption of any translation until the next Synod, and to instruct the Stated Clerk of Synod to publish the Dutch original as well as both translations in the Agenda, Part I, for the Synod of 1942." In compliance with this decision, the Dutch original, together with the two mentioned translations are herewith presented, the latter being placed in parallel columns so as to facilitate comparison.

STATED CLERK.

CONCLUSIES IN ZAKE ZEKERE LEERGESCHILLEN

Aangenomen door de Generale Synode der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, te Utrecht, 7 Sept. 1905.

(Zie Art. 58, I, Acta Synodi 1908)

I. "Wat het eerste punt, het *infra-* of *supralapsarisme* aangaat, spreekt de Synode uit, dat onze Belijdenisschriften zeker ten opzichte van het leerstuk der uitverkiezing de *infralapsarische* voorstelling volgen, maar dat zoowel blijkens de bewoordingen van Hfdst. I, Art. 7, der Leerregels van Dordt als blijkens de beraadslagingen op de Dortsche Synode hiermede geenszins is bedoeld de *supralapsarische* voorstelling uit te sluiten of te veroordeelen; dat het diensvolgens wel niet geoorloofd is de *supralapsarische* zienswijze als *de* leer der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland voor te stellen, maar evenmin om iemand, die voor zich zelf het *supralapsarische* gevoelen voorstaat, daarom te bemoeilijken, aangezien de Synode van Dordt over dit geschilpunt geene uitspraak heeft gedaan; waarbij de Synode de waarschuwing voegt, om dergelijke diepgaande leerstukken, die het verstand der eenvoudigen zeer verre te boven gaan, zoo weinig mo-

gelijk op den kansel te brengen en in de prediking des Woords en het catechetisch onderwijs zich te houden aan de voorstelling, die onze Belijdenisschriften geven.

II. Wat het tweede punt, de *eeuwige rechtvaardigmaking*, betreft, verklaart de Synode, dat deze uitdrukking zelve niet in onze Belijdenisschriften voorkomt, maar dat ze daarom evenmin mag worden afgekeurd als de uitdrukking Verbond der Werken en dergelijke, die uit het theologisch spraakgebruik zijn overgenomen; dat het onjuist is te zeggen, dat onze Belijdenisschriften alleen een rechtvaardigmaking uit en door het geloof kennen, aangezien èn Gods Woord in Rom. 4:25 èn onze Belijdenis in Art. 20 uitdrukkelijk spreken van een objectieve rechtvaardigmaking door de opstanding van Christus bezegeld, die in tijdsorde aan de subjectieve rechtvaardigmaking vooraf gaat; en wat voorts de zaak zelve aangaat, dat al onze Kerken van harte gelooven en belijden, dat Christus in den Raad des vredes van eeuwigheid zich als borg voor zijn volk gesteld heeft en hunne schuld op zich heeft genomen, evenals Hij daarna door Zijn lijden en sterven op Golgotha het rantsoen metterdaad voor ons betaald en ons met God verzoend heeft, toen wij nog vijanden waren; maar dat even beslist worde gehandhaafd op grond van Gods Woord en in overeenstemming met de Belijdenis, dat wij persoonlijk deze weldaad alleen door een oprecht geloof deelachtig worden; waarom de Synode met ernst waarschuwt tegen elke voorstelling, die hetzij aan de eeuwige borgstelling van Christus voor zijne uitverkorenen, hetzij aan den eisch van een oprecht geloof, om in de vierschaar der conscientie voor God gerechtvaardigd te worden, afbreuk zou doen.

III. Wat het derde punt, de *onmiddellijke wedergeboorte*, aangaat, spreekt de Synode uit, dat deze uitdrukking in goeden zin gebruikt kan worden, in zooverre onze Kerken steeds tegenover de Luthersche en Roomsche Kerk hebben beleden, dat de wedergeboorte niet geschiedt door het Woord of de Sacramenten als zoodanig maar door de almachtige en wederbarende werking des Heiligen Geestes; dat deze wederbarende werking des Heiligen Geestes echter niet in dien zin mag losgemaakt worden van de prediking des Woords, alsof beide van elkaar gescheiden zouden zijn; want al leert onze Belijdenis, dat wij aangaande de zaligheid onze jong gestorven kinderen niet te twijfelen hebben, alhoewel ze de prediking des

Evangelies niet hebben gehoord, en voorts aangaande de wijze waarop deze wedergeboorte bij deze en andere kinderen geschiedt, nergens in onze Belijdenisschriften uitspraak wordt gedaan; dat toch aan de andere zijde vast staat, dat het Evangelie eene kracht Gods is tot zaligheid voor een iegelijk die gelooft, en dat bij de volwassenen de wederbarende werking des Heiligen Gestes de prediking vergezelt. Al betwist de Synode niet, dat God machtig is ook buiten de prediking des Woords om, met name in de heidenwereld, degenen die Hij wil, tot wedergeboorte te brengen, toch oordeelt de Synode, dat wij op grond van Gods Woord over de vraag of dit ook werkelijk geschiedt, geene uitspraak kunnen doen, en daarom ons te houden hebben aan den regel, dien het geopenbaarde Woord ons geeft, en de verborgene dingen hebben over te laten aan den Heere onzen God.

IV. En wat eindelijk het vierde punt, *de onderstelde wedergeboorte*, aangaat, verklaart de Synode, dat volgens de Belijdenis onzer Kerken het zaad des verbonds krachtens de belofte Gods te houden is voor wedergeboren en in Christus geheiligd, totdat bij het opwassen uit hun wandel of leer het tegendeel blijkt; dat het echter minder juist is te zeggen, dat de doop aan de kinderen der geloovigen bediend wordt op grond van hunne onderstelde wedergeboorte, omdat de grond van den doop is het bevel en de belofte Gods; dat voorts het oordeel der liefde, waarmede de Kerk het zaad des verbonds voor wedergeboren houdt, geenszins zeggen wil, dat daarom elk kind waarlijk wedergeboren zou zijn, omdat Gods Woord ons leert, dat niet allen Israël zijn, die uit Israël zijn, en van Izak gezegd wordt: in hem zal u het zaad worden genoemd (Rom. 9:6 en 7), zoodat in de prediking steeds op ernstig zelfonderzoek moet worden aangedrongen, aangezien alleen wie geloofd zal hebben en gedoopt zal zijn, zal zalig worden. Voorts houdt de Synode met onze Belijdenis staande, dat “de sacramenten niet ijdel noch ledig zijn om ons te bedriegen, maar zichtbare teekenen en zegelen van eene inwendige en onzienlijke zaak, door middel derwelke God in ons werkt door de kracht des Heiligen Geestes” (Art 33), en dat inzonderheid de doop “het bad der wedergeboorte” en “de afwassing der zonden” wordt genaamd, omdat God “ons door dit Goddelijk pand en teeken wil verzekeren, dat wij zoo waarachtig van onze zonden geestelijk gewasschen zijn, als wij uitwendig met

water gewasschen worden”; waarom onze Kerk in het gebed na den Doop “God dankt en looft, dat Hij ons en onzen kinderen door het bloed van zijnen geliefden Zoon Jezus Christus al onze zonden vergeven en ons door zijnen Heiligen Geest tot lidmaten van zijnen eeniggeboren Zoon en alzoo tot zijne kinderen aangenomen heeft en ons dat met den heiligen Doop bezegelt en bekrachtigt”; zoodat onze Belijdenisschriften wel duidelijk leeren, dat het Sacrament des Doops beteekent en verzegelt de afwassching der zonden door het bloed en den Geest van Jezus Christus, d. w. z. de rechtvaardigmaking en de vernieuwing door den Heiligen Geest als weldaden, die God aan ons zaad geschonken heeft.

Intusschen meent de Synode, dat de stelling, dat elk uitverkoren kind daarom reeds vóór den Doop metterdaad wedergeboren zou zijn, noch op grond van de Schrift noch op grond van de Belijdenis te bewijzen is, dewijl God zijne belofte vervult naar zijne vrijmacht op zijnen tijd, hetzij vóór of onder of na den Doop, zoodat het eisch is zich hierover met omzichtigheid uit te laten, en niet wijs te willen zijn boven hetgeen God ons heeft geopenbaard.” (Art. 158, Acta, Gen. Synode van Utrecht, 1905.

Translation submitted to the 1941 Synod — see Art. 87 of its Minutes. Cf. the criticisms therein contained.

I. In regard to the first point, *infra- or supralapsarianism*, synod declares: that our Confessional Standards certainly teach the *infralapsarian* position in respect to the doctrine of election, but this, as is evident both from the wording of the Canons of Dordt (Chapter I, Art. 7) and from the deliberations at the Synod of Dordt, certainly does not mean that the *supralapsarian* position is thereby excluded or condemned; that it is according-

Draft drawn up by the Adviser of the Advisory Committee, Synod of 1941, at the request of this Committee and approved by it.

I. *Infra- or Supralapsarianism*

In regard to the first point, *infra- or supralapsarianism*, Synod declares:

that our Confessional Standards admittedly follow the *infralapsarian* presentation in respect to the doctrine of election, but that it is evident both from the wording of Chapter I, Article 7, of the Canons of Dort and from the deliberations

ly not at all permitted to present the supralapsarian point of view as THE doctrine of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, nor to molest any one who personally holds the supralapsarian view, inasmuch as the Synod of Dort has made no declaration about this disputed point. Furthermore, Synod adds the warning that such profound doctrines, which are far beyond the understanding of the common people, should be discussed as little as possible in the pulpit and that one should in the preaching of the Word and catechetical instruction adhere to the position presented in our Confessional Standards.

II. In regard to the second point, *eternal justification*, Synod declares: that this expression does not appear in our Confessional Standards but that it may therefore be disproved no more than such an expression as the Covenant of Works and the like, adopted from theological terminology; that it is incorrect to say that our Confessional Standards merely acknowledge [know of] a justification out of and by faith,

of the Synod of Dort, that this is in no wise intended to exclude or condemn the supralapsarian presentation;

that it is hence not permitted to present the supralapsarian view as *the* doctrine of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, but neither to molest anyone who personally holds the supralapsarian view, inasmuch as the Synod of Dort has made no pronouncement upon this disputed point.

Furthermore, Synod adds the warning that such profound doctrines, which are far beyond the understanding of the common people, should be discussed as little as possible in the pulpit, and that one should in the preaching of the Word and in catechetical instruction adhere to the presentation offered in our Confessional Standards.

II. *Eternal Justification*

In regard to the second point, *eternal justification*, Synod declares:

that the term itself does not occur in our Confessional Standards but that it is not on this account to be disproved, any more than we would be justified in disapproving the term Covenant of Works and the like, terms which have been adopted from theological usage;

that it is incorrect to say that our Confessional Stand-

since *both* God's Word (Rom. 4:25) and our Confessions (Art. 20) speak emphatically about an objective justification sealed by the resurrection of Christ—[a justification] that in order of time precedes subjective justification; and furthermore [Synod declares] that as far as the matter itself is concerned, all our Churches sincerely believe and confess that Christ from eternity in the Council of Peace offered Himself as a surety for His people, and took their guilt upon Himself, just as afterwards by His suffering and death on Golgotha, He actually paid the ransom for us, and reconciled us to God while we were enemies; but that upon the basis of God's Word and in harmony with our Confessions it must be maintained that we personally share in this benefit only by sincere faith. Therefore Synod earnestly warns against any position that would do violence *either* to the eternal surety established by Christ for His elect *or* to the demand of a sincere faith, in order [that we may be] justified before God in the tribunal of [our] conscience.

III. In regard to the third point, *immediate regeneration*, Synod pronounces: that this expression may be used in a sound sense in so far as

ards know only of a justification by and through faith, since *both* God's Word (Rom. 4:25) and our Confession (Art. XX) speak explicitly of an objective justification sealed by the resurrection of Christ, which in point of time precedes the subjective justification;

that moreover, as far as the matter itself is concerned, all our Churches sincerely believe and confess that Christ from eternity in the Counsel of Peace undertook to be the Surety of His people, taking their guilt upon Himself, as also that afterward He by His suffering and death on Calvary actually paid the ransom for us, reconciling us to God while we were yet enemies; but that on the basis of God's Word and in harmony with our Confession it must be maintained with equal firmness that we personally become partakers of this benefit only by a sincere faith.

Wherefore Synod earnestly warns against any view that would do violence either to Christ's eternal suretyship for His elect, or to the requirement of a sincere faith to be justified before God in the forum of conscience.

III. *Immediate Regeneration*

In regard to the third point, *immediate regeneration*, Synod declares:

that this term may be used

our Churches have steadfastly professed, over and against Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches, that regeneration does not take place by the Word and sacraments as such, but by the almighty and regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit; that this regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit, however, may not be disconnected in such a way from the preaching of the Word as if these two could be disconnected from each other. For even if our Confession teaches that we should not doubt concerning the salvation of our children who pass away early in life, though they have not heard the preaching of the Gospel, and furthermore even if our Confessional Standards do not express themselves about the manner in which this regeneration takes place in these and other children, it is on the other hand certain that the Gospel is a power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and that in the case of adults the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Gospel. Even though Synod does not dispute that God is able to regenerate those whom He will, for instance in the pagan world, even without the preaching of the Word, yet Synod judges that we are not

in a good sense, insofar as our Churches have over and against the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches steadfastly professed that regeneration is not effected through the Word or the Sacraments as such, but through the omnipotent regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit;

that this regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit should not in such a way be dissociated from the preaching of the Word as if these two were divorced from one another. For though the Confession teaches that we should have no doubt concerning the salvation of our children dying in infancy despite the fact that they have not heard the preaching of the Gospel, and though our Confessional Standards nowhere express themselves about the manner in which such regeneration takes place in these and other children, it is, on the other hand, no less certain that the Gospel is a power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, and that in the case of adults the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Gospel.

Even though Synod does not dispute that God is able also apart from the preaching of the Word—as, for instance, in the pagan world—to regenerate those whom He

able, on the basis of God's Word, to make any declaration in respect to the question whether this actually occurs, and therefore we should adhere to the rule which God has revealed to us in His Word, and leave the hidden things to the Lord our God.

IV. And finally in regard to the fourth point, *presupposed regeneration*, Synod declares: that according to the Confession of our Churches the seed of the Covenant must be held, by virtue of the promise of God, to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ until they manifest, as they grow up, the contrary in their way of life or doctrine; that it is not entirely correct to say that children of believers are baptized on the ground of their presupposed regeneration because the basis for baptism is found in the command and promise of God; furthermore, that the judgment of love with which the Church regards the seed of the Covenant to be regenerated does not mean at all that each child is actually born again, because God's Word teaches that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel," and about Isaac it is said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. 9:6, 7). Hence it is necessary in preaching that

will, yet Synod judges that on the basis of the Word of God we are not able to make any declaration in respect to the question whether this actually occurs, and that therefore we should adhere to the rule which the revealed Word offers us, leaving the hidden things to the Lord our God.

IV. *Presumptive Regeneration*

And finally, in regard to the fourth point, *presumptive regeneration*, Synod declares:

that according to the Confession of our Churches the seed of the covenant must be held by virtue of the promise of God to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until as they grow up they should manifest the contrary in their way of life or in doctrine;

that it is, however, hardly correct to say that baptism is administered to the children of believers on the ground of their presumed regeneration, seeing that the ground of baptism is found in the command and the promise of God;

that, furthermore, the judgment of charity with which the Church regards the seed of the covenant as regenerated, does not at all imply that each child is actually born again, seeing that God's Word teaches that they are not all

earnest self-examination be insisted upon because only "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Furthermore, Synod in agreement with our Confession maintains that the "sacraments are not empty and meaningless, so as to deceive us, but visible signs and seals of inward and invisible things by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit," (Art. 33) and that special mention is made of baptism as "the washing of regeneration" and "the washing away of sins" because God would assure us "through this divine sign and seal that we are as certainly cleansed of our sins in a spiritual sense as we are in an external sense washed with water." Therefore, our Church in the prayer following the baptizing [says] "We thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and received us by Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism." Thus our Confessional Standards do clearly teach that the Sacrament of baptism signifies and seals the washing away of our sins by the blood and the Spirit of Jesus Christ;

Israel that are of Israel, and of Isaac it is said: in him shall thy seed be called (Rom. 9:6, 7), so that it is imperative in the preaching to insist upon earnest self-examination, since only he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

Moreover, Synod in agreement with our Confession maintains that "the sacraments are not empty or meaningless signs, so as to deceive us, but visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means of which God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Article XXXIII), and that more particularly baptism is called "the washing of regeneration" and "the washing away of sins" because God would "assure us by this divine pledge and sign that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really as we are outwardly washed with water"; wherefore our Church in the prayer after baptism "thanks and praises God that He has forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through His Holy Spirit as members of His only begotten Son, and so adopted us to be His children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism"; so that our Confessional Standards clearly teach that the sacrament of baptism signifies and seals

that is to say, justification and renewing by the Holy Spirit are benefits which God has bestowed upon our seed.

Meanwhile, Synod is of the opinion that the position, that every elect child even before its baptism would be regenerated in fact, cannot be proved either on Scriptural grounds or on Confessional grounds, because God fulfills His sovereign free-will at His time, either before, during, or after the baptizing. Hence, it is imperative to be circumspect in one's utterances in this matter, and not to wish to be wise beyond that which God has revealed. (Art. 158, Acta, The General Synod of Utrecht).

the washing away of our sins by the blood and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that is, the justification and the renewal by the Holy Spirit as benefits which God has bestowed upon our seed.

Synod also is of the opinion that the thesis that every elect child is on that account already in fact regenerated even before baptism, can be proved neither on scriptural nor on confessional grounds, seeing that God fulfills His promise sovereignly in His own time, whether before, during, or after baptism. It is hence imperative to be circumspect in one's utterances on this matter, so as not to desire to be wise beyond that which God has revealed.

REPORT II.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CORRESPONDENCE WITH OTHER CHURCHES

To the Synod of 1942.

ESTEEMED BRETHERN:

THE appointment of this Committee is recorded in the Acts of the Synod of 1941, under number 19 on page 136, and in the Acts of the Synod of 1940 under number 17 on page 142. The task entrusted to it is defined in the Acts of the last named Synod on page 68. That task is fourfold:

- “a. To make a careful study of the basis, the aim, the scope, and the norms, for the practice of Correspondence with other Churches, and to make definite proposals for adoption regarding these matters.
- “b. To make a study of the creedal position, the doctrinal attitude, the conditions for membership, and the practice of church discipline prevailing in such bodies of the historic Reformed tradition which might come into consideration (both at home and abroad) for correspondence with our Church.
- “c. To utilize the material offered in Report IV and to make a study of past decisions of Synod anent correspondence with other Churches.
- “d. To propose, in the light of this study, a revised list of Churches with which our Church should stand in the relation of official correspondence, grouping them and specifying how in the case of each group the actual correspondence may be made most effective and fruitful.”

We regret the fact, that we have to inform you, that we have been unable, in the course of the last two years to accomplish this comprehensive and complicated task. Although we have made a rather thorough study of past decisions of Synod anent correspondence with other Churches, we have as yet not attained to such a clear and unified opinion as to the aim, scope, norms, and basis for the practice of such correspondence as would enable us to make definite proposals to Synod for adoption regarding

these matters. And as long as these fundamental questions are not settled, it is practically impossible to proceed with the work required by Synod in points b. and d.

It is, therefore, impossible for us to advise Synod on any of these matters at the present time and we find ourselves under the necessity of asking Synod for an extension of time for the performance of our labors. Praying, that the Lord may grant you to find it possible to work more expeditiously in all other matters that are brought to your attention for action, and that His guidance may lead you in them all to sound and fruitful decisions, we submit this report with our regrets.

Your Committee,

D. H. KROMMINGA

HENRY BEETS

S. VOLBEDA

JOHN DE HAAN

REPORT III.

REPORT ON THE MATTER OF ANNUAL OR BIENNIAL SYNODS

To the Synod of 1942.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

YOUR Committee appointed at the last Synod to study the matter of annual or biennial Synods herewith submits its report.

I. INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

A. Our MANDATE is found in the 1941 Acts of Synod, page 26. Classis Minnesota had overtured Synod not to immediately accede to requests made by others to revert to biennial Synods, but rather to appoint a committee to carefully consider the matter from all angles since many important matters were involved, such as a possible increase in the size of Curatorium, the method of examining Candidates, the re-arrangement of the Home Missions Committee matters, etc.

In harmony with Minnesota's overture SYNOD DECIDED "to appoint a committee . . . to study this matter and report to next Synod and not to decide this matter at this time. *Grounds*: 1. There are many important matters, as suggested by Classis Minnesota, which will have to be considered in connection with this matter. 2. The grounds given by the other overtures demand further study."

B. In 1936 it was decided to hold Synodical meetings annually instead of biennially. In order to place all relevant material conveniently before Synod we quote from the Acts of 1936, pages 38, 39, the following:

"III. In regard to the proposed number of Synodical delegates Classis Orange City overtures Synod to revise Article 50 of the Church Order in such a way that instead of three ministers and three elders, two ministers and two elders be delegated by each Classis to Synod.

"Your Advisory Committee is of the opinion that in case Synod continues to meet as heretofore, every two years, the number of delegates to Synod should not be reduced. It is a recognized principle of Reformed Church polity that as many as possible attend the ecclesiastical assemblies.

"However, Classis Sioux Center overtures Synod that Synod meet every year. The Committee favors an annual meeting of Synod. Should this find favor with Synod, the Committee proposes to reduce the number of delegates from six to four.

"Your Advisory Committee recommends:

"1. Synod meet henceforth annually.

- a. This is in accordance with the spirit of the Church Order, which favors frequent meetings, Articles 37, 41, 47.
- b. This will make for shorter meetings of Synod. Our Synods at present are too long. Delegates complain that it is difficult for them to be away from their work for so long a time.
- c. This will expedite matters in cases of protests and appeals.
- d. This will open the way for a reduction in the membership of our Boards.
- e. This will promote contact between the various parts of our Church, which is in harmony with the Church Order.

"Adopted."

C. Three Classes overtured the Synod of 1941 to return to the practice of biennial Synods. These overtures, with their grounds, are found in the 1941 Acts, pages 23-25. Still catering to the convenience of consistory members and delegates to Synod we herewith submit a copy of the grounds given by those three respective Classes, which grounds your Committee was asked to study.

H. Classis Holland adduced the following grounds:

- "1. The Synods of 1937 and 1938, when overtured to the same effect, decided that it was 'too early to discard a new policy which has had so little time to prove its own worth and wisdom.' In view of historical developments, that argument now no longer holds. The experiment has been tried a sufficient length of time—and has been found wanting.
- "2. Annual Synods have not proved their own worth and wisdom. Fact is that during these last few years the dignity and the prestige of our Synods has been greatly lowered in the estimation of our people.
- "3. Art. 30 of our Church Order demands that in major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the church of the major assembly in common. This principle of Reformed church polity is continually violated by annual Synods. In late years there is a very noticeable tendency to carry ALL matters through to Synod. A synodical gathering is always near at hand, at most only a few months away, and our minor assemblies, as well as the various Committees appointed by Synod (the so-called Boards), are shirking their responsibility and casting all kinds of matters that could be dealt with in small gatherings, into the lap of Synod.
- "4. The contention that annual Synods will expedite matters of protest and appeal is not borne out by experience. In the last few years Synod has more than once referred such cases back to the Classes. And in cases of urgent need, provision

- can be made, such as we had before 1936, for the calling of a special Synod to take care of matters really important.
- "5. Neither has the argument that "Boardism" will be reduced to a minimum by annual Synods been borne out by the experience of recent years. For instance, there is at present among our Classes in the East as well as in the West just as much dissatisfaction with the arrangement by which our Home Missions are handled by an "Executive Committee" than there was formerly. This Committee should be enlarged to contain a member from each Classis.
 - "6. The time consumed by annual meetings has not been appreciably reduced. A biennial Synod may sometimes have to be in session a day or two longer than an annual Synod, but it surely is not necessary for our small denomination every year to take almost a hundred men away from their congregation and home duties.
 - "7. Committees of Synod to which matters are entrusted for study and advice do not have sufficient time to perform their task, if they are to report at the next meeting. Part I of the Agendum should be published in January, and the material for it should be in the hands of the Stated Clerk a month before that date, but in late years there was not sufficient material on hand at the proper time to publish a worth-while Agendum.
 - "8. The expense involved in annual meetings is not warranted. We can save more than \$4,000.00 every other year by having biennial Synods. Surely this large sum of money can be spent more advantageously and wisely in God's Kingdom."

W. Classis Wisconsin adduced the following grounds:

- "1. At the Synod of 1936 only one Classis overtured Synod to meet annually, and in the light of this overture, the Advisory Committee adduced five grounds which were adopted by Synod. We are convinced, after a trial period of four years, that most of these grounds must fall by the wayside.
- "2. At the Synod of 1937, many Classes urged Synod to rescind its decision. We believe that very good grounds were then adduced. However, after considerable discussion and close vote, it was decided, 'It is too early to discard' Now, after four years, we believe that annual Synods are not necessary and, hence, not justified or wise.
- "3. Our annual Synods have, on the whole, not made for shorter gatherings. Fact remains, our annual Synods meet about as long as our former biennial Synods.
- "4. If biennial Synods lead to powerful Boards, why not curb these Boards, and, if necessary, make them more representative by adding one delegate from each Classis and have such a Board meet annually.
- "5. Annual Synods do not always expedite matters in cases of protests and appeals. Annual Synods often open up the way for protestants to appear each year.
- "6. We do not believe that annual Synods add to the dignity and prestige of our highest ecclesiastical body. The Stated Clerk must plead for material to print the first part of the Agenda, and when received one is inclined to say, 'Is that all? Does that make it worth while to send our minister or elder away for two or three weeks?'

"7. Money saved through biennial Synods could be used for other worthwhile Kingdom purposes."

M. Classis Muskegon adduced the following grounds:

- "1. By this time the practice of meeting annually has proven unsatisfactory.
- "2. There are no advantages accruing from annual Synods to warrant the present extra loss of time and expenditure of money."

II. THE ARGUMENTS FOR A RETURN TO BIENNIAL SYNODS CONSIDERED.

Obviously the above overtures do not present seventeen different and distinct arguments for a return to biennial meetings of Synod. After discounting repetitions and overlapping they simmer down to six main contentions which call for careful consideration.

A. *The time element.*

It is rather loosely argued that "our annual Synods meet about as long as our former biennial Synods," and again, "A biennial Synod may sometimes have to be in session a day or two longer than an annual Synod." The latter statement implies that, as a rule, annual and biennial Synods last about equally long. The only way to determine whether or not these contentions are correct is to consult the records.

We have now had five annual Synods, 1937-1941. These five Synods we propose to compare with the previous five Synods (which were, of course, biennial) 1928-1936. This basis of comparison seems to be entirely fair, in fact, is the only basis of comparison which we have and will be used throughout this report. Consulting the various Acts then for those years we find the average duration of annual Synods to be 12 1-5 days, and that of biennial Synods to be 17 3-5 days. In this connection it must also be remembered that in those 12 1-5 days is included one full day's work taken over from the Board of Trustees (examination of Candidates), which is not included in the 17 3-5 days of biennial Synods. Annual Synods are, therefore, shorter than biennial Synods by five days. Or if allowance may be made for that extra day taken over from Calvin's Board (since that body's sessions are thereby shortened correspondingly) the difference is six days. Over a period of two years then annual Synods consume 24 2-5 (22 2-5?) days and biennial Synods 17 3-5 days. The former thus approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ ($2\frac{1}{2}$?) days more per year than the latter.

According to the above method of computation annual meetings of Synod are noticeably shorter in duration than those of biennial Synods. At the same time it appears that over a period of two or more years annual Synods consume more time than when Synod meets biennially. Although this difference is far less than some Classes apparently thought.

However, your committee is of the opinion that the above method of computation is not entirely correct. If we wish to determine exactly the amount of time consumed at Synod we must figure it in "man-days" or "work-days", i. e., the number of days spent there by each delegate and that multiplied by the number of delegates. That's the method which is applied by the farmer, merchant or manufacturer when he seeks to determine the time spent to produce something. And here your committee assumes (justifiably so, we think, on the basis of a former action of Synod, cf. I, B, above) that the church would not be content with four delegates from each Classis in case of biennial meetings of Synod. There are now nineteen Classes in our church. We get then the following results: 19 times 6 times 17 3-5 equals 2006 "work-days" for a biennial meeting of Synod; and 19 times 4 times 12 1-5 equals 927 "work-days" for an annual meeting of Synod, or 1854 days over a two-year period (since biennial Synods cover two years also). In two years' time, therefore, annual Synods actually save the church 152 days every two years.

It does not seem unreasonable to conclude that there is no argument to be drawn from the time element for changing from annual to biennial Synods.

B. As to the matter of protests and appeals.

As one of the grounds for introducing annual Synods the 1936 Synod contended that such "would expedite the matters of protests and appeals" (cf. I, B, 1, c, above). Now the contention is made that annual Synods make the way for protests and appeals so easy and readily accessible that too many untimely or premature cases are brought to the floor of Synod. There is a noticeable tendency recently, it is claimed, to carry ALL matters through to Synod, thus continually violating Art. 30 of the Church Order (cf. I, C, H, 3 and 4; and I, C, W, 5 above).

Here your Committee has three considerations to bring to your attention.

1. First of all, does the contention made here square with the facts? If so, in how far and with what significance?

In tracing down the argument we are confronted with a difficulty, the perennial difficulty of distinguishing in every instance between overtures, protests, and appeals. Your committee is seeking to evade that difficulty by merely following the classification and enumeration given in the various agenda, listing overtures separately and grouping protests and appeals together. We get the following data: The biennial Synods 1928-1936 average 63 overtures and 9 3-5 protests and appeals per meeting; while the annual Synods 1937-1941 average 35 overtures and 3 2-5 protests and appeals per meeting. However, there is an exceptional case involved here which spoils the effect of the comparison. Fairness demands that it be remarked here that the year 1932 was an exceptionally productive year for protests and appeals, there being 29, which dealt with only seven different matters. If you consider the subject-matter dealt with for that year instead of the number of documents, then the average for protests and appeals at biennial Synods is lowered considerably, i. e., to 5 1-5. But even following this latter method it all adds up to this: Over a two-year period with biennial Synods 63 overtures and 5 1-5 protests and appeals are dealt with; and over the same length of time, with annual Synods 70 overtures and 6 4-5 protests and appeals are dealt with. The increase is hardly sufficient to serve as a convincing argument against annual Synods.

2. Moreover, is this slight increase necessarily an evil working to the disadvantage of the membership of the church? Your committee does not think so. For even though it may be granted that an occasional untimely protest or appeal may come before an annual Synod more easily than before a biennial Synod, this is more than off-set by the fact that when Synod meets only once in two years an appeal or protest may have to drag so long that it also becomes untimely — untimely in the sense that it comes too late, after too much damage has been done. We do not care to drag old skeletons out of the closet, otherwise we might mention one or two instances in recent years.

3. Again if it's true that matters are sometimes brought to Synod (annual or biennial) prematurely, this should not be laid to the charge of a Synod (annual or biennial) but of consistories and Classes.

The above three considerations show that here, again, the argument for a return to biennial Synods is not convincing.

C. *As to the cost element.*

This item is often brought up and should therefore be carefully scrutinized. Unless the difference in cost is *too* great this particular point should not be decisive in determining the frequency of synodical gatherings. Nevertheless, if the Church can save more than \$4,000.00 every other year by having biennial Synods (cf. I, C, H, 7, and I, C, W, 7 above) without losing something somewhere else on account of it, such ought to be done.

In connection with this claim that annual Synods cost the Church more than biennial Synods it should be borne in mind that the annual Synods made it possible to reduce the length of sessions of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary and, especially, made it possible to reduce its membership by one-half, thereby reducing its expense considerably. Possibly this is true, in part at least, of some other Board or Committee also. This in part cancels the supposedly extra cost of annual Synods since the Church pays the expense of the Board of Trustees as well as that of Synod.

But even though the above consideration be disallowed or discounted, it is not plain to your committee where a saving of \$4,000.00 could be effected through biennial Synods on the basis of past experience. Your committee made an effort to get an itemized account of the expenses immediately involved in the Synodical meetings, but this did not prove practicable. Our Synodical treasurer gave us his opinion to the effect that the reports in the various Acts were entirely sufficient for our purpose, and the assessments for the Synodical Fund for the various years could well serve as a fair basis to determine the comparative costs of the past meetings of Synod. Turning to the Acts then, we find that the biennial Synods from 1928-1936 required an average assessment of 22½ cents per year (45 cents for the two-year period), and the annual Synods 21 cents per year. According to that annual Synods save the Church \$400.58 every year. That's without considering the saving effected through the Calvin Board.

Your committee realizes that figures and statistics can not always serve as infallible proof. Consequently, there *may* be considerations which offset, at least in part, the

above figures. But we do feel justified now in contending that, to say the least, the cost element does not provide a convincing argument for a reversion to biennial Synods.

D. *As to the dignity and prestige of Synod.*

We can be more brief on this point for the simple reason that dignity and prestige is one of those vague and indefinite somethings which are hard to lay hold on. It does not lend itself readily to proof or disproof. It is the opinion of some brethren that the dignity and prestige of Synod has suffered recently, the cause of which is due to the fact that it meets twice instead of once in two years. About all we can do as committee is to set our opinion over against theirs. And it's our opinion that if the dignity and prestige of Synod is endangered, such is due to the more or less disrespectful attitude the office-bearers and membership generally take with respect to Synodical authority and decisions. *This*, we think, and not the frequency or infrequency of its gatherings, will determine the dignity and prestige of all our ecclesiastical gatherings.

Under this heading mention is made of the difficulty obtaining in getting the material in on time for the printing of the Agendum, whereby our Stated Clerk is sometimes necessitated to well-nigh play the role of a beggar. This being interpreted (in the mind of your committee) simply means: Shame on the lagging committee-members, but no reflections on any Synod! How much committee work is done until at least three or four months of the adjournment of Synod? And such committees as have really difficult and large assignments are given two years by synodical rule and practice.

We deem it difficult to squeeze a cogent argument out of this point for fewer synodical meetings.

E. *As to "Boardism".*

Apparently this matter is not considered to be as important as some others as an argument against annual Synods. It partakes more of a negative than a positive character, i.e. annual Synods still leave a measure of dissatisfaction on the part of some with regard to the scope and influence of some Committees or Boards. This being granted, we submit that such is probably to be ascribed to the fact that we have not yet perfected the whole annual-Synod set-up with its various Boards and Committees. Possibly these Boards are not yet properly constituted and regulated, and therefore do not yet function entirely satisfactorily. Surely,

the constituency and working methods of the Executive Committee for Home Missions (which Classis Holland mentions by name) can be altered, if such be necessary, without changing the whole set-up of synodical meetings.

F. *As to the wish of the majority.*

1. The statement, "At the Synod of 1936 *only one Classis* overtured Synod to meet annually and *in the light of this overture* (both italics ours—Com.), the Advisory Committee adduced five grounds which were adopted by Synod" (cf. I, C, W, 1, above) is technically correct but essentially incorrect. It must be recalled that such overture did not come isolated and more or less out of the clear sky. The above mentioned overture, together with six others (cf. Acts, 1936, pp. 37 and 38), plus a detailed report of a committee appointed in 1934, all wrestled with the closely allied questions of frequency of Synodical meetings, delegations to Synod, expense of Synodical meetings, redistricting of Classes, number of delegates on Boards, etc. *In the light of all these* (not merely in the light of one overture), Synod decided, among other things, to meet annually. Apparently the Synod of 1936 deemed the solution of all these inextricably interwoven problems could best be advanced by following the suggestion of that one mentioned overture.

2. The assertion, "At the Synod of 1937 many Classes urged Synod to rescind its decision" to meet annually, must have been made in an unguarded moment. When one exegetes that word "many" in the light of the 1937 Agendum, it turns out to mean just exactly two. And two are usually not considered as being many.

However, from 1937 to 1941 six different Classes requested Synod to return to biennial meetings of Synod. That is one-third of our Classes and that may properly be considered *many*. That leaves two-thirds who have not expressed themselves, and that may properly be considered *more*. May the conclusion be drawn that those two-thirds are satisfied with the present arrangement? If this argument from silence be not permitted we are at least justified in concluding that neither does the wish of the majority (in so far as it is known at present) provide an argument for returning to biennial Synods.

III REASONS FOR ABIDING BY THE PRESENT RULE STATED

Your committee is here, at least in part, restating the grounds adduced for annual Synods in 1936 (cf. I, B, 1, a-e above), which grounds we consider still essentially valid.

A. Annual Synods reduce the danger of so-called "Boardism" to a minimum. It is self-evident that there is less occasion and danger of any Board or Committee wilfully or unwittingly to assume undue scope of authority or influence when the body which it serves and to which it is amenable (in this case the Synod) meets twice instead of once in two years.

B. The cause of missions is better served by annual meetings of Synod than by less frequent meetings of that body, unless a dangerous and unwise amount of authority is to be placed in the hands of a Board or Committee. We might cite, as an example of what is meant, the support of the recently orphaned missions in the East Indies. What Missions or Synodical Committee would dare or care to promise them (even unofficially) a couple of thousand dollars a month for nearly two years and then ask the membership of our Church to bring up such a large sum for such a period of time? Yet just that would have to be done, or let such Missions suffer.

Also, in Home Mission work, subsidies can be more equitably and satisfactorily determined for one year than for a two-year period.

C. In direct relation with the above point attention may be called to the swiftly moving times and rapidly changing circumstances of life which characterize our modern day. Political, economic, social, and religious conditions are subject to change without notice in recent years. This fact would tend to argue to the effect that if Synods were formerly necessary once every two years, now they are necessary more frequently.

D. Outlying churches and Classes have more contact with denominational life, more opportunity for taking part in and acquainting themselves with the work, and thus more interest in denominational activities is generated.

IV. OUR ADVICE

Your committee RECOMMENDS that Synod do not accede to the request for biennial meetings of Synod, but abide by the decision of 1936 to meet annually. *Grounds:*

- a. Synodical decisions should not be changed without weighty and convincing reasons. No such reasons have thus far been advanced (cf. II, A-F, above).
- b. The general welfare of the churches is best served by annual meetings of Synod (cf. III, A-D, above).

Respectfully submitted,

I. WESTRA, *Chairman*

H. BLYSTRA

B. VAN SOMEREN

J. C. VERBRUGGE

R. J. FRENS, *Sec'y*

REPORT IV.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ARTICLE 41, CHURCH ORDER

To the Synod of 1942.

ESTEEMED BRETHERN:

MANDATE

THIS Committee was appointed as a result of a request from the Christian Reformed Church at Grant, Michigan, for a synodical ruling on the method of answering the questions according to Art. 41, C. O., by questionnaire, as had been recently adopted by her Classis. Synod replied: "The method of answering these questions by questionnaire is indeed contrary to the spirit and letter of Art. 41," but added: "Since this method is finding favor, and has apparent merits, a committee be appointed:

- a. to consider the advisability of amending Art. 41, C. O., to allow or prescribe the questionnaire method; and
- b. to advise the next Synod both as to a revised form for this Article and a form of questionnaire to be used in our Churches, should the Committee deem such a change advisable" (Acts, 1941, p. 27).

PART I.

AS TO THE ADVISABILITY OF AMENDING ARTICLE 41

In facing the first part of our mandate your Committee finds it necessary to consider the place of these questions in the meetings and work of Classes according to the original intention, as well as the place they now occupy.

PREDECESSORS TO OUR ARTICLE 41

At the Convent of Wezel, 1568, certain rules were adopted for the regulation of Church life. Among these we find also a few Articles dealing with the work of Classes. These bodies did not yet exist, but were deemed necessary for the future. In Article 20 we read: "It seems that it will be advisable that these Classical meetings, *which are instituted for the sake of discipline* (de censuur) do not meet always in the same place . . . in order that more accurate investigation may be held in various

Churches as to what order is used in the instruction of the Word, as also the regulations for the Sacraments and discipline, and, finally, whether Elders and Deacons fulfill their offices zealously and well" (Biesterveld en Kuyper: *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, pp. 32, 33, Art. 20). Here we have the beginning of the ideal of Classical supervision, by way of questioning.

At the first Synod, that of Emden, 1571, however, nothing was done about this matter, officially, it would seem, so that no such questioning by Classis was instituted for the time being. There are in existence certain "Statuten van de Classische Versamelingen", drawn up at this Synod, but seemingly not part of the official Acts, signed by a number of ministers. It is hard to say just what authority these had. In these we read, among other things: "In the Classical Meeting one of the ministers shall preach a Sermon . . . After this a President shall be chosen . . . He shall ask each one in particular whether they hold Consistory meetings in their Church; whether the discipline of the Church (die Kerkelijke straffe) runs its course; whether there are heretics to combat; whether they have any doubts as to the main heads of doctrine; whether they are caring for the poor and supervising the schools; whether they need the assistance of other ministers for the government of their Church, and similar questions." After this matters were to be discussed and judged that could not be agreed on or decided by any consistory, as also matters pertaining to Churches of Classis in general. Then, "to stimulate one another, and awaken a desire for study" the president was to lead a discussion on points of differences between them and the Romish Church. Mutual supervision and Ministerial instruction were thus regarded as being the main purpose of the Classical meetings.

That these "Statuten" were not official seems to be indicated by the fact that the next Synod, that of Edam, 1572, said nothing about any questioning by Classes.

In 1573 a meeting was held at Alcmaar. It names itself variously, at times as a "Conference of Ministers", and again as a "Classische Synodus". This meeting decreed that in its territory ministers of neighboring designated Churches should meet every Monday as a "Coetus". This was to be a purely educational meeting of Ministers. However, on every other week several of these "Coeti" were to meet together, and at these joint meetings, besides the

educational work, they were to "see to it that in every congregation efficient Consistories function; that the ministry to the poor and schools are maintained; that good mid-week meetings are held; . . . that the Confession is signed by all" (cf. Reitsma and Van Veen, Vol. I, pp. 13, 14). It would seem that here we have an attempt to bring into actual life such meetings of Classis as had formerly been felt necessary, but had never yet really taken root. Alcmäär also does not consider the questions proposed in the "Statuten" as binding.

At the Synod of Rotterdam, 1575, it was decided: "The ministers of ten or twelve neighboring Churches shall meet together in such numbers and at such times as is needful" (Dordt, 1574, had said every month). At these meetings "they shall inquire as to the condition of the Churches, the doctrine and life of the ministers, elders, and deacons and such like things". Also, they shall see to it "that vacant Churches are properly supplied with Ministers and school teachers" (cf. Reitsma and Van Veen, Vol. II, p. 166).

In Art. 41 of the C. O. of the Synod of Dordt of 1578 the Questions, as given in the "Statuten van de Classische Versamelingen" of the Synod of Emden, 1571, were almost literally adopted (cf. above). These now receive official and national authority, since this Synod is a national one (cf. Biesterveld and Kuyper: *Handboekje*, p. 105). Except for the delivery and criticism of a sermon, and a few minor matters, this questioning was to constitute the entire business of Classis.

In the Church Order adopted by the Synod of Middelburg, 1581, the same program for Classical meetings is decreed: Election of a president, questioning of each Consistory by the president, a sermon and its criticism and election of Synodical delegates. The questions to be asked are, however, reduced. This simplified reading of these questions is practically identical with those retained in our C. O. (cf. Biesterveld and Kuyper: *Handboekje*, pp. 149 and 201).

INTERPRETATION OF THIS HISTORY

It appears that two ideas combine in the practice of asking these questions at Classis. First of all, historically, they were intended as a matter of mutual supervision, so as to promote good discipline in the Churches. In the second place, they were intended to determine the program

of Classis. It proved to be no easy matter to determine the purpose of these meetings and to state how they were to be conducted. While Wezel had said they were instituted for the sake of discipline, in actual fact they soon found their usefulness in improving the professional ability of the ministers. Later again more emphasis is placed on mutual counsel and assistance. As the conception of the purpose and work of Classis changed, these questions also changed. However, from the fact that this questioning held first place on the agendum, and no other real task is assigned Classis (except the hearing and criticism of a sermon), it appears that the work elicited by this questioning constituted the real work of Classis. It had been repeatedly decided that written instructions containing matters to come before Classis were to be taken along by the delegates, but it sometimes happened that the Churches would present nothing. That is perhaps why it happened that these questions were used to determine the work of Classis.

THE PLACE OF ARTICLE 41 IN OUR CHURCH ORDER

Article 41 is the basic Article in our C. O. for determining the character and work of our Classical meetings. It contains practically all our C. O. has to say on these matters. The following elements are found therein: (1) Definition of Classis; (2) How Classis is to be constituted; (3) How often it is to meet; (4) Its leadership; (5) Its program (here we have the questions); (6) Its preparation for (particular) Synod.

Since this Article gives no other work to Classis (even the Sermon is now omitted) it would seem that our C. O., too, intended this questioning to constitute the real task of Classis. This is certainly different from the place it now occupies in our Classical meetings. Usually these questions are now asked at the end of the meeting, and answered in a most slipshod manner. Van Dellen and Monsma speak of "a mere perfunctory last minute formality". These brethren ascribe this change to the introduction of Church Visitation, whereby "the supervisory work at Classis did not have to occupy quite such a prominent part". We feel that the custom of requiring overtures on our Letters of Credential, and publishing agenda, robbed this questioning of its program-controlling place, and this, together with the competition with Church Visitation as a means

of supervision, made this part of the work of Classis practically obsolete.

As a method of supervision, this questioning by a few general questions, answered *vive voce*, in public, hurriedly, at the end of the meeting, is neither efficient nor psychologically wise. What Consistory wishes to reveal abnormalities in its work at such a time and in such a manner? Under such circumstances the question may be raised whether there is much use in maintaining such a custom. This inefficiency was one reason why some Classes ordered a change to a written questionnaire, even though, as Synod stated, this method was contrary to the letter and spirit of Article 41.

PERTINENT QUESTIONS AT THIS POINT

Questions that face your Committee at this point are:
(1) Should we return to the original way of conducting Classes, making these questions the basis of all work done?
(2) Should we drop these questions entirely, and improve Church Visitation, relying on that agency to do all the work of supervision?
(3) Should we retain these questions and ask them in the usual way, for antiquities' sake?
(4) Should we improve them so that they may again take a real place in our Classical work? Your Committee has faced each of these questions.

SHOULD WE RETURN TO THE ORIGINAL WAY OF CONDUCTING CLASSES?

Two possibilities face us here. We could have these questions discussed in the Consistory meeting, and have the delegates bring with them, in written form, whatever the Consistory wishes to say or ask in connection with each question in Art. 41. Then the President of Classis would ask the questions, and the delegates would present to Classis nothing but the things decided by Consistory, and that in written form. Classis then deliberates on these matters and makes its decisions. This would then come **FIRST** and constitute the real work of Classis.

The second possibility would be that each delegate answers the questions put by the president at the beginning of the meeting, orally, without having written, or perhaps any, instructions from his consistory.

In neither case would there be an Agendum, so that Consistories could not deliberate, or prepare themselves for the questions they will have to face. Your Committee feels

that we do not wish to return to a method whereby questions are cast into the Classical hopper without previous notice. The method now in vogue among us has undoubted advantages over that of conducting Classis on the basis of any "Rondvraag".

SHOULD WE DROP THESE QUESTIONS AND IMPROVE CHURCH VISITATION?

While realizing that, if properly conducted, Church Visitation is a far more effective, and, naturally, a far more thorough way of exercising supervision over the Churches, we would seriously object to dropping this questioning at Classis. If a choice had to be made our choice would not be that of the R. C. A., which eliminated Church Visitation. But we are glad we need not choose between the two.

Especially since travelling expenses prohibit the use of this Visiting more frequently than once in two years in some Classes, it is highly desirable to exercise at least some measure of supervision at each Classical meeting, lest we drift into slovenly methods of Church government. We can hardly overemphasize the value of mutual supervision and assistance. Rather than dispense with these questions, we should find a more efficient way for conducting this work of Classis.

SHOULD WE KEEP THE CUSTOM OF ASKING THESE QUESTIONS ORALLY?

We presuppose, in this part, a situation as that of which it is said that this questioning is "a mere perfunctory last minute formality." Where these questions are asked orally they have tended to become a mere appendix to the Classical meeting. Then, when everyone is eager to go home these questions are asked, and answered by a simple "yes", "yes", "yes". Little profit follows. This custom is open to various objections.

1) First of all, the vital question of truthfulness may be raised. The delegate who answers has rarely had the benefit of discussing them with the Consistory. The responsibility is all his own. He will therefore hesitate to reveal existing evils. He will be tempted to answer "yes" even when his conscience tells him he might as truthfully answer "no", since each answer would be only relatively true, and a fully correct answer would take too much time and effort and courage.

2) A second objection lies in the lack of objectivity. First of all, the delegate may be a man who does not have

the ability to think and speak readily on his feet at the moment, and so cannot give a true picture of the life of the Church. Second: This method opens the way for airing personal views, and thus, for creating a false impression. It has happened that one delegate had to correct a fellow delegate who gave such a subjective answer.

3) A third objection lies in the fact that thus we get no OFFICIAL answer to these questions. Classis may find out what a certain delegate thinks, but not what the CONSISTORY thinks about them.

These objections would be removed if the Classes demand that the Consistory answer them officially, in writing. While your Committee would not advise Synod to PRESCRIBE the use of the Questionnaire method, since it is conceivable that sometimes local conditions may make this method less advisable, as when a Classis is very small, at the same time we feel that Synod should strongly advise the various Classes to use a printed questionnaire for answering the questions of Art. 41. Arguments for this position are: (1) A written questionnaire will stimulate Consistorial attention to the questions asked. (2) Classes thus get official answer to these supervisory questions. (3) The closer attention of Consistories and Classes will lead to correction of undesirable conditions.

SHOULD WE IMPROVE THE LIST OF QUESTIONS?

Permit us to call attention to the fact that four of our Classes, that follow the questionnaire method, have introduced an improved list of questions for this purpose. It was felt that the questions mentioned in Art. 41 are not sufficiently specific, nor sufficient for the needs of present-day church life. Nor is this surprising. Questions that satisfied the Churches several centuries ago need not be the ones to satisfy us under the changed situation that time has brought about. For that reason we believe that the list should be improved, and that, while Synod amends the Article in our C. O. so as to permit the questionnaire method, it would be an opportune time to also revise the list itself, so that it answers the needs of today.

PART II.

ADVICE OF YOUR COMMITTEE

On the basis of the foregoing your Committee advises:

I. Synod APPROVE of the method of asking the questions under Art. 41, C. O., by the questionnaire method.

Grounds:

- 1) A number of our Classes are now using the questionnaire method with satisfaction;
- 2) Abnormal conditions, revealed by this method, can be more fully considered, and remedies suggested, and advice more carefully drawn up when the written questionnaires are in hands of a Committee from the time that Classis convenes, as should be the case when this method is followed. In this connection may we call attention to a common error, by which advice given under Art. 41 is not recorded, nor given as by Classis, but merely as the personal opinion of the president or of some leading minister! The Article asks whether there is any matter in which the Consistory needs the "Judgment and help of CLASSIS for the proper government of your Church";
- 3) Answers to questions according to Article 41 are thus the official statement of the Consistory, not the personal opinion of a delegate;
- 4) This method may be expected to stimulate greater earnestness on the part of our Consistories in these vital matters.

II. Synod IMPROVE the list of questions under Art. 41.

Grounds:

- 1) These questions, as now formulated, are too vague to give an accurate picture of congregational conditions;
- 2) These questions, as now formulated, do not cover those areas of Church life which demand supervision under modern conditions.

III. Synod REVISE Article 41, last paragraph, to read: "At each meeting of Classis each Church shall report: (1) whether Consistory meetings are regularly held, according to the needs of the Church; (2) whether Church Discipline is faithfully exercised; (3) whether the poor are provided for; (4) whether Christian Schools are given the required moral and financial support; (5) whether the Congregation is faithfully doing its best to pay the Denominational quotas; (5) whether the Consistory is vigorously combating worldliness; (7) whether the Consistory needs the advice of Classis for the proper government of their Church; (8) whether there are names of non-resident members that should be sent to the Committee for Church Extension?"

Ground: Thus the C. O. is brought into harmony with the decisions of Synod, just made.

IV. Synod INSTRUCT the Consistories and Classes to pay the closest attention to the filling out of the questionnaires, and to the consideration of the answers. *Ground:* Even the best method will be useful only in the measure in which it is faithfully applied.

V. Synod also INSTRUCT such Classes as may find it to their advantage to ask the questions orally, to use the questions given on the Synodically approved Questionnaire, and to place this work as near to the beginning of the Classical meeting as possible, and to give it their careful attention. *Grounds:* There should be as much unity as possible in this supervisory work of Classis; Thus the work may be expected to receive due consideration.

VI. Synod APPROVE the following Questionnaire, and strongly advise all Classes to use it, with the understanding that any Classis may ADD to it, as local conditions may demand, but may NOT SUBTRACT from it without Synodical authority.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Consistory will earnestly consider and fully answer these questions.

- 1) Are Consistory meetings held regularly, and according to the needs of your Church?
- 2) Do you faithfully exercise Church Discipline?
- 3) What is done for the relief of the poor within and outside of your local Congregation?
- 4) If you have a Christian School in your midst, what does the Consistory do to support and supervise it?
- 5) If you have no Christian School in your midst, what is the Consistory doing so that one may be established, if at all possible?
- 6) Is your congregation faithfully striving to meet the Denominational Quotas?

(At the FIRST Classical meeting each year state whether your Church has fully paid the quotas last year? If not, to what extent were you able to pay them?)

- 7) Are you faithfully adhering to the Synodical Decisions (see Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 88) in regard to combating worldliness?

- 8) Is there any matter in which you need the advice or help of Classis?
- 9) Have you any names of non-resident members to transmit to the Committee for Church Extension?

Respectfully submitted,

Your Committee,

A. WASSINK, *Pres.*

G. A. LYZENGA, *Clerk*

J. RUBINGH

REPORT V.

REPORT IN RE PROPOSED CHANGE IN THE ELECTION AND CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR HOME MISSIONS

To the Synod of 1942.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

I. THE MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

PURSUANT to the mandate given our Committee by the Synod of 1940, to so amend the Home Missions Order that provision is made for a General Committee composed of one delegate from each Classis and three delegates at large, to be elected by Synod from a nomination of six presented by the General Committee; and for an Executive Committee, which shall consist of six members of the General Committee of the Classes which Synod may see fit to designate and the delegates at large, to execute the decisions of Synod and to discharge the duties of the General Committee when the latter are not in session (cf. Overture 5, under A, Acts of Synod 1941, pp. 44, 45).

In accordance with this mandate your Committee humbly calls the attention of Synod to the following changes that must be made if this New Order is to go into effect. (See Church Order by Schaver, p. 162; or Acts of Synod 1936, pp. 141, 190-194 for original Order.)

II. EXECUTION OF THE MANDATE

Art. 1 (b) must then read, "A General Committee which in the name of Synod shall direct the Home Mission Work of the Church as specified in Article 5 of the Order. This Committee shall be known as the General Committee for Home Missions of the Christian Reformed Church.

Art. 3. Throughout the name Executive Committee is to be changed to General Committee. In (e) the name "Sudsidy Fund" is to be changed to "Fund for Needy Churches."

Art. 4. *Committees for Home Missions.*

(a) The General Committee for Home Missions shall be composed of one member from each Classis (this member, whenever feasible, shall be chosen from the Classical Home

Mission Committee). The names of these members are to be proposed by their respective Classes and elected by Synod. These members shall serve for two years. The names of the alternates to these members shall also be proposed by their respective Classes and elected by Synod. In addition to these Synod shall also elect three members at large to serve as members of the Committee. These shall be chosen from a nomination bearing the names of centrally located men. The members at large shall serve for three years and Synod shall elect one member each year together with his alternate. This General Committee shall have its office in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and shall be incorporated according to the laws of the State of Michigan (cf. Acts of Synod 1930, p. 126).

(b) There shall be an Executive Committee composed of the three members at large and the delegate members from six Classes to be designated by Synod.

Art. 5. *To change the term "Executive Committee to General Committee."*

(c) The representatives of the various Classes shall keep their respective Classical Home Mission Committees fully informed as to the activities of the General Committee . . . transcripts of the minutes of the Committee meetings to be sent to the Classical representatives serving as members of the Committee.

(h) To pass upon all applications for support from the *Fund for Needy Churches . . . Fund for Needy Churches.*

(i) To administrate . . . and *the Fund for Needy Churches.*

To do this work efficiently it will be necessary for the General Committee to meet at least once every three months.

Art. 6. The Executive Committee shall meet once per month to take care of all Ad Interim matters that demand immediate attention. For the sake of efficiency it may appoint sub-committees, each of which shall make it a point to specialize in and to be well informed on, one of the three respective phases of the work.

Art. 7. There shall be three distinct funds in charge of the General Committee to-wit: . . . and the Fund for Needy Churches.

Art. 8. The term Executive Committee to be changed to General Committee.

Art. 10. Change the caption to this Article to read "Fund for Needy Churches." In the Article itself the term Executive Committee will have to be changed to General Committee, and the term Subsidy Fund to Fund for Needy Churches.

Art. 11. The term Executive Committee to be changed to the General Committee.

Art. 12. Change the term Executive Committee to General Committee.

Art. 13. Subsidy Fund to be changed to Fund for Needy Churches. Executive Committee to be changed to General Committee.

Art. 14. Change the term Executive Committee to General Committee (in two instances). Subsidy Fund to be changed to Fund for Needy Churches.

Art. 15. The term Subsidy Fund to be changed to Fund for Needy Churches.

Art. 16. The General Committee shall elect a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer from its Executive Committee members. The Treasurer shall be placed under bond. The fee for this bond is to be paid from the treasury. The fiscal year shall be the calendar year.

Art. 17. All expenses connected with executing the work of the General and the Executive Committee shall be borne equally by the Church Extension Fund and the Fund for Needy Churches.

Art. 18 (b). The term Executive Committee to be replaced by the term General Committee.

(d) Again the term Executive Committee to be replaced by the term General Committee.

(g) The term Executive Committee to be changed to the General Committee and its Executive Committee.

Art. 19. The term Executive Committee in the third line to be replaced with the term General Committee. The second paragraph should be changed to read, "For cases between the gatherings of Synod the *General Committee . . .*"

May God bless our synodical gathering as it faces this and other important problems connected with the extension of His Kingdom on earth.

Humbly submitted,

JOHN BREUKER, *Pres.*

H. BLYSTRA, *Sec'y.*

P. S. All Articles and subdivisions of the Order not specifically mentioned here are to remain unchanged.

REPORT VI.

REPORT OF TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

To the Synod of 1942.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

YOUR Transportation Secretary has the honor of submitting the following report for the calendar year 1941:

Although the railroads are making constant efforts to decrease the number of passes issued to ministers of religion, they very kindly favored us with six annual and twenty trip passes.

Correspondence was carried on with delegates to Synod with the view of keeping synodical transportation expenses down to a minimum consistent with proper travel. Several of the delegates are to be commended for their coöperation in this respect.

There is a growing tendency toward the use of personal autos in traveling to and from Synod, thus precluding the possibility of effecting savings by obtaining free or reduced rate transportation on some railroads.

Herewith is a statement showing by Classes the payments made to delegates; also a comparison of the 1941 totals with those of 1940.

We bespeak the coöperation of all delegates to the 1942 Synod, and others traveling on Church business, toward making any reasonable savings in their transportation expenses, in order that the money thus saved may be used for more directly spiritual causes.

It is a privilege and pleasure to be of service to our Church.

Respectfully submitted,

BERT POUSMA.

Classes	Railroad and Pullman	Bus	Private Auto	Meals and Lodging	Totals 1941	Totals 1940	Increase	Decrease
California	\$ 173.00	\$	\$ 95.60	\$ 44.20	\$ 312.80	\$ 259.00	\$ 53.80	\$
Grand Rapids East .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	24.00	.....	\$ 24.00
Grand Rapids South .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Grand Rapids West .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4.00	.....	4.00
Hackensack .....	.....	.....	120.00	21.50	141.50	175.10	.....	33.60
Holland .....	.....	.....	8.40	.....	8.40	12.00	.....	3.60
Hudson	28.00	.....	134.00	18.00	180.00	179.59	.41	.....
Illinois	3.30	.....	14.70	.65	18.65	23.00	.....	4.35
Kalamazoo .....	.....	.....	8.10	.....	8.10	14.40	.....	6.30
Minnesota	47.35	.....	53.55	19.00	119.90	122.86	.....	2.96
Muskegon .....	.....	.....	16.80	.....	16.80	10.03	6.77	.....
Orange City .....	.....	.....	105.00	8.00	113.00	95.90	17.10	.....
Ostfriesland	27.50	.....	90.57	.....	118.07	62.00	56.07	.....
Pacific	155.30	.....	148.23	86.20	389.73	265.20	124.53	.....
Pella	63.37	.....	115.75	.....	179.12	143.65	35.47	.....
Sioux Center	40.95	6.90	78.00	4.65	130.50	139.10	.....	8.60
Wisconsin	22.20	11.10	3.00	2.90	39.20	64.13	.....	24.93
Zeeland .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Totals 1941	\$ 560.97	\$ 18.00	\$ 991.70	\$ 205.10	\$1,775.77	\$1,593.96	\$ 181.81	.....
Totals 1940	768.45	18.58	737.03	69.90	1,593.96	.....	.....	.....
Increase	\$	\$	254.67	135.20	181.81	.....	.....	.....
Decrease	\$ 207.48	\$.58	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

REPORT VII.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE IN RE THE REVISED COMPENDIUM

To the Synod of 1942.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

I.

YOUR committee performed its work against the following historical background.

The *Synod of 1936* received an overture from Classis Pella. It requested Synod "to appoint a committee for the purpose of drafting a revision of our present Compendium of the Heidelberg Catechism, charging said committee to alter the construction and language of the present Compendium wherever advisable, avoiding, however, all unnecessary changes, but not neglecting to incorporate in the proposed revision a brief exposition of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer; charging said committee in the second place, to add supplementary questions and answers on the doctrinal tenets vital today, not stressed or explicitly mentioned in the Catechism and its Compendium" (Agenda, 1936, p. 466). This overture was adopted by Synod (Acts, 1936, p. 17).

The committee appointed by the Synod of 1936 submitted a revised draft of the Compendium to the Synod of 1938. The revision did not meet with favor. Synod objected that 1) the document had not been carefully edited, 2) the meaning of certain questions could not be determined without reading the context, 3) in some instances in which proof-texts were employed the most appropriate texts were not used, 4) certain matters were stated incorrectly and others incompletely, 5) the draft departed needlessly from the specific language of the Compendium. (Acts, 1938, pp. 45-47).

The *Synod of 1938* appointed a new committee. It was decided "that Synod appoint an Editing Committee composed of four ministers and the Professor of Systematic Theology in our seminary, who is to serve in an advisory capacity, for the purpose of reviewing and editing the draft submitted by the former committee, this new committee to take cognizance of all criticisms of the present

draft and of suggestions for its improvement, to make whatever changes it may deem necessary, and to report to the next Synod. This new committee shall include at least one member of the former committee for the Revision of the Compendium" (Acts, 1938, pp. 47, 119).

The new committee presented its report to the Synod of 1940 (Cf. Agenda I, 1940, Reports I and II). Four of the five members of the second Revision Committee offered a Majority Report and one of its members offered a Minority Report. Neither draft met with the approval of Synod. The chief objection against them seems to have been that they deviated needlessly from the Heidelberg Catechism and the old Compendium (Cf. Acts, 1940, pp. 70-72).

The *Synod of 1940* decided to appoint a new committee, the committee now reporting. Synod first of all referred your committee for its mandate to the original overture of Classis Pella to the Synod of 1936, already quoted above. It then proceeded to instruct us as follows: "And further, in order that there may be definite progress toward an acceptable revision, Synod instruct this committee:

1. That it take cognizance of all criticisms of the present drafts and of suggestions for their improvement;
2. That it maintain the original character and purpose of the present Compendium, namely, that it serve as a text for the instruction of those seeking admittance to the Lord's Table;
3. That it retain the personal approach, and as far as possible, the language of the Heidelberg Catechism and Compendium;
4. That it retain the general structure of the present Compendium, and make no division of the material beyond the present divisions (Sin, Deliverance, Gratitude), thus allowing greater pedagogical freedom to the instructor;
5. That it observe the need of brevity, to the extent that such is consistent with the demands of clarity, and the purpose which the Compendium is to serve.
6. That it expressly call to the attention of our churches all noteworthy changes from the Heidelberg Catechism and the present Compendium which it deems necessary to bring about, and all introduction of new

material into the revised Compendium, together with the reasons of such changes.”

Adopted.

II.

From the foregoing historical sketch two facts stand out: 1) the church regards the old Compendium as no longer fully adequate; 2) the church does not approve of the revisions hitherto presented.

A. Your committee believes the church is correct in its appraisal of the old Compendium. Our work has confirmed us in the conviction that it has grave weaknesses. We hold, therefore, that, whatever the difficulties encountered in finding a satisfactory revision, the effort to do so ought not to be abandoned. There can be no uncritical returning to the old Compendium. It has certain faults that may not be left uncorrected. Permit us to point out some of these.

1. The Old Compendium contains no exposition of the Ten Commandments. It fails by that token to give an adequate account of the Christian life.

2. It omits entirely an analysis of the Lord's Prayer. In this it neither follows the Catechism, nor gives to "the chief part of thankfulness" the prominence that is its due.

3. It lacks certain definitions which should not be missing from a basic catechetical text. No exposition is made of such fundamental doctrines as the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, Everlasting Life, the Covenant of Grace, the Resurrection of Christ, the Keys of the Kingdom, the Inspiration of Scripture, Regeneration, Sanctification, etc.

4. A major formal defect of the old Compendium is its habit of giving answers which, from both a logical and grammatical point of view, are mere fragments. Answers such as the following abound: A. 2, "Out of the law of God"; A. 3, "That is contained in the Ten Commandments"; A. 4, "Into two tables"; A. 10, "That they did eat of the fruit of the tree, which God had forbidden them."

5. The questions, conversely, are frequently overburdened, containing material that is proper only to an answer. The answers in such cases are necessarily impoverished. For an instance of this, see question 12: "Are we then incapable of doing any good of ourselves and

prone to all manner of wickedness?" Ans.: "Indeed we are: unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God". Cf. also question 47.

6. These and other defects, any one of which justifies the church's insistence on revision, the draft now before Synod has sought to mend.

B. As to the revisions hitherto presented, we must acknowledge that we frequently consulted them with profit. Yet, with all due appreciation of their many excellencies, we were unable to endorse them. They seemed to us to be unacceptable for the following reasons:

1. They had abandoned the personal approach. They lost, in consequence, the warmth of personal conviction and joyous testimony characteristic of the old Compendium.

2. Somewhat too pedestrian, they lacked the beauty, profundity, and solemn dignity of the Catechism and Compendium.

3. They were catechism books, rather than Compendia.

Your Committee addressed itself to a task differently conceived. We felt it necessary to maintain the original character and purpose of the Compendium. We undertook to restore the personal approach. We borrowed freely from the Catechism, so freely indeed that our revision probably approaches the Heidelberger more closely than the old Compendium itself. We sought to avoid producing another popular question book lest we increase the number of those now jeopardizing the quality and uniformity of catechetical instruction among us.

III.

A. In making its revision your Committee was guided by the following directive principles:

1. There should be a *common, basic* text for the *uniform* instruction of all those seeking admittance to the Lord's Table. An enlightened and intellectually homogeneous church membership can be preserved only when fixed and uniform standards are maintained.

2. Such a text should be a manual of *fundamental* truths. Truths are never trivial, but they are sometimes peripheral. These, inasmuch as they are always either applications or implications of more fundamental truths, should be excluded from the text.

3. The text should be *positive*. It should make forthright affirmations and reduce to a minimum the number of negations and refutations.

4. The text should be *brief*, embodying only the indispensable minimum of essential truth.

5. The text should be *complete*. It should leave no essential doctrine undefined, and should make every definition adequate.

6. The text should have answers stated in the form of classical *definitions*. Such statements should be doctrinally sound, logically precise, grammatically complete, and of good rhetorical quality.

B. In further elucidation of these principles, the following may be said:

1. The Revision now before Synod is a *basic* text. It sets no limitation upon the teacher other than that demanded by good order. It permits the freest use of outside aids and individual techniques.

2. Inasmuch as the exercise of a principle of selection was imperative, your Committee excluded from its revision, or subordinated to others, such questions and answers as it did not deem of *fundamental* importance. Cf. in the old Compendium, question 4, "How are the ten commandments divided?" Ans.: "Into two tables". (But see our question 4 and 5).

3. Impressed with the importance of *positive* formulations of Christian truth, your Committee was reluctant to include references to contemporary heresies. It felt that the discussion of these should be at the discretion of the teacher, in terms of the student's comprehension, and with reference to changing conditions.

4. We have observed the need of *brevity*. The first draft, submitted to the Synod of 1938, contained 283 questions and answers. The drafts submitted in 1940 contained 224 and 271 questions and answers, respectively. The present draft numbers 116 questions and answers.

5. The demands of *completeness* have sometimes lengthened our answers. We believe, however, that none is unduly long.

6. We have made every answer a complete, self-sufficient, *definitive statement*. The advantage of this may be presumed to be self-evident. The following compari-

son of the old Compendium and the present Revision will illustrate the method we have followed:

OLD COMPENDIUM	REVISED COMPENDIUM
Q. 13: "Will God", etc. A: "By no means", etc.	Q. 13: "Will God", etc. A: "God by no means allows", etc.
Q. 46: "Why cannot", etc. A: "Because even", etc.	Q. 63: "Why cannot", etc. A: "We cannot be justified", etc.
Q. 48: "Who works that faith in you?" A: "The Holy Ghost"	Q. 65: "Whence is", etc. A: "Faith proceeds from the Holy Spirit", etc.

IV.

In all this we have not been unmindful of the instructions given us by the Synod of 1940. We have maintained the original character and purpose of the present Compendium; we have maintained its personal approach; we have sought to retain the dignified, solemn, deeply spiritual language of the Catechism; we have retained the general structure of the present Compendium, the whole being divided under the four heads of Introduction, Misery, Redemption, and Gratitude; and finally, we have observed the need of brevity, though not at the expense of completeness and clarity.

Synod further instructed us to call attention to the *new material* introduced. — Besides the questions and answers on the law of the Ten Commandments (90-103) and those on the Lord's Prayer (108-116) we make note of the following: Q. 10, on the Covenant of Works; Q. 20, 21, on the Inspiration of Scripture; Q. 26, 27, on Creation and Providence; Q. 28, on Miracles; Q. 35, 36, on the Prophetic and Kingly offices of Christ; Q. 50, 51, 52, on Regeneration and Conversion; Q. 57, 58, 59, on the Forgiveness of Sin, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting; Q. 68, on the Covenant of Grace; Q. 69, on the general significance of the Sacraments; Q. 82, 83, 84, on the Keys of the Kingdom; Q. 88, on the place of Good Works in the Christian Life; Q. 104, on Sanctification; Q. 105, on the place of prayer in the sanctified life.

V.

The Revision herewith submitted is, in the opinion of your Committee, the kind of text the Church envisages. It

is, however, not a perfect work. Your Committee itself is not fully satisfied with every detail. It therefore advises Synod:

- A. To endorse the principles that have guided the Committee in its work;
- B. To reappoint the present Committee with instructions to continue its labors for another year and, after taking due cognizance of all suggestions for improvement, to report to the following Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

MARTIN MONSMA.

HENRY J. STOB.

GERRIT HOEKSEMA.

A COMPENDIUM OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Being an abbreviation and adaptation of the Heidelberg Catechism, and designed for the instruction of those seeking admittance to the Lord's Table.

INTRODUCTION

Qu. 1. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Ans. My only comfort is that I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

Q. 2. How many things are necessary for you to know in order that you may enjoy true comfort?

A. To enjoy true comfort I must know three things: first, how great my sin and misery is; second, how I may be delivered from all my sin and misery; third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

THE FIRST PART

Sin and Misery

Q. 3. Whence do you know your sin and misery?

A. I know my sin and misery out of the law of God.

Q. 4. Where are the principles of God's law laid down?

A. The principles of God's law are laid down in the Ten Commandments, or the two tables of the moral law.

Q. 5. What does God require of you in the two tables of the law?

A. God requires of me, in the first table, to love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength; and in the second, to love my neighbor as myself.

Q. 6. Are you able perfectly to keep the law of God?

A. I am utterly unable to keep the law of God, for by nature I, with all men, am inclined to hate God and my neighbor and to transgress the commandments of God in thought, word, and deed.

Q. 7. Did God create man wicked and perverse?

A. God created man good and in His own image, endowed with true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

Q. 8. How did man become wicked and perverse?

A. Man became wicked and perverse through the fall and disobedience of Adam and Eve in paradise.

Q. 9. What was the disobedience of our first parents?

A. Our first parents disobeyed God by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree.

Q. 10. What divine institution did Adam violate through his first sin?

A. Through his first sin Adam violated the Covenant of Works, in which God promised man eternal life in the way of obedience and pronounced the penalty of death upon disobedience.

Q. 11. What are the results of Adam's disobedience?

A. The guilt of Adam as our covenant head is imputed to all men, and our nature is become totally corrupt, so that we are all conceived and born in sin.

Q. 12. What is involved in the total corruption of our nature?

A. We are incapable of doing any spiritual good, and are inclined to all manner of wickedness, unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Q. 13. Will God allow man's disobedience and corruption to go unpunished?

A. God by no means allows sin to go unpunished, but in His righteousness inflicts the penalties of sin both in this life and in the life to come.

THE SECOND PART

Deliverance

Q. 14. Is there any way of escaping the punishment of sin and being received again into God's favor?

A. God himself has planned and accomplishes the salvation of His people by giving Christ, His incarnate Son, true God and real righteous man, as the mediator between God and man.

Q. 15. What does our Mediator do to save us?

A. Our Mediator delivers us from the wrath of God and endows us with eternal life by bearing the punishment which we deserve and rendering the obedience required of us.

Q. 16. Why do we need a mediator who is truly human, yet without sin?

A. The justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should make satisfaction for sin; and one who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others.

Q. 17. Why must the mediator between God and man, Himself be God?

A. Through his divine power our Mediator must bear in his human nature the burden of God's wrath; and restore to us righteousness and life.

Q. 18. Will all men be saved by the mediator, Jesus Christ, as they are all condemned in Adam?

A. Not all men will be saved, but those only who receive Christ by a true faith.

Q. 19. What is true faith?

A. True faith is an assured knowledge of God, and of His promises revealed to us in the gospel, and a hearty confidence that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake.

Q. 20. What should every Christian believe?

A. Every Christian should believe the Holy Scriptures since they are God's inspired revelation of Himself in Christ.

Q. 21. What is to be understood by the inspiration of the Bible?

A. The Holy Spirit moved men to write the Scriptures and guided them in their work so that they wrote the Word of God without error.

Q. 22. What do you confess as a member of the Church of Christ of all ages?

A. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary;

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell;

The third day He rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit.

I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of saints;

The forgiveness of sins;

The resurrection of the body;

And the life everlasting.

Q. 23. What is the one great confession of the whole Apostolic Creed?

A. Throughout the Apostolic Creed we confess our faith in the one true God, who exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Q. 24. How are the articles of the Apostolic Creed divided?

A. The articles of the Apostolic Creed are divided into three parts: the first is of God the Father and our creation; the second, of God the Son and our redemption; the third, of God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Q. 25. What do you confess when you call God Father?

A. I confess that God is the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; that He is the universal Father of His whole creation; and that He is the Father of all believers once estranged through sin but restored to sonship in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Q. 26. What do you believe when you say "maker of heaven and earth"?

A. I believe that all things came not of themselves, but were made by God of nothing by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

Q. 27. What is meant by the Providence of God?

A. The providence of God is His almighty and everywhere present power whereby He upholds heaven, earth, and all creatures, and governs them according to His wise and gracious plan.

Q. 28. What are miracles?

A. Miracles are events wrought by the extraordinary operation of God's power unto the accomplishment of his redemptive purpose and the glory of his name.

Q. 29. What do you believe when you confess the sonship of Jesus Christ?

A. I believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal and only begotten Son of God, not made, nor created, but Himself God, having life in Himself of the Father.

Q. 30. Why do you call the Son of God our Lord?

A. Christ is our Lord because He has redeemed us from all our sins, has delivered us from all the power of the devil, and has made us His own possession.

Q. 31. What did the Son of God do to redeem us?

A. In order to redeem us the eternal Son of God, who is and continues to be true God, took upon Him the very nature of man in personal union with the divine.

Q. 32. Whence did Christ derive His human nature?

A. Christ took on his human nature from the virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and is thus become like unto us, His brethren, in all things, sin excepted.

Q. 33. Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Savior?

A. The Son of God is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins, and because there is salvation in none other.

Q. 34. Why is the Son of God called Christ?

A. The Son of God is called Christ, the Anointed One, because He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, to be our chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King.

Q. 35. What is the redemptive work of Christ as Prophet?

A. As Prophet Christ reveals to us, through His Word and Spirit, the counsel and will of God concerning our redemption.

Q. 36. What is the redemptive work of Christ as King?

A. As King Christ governs us by His Word and Spirit and defends and preserves us in the salvation obtained for us.

Q. 37. What is the redemptive work of Christ as Priest?

A. As Priest Christ bore the curse of sin in our stead and makes continual intercession for us with the Father.

Q. 38. How did Christ bear the curse of our sin?

A. Christ suffered for us, both in body and soul; He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; He was buried; and He descended into hell.

Q. 39. What do we confess when we say Christ descended into hell?

A. We confess that Christ, when He was forsaken of God on the cross, was plunged into hellish agony, and that He delivered us from the curse of sin and everlasting hell.

Q. 40. How was the Son of God able to suffer the wrath of God against sin and deliver us from it?

A. The Son of God bore the wrath of God against sin in His human nature supported and strengthened by His divine nature.

Q. 41. For whom did Christ die?

A. Christ died for all whom God out of sovereign grace has chosen unto faith, obedience, and glory.

Q. 42. What do you understand by the resurrection of Christ?

A. We believe that Christ rose the third day, with the body once crucified, as the conqueror of death and the grave.

Q. 43. What does the resurrection of Christ profit us?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ arose unto our justification, and by His resurrection power we are now born again unto a new life and at the last day will be raised in glory from the grave.

Q. 44. Where is Christ now as to His human nature?

A. Christ is ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father, exalted in the highest glory, far above all creatures.

Q. 45. What is the redemptive work of Christ our Lord in heaven?

A. In heaven our Lord intercedes for us with the Father, bestows His grace and Spirit upon us, rules His Church as its glorified head, and governs all things unto the coming of His kingdom.

Q. 46. Is our Lord not with us even unto the end of the world, as He has promised us?

A. With respect to His godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit, our Lord is never absent from us, but with respect to His human nature He remains in heaven until He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

Q. 47. What do you confess when you say that Christ shall come to judge the living and the dead?

A. I confess that the very same person who once died for my sins shall come as Judge from heaven, and shall cast all His enemies into everlasting condemnation, and shall take me with all His chosen ones to Himself into heavenly joy and glory.

Q. 48. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit is God eternal, the third person of the holy trinity, one in essence with the Father and the Son.

Q. 49. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in your redemption?

A. The Holy Spirit, being given to me of the Father through Christ, regenerates me and leads me into all truth, comforts me, and will abide with me forever.

Q. 50. What is regeneration?

A. Regeneration is that gracious and irresistible work of the Spirit by which men dead in sin are raised to new life in Christ.

Q. 51. How does the new life manifest itself?

A. The new life manifests itself in true conversion.

Q. 52. What is true conversion?

A. True conversion consists in a hearty repentance and avoiding of sin and a glad acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.

Q. 53. What do you believe concerning the Holy Catholic Church?

A. I believe that the Son of God gathers by His Word and Spirit out of the whole human race, those chosen to eternal life, thus building His Church in the unity of true faith; and of this Church I believe I am and always shall remain a living member.

Q. 54. What do you confess concerning the communion of saints?

A. I confess that all believers as members of Christ are partakers of Him through His Spirit, and are knit together in the fellowship of Christian love and service.

Q. 55. How does the Church of Christ manifest itself before men?

A. The Church of Christ manifests itself in the communion of the saints and in the offices and functions of the organized Church.

Q. 56. How is the purity of the true Church on earth maintained?

A. The purity of the true Church is maintained through the pure preaching of God's Word, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline.

Q. 57. What do you believe concerning the forgiveness of sins?

A. I believe that God, who graciously grants me the righteousness of Christ, no longer remembers my sins, neither the sinful nature against which I have to struggle all my life long.

Q. 58. What do you believe concerning the resurrection of the body?

A. I believe that at the last day my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall again be united with my redeemed soul from heaven, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ.

Q. 59. What do you believe when you confess the life everlasting?

A. I believe that in the fellowship of God I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, and that in the life to come I shall possess perfect and never ending bliss in His praise and service.

Q. 60. What is the blessed state of the Christian believer?

A. The Christian believer, being justified by faith, is righteous in Christ before God.

Q. 61. How, though you have kept none of the commandments of God, are you righteous before Him?

A. God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me and all who believe, the perfect satisfaction and righteousness of Christ.

Q. 62. How are we justified by faith?

A. Faith, without which no man is justified, does not merit justification; it is the gracious gift of God by which we receive the righteousness of Christ.

Q. 63. Why cannot our good works be our righteousness before God?

A. We cannot be justified by works, for even our best deeds are polluted by sin and cannot stand before the tribunal of God.

Q. 64. Does not God reward the good works of the Christian?

A. God assuredly rewards our good works, but merely out of grace, and not on the basis of merit.

Q. 65. Whence is the faith by which alone we are made righteous before God?

A. Faith proceeds from the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the hearing of the Word.

Q. 66. How does the Holy Spirit strengthen our faith?

A. The Spirit strengthens our faith by the hearing of the Word and the use of the Holy Sacraments.

Q. 67. What are the Sacraments?

A. The Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

Q. 68. What is the covenant of grace?

A. The covenant of grace is the gracious agreement wherein God promises His people complete salvation in the way of faith.

Q. 69. What do the Sacraments signify and seal?

A. The Sacraments signify and seal that God graciously grants us remission of sins and life eternal for the sake of the one sacrifice of Christ finished on the cross.

Q. 70. How many Sacraments has Christ instituted in the New Testament?

A. Christ has instituted two sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Q. 71. What is the outward sign of Baptism?

A. The outward sign of Baptism is the water with which we are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Q. 72. What does Baptism signify and seal?

A. Baptism signifies and seals the washing away of our sins by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Q. 73. Who are the subjects of Baptism?

A. The Christian Church, upon the command of Christ, baptizes believers and their children.

Q. 74. Why does the Church baptize the children of believers?

A. Children of believers are baptized inasmuch as they, as well as their parents, are in the covenant and members of the Church of God.

Q. 75. What are the outward signs of the Lord's Supper?

A. The outward signs of the Lord's Supper are the broken bread that we eat and the poured out wine which we drink in remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ.

Q. 76. What does the Lord's Supper signify and seal?

A. The Lord's Supper signifies and seals that Christ, with His crucified body and shed blood, once purchased my redemption on the cross, and now feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life.

Q. 77. What is it to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ at the Lord's Table?

A. To eat Christ's body and to drink His blood is to embrace with a believing heart the sufferings and death of Christ and thus to become more and more united to Him as our Head.

Q. 78. Is the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ?

A. The bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, but they are visible signs and pledges of His broken body and shed blood.

Q. 79. Who are called to partake of the Supper of the Lord?

A. The call to holy communion comes to all who bear Christ's name and have come to years of understanding.

Q. 80. Who, by God's grace, are worthy partakers of Holy Communion?

A. All those are worthy partakers of Holy Communion who, upon earnest self-examination, are displeased with themselves for their sins; who yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ; and who therefore sincerely desire to live the new life of Christian gratitude in obedience to God's holy law.

Q. 81. How must the Church guard the holiness of the Lord's Table.

A. The Church, in the exercise of the power of the Keys, must refuse Holy Communion to the unbelieving and ungodly, lest the covenant of God be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole Church.

Q. 82. What are the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven?

A. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are the power given by Christ to His Church to open and close the doors of the Kingdom by the preaching of the Word and the exercise of discipline.

Q. 83. How does the Church open the doors of the Kingdom?

A. The Church opens the doors of the Kingdom by promising eternal salvation, in the name of Christ, to all who repent and believe, and by receiving such into its sacred fellowship.

Q. 84. How does the Church close the doors of the Kingdom?

A. The Church closes the doors of the Kingdom by declaring the wrath of God upon the unbelieving and unrepentant, and by excluding such from its sacred fellowship.

THE THIRD PART

Gratitude

Q. 85. What manner of life does the Christian live?

A. The Christian, in humble gratitude for his deliverance, lives a new, godly life in the service of his Lord.

Q. 86. What is the new life?

A. The new life is a continual dying unto sin and a living unto God in all good works.

Q. 87. What are good works?

A. Good works are those which proceed from a true faith and are done according to the law of God and to His glory.

Q. 88. What is the place of good works in the life of the redeemed?

A. Our good works do not merit heaven, but doing the will of God is the very essence of the Christian life, wherefore without good works there is no salvation.

Q. 89. What are the blessed fruits of a life of good works?

A. A life of good works glorifies God, assures me of the sincerity of my faith, and serves to win men to Christ.

Q. 90. What is the law that we must observe to live the life of good works?

A. To live the life of good works we must observe the law of the Ten Commandments, which God proclaimed from Sinai, saying:

I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage.

- I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- II. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.
- III. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
- IV. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
- V. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.
- VI. Thou shalt not kill.
- VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- VIII. Thou shalt not steal.
- IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Q. 91. What is the significance of the solemn preface to the law?

A. In the preface to the law God claims our love and obedience by revealing Himself as our sovereign Lord and gracious Redeemer.

Q. 92. What does God require in the first commandment?

A. In the first commandment God requires that I know and acknowledge Him as the only true God, and that I give to none other the homage and service that is due to Him alone.

Q. 93. What does God require in the second commandment?

A. In the second commandment God requires that I know and acknowledge Him as Spirit, and that I worship Him not through images or any mere form, but in spirit and in truth.

Q. 94. What does God require in the third commandment?

A. In the third commandment God requires that I know and honor the revelation that He has given of Himself, that I stand in awe of His majesty, and that I never profane or abuse, but ever honor His holy name.

Q. 95. What does God require in the fourth commandment?

A. In the fourth commandment God the Creator, because He rested on the seventh day and hallowed it, requires that I rest on that day from my labors and that I keep it holy by devoting it to Christian worship and service.

Q. 96. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

A. In the fifth commandment God requires that I show due honor and obedience to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

Q. 97. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

A. In the sixth commandment God requires that I show due respect for the sacredness of human life by preserving and promoting it with all that is in me, and by never taking it unjustly or endangering it without cause.

Q. 98. What does God require in the seventh commandment?

A. In the seventh commandment God requires that I honor the divine institution of marriage, maintain its sanctity, and detest and avoid all sexual impurity in thought, word, and deed.

Q. 99. What does God require in the eighth commandment?

A. In the eighth commandment God requires that I respect the property rights of my neighbor, abhor all theft and fraud, and be a faithful steward of that which is mine.

Q. 100. What does God require in the ninth commandment?

A. In the ninth commandment God requires that I speak the truth in love and uprightness, defend and promote the honor of my neighbor, and shun all falsehood and slander as the proper work of the devil.

Q. 101. What does God require in the tenth commandment?

A. In the tenth commandment God requires that I, in grateful recognition of His all-wise providence, be content with His gracious gifts, rejoice in the prosperity of my neighbor, and never, in envy and selfishness, desire what God withholds from me.

Q. 102. Can they who are converted to God keep His commandments perfectly?

A. Because of indwelling sin no Christian can attain to perfection in this life; even the holiest of men have but a small beginning of true obedience.

Q. 103. What is the place and purpose of the preaching of the law in the Christian Church?

A. The law must be constantly preached as the teacher of sin and as the rule of Christian gratitude unto the progressive sanctification of God's people.

Q. 104. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is that gracious operation of God's Spirit whereby we are enabled in ever fuller measure to cleanse ourselves from sin, and to press on to the goal of Christian perfection.

Q. 105. What is the place of prayer in the sanctified life?

A. Prayer is the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us, and it is only in answer to earnest prayer that God grants His sanctifying grace.

Q. 106. What is true prayer?

A. True prayer is the humble and believing recognition in confession, petition, and praise of the holy and gracious God of Scripture as the supreme fountain of all good.

Q. 107. In whose name must we pray?

A. We must pray in the name of Christ, our Mediator, in whom alone we have access to the throne of grace, and for whose sake our heavenly father will always hear our prayers.

Q. 108. After what manner has our Lord taught us to pray?

A. Our Lord taught us to pray as follows:

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name:

Thy Kingdom come;

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors;

And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Q. 109. How do the words "Our Father who art in heaven" teach us to approach God in prayer?

A. Our Lord teaches us, as we address God in prayer, to confess His almighty power and heavenly majesty, and to express our own childlike trust and reverence.

Q. 110. What do we pray in the first petition: *Hallowed be thy name?*

A. In the first petition we pray that we and all men may honor God's revelation of Himself as the Holy one, who is forever to be praised.

Q. 111. What do we pray in the second petition: *Thy Kingdom come?*

A. In the second petition we pray that God may by His Word and Spirit rule ever more fully in the hearts and lives of men, until the perfection of His kingdom arrive wherein God shall be all in all.

Q. 112. What do we pray in the third petition: *Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth?*

A. In the third petition we pray that we may, by God's grace, renounce our own wills, and gladly and faithfully obey the will of God, as do the angels in heaven.

Q. 113. What do we pray in the fourth petition: *Give us this day our daily bread?*

A. In the fourth petition, withdrawing our trust from all creatures, we pray that our heavenly Father may daily provide for all our bodily needs.

Q. 114. What do we pray in the fifth petition: *And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors?*

A. In the fifth petition we ask our heavenly Father to forgive us our sins for the sake of Christ, and this we ask in confidence since He by His grace enables us to forgive our neighbor.

Q. 115. What do we pray in the sixth petition: *And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one?*

A. In the sixth petition, knowing our weakness, we pray that we may not be exposed to the assaults of the tempter, and that if temptations must come we may stand in the strength of God.

Q. 116. What do we confess in the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer: *For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen?*

A. In the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer we confess that all authority, might, and honor belong to God alone, and that He is both able and willing to hear us, His children, in Christ Jesus our Lord.