

AGENDA

Synod

Christian Reformed Church

*To convene June 13, 1928
at Holland, Mich.*

[[PART I]]
REPORTS

Grand Rapids, Mich., U. S. A.

Office of the Stated Clerk
737 Madison Ave., S. E.

Bert Jager.

AGENDA

Synod Christian Reformed Church

*To convene June 13, 1928
at Holland, Mich.*

[PART I] [REPORTS]

Grand Rapids, Mich., U. S. A.

Office of the Stated Clerk
737 Madison Ave., S. E.

< Blank Page >

PREFACE

THE Synod of 1926, p. 174 of its "Acta", 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 of the synodical year; the second part, to contain the Overtures to be laid before Synod, to be published on or before May 1st of that same year. The present volume is PART I. Sorry to say its publication has been delayed, for the simple reason that on Dec. 1, 1927, by which time the stated clerk was to have all the reports in his hands, so little material had reached him that he was necessitated to postpone the printing till the first week of February.

VOORWOORD

DIT boek is het eerste stuk der Agenda, voor de e. k. Synode. Het bevat de rapporten die volgens opdracht der vorige synodale vergadering werden samengesteld. Doordat er op 1 Dec. l. l. nog lang niet genoeg materiaal in onze handen was, zijn wij genoodzaakt geworden het drukken uit te stellen tot begin Feb. Het tweede stuk, met voorstellen voor de Synode, verschijnt D. V. op of vóór 1 Mei, 1928, zie "Acta" der Synode van 1926, bl. 174. De classicale statéd clerks worden bij dezen vriendelijk uitgenoodigd om ons die voorstellen, met de namen der gekozen deputaten, zoo spoedig mogelijk te doen toekomen.

Henry Beets, S. C.

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

A G E N D A

PART I

::

REPORTS

REPORT I

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting
in Holland, Mich., June, 1928.*

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:—

THE UNDERSIGNED respectfully submit to your honorable body the following report on the subject of AMUSEMENTS, thus acquitting itself of the task assigned to it by the Synod of 1926.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. OUR MATERIAL

This is found in the Acts (1926) on pages 56-58 and 181-182 as follows:

PAGES 56-58

"IX. Overture in re Worldly Amusements (Agendum, pp. xxxv and xxxvi).

"Classis Grand Rapids West requests Synod to utter a strong warning against worldliness and take a definite stand against the popular evils of card-playing, theater attendance (including movies), and dancing. Grounds:

- (a) An increasing number of our members indulges in these forms of amusement;
- (b) They are contrary to the Word of God, bear the stamp of worldliness, endanger the spiritual and moral welfare of those who indulge in them, and have always been condemned by Reformed moralists as a whole;
- (c) If our Synod takes no definite stand in these matters, the evil will spread and soon become too general to be eradicated.

"Classis Pacific supports the overture of said Classis, and Classis Illinois requests that a competent Committee be appointed which shall thoroughly investigate this problem with special reference to the question, whether habitual indulgence in these amusements becomes a disciplinary matter.

"Your Committee advises: That Synod appoint a competent Committee of investigation, to draw up a statement, uttering a strong warning against worldly amusements as card-playing, theater attendance (including movies), dancing and other forms of worldliness to report during the session of this Synod.

"In connection with the above advice the following overture of Classis Illinois was read:

"I. PREAMBLE.

- "1) It is the belief of Classis Illinois that the indulgence in worldly amusements, such as theater- and movie-attendance, dancing and card-playing is becoming a serious problem in the life of the Church. It is an incontrovertible fact that these worldly amusements are increasingly indulged in, especially by the youthful members of the church in the larger cities. That this indulgence is detrimental to spiritual development, impedes religious progress, undermines individual piety and devotion, and of necessity jeopardizes the spiritual life of the church, needs no argument.
- "2) How to deal effectively with this deplorable situation baffles many a Consistory. Although traditionally the Reformed Churches have always been opposed to the above named amusements, they have never taken an official stand or formulated a definite policy by which the consistories might be guided in combating this evil.
- "3) Classis believes that the time has arrived that this problem of worldly amusements should be thoroughly investigated and intelligently studied, in order that the Church may come to a clear and definite policy as to proper methods to be employed to cope with this situation as may with God's blessing stem the tide of worldliness which is sweeping over the Church.
- "4) It is furthermore the opinion of Classis that the object of this investigation and study should not only be of a negative character, but also of a positive nature. Namely, that also ways and means should be found whereby wholesome amusements and recreation may be provided for our young people.

"II. Classis, therefore, overtures Synod to appoint a competent Committee which will have the time and opportunity to make:

- a) The necessary study and investigation of the above named amusements in order to determine their true nature and character in the light of Scripture;
- b) To advise whether habitual indulgence in these amusements becomes a disciplinary matter;
- c) To outline principles of policy which the Church may adopt to combat this particular spirit of worldliness;

- d) To find ways and means whereby our young people may be provided with wholesome amusements;
- e) To submit its findings and recommendations to the Synod of 1928."

"This overture is adopted by Synod instead of the advice offered by the Committee. Ook besloten om bovengenoemd besluit, in re "Worldly Amusements" te laten drukken, opdat de afgevaardigden dit besluit te spoediger aan hunne respectieve Classes en Kerkeraden kunnen bekendmaken. Zie verder nog Art. 120 infra."

PAGES 181-182

"AMUSEMENTS

"In verband met instructies van Classis G. R. West en Classis Illinois inzake het deelnemen aan wereldsche vermaken, besloot de Synode een Commissie te benoemen, die deze zaak in studie zal nemen en de volgende Synode van advies zal dienen.

"Ofschoon in de aannahme van de instructie van Classis Illinois feitelijk reeds een uitspraak opgesloten ligt, zoo gevoelt de Synode zich toch gedrongen, om nog uitdrukkelijk uit te spreken, dat zij de toenemende wereldgelijkvormigheid in onze kerken, en de deelname aan allerlei zondige en bedenkelijke gemakkelijkheden ten zeerste betreurt. Zij acht dit in strijd met de heiligheid der gemeente en met den nauwgezetten en vromen wandel, die het waarachtig sieraad is van Gods kinderen. Zij ziet daarin een kwaad dat velen afleidt van het spoor der godsvrucht, dat den bloei van het geestelijke leven belemmert, dat hogere geestelijke aspiraties doodt, en dat de harten van vele kinderen Gods met droefenis vervult.

"Daarom wekt zij dan ook alle ambtsdragers in onze kerken er toe op, om in prediking en onderwijs, in vermaning en persoonlijke beaardiging, en desnoods ook door de tucht, jongen en ouden zonder ophouden te herinneren aan het woord van den Apostel: 'Wordt deze wereld niet gelijkvormig, maar wordt veranderd door de vernieuwing uws gemoeds, opdat gij moogt beproeven welke de goede en welbehagelijke en volmaakte wille Gods zij'."

"[TRANSLATION]

"In connection with the overtures of Classis G. R. West and Classis Illinois relative to participation in worldly amusements, Synod decided to appoint a Committee to study this matter and to report to the following Synod.

"Though the adoption of the overture of Classis Illinois virtually includes a declaration of Synod, yet it feels constrained to declare ex-

placitly that it greatly deplores the increasing worldliness in our church, and the participation in all kinds of sinful and questionable amusements. Synod considers this to be in conflict with the holiness of the Church and with that conscientious and pious conversation which is the true adornment of the children of God. It views this as an evil that causes many to deviate from the path of piety, retards the development of spiritual life, that stifles higher spiritual aspirations, and that fills the heart of many of the children of God with sorrow.

"Therefore, Synod exhorts all office-bearers in our churches to remind young and old constantly, in preaching and in giving instruction, in admonitions and in personal ministrations, and if necessary, also by means of discipline, of the word of the Apostle, 'Be ye not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.'"

B. INTERPRETATION OF OUR INSTRUCTIONS

1. The first question which arises is whether it is the business of this Committee to discuss other forms of questionable amusement besides theater-attendance, card-playing and dancing. There is some room for doubt here. The overture of Classis G. R. West mentions only the three amusements just named. That of Classis Illinois (adopted by the Synod) speaks of "worldly amusements, such as theater- and movie-attendance, dancing and card-playing." This is a wider field. But the second part of this overture speaks of "the necessary study and investigation of the above named amusements", of "habitual indulgence in these amusements", and of the Church combating "this particular spirit of worldliness". The Warning uttered by Synod speaks of "the overtures of Classis Grand Rapids West and Classis Illinois relative to participation in worldly amusements". The familiar trio named above is not mentioned here. Participation "in all kinds of sinful and questionable amusements" is greatly deplored. We conclude that Synod was specially concerned about the evils of theater- and movie-attendance, card-playing and dancing, but at the same realized that our people should be warned against other forms of worldly amusements, and in fact against all forms of worldliness.

On the basis of the foregoing we judge it to be our task as concerns point (a):

- I. To explain what attitude the Christian should assume toward the World;
- II. To state the Principles which should guide the Christian in his contact with the world, and particularly in his Amusements; and
- III. To confine ourselves, as regards the application of these principles to concrete things, to the well-known trio: theater- and movie-attendance, card-playing, and dancing.

2. An important question confronting us was in how far Synod took a stand against certain worldly amusements. It is evident that this has a bearing on the task of your Committee, and also on the decisions which your body will take. There are, on the one hand, several statements in Synod's resolutions on the subject in which worldly amusements are strongly condemned. These statements are found, first, in the preamble to the overture of Classis Illinois—assuming that the preamble as well as the recommendations were approved by Synod—and, second, in the Warning which was given later. Here, for example, consistories are exhorted to remind young and old constantly in preaching and in giving instruction, in admonitions and in personal ministrations, *and if necessary, also by means of discipline* (italics are ours), of the word of the Apostle, "Be ye not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God". On the other hand, Synod did not think it superfluous to appoint a Committee to study the matter,—which can hardly mean that it should simply formulate grounds for its condemnation of worldly amusements.

It appears to us, then, that there are contradictory elements in Synod's decision. But the task assigned to your Committee is not a matter of doubt. We are to make a thorough study of the entire subject and to present to the Synod of 1928 definite recommendations touching the various angles of the matter. These recommendations are to concern, first, the disciplinary side of the question; second, the measures which the Church must employ to combat the desire for worldly amusements; and third, the ways and means which the Church may have to use to provide wholesome amusements for our young people.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

We shall, of course, mention only those principles which should guide the Christian in his contact with the World and in his choice of Amusements.

All these principles can be subsumed under the following general concepts: the Honor of God, the Welfare of Man, Christian Separation from the World, and Christian Liberty. These touch on a fourfold relationship of the Christian: to *God*, to *Himself*, to the *World*, and to the *Law*.

A. THE HONOR OF GOD

According to the Scriptures man's chief end is the glorification of God. God created man in His own image that he might rejoice in Him and praise Him, and He saves his people from their sins to enable them to answer to their original purpose. Their entire life should be directed to this end. Paul says, "Whether ye eat or drink or do anything else, do it all to the glory of God".

1. It follows that our amusements should also glorify God. This means that **THESE AT THE VERY LEAST SHOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH ANY COMMANDMENT OF GOD**—either with an expressed divine precept or with what must logically be inferred from such a precept. We admit that the rule: do nothing which in any way conflicts with the letter or spirit of any of God's commandments, is a very general principle. But it is nevertheless one of the utmost importance—one which must be strongly emphasized in an age characterized by a universal craze for pleasure, a craving for physical enjoyment which knows no bounds. If all who profess to be Christians were at all times ready and eager to make their own pleasure subservient to the keeping of God's commandments, the problem of amusements would not be a pressing one. Though even the consecrated member of the church is at times puzzled to "know what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God" in regard to his diversions, and though his thoughtful and conscientious conduct with respect to them may give serious offense to others, *the real problem* arises out of the attitude of those church-members whose deepest conviction in the matter seems to be that "a man must have some fun", and who unthinkingly participate in any amusement which the average man pronounces respectable! Men

and women without Christian self-control, living not by principle but by mere habit and custom, and unwilling to make the will of God supreme in their life!

There may arise an apparent conflict between man's need and God's commandment. To some it seems that their need of recreation conflicts for example with the commandment to keep the Sabbath Day holy. Or rather their imagined need of recreation on the Lord's Day in the form of joy-riding becomes so all-important in their estimation that the conflict with the fourth commandment disappears! There is no desecration of the Lord's Day in their case! That is the worldly man's attitude. It is applied humanism. To such people the highest commandment is *man's need*! Let us warn our people against such modern epicureanism! Let us teach them to make the glorification of God, the keeping of his commandments, in which there is great reward, the supreme object and passion of their life!

2. The same principle (that the honor of God is superior to all other interests) requires *that the Christian shall deem it a matter of loyalty to his God and Savior not to further the interests of an institution which in its general influence is an unmitigated evil*, even though occasionally it may offer amusement which is not positively baneful. We believe this side of the matter has not been sufficiently stressed in Christian circles. No Christian stands alone. He is a soldier in the army of Christ. No worldly thing, no corrupt institution stands alone, but is a part of Satan's system, and one of his instruments for attack upon the Kingdom of God. If in time of war a citizen is disloyal to his country by "giving aid and comfort to the enemy", for example by utterances which in time of peace would not at all be deemed treasonable, a follower of Jesus Christ, a member of the Militant Church, must be branded as disloyal to his heavenly King when he furthers the interests of any institution or cause which must be reckoned among the forces of Satan. It should not merely be a question whether we can take part in a certain amusement without jeopardizing our spiritual welfare. It is not less important to consider whether our act of participation will "give aid and comfort" to our enemies, Satan and the world! One can easily sense the importance of this principle for the determination of the Christian's attitude toward those amusements which have become commercialized and institution-

alized, when the institution has become corrupt, even though the amusement as such which it offers, the elemental craving which it seeks to satisfy, cannot be condemned as sinful.

B. THE WELFARE OF MAN

There is no real conflict between the honor of God and the welfare of man. That which glorifies God is also conducive to human well-being, while disobedience to God is destructive of soul and body, "The wages of sin is death".

It is man's duty as well as his privilege to seek his own physical, mental, and spiritual welfare. In case of a real conflict the less important must be sacrificed to the more important, the physical to the spiritual, the temporal to the eternal.

Several principles may be deduced from this fundamental thought, which is so clearly taught in God's Word that no Christian would think of questioning it.

1. The first of these is that **THERE IS A LEGITIMATE PLACE IN LIFE FOR SUCH AMUSEMENTS WHICH ARE RECREATIVE FOR BODY AND MIND.**

a) *God has equipped man with the play-instinct and with the need of physical and mental diversion.* Both body and mind suffer when the tension inseparable from the discharge of one's obligations is not periodically relaxed. All men need recreation. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Our powers need frequent *re-creation*, replenishing. Scripture speaks of "bodily exercise as being *profitable for a little*" (1 Tim. 4: 8). Jesus took part in social functions to such an extent that the Pharisees based one of their slanders concerning Him on his frequent participation in festivities. Festive occasions were abundant among the Jews, and nowhere does the Bible condemn them. A gloomy view of life and an ascetic mode of living are consistently opposed. It is the Christian's duty to control and to purify his desire for amusement but not to suppress it.

b) *Our amusements, however, should be truly recreative, not dissipative.* All pleasures and diversions which lead to physical or mental exhaustion, all

sports and games which are inherently dangerous to life or limb conflict with the principle of the sixth commandment and must be condemned. We Christians should not blindly follow the world in the matter of sports. Let's dare to be a peculiar people even here! It also follows that all amusements which stupefy the mind, disturb and excite the nervous system or in any way are dissipative rather than recreative should be frowned upon in Christian circles. Since our bodies are holy, because they are temples of the Holy Spirit, we should preserve them for the Master's use.

2. NO PHYSICAL RECREATION OR MENTAL DIVERSION SHOULD BE TOLERATED WHICH IS IN ANY WAY OR DEGREE SUBVERSIVE OF OUR SPIRITUAL AND MORAL WELL-BEING. "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his *soul*?" It is man's duty to seek his own welfare, but the welfare of his soul is of far greater importance than that of his body. This principle is clearly expressed in the words of Paul: "Bodily exercise is profitable *for a little*; but godliness is profitable *for all things*, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4: 8). To be able to say of any amusement, regardless of the keen pleasure which it may afford and even of the educational, or æsthetic benefit which may be derived from it, that it stifles true spirituality, hinders prayer, endangers Christian morality and consequently grieves the Holy Spirit, is to condemn it most emphatically and to declare it to be incompatible with sound Christian principles.

This principle is closely related to that under A-1. The only difference lies in the approach, the point of view. There it is the honor of God as involved in the keeping of his commandments; here it is the spiritual welfare of the Christian.

3. EVEN WHEN OUR AMUSEMENTS ARE NOT SPIRITUALLY AND MORALLY HARMFUL, THEY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO OCCUPY MORE THAN A SECONDARY, SUBORDINATE PLACE IN OUR LIFE. The very words we use to characterize this phase of life bring this out. They are only "amusements", "recreations", "diversions". All these imply that they are not the primary things. They should be the exception, not the rule; not an

end in themselves but only a means to an end. Their function is to keep us fit for the joyful and zestful performance of our task. It follows that an inordinate desire, an uncontrollable craving for or an excessive indulgence in diversions which in themselves are not sinful *is nevertheless sinful*. Paul expresses this principle plainly in 1 Cor. 6: 12: "All things are lawful for me; but *I will not be brought under the power of any*". The sin lies in putting second things first and in becoming enslaved to them. There is a common notion among members of the church that whatever is not wrong *in itself* cannot be sinful. But a person may spend his entire life *doing only things which are not wrong in themselves* and still perish because he has not done the really needful things! He has put second things first and first things second. He who neglects the cultivation of personal piety through prayer, meditation, and reading, who fails to take time to repair the breaches in the citadel of his home and to devote some time and strength to the week-day interests of his church *because he needs all his spare time for the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, or honor*, is unworthy of the Kingdom of God and loses his soul!

C. CHRISTIAN SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

The question of the relation of the Christian to the World is involved here—a very difficult question!

1. Let us first of all inquire into the sense in which the word "world" must be taken when we speak of the Christian's separation from the world.

The word "world" does not always have the same meaning in the Scripture. There are many passages in which it has no unfavorable sense; as, for example, where we read that "the field is the world", that the apostles should "go into all the world". But when we speak of "worldly amusements" it is clear that "world" does not mean the universe, nor the earth, nor the sum total of human beings on the earth.

It has an evil sense in many other texts of Scripture. In John 17: 14 Christ says concerning his disciples: "I have given them thy word; *and the world hated them* because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world". There is no doubt that "world" here means "the whole mass of men alienated from God?" (Thayer's *Greek N. T. Lexicon*). It means all the wicked. In other passages,

where it is also used in an unfavorable sense, it has a less personal connotation. We refer especially to the important passage in 1 John 2: 15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world". Thayer says that "world" here stands for *earthly things* or, as he puts it: "the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which, although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ". In short, "the world" means "the total of perishable things". But if this were true, how could John say that the things of the world are not of the Father but of the world? Is there an inherent taint in the transient things of earth? We agree with Luther and others that "the world" in this passage means *the sphere of evil* as it exists on earth—that sphere which godless men (under the influence of Satan, who is the Prince of this World) create through their godless living.

As far as we know, the word "world" has only these two meanings in texts where it is used in an unfavorable sense: *godless men* or *the sphere of ungodliness*. Now when we speak of *worldly amusements*, the second connotation must be thought of. "Worldly amusements" are not *the amusements of worldly, ungodly men*, but *amusements which belong to the sphere of the world, of ungodliness*. We emphasize this because Christians sometimes understand the expression in the former sense. They condemn certain amusements solely on the ground that "worldly people do those things". Now it is true that the favorite amusements of worldly people often bear a worldly, sinful stamp. But this is not always the case. The fact that worldly people like to listen to a symphony orchestra is not indication that listening to a symphony orchestra concert is evil. The view that all amusements of worldly people are "worldly amusements" in themselves, even apart from the worldly, sinful spirit and manner in which they take part in them, would be correct only if worldly people could do none but sinful things. This is not good Reformed doctrine. It is not Scriptural teaching.

There are texts in which the word "world" is not used in an unfavorable sense, and one group of these must be taken into account here. We refer to those passages in which it signifies *the inhabitants of the earth, the human race, human society*. (1 Cor. 1: 27, 28; 4: 13; 5: 10b, and others.) In these texts the word has a neutral connotation. It means the *human race*. This race consists of believers and unbelievers. And since these two groups cannot live independent of each other, they together constitute the *world* in the sense of *human society* in all its interactions: that whole complex of human activities which are essential to human life and contribute to human development. The very fact that human society consists of believers and unbelievers who have nothing in common spiritually and who nevertheless belong to one race and are dependent upon one another, gives rise to the difficult problem of the Christian's relation and attitude toward the world.

2. So let us in, the second place, inquire in what sense the Christian should be and should not be separated from the world.

- a) SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, as God requires it of his people, DOES NOT MEAN THAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD FORM SEPARATE COMMUNITIES OR THAT THEY SHOULD SHUN ALL ASSOCIATION WITH UNGODLY MEN.

In Old Testament times the nation of Israel was God's peculiar people. In all those centuries of particularism God confined the workings of his special grace to that narrow circle. The purpose was the preservation of the true religion. Particularism had its object in Universalism. Israel was the reservoir in which Jehovah was storing up the waters of truth and salvation until such time as they could break their bounds and flood all the earth. For that reason God wanted a people who were separated from the world geographically, spatially as well as spiritually. This separation was only *temporary, symbolical, typical and relative*. It was temporary: the universality of the Church was the goal toward which all things were moving. It was symbolical of the spiritual identity which the people of God had to maintain in the midst of heathen nations. It was

typical of the spiritual separation of the Church of the New Testament from the godless world. It was relative, as the frequent and close contacts of Israel with the surrounding nations, even in times of spiritual florescence, clearly show. Think of the part which Hiram of Tyre took in the building of Solomon's temple. We remark in passing, that this geographical separation did not prevent sinful contacts and alliances between Israel and the heathen. It was not at all ideal.

Our Lord terminated this isolation of God's people when he commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all the nations. He taught them to mingle with publicans and sinners after his own manner: seeking to win them for the Kingdom of God. He commanded them to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He prayed the Father not that he would take his own out of the world, but that he would keep them from the evil one; and he declared that even as the Father had sent him into the world so he was sending his own into the world. All these teachings imply that the seclusion and aloofness of the people of God had to cease with the advent of the universalism of the N. T. Church. At the same time, however, they also imply that the Church must preserve its spiritual identity in the midst of the world. How can it transform the world if it conforms to the world?

And so the call to the Church of *every* age is a call to separation. "Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord", is a New Testament quotation of an Old Testament injunction. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. 6: 14, 15). Elsewhere the apostle commands the church to withdraw from evil and ungodly men. He counsels Christians not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind. This spiritual separation from the world as practised by the Church is its recognition of God's own

work, of the antithesis, the contrast, between the believers and the unbelievers which God himself has made between them by regenerating the former and not the latter. This antithesis is absolute in principle, though not in degree. Nothing can bridge the chasm between the church and the world. Because *God* has separated his people from the world they must separate themselves from the world.

The purpose of this separation lies, in the first place, in the *self-preservation* of the Church. It must "keep itself unspotted from the world", protecting itself against spiritual and moral contamination. Sin is not foreign to the heart of the child of God; therefore, he should not unnecessarily expose himself to temptation. Confessed Christians who conform to the world, adopting its sinful forms and customs, are swallowed up by the world. The purpose of this separation lies also in the *fulfilment of the task* which the Lord laid upon his Church. Included in our high calling is the duty to testify against sinful living and all organized forms of evil and withal to call the sinner away from sin and death to righteousness and life and faith in Jesus Christ. But how can we perform this task unless we confirm our testimony by our own example? All worldliness is a loud confession that we have no message for the world.

But our separation does not consist in a lack of contact with the "world" in the sense of *human society* and *human affairs* (vid. C-1, third par.). There are many points of contact and close associations between the Christian and the worldly man which simply cannot be avoided because the former as well as the latter is a member of the human race, having the same needs and wants. If mere association with worldly men were sinful it would be impossible to live a Christian life on this earth. Paul dwells on this fact in 1 Cor. 5: 9 ff: "I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators; not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, and extortioners, or with idolaters; *for then must ye needs go out of the world*". This last statement is not intended as a

statement of *the ground* on which Christians are permitted to associate with the ungodly, as if Paul wants to say that unavoidable evils cease to be evils. He reasons backward, so to speak. The fact that Christians are in the world because God wants them to be here and the impossibility of being in the world without having fellowship with evil men, indicates that such fellowship cannot be necessarily and always sinful. If it were, Christ would not have sent his disciples into the world. Mankind is a physical organism, the members of which, believers and unbelievers, are dependent upon one another for their daily sustenance and the performance of their life task. As the world is constituted, no group of Christians can possibly be a community sufficient unto itself.

Both the needs and the calling of the Christian require close and frequent contact with worldly men. Think of the economic sphere in which so many Christians move every day from morning till evening in continual association with worldly men. There is also the political sphere. The fact that we are a peculiar people does not prohibit us from taking part in political campaigns nor even from holding political office. This, too, means constant fellowship with non-Christians. There are institutions which Christians can support together with those who do not profess faith in Christ, for example, the Red Cross. There are associations to which both can belong, even though these are not founded on positive and avowed Christian principles, as for example, Improvement Associations and Automobile Clubs. This position finds direct support in the text from Corinthians just quoted, and in the familiar words of Jesus in John 17: 15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one".

The question arises, *what basis of fellowship there can be* between the child of God and the man of this world? What have they in common which makes a degree of communion possible and legitimate? How can Paul ask in 2 Cor. 6, "What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity" (speaking

of the believer and the unbeliever) and at the same time declare in 1 Cor. 5 that it is possible for the Christian to have some fellowship with the unbelievers, the fornicators and idolaters of this world? Notice that Paul is responsible for the apparent contradiction! The solution is found in the doctrine of common grace. *Spiritually* the believers and unbelievers have nothing in common, but morally they have. The basis of our fellowship with unbelievers should never be *the sin* which we have in common with them, but the *grace* (common) which they have in common with us! The Christian who is a partner in a business firm and connives at the employment by his firm of business methods which are not strictly honest is guilty of worldliness: he has fellowship with worldly men *on the basis of the sin* which he has in common with them. But if that firm employs honest business methods he has fellowship with them on the basis of common grace. This principle can be applied to the sphere of amusements. In his general grace God has (1) given certain joys, diversions, pleasures to men. There are no amusements in hell! By that same general grace He (2) restrains sin in the hearts of the ungodly so that the diversions and amusements which they devise are not always and necessarily tainted with sin. Even their manner of participating in them may not be so manifestly sinful that a Christian cannot join in with them. Is it not possible for Christians to play a game of ball with non-Christians without denying their christian principles? We do not advise Christians to seek their amusements in mixed company. This is often dangerous. But the mere fact that they meet on a *common* ground is no proof that the Christian is on *forbidden* ground.

b) SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, AS REQUIRED BY GOD, FORBIDS AND EXCLUDES FRIENDSHIP WITH EVIL MEN.

We have seen that one of the connotations of the word "world", as used in the Scriptures, is "the whole mass of men alienated from God". They are enemies of God, of his law and of his people. By fraternizing

with them we are disloyal to Christ, break God's covenant with us, and forfeit his friendship. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God". (James 4: 4.) There is an essential difference between this *friendship* of the world and the *fellowship* with unbelievers of which Paul speaks. The latter is mere contact and association for the purpose of supplying certain needs which the believer has in common with the unbeliever. Friendship has no such restrictions; it implies unity of spirit, viewpoint and convictions. Such worldly friendships may exist between individuals, families and fellow-members of organizations. It is often very difficult to say where fellowship in the sense of mere association or contact ends and friendship begins. This is especially true of membership in mixed organizations. Much depends among other things on the purpose of the organization, the character of the non-Christians who belong and particularly on *the nature of the contact* between them and their Christian fellow-members. There are contacts between believers and unbelievers which lie in the borderland between legitimate fellowship and sinful friendship. In many cases the decision will have to be left to the individual conscience.

c) SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, AS REQUIRED OF THE BELIEVER, CONSISTS IN SHUNNING ALL THE EVIL WHICH IS IN THE WORLD.

Christians are besought not to love the world nor the things which are in the world. We have seen that here "world" means the *sphere of evil* which is created by the godless life of sinners, the realm in which Satan is King. This world consists of false theories and ideals, sinful calculations and schemes, godless institutions, iniquitous practices, questionable methods and customs. John speaks of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life". The Christian should not love them but hate them. In fact he does hate them according to the measure of his attachment to God. He is conscious

of having a different spirit, which finds expression in radically different views, ideals and endeavors. He knows that he belongs to a peculiar people, and is not satisfied with differing from the world only in the ground he has for his hope of heaven. He wants to lead a Christian *life*, a life as rich and varied as that of the worldly man, but a life which in all its ramifications bears the christian stamp and grows from a christian root.

- d) SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, FINALLY, INCLUDES THE WEANING AWAY OF THE HEART FROM THE TRANSIENT THINGS OF THIS PRESENT EARTHLY SPHERE. The word "world" is sometimes used in a neutral sense, and may then refer to all things mundane and temporal. A christian should not despise earthly blessings, but rather use them to the glory of God. But it is just as necessary for him to guard against making them the object of his deepest affections. "The fashion of this world passeth away", says Paul; therefore, we should weep as though we wept not, rejoice as though we rejoiced not, possess as though we possessed not, and use the world as not using it to the full" (1 Cor. 7: 30, 31). The believer's treasures are not on earth, but in heaven. The life we now live is in principle a heavenly life; therefore our chief attachments should be heavenly, not earthly. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3: 1, 2). Separation from the world in this sense is the counterpart of the practise of heavenly-mindedness. Worldliness consists not only in the practise of those evil things which worldly men love to do, but also in the pursuit of those transient, corruptible things of earth (food, clothing, riches, honor, pleasure, etc.), which are the sole object of the world's striving, *when they take the place* in our affections and endeavors of those incorruptible treasures and spiritual delights which God promises to those who love and seek him.

D. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

The Word of God teaches that the Christian is a free man and should "stand in the freedom with which Christ has made him free." What is meant by Christian freedom? What is freedom in general? We answer: it is not the right and the ability to do as one pleases, but the ability to move without constraint in the sphere for which God made us. Freedom therefore is not inconsistent with limitation and law. The bird is free only when it can move in the air unhindered. A worm is free when it is not prevented from moving in the ground—in a sphere which would mean bondage and death for many other creatures. A locomotive is not free unless its motion is confined to the two rails on which it was made to run. Man was made in the image of God to be like Him and to reflect his holiness. Consequently he is free only when he moves without constraint in the sphere of holiness and obedience to God's law.

1. It follows that true freedom consists, first of all, in *deliverance from the power of sin* and in the *loving service of God his Savior*. Man was not made to live in sin, but in righteousness. Consequently, "he that doeth sin is a bondservant (that is, a slave) of sin. But if the Son shall have made us free we shall be free indeed" (John 8: 34, 35).

2. Christian freedom consists, in the second place, in *freedom from the law of God*. The Christian is no longer under law but under grace. He can say with Paul that through the law he died unto the law that he might live unto God. This same apostle declares that "Christ is the end of the law for all who believe" (Rom. 6: 14; Gal. 2: 19; Rom. 10: 4, etc.). But how must we interpret these texts? Is the Christian free from the law in the sense that it is no longer the rule of his life? Is it no longer the objective norm or standard of his conduct? Has the Christian only an inward law written in his heart? Has Christ abolished all commandments, precepts and prohibitions? Just a glance at the words of Christ, for example, the "Sermon on the Mount", and a reading of the epistles will show the opposite to be true. True, the need of an external law would not exist under ideal conditions. But ideal conditions exist only in heaven. Dr. H. H. Kuyper remarks in *De Christelijke Vrijheid*: "Omdat de mensch zoo diep gezonken is dat de wet uit zijn hart weg is, moet ze hem van buiten af

worden ingescherpt. Maar tegelijk gaat onder Israël de profetie uit dat God de Heere een nieuw verbond maken zal, en dat dit nieuwe verbond juist hierin zal bestaan dat God zijn wet in hun binnenste zal geven en die in hun hart zal schrijven. En zij zullen niet meer een iegelijk zijnen naaste leeren, zeggende: kent den Heere, want zij zullen mij allen kennen". Voor een deel is dat vervuld op den Pinksterdag. De uitstorting des Heiligen Geestes is het tegenbeeld van de wetgeving op Sinaï * * * * Eerst daardoor is de ware vrijheid tegenover de wet gekomen, in zoo verre Gods kind nu niet door een uitwendig opgelegden dwang, maar door de innerlijke drijving des Geestes naar den regel der wet behoort te wandelen". Elsewhere in the same book we read: "En dan zij vooreerst opgemerkt, ter voorkoming van misverstand, dat met deze vrijmaking van de wet allermint bedoeld is, dat de wet als 'regel des levens' voor Gods kind zou zijn afgeschaft" (p. 20). We refer further to the entire chapter on "De Wet als Regel des Levens".

Dr. H. Bavinck, writing on this same subject, says: "Wet en Evangelie verschillen niet daarin, dat de eerste alleen eischt, 't tweede alleen belooft; want beide bevatten geboden, bedreigen en beloften; *mysteria, promissiones, praecepta*. Niet alleen Mozes, ook Christus, was Legislator. Maar in het N. T. zijn de wetten veel heerlijker en lichter, wyl ceremonieele en burgerlijke wetten afgeschaft en door enkele ceremoniën vervangen zijn. . . . In één woord, de wet is het onvolmaakte, onvolkomene Evangelie, het Evangelie de volkomene wet". (*Dogmatiek*, IV. 494.) On page 498 of the same volume we read: "De vrijheid van de wet bestaat dan ook niet hierin, dat de Christen met die wet niet meer te maken heeft, maar zij is hierin gelegen dat de wet van den Christen niet meer als voorwaarde der zaligheid eischen, hem niet meer veroordeelen en verdoemen kan En daarom moet die wet altijd in het midden der gemeente, in verband met het Evangelie verkondigd worden Veel breeder plaats dan in de leer der ellende neemt daarom de wet bij de Gereformeerden de leer der dankbaarheid in".

The Christian is free from the law in a threefold sense. First, he is free from its *curse* by virtue of the atoning suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Second, he is free from its *demands* as a condition for earning eternal life. "Christ is the end of the law *unto righteousness* to every one that

believeth" (Rom. 10: 4). By his active obedience Christ has secured an everlasting righteousness for his people. Third, the Christian is free from the law as an *oppressive, galling yoke*—first as regards the ceremonial commandments which have all been fulfilled in Christ, and which as mere shadows of the truth in Christ were abolished by the coming of Christ—and second even with respect to the Moral Law, the Ten Commandments. Even this law is a heavy burden, an oppressive yoke for the sinner because he lacks the strength of love to do the will of God. But since he has received the Spirit of adoption whereby he cries, Abba, Father, he is reconciled to the law of God, has a delight in that law according to the inward man, and finds that the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden light.

3. Christian liberty also consists in *liberty of conscience*. This means:

- a) *That the Christian is free from the yoke of human ordinances*, and is bound in his conscience only by the Word of God. This would seem to imply that he recognizes no authority in Church, State, or Society. The fact is that he submits to all human authority in so far as it is divine: only because God has clothed certain men with his own authority. So after all he recognizes no law which is purely human. As a citizen he obeys the magistrate for God's sake. As a church member he is subject to those who have the rule because Christ invested them with his authority. He recognizes only Christ as King of the Church. The Church has no right to *legislate* in the strict sense of the word. Our only law is the "royal law" of Christ, "the law of liberty" (James 1: 25; 2: 8, 12). The elders lay down no laws of their own; but they do have the right to require submission to the law of Christ. They have no right to add any ordinances or traditions to the Scriptures for the Christian to observe, but they do have the right to *interpret* Christ's law. Their interpretations, rules, and regulations bind the conscience only in so far as they can be shown to be in harmony with the Word of God.
- b) *That the Christian is free to let his own conscience decide* all moral questions which belong to the "Adiaphora". By adiaphora are meant minor ques-

tions of conduct which the Scriptures do not settle; in which there is room for difference of opinion and in which every Christian must be guided by his own enlightened conscience or moral sense.

In all other questions not conscience but Scripture should be our guide. We must not subjectify the will of God by looking to conscience for light and guidance in things concerning which God has made known his will in his Word. No christian's conscience is perfectly reliable. Conscience is not "the voice of God in the soul". God's voice is his Word, his law; conscience is the echo within our soul of that voice. It is the moral sense with which God has endowed us. But this moral sense shares the corruption in which sin has involved our entire soul. The conscience of the sinner is defiled. The heathen's moral sense may not revolt against his cannibalistic practices; the civilized man's conscience may not protest against certain dishonest business methods which the law of God and the enlightened conscience of the Christian condemn. Neither are the consciences of christians equally pure. The trustworthiness of the christian's conscience depends, among other things, on the breadth and depth of his insight into God's Word and the purity and power of his spiritual life. Neither is one and the same conscience equally trustworthy in all matters. Perhaps it is not too much to say that every Christian's conscience has its dull areas.

The apostle Paul speaks of conscience as our guide only in connection with Adiaphora, such as the eating of meat offered to idols and the observance of special days (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 6: 12-20; 1 Cor. 8, 9, 10). The very fact that Paul declares with emphasis: "All things are lawful" plainly indicates that he is not thinking of important moral issues concerning which the Scriptures have made known God's will. For surely the Apostle could not mean to say that nothing of what a Christian may do can be contrary to the law of God!

- c) In the passages just quoted Paul teaches that the Christian's *liberty of conscience is limited by the law of love*. We should do nothing, even though it

be lawful, which may cause the weaker brother to stumble, to violate his own conscience by following our example. "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to the weak. . . . Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (1 Cor. 8: 9, 13. Compare vs. 1-8; also Rom. 14: 14, 15, 19-23). To say, however, that Paul requires that we shall abstain from doing everything which another christian may deem to be wrong is to misinterpret him. He not only warns the "strong" against offending "the weak", but also the weak against "judging" the strong. Moreover, by "offending" the brother he means not merely displeasing him, but causing him to stumble.

If the objection be raised that by abstaining from innocent things for the brother's sake the christian loses the freedom which he has in Christ, Paul answers (1) that by not using our freedom we are not losing it nor binding our conscience (1 Cor. 10: 29); and (2) that the brother's spiritual welfare and edification is far more important than the use of our liberty (Rom. 14: 15).

The significance of these principles for the Christian's conduct in the matter of amusement can readily be seen. The mere fact that a certain pleasure is not condemned by God's Word, either directly or indirectly, nor by our enlightened christian conscience is no proof that we are not displeasing God by indulging in it. We may have to abstain for the brother's sake. If Paul was willing to abstain from the eating of meat to the extent of never eating it again for the sake of not causing his brother to stumble, how much more willing we should be to forego pleasures which are far less essential to our well-being than eating meat, if by indulging in them we should tempt the weak brother to violate his conscience! Christians should never forget the stern judgment which Christ pronounces upon those who cause "one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble". "It were better that a millstone were hung about his neck and that he be cast into the sea!"

- d) The Christian's liberty is also *limited by the law of self-preservation and of self-denial.*

These two apparently contradictory motives are in reality one, since self-denial is the road to self-preservation, while self-indulgence means self-destruction.

Self-denial is often used in the wide sense of a *renunciation of the old sinful self*. This is manifestly a christian duty, but has no direct bearing on the subject of christian liberty.

When Christ tells us in Matt. 16: 24, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me", he means the renunciation for his sake of *things which are lawful and useful in themselves*, when they interfere with the service of God or with the promotion of our spiritual welfare. The common notion that a Christian is at liberty at all times and under every circumstance to use whatever is lawful, is a dangerous fallacy, most emphatically and consistently opposed in the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. The fact that self-denial in this specific sense, as the renunciation of things lawful, was also in the mind of Christ when he laid down the double rule of self-denial and cross-bearing for all who would follow Him, is clear from the fact that He represented it as the rule of his own *sinless* life. Self-denial in the fundamental sense of conversion could not be practised by One who had no sinful self. Yet our Lord says: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and (in this way) follow me". Christ denied himself in the sense that he voluntarily surrendered all lawful things in so far as they interfered with his vicarious work. He denied himself the riches and glories of heaven though it was no robbery for Him to be on an equality with God. He who was rich became poor that we by his poverty might become rich. Christ also denied himself the pure joys of earth: the comforts of home, the bliss or marriage and of parenthood, etc.

This same kind of self-denial was required in a special measure of the Twelve. They uttered no vain boast when they said: "Lo, we have left *all* and followed Thee" (Mark 10: 28). Yet this self-denial Christ required of all his disciples though in a lesser degree. If *any man* would

come after Me, let him deny himself". The apostles were called upon to sacrifice earthly possessions, earthly ties and life itself for the sake of Christ. Lawful, useful, and precious things had to be surrendered in order that they might spend their life in laying the foundation of the New Testament Church. But these same sacrifices must be made, though usually in a less literal sense, by the ordinary disciples of Jesus Christ. "If *any man* cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14: 27). These precious ties must be renounced by every christian in the sense that they must be subordinated to our attachment to Christ; and there may be special circumstances which require a literal forsaking of the dearest friends on earth in the interest of the Kingdom. The Christian's supreme task is to serve Christ and to specialize in godliness. He should concentrate on the things that are first, and never permit earthly affairs, be they ever so legitimate, to engross his mind so that he lacks sufficient time and energy for the pursuit of holiness. Paul speaks as a Christian rather than as an apostle when he exclaims: "I count *all things* to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"! and when he testifies to his intense concentration on the attainment of Christian perfection, and the implied neglect of other things, in the gripping words: "*One thing I do* I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In another place the same apostle likens the Christian to a soldier on service who does not "entangle himself in the affairs of this life", who has left his family and reduced his personal wants to a minimum, for the sake of "pleasing him who enrolled him as a soldier". Specialization in godliness and in the service of Christ requires renunciation of that superfluity of earthly cares and pleasures which loads down the soul and disqualifies it for running the Christian race.

The renunciation of lawful things is sometimes necessary for another reason besides the need of specialization in godliness, namely, that many a thing lawful in itself is nevertheless a menace to our spiritual life *either because*

of our spiritual weakness and sinful tendencies or because of the close association of that particular thing with evil. First, we must not fail to reckon with our spiritual weakness. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak". It is true that "all things are ours", but not all Christians are strong enough to use all things and lay them at the feet of the Master. If we cannot safely use our christian liberty, let us deny ourselves! Christ lays down this principle in the gripping passage in Matt. 18: 8, 9: "And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire" (cf. Mark 9: 43). This spiritual or moral self-mutilation has nothing in common with the self-torture of the ascetic, except a stern, unrelenting insistence on self-control and on "counting all things but refuse" for the sake of gaining Christ. It is a spiritual, not a physical self-discipline. It does not imply a morbid delight in want or pain. It is the surrender of things which are as precious and as lawful in themselves as hands and feet and eyes. The very fact that Christ speaks of entering into life "maimed" indicates that He has not the surrender of *sinful* things in mind, since nothing that is sinful is essential to the completeness of life. He speaks of the cutting off or plucking out of hands, feet, and eyes—not of the removal of malignant growths! Christ wants to say: "*Rather than imperil your soul, let your life be limited, incomplete and narrow! Shun legitimate spheres of activity rather than use your christian liberty to your own spiritual and eternal hurt!*"

It must, of course, be borne in mind that Christ does not teach that there is any independent spiritual value in this kind of self-denial. He does not say to his disciples: "cut off your hand and foot", but, "*if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off*". It follows that this self-denial is not the same for all Christians. For example, total abstinence from intoxicating beverages is for some a moral obligation: but it cannot be this for all. "In whatever thing your appetite causes you to stumble, deny your appetite!" Many other examples could be added. It is better to

deny ourselves any lawful pleasure than to permit it to entice us to sin. It is better to sacrifice even a hand or a foot than to stumble on account of it, since this may be the beginning of a wayward course that leads to hell. We can live, if need be, without a hand, a foot, and even an eye. So a man can live, for example, without art. Though it is a precious gift of God, it is not absolutely essential to life. Dr. Kuyper, Sr., says: "Zonder kunst kan een volk desnoods leven; zonder religie niet" (*Gemeene Gratie*, III, 49). Dr. Bavinck writes: "Het schoone treedt niet met zulk een verplichtend karakter voor ons op als 't ware en het goede". A disciple of Christ should not hesitate to sacrifice the most innocent pleasure or the keenest delight if, on account of some moral weakness in him, he is jeopardizing his soul.

Things lawful in themselves must be renounced in still another case: *when they are inseparably associated with evil*. There are things clean in themselves which the unclean hands of worldly men have so defiled that the Christian cannot touch them without running the risk of being contaminated by them and contracting spiritual disease. Thus self-denial must be practised in the interest of self-preservation! The Apostle Jude admonishes us to "hate even the garment spotted by the flesh" (vs. 23). The context shows that the writer is thinking of the danger to which Christians are exposed when they associate with evil men, even when the purpose of this association is solely to win them for Christ. Some must be dealt with gently, but some must be saved as brands that are plucked from the fire, and on others we must "*have mercy with fear, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh*". We must shun not only the polluted flesh, but even the garments which the flesh has defiled.

This text undoubtedly expresses a stern ethical principle by which our Christian liberty is further restricted. The way that leads to eternal life is narrow. Defiled garments as well as defiled flesh must be hated and shunned as one shuns a pest. Defiled flesh stands for the sin that is in the world. Spotted, soiled undergarments represent the things that *border* on uncleanness. They are not unclean in themselves, they are not like the flesh which has the source of uncleanness in itself; but they become defiled through constant handling by the world. There are also things which may be compared to our outer garments which are

not defiled by the flesh because they are not in immediate contact with it. Of these Jude does not say that we should hate them. And so this text also on the one hand confirms the Scriptural truth that not everything which is in the world and is done by worldly men is sinful. It is, for example, not correct to say that a moving-picture is a sinful thing, even though the godless world turns it into pollution on an enormous scale. But on the other hand this statement embodies the stern ethical principle that everything is forbidden which, though lawful in itself, has become defiled by the world to such an extent that a Christian cannot participate in it without endangering his spiritual or moral purity.¹⁾

We see that this doctrine of self-denial differs from asceticism in the following respects:

- (1) It does not conceive of the natural as being in itself an enemy of the spiritual. The ancient dualism between nature and grace is not present here;
- (2) It requires abstinence from certain things lawful in themselves not as having any spiritual value in itself, but only as a means to spiritual self-preservation. And it teaches that the law of self-preservation makes such abstinence imperative when
 - a) the multiplicity of earthly interests and lawful pursuits interferes with a daily striving for holiness or with one's peculiar task in the Kingdom of God;
 - b) in view of one's peculiar weakness, a thing lawful in itself becomes a peril and a stumbling-block to him;
 - c) things lawful in themselves bear a worldly stamp so that they cannot be safely used by the child of God.

III. THE APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES TO THREE FORMS OF AMUSEMENTS

A. THEATER- AND MOVIE-ATTENDANCE

1. THEATER-ATTENDANCE

By *the* theater we mean not merely *a* theater, a building

¹⁾ DR. H. H. KUYPER, *De Christelijke Vrijheid* (1898), pp. 88-91.

used as a play house. Attending a lecture, a musical concert, a religious meeting in such a building does not make one a theater-attendant. The theater is an institution which (with rare exceptions) exists for commercial purposes and which offers its patrons dramatic representations by professional actors.

The question may be asked whether the theater *as such* is a sinful institution. The answer depends on whether acting, particularly professional acting, is necessarily sinful. Is acting as such sin? Is it always sin to give or witness a dramatic performance? Your Committee feels quite safe in declaring that no ground for an affirmative answer can be found in the Bible. If the dramatic gift, the art of impersonation, is not from the evil one it must be from God. Impersonation is imitation of human actions, as expressing human character. Is not the element of imitation essential to all art? We realize full well that many subtle snares beset the path of those who enter the field of amateur dramatics. But this does not mean that acting *as such* is condemnable. The reason is rather that sin is in the world and has rendered many a thing good in itself, dangerous to spirituality and morality. Though we are not ready to recommend that all amateur dramatic performances by our young people be forbidden or frowned upon, and though such performances may tend to satisfy a desire whose satisfaction might otherwise be sought in the theater, there is also the danger of whetting the appetite for the theater; and the need of supervision by older and more responsible persons is never to be lost sight of. Besides, there are peculiar restrictions which our christian principles impose. If, for example, the christian in his impersonating seeks to reproduce life *as it is*, it is evident that certain sinful deeds may not be reproduced nor certain sinful words repeated. But if it be his purpose to reproduce the best side of life or life *as it ought to be*, he finds that not a few things are *too sacred* to be imitated (for instance, The Lord's Supper).

This report, however, should concern itself with *the theater*—the theater as it is—not the theater as it might be. Theater-attendance must be judged not in the light of certain theaters or certain theatrical productions, but by the general character of what is put forth by the theater as a whole, specifically the American theater, and also by the

moral standing of the personnel of the theater: playwrights, managers, actors and actresses, owners of play-houses, etc.

What about professional acting and the professional actor? Again, we are dealing not with the actor as he might be but as he is. Since it is an incontrovertible fact that the number of really clean and wholesome plays which managers care to present is very small, and since the moral tone in the theatrical world is all but good, we do not hesitate to say that, even if it should not be true that continual acting has the tendency to suppress one's individuality, and to substitute artificiality for sincerity and truth, it is exceedingly difficult, if not altogether impossible, for us to conceive of a Christian who can conscientiously engage in this kind of work.²⁾

²⁾ G. C. LORIMER, *The Modern Crisis in Religion* (1904, pp. 70-72.

"The second of the forces that complicates our problem is the Stage. I have no desire in an indiscriminating way to assail the theater. That it is open to criticism, and to that of the gravest kind, cannot be denied. Not a few of its ardent supporters have conceded that in several respects its character is objectionable. M. Dumas, himself a dramatist, wrote to an acquaintance: 'You do not take your daughter to see my play. You are right. Let me say once for all, you must not take your daughter to the theater. It is not mainly the work that is immoral, it is the place.' And this saying recalls a pregnant fact. In this country and in Europe endeavors have been made to reform and elevate the stage, and never one has been a permanent success. Like Mr. Booth's attempt in New York years ago, the public by its indifference has indicated clearly that it is not particularly anxious for a theater where realistic art is subordinated to idealistic morals. Mr. Clement Scott, the foremost dramatic critic connected with the English press, confirms this impression when discussing the question of women and the player's calling. He says:

"'A woman may take a header into a whirlpool and be miraculously saved; but then she may be drowned. I should be sorry to expose modesty to the shock of that worst kind of temptation, a frivolous disregard of womanly purity. One out of a hundred may be safe; but then she must hear things she had better not listen to and witness things she had better not see. Stage life, according to my experience, has a tendency to disorder the finer feelings, to crush the inner nature of men and women out, and to substitute artificiality and hollowness for sincerity and truth; and, mind you, I speak from an intimate experience of the stage extending over thirty-seven years. It is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession. Everything is against her, and what is more to be deplored is that a woman who endeavors to keep her purity is almost of necessity doomed to failure in her career. It is an awful thing to say, and it is still

The theater has existed since pre-Christian times, and we are told, has practically always been a corrupt institution.³⁾ Movements to elevate it have never been successful as far as we know. Not a few Greek and Roman writers are strong in their condemnation of it. The religious plays of the Middle Ages were often notoriously impure. Coming to more recent times we find that "soon after the Declaration

more terrible that it is true, but none who know the life of the green-room will deny it."

H. CLAY TRUMBULL, *Border-lines in the Field of Doubtful Practices* (1899), pp. 132-134.

"A few years ago, in a symposium on the 'Moral Influence of the Drama' in the *North American Review*, there were papers from such well-known friends of the theater as the veteran actor John Gilbert, the experienced and successful theater manager A. M. Palmer, and the distinguished author and dramatic critic William Winter. They surely will be accepted by friends of the theater as men who are competent to defend it.

"Mr. Gilbert said: 'I believe the present condition of the drama, both from a moral and an artistic point of view, to be subject for regret. A large number of our theaters are managed by speculators who have no love for true art, and who, in the production of attractions, consider only the question of dollars and cents. With that class it seems to matter little whether a play has any literary merit; it is sufficient if it is sensational and full of startling situations. Many of the plays that have been adapted from the French are open to the severest criticism on the ground of immorality. I say, as an actor, without any hesitation, that such plays have a very bad influence on nearly all people, especially on the young. Some argue that, even in these productions, vice is punished in the end; but when a play is filled with amorous intrigue, and fairly bristles with conjugal infidelity, when, in short, all the characters are infamous, there is no question in my mind but that its influence is bad.'"

PRESBYTERIAN DIGEST OF 1907, *the Book of Discipline*, p. 615.

"Resolved, That, in view of the increased attendance of church members at the theater and opera, the Assembly bear earnest and solemn testimony against this practice as inconsistent with Christian duty, since it not only gives countenance and support to an institution, justly described by a former Assembly as a school of immorality, but is in itself spiritually hurtful, and tends to obliterate the line which should always be plainly visible between the followers of Christ and the world."

³⁾ W. E. BIEDERWOLF, *The Christian and Amusements* (1911), p. 16. "The best literary criticism from the time of the theater's first appearance until the present, unsparingly condemns it as the polluter of public morals. Xenophon and Plato and Plutarch and Socrates and Seneca and Tacitus and all the best statesmen and writers of Greece and Rome and every other country, denounced the theater unmercifully, and declared it to be a place where men and women of delicate feeling and refinement could not go."

of Independence the American Congress adopted the following resolution:

‘Whereas, true religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness:

‘Resolved, That it be and is hereby earnestly recommended to the several states, to take the most effective measures for the encouragement thereof, and the suppression of *theatrical entertainments*, horse racing, gambling and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners.’”—E. J. TUUK, *As to Being Worldly* (1927), p. 115.

Coming to a still later date we find the Presbyterian Assembly of 1818 expressing itself as follows on the theater: “The theater we have always considered as a school of immorality. If any person wishes for honest conviction on this subject, let him attend to the character of that mass of matter which is generally exhibited on the stage. We believe that all will agree that comedies at least, with a few exceptions, are of such a description that a virtuous and modest person cannot attend the representation of them without the most painful and embarrassing sensations. If, indeed, custom has familiarized the scene, and these painful sensations are no longer felt, it only proves that the person in question has lost some of the best sensibilities of our nature, that the strongest safeguard of virtue has been taken down, and that the moral character has undergone a serious depreciation.”—MOORE, *Presbyterian Digest* (1907), p. 607.

Everyone knows that the modern theater is not an improvement upon the old, as far as morals are concerned. It is said to belittle virtue and extol vice.⁴⁾ In its unblushing, disgusting display of sex, it is probably the worst school of immorality among us today, and for this it deserves the supreme contempt of every Christian. We do not hesitate to

4) H. W. STOUGH, *Across the Deadline in Amusements* (1912), p. 18: “The first harmful effect (of the theater) is the gloss that many plays put upon sin. The base, the wicked, the impure are frequently exalted, and virtue is made sport of. Religion is scoffed at, blasphemy indulged in, the Bible standard is not recognized, and the Ten Commandments are frequently flaunted.”

say that those who make a practise of attending the theater, and who therefore cannot avoid witnessing the lewdness which it exhibits or suggests, are transgressors of the seventh commandment, which "forbids not only adultery and such like gross sins, but all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, *and whatever can entice men thereto*" (Heid. Cat., Q. 109). [Compare Part II, General Principles, A, 1; B, 2; C, 2, c; D, 3, d.] Who will deny that the theater, even though it is not an unclean thing in itself, has become defiled in the hands of the world to such a degree that it is to be shunned as the garment that is spotted by the flesh?

Your Committee would call attention to other baneful features of the theater:

1. As a rule it presents a false view of life, and its atmosphere is one of artificiality and extreme frivolity in which the spiritual life of the Christian cannot thrive.
2. The theater as an institution, taken in its general influence, is on the side of Satan against the Kingdom of Christ. It is unquestionably one of the "strongholds of the devil". Loyalty to our King forbids that we should further the interests of this corrupt, iniquitous institution.

But what shall we say about the so-called *good plays*? It cannot be denied that a few plays, taken by themselves, apart from the evil cause which they are made to serve, the actors who present them, and the environment where they are shown, are unobjectionable; and that some Christian people see no wrong in viewing them. Is this morally defensible? Your Committee is of the opinion that he who takes this stand toward the theater is, in spite of the fact that he may take it conscientiously, *on dangerous ground*. First, how about the brother whom he by his example may cause to stumble? (Compare Part II, Gen. Principles, D, 3, c). Second, how can one always have reasonable certainty before seeing a play that it is not only clean throughout but beneficial? Even the fact that the book on which the play may be based is unobjectionable is no guarantee that the play will be. Third, some of the so-called good plays are more dangerous than the bad, because of the false conceptions of religion and morality which they

set forth. Fourth, by attending the theater occasionally one incurs the risk of developing a taste for theater-going. The whetted appetite will then not be satisfied with an occasional morsel. It will cry for More, More! Who knows how many inveterate theater-goers have started in their sinful course by viewing the occasional good play! We believe that the safest course to pursue is the way of total abstinence. (Compare Part II, General Principles, D, 3, d.)

2. MOVIE-ATTENDANCE

There is no essential difference between the playhouse and the movie theater. The purpose, the atmosphere and the character of the actors are the same. The chief difference is that in the movie the actor is present not in person but on the screen.

The cinematograph is a wonderful invention, and the moving picture *as such* as innocent as the "still" picture. In fact it is nothing but a series of still pictures presented in such rapid succession that everything moves and seems to live. No intelligent person will condemn a movie-theater on the sole ground that it presents *moving* pictures.

The enormous number of patrons which the picture houses have, the fact that a large proportion of these patrons consists of children, and the powerful influence which the moving picture exerts upon the impressionable mind of the child are things so well known that a mere mention of them is sufficient. It is also common knowledge that the moving picture industry is to a large extent in the hands of unscrupulous men, whose only concern is large financial profits regardless of the moral influence of the presentations. A large number of these pictures are a shameful exploitation of the sex-instinct; and many other exert a baneful influence through the portrayal of crime, a flippant attitude toward parental authority, the dignity of the government and of the church. Because of these things the movie-theater is undeniably one of the most destructive forces in our country, morally pestilential. Its influence in some respects is more baneful than that of the regular theater, especially because of its shameful exploitation of the child.

Our advice is the same as that concerning the playhouse.⁵⁾

⁵⁾ E. P. OBERHOLTZER, Ph.D., Litt. D., *The Morals of the Movie*

(1922), p. 31. (For six years a member of the Pennsylvania Board of Control.)

"Sex is the one potently dominant idea in the minds of the men who are gambling in the public taste for nasty photographic stories. The capitalist who is financing the picture-producing company, the executive officers whom he hires to make money for him, and the directors in the studios expend much of their time and energy in trying to devise that which will show the male and the female in some unusual and new relationship. The public, sated by much looking at film, night after night, must be aroused from the apathy which comes from having long ago seen all that is proper to be shown, and we have been plunged into an abysmal morass of fornication, adultery, pandering, and prostitution. The seduction of mill girls and stenographers by their employers, men living with mistresses and women consorting with men without marriage are flashed into the eyes of old and young, willy nilly, in our 'movie' houses."

"It has been said frequently and truly that the prevailing type of 'movie' play is melodrama, a term conveniently used to cover stories having to do with criminal incidents presented in a sensational way."

..... "A story is made to deal with metropolitan low life to feed a curiosity which boys and girls everywhere, and many adults, particularly those living in little hamlets, entertain in regard to wickedness that they have heard about but never seen. So we are carried for an hour or two through opium dens, gambling and drinking houses, dance halls and various cubbies and dives that belong to the slums of the larger cities. Women are debauched and men are shot. We visit thieves' fences. Gun play, the use of knives, fighting of all kinds in every situation, without rhyme or reason, are prepared for us, reel upon reel. Prostitution is seen on every side. All the sewers of creation, I believe, have been explored lest some villainess shall escape, and we shall not have had a record of it. With crime and villany, of all degrees and varieties, we who sit and look at film are in a little while so familiar that it is nearly a part of our daily lives. We go home at night ready for a moral bath, and are but partially refreshed when we awaken next morning for the tasks of another day. Major Funkhouser of Chicago used to say that he was washing the dirty linen of New York City. We censors are washing the dirty linen and cleaning the Augean stables of the whole wide world.

"The *modus operandi* of criminals, if it shall be delineated in a medium as graphic as film, is a dangerous communication. How many times have we seen the pickpocket snatching a purse, the thief climbing a porch roof and prying up a window, the burglar opening a safe and rifling it of its valuables, the thug striking down his victim and running away, the highwayman holding up a stage or a railway train, to mention but a half dozen of the thousand and one deviltries which are studied by the picture director that they may be carefully transcribed upon film. Such scenes are suggestive. If the depiction is detailed it is informative in the plainest way. Can anyone believe that a boy, after seeing these sights over and over again, will not come out the experience with a vast new fund of knowledge which it is not good for him to possess? Will any doubt that here is a supply fountain of ideas for men who, with ill-conditioned minds and, perhaps, with nascently criminal instincts, in winter-time creep into the theaters to keep warm, and live there the day through? Let us ask the officers

B. DANCING

The Scriptures often speak of dancing without condemnation. (Ex. 15: 20; Judges 21: 21; 1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Sam. 6: 14; Psalm 150: 4; Eccl. 3: 4; Jer. 31: 4; Matt. 11: 17.) In some of these texts divine approval is either expressed or implied, though it must also be stated that the mere fact that dancing is spoken of without condemnation is no proof that it is approved. Sometimes the sins of the saints are recorded without comment. The fact remains, however, that there is nothing in Scripture which forbids dancing, indiscriminately. Dancing *as such*, the rhythmic movement of the body, especially of the feet, usually to the accompaniment of music, cannot be said to be morally wrong. In that case we should have to condemn the religious dance. Think, for example, of David whose dancing before the ark was the spontaneous expression of religious exultation. But when we speak of "the dance", we speak of the modern dance, the suggestive dance such as Salome performed to the delight of Herod's drunken guests, and the promiscuous dance in which the sexes mingle and that promiscuously, that is any man with any woman. Reformed moralists and christian writers in general have condemned the dance for amusement when it is suggestive, because of an immodest exposure of certain parts of the body, and also when it is promiscuous.⁶⁾

of schools, correctional institutions, juvenile courts, jails, and penitentiaries, and we shall receive but one answer.

"The 'most important' among 'the deteriorating and destructive factors', as causes of 'minor and grave misdemeanors' coming under the notice of Dr. MacMillan, who, as superintendent of the child study department in the Chicago school system, has had an experience covering some 15,000 cases annually for a long term of years, is the moving picture. 'I could trace case after case', he says, 'directly to the habitual frequenting of these questionable picture shows'.

"'I do not think, I know,' says Warden McKenty of the Eastern Penitentiary of Pennsylvania, 'that criminals are made in the picture houses. I study the cases of those who come to me. I ask the men how they started on the paths which brought them to me, and they say through the moving picture'."

⁶⁾ PHILIP VOLLMER, Ph.D., D.D., *New Testament Sociology* (1923), p. 116.

"The uncompromising opponents (of dancing) hold that the modern form of the dance, combined with the modern modes of dress, make the custom dangerous in the extreme. Its evil is not in the environment but in the thing itself. In the words of *The Presbyterian*: 'It

The promiscuous dance, especially as it is in vogue to-day, because of the close physical contact between the sexes, is fundamentally immoral. Its fascination lies in its sex-appeal. It thrives on the sex-instinct, and is therefore a violation of the seventh commandment, as explained in the Heid. Cat. (see above). This kind of diversion would almost die out if there were no mingling of the sexes in the mazes of the dance. It is an unclean thing and is in prin-

dissipates the mind, sears the conscience, deadens the sensibilities, often destroys health, certainly tends toward the lowering of morals, is utterly incompatible with true holiness and separation from the world, burns up any right religious conviction, incites the lowest animal passions, and sends its giddy, godless devotees whirling down the broad avenue of lust, lewdness, divorce, broken hearts, and wrecked homes'. This does not mean that every one who dances yields to any one or all of these immoral temptations—not at all, but it does mean that no one, man or woman, is safe. Moreover, a large proportion of ill health (especially female diseases and tuberculosis), as well as poverty, is directly traceable to the dance of modern society.

"Question: Should not an amusement be discouraged which, like the modern dance, is so beset with dangers that it must be surrounded with all kinds of safeguards?"

H. H. KUYPER, D.D., *De Christelijke Vrijheid* (1898), p. 92: "Deze wereldsche vermaken zijn niet alle zonde op zich zelf beschouwd. Om slechts één bekend voorbeeld te nemen, de Gereformeerde zede veroordeelt het dansen.* Toch spreekt de Heilige Schrift meer dan eens van het dansen, dat onder Israël in zwang was, zonder daaraan ooit één woord van afkeuring toe te voegen. Israël's dochters dansten bij groote overwinningen. David danste voor de ark. Maar dit dansen of 'huppelen' of 'van vreugde opspringen', gelijk de Schrift het noemt, is geheel wat anders dan wat de wereld tegenwoordig van het dansen gemaakt heeft. Het is niet meer een spontane uiting van vreugde, maar een kunstmatige beweging; het geschiedt bijna altijd tusschen mannen en vrouwen; en heel de aard van dit dansen doelt om eene begeerlijkheid op te wekken, die ingaat tegen het VIIde gebod. Men kan geen vreemde vrouw zoo dansende met zich voortbewegen, of men loopt gevaar, dat de zinnelijke hartstochten daardoor geprikkeld worden. Vandaar dat al zulk dansen als beslist zondig moet worden afgekeurd. Het heeft Johannes den Dooper het hoofd gekost en Herodes tot een moordenaar van Gods heiligen profeet gemaakt.

"* Perkins, I, p. 1238; Amesius, I, V, c. 39, par. 23; Voetius, *Disp. Sel.*, III, p. 325 sqq.; Maastricht, p. 1306. En toch, hoezeer onze Gereformeerde praktijks eenparig het dansen veroordeelen, in tegenstelling met de Roomsche en Luthersche godgeleerden, zij voegden er steeds aan toe, dat dit het dansen gold, zooals het nu geschiedt tusschen mannen en vrouwen met muziek en zinnelijke bewegingen. Een dans tusschen mannen alleen, of van een man met zijne gehuwde vrouw, zonder toeschouwers, veroordeelt Voetius niet (III, p. 330). Waaruit wel genoegzaam blijkt, dat wel de tegenwoordige dans, maar niet het dansen op zichzelf in hun oog zonde was."

ciple immoral because it nourishes forbidden lusts. It can and does entice men to unchaste thoughts and desires if not to impure actions.

But how about the dance for amusement's sake when it is not suggestive or promiscuous? Since the mere act of dancing is not condemned in the Scriptures, either directly or indirectly, the conclusion might seem justifiable, even inescapable, that there can be no harm in the private dance in the home between members of the same family, the æsthetic dance and the folk-dances which are taught in many public schools. We do not believe, however, that this conclusion should be drawn. The rule of self-denial and self-preservation determines our attitude in this case (Compare II, General Principles, D, 3, *d.*) We believe that in view of the rapidly increasing popularity of the promiscuous dance and the low morality of the modern dances, christian parents and teachers and the christian church should frown even on the most innocent forms of this kind of amusement. The folk-dance and the parlor dance so easily become the stepping-stone to the promiscuous dance. The child which is permitted to take dancing lessons will, as a rule, not stop at the mixed dance, as its parents may require and expect, and say, "There I draw the line!" It has entered the danger zone and may lose its soul because of the carelessness of its parents! Such parents are not less foolish than those who allow their children to play with matches on the ground that matches were made for useful purposes! Here again we have a case where Christians should hate even the garment which is spotted by the flesh.⁷⁾

⁷⁾ THE PRESBYTERIAN DIGEST OF 1907, *The Book of Discipline*, p. 607.

"With respect to dancing, we think it necessary to observe that, however plausible it may appear to some, it is perhaps not the less dangerous on account of its plausibility. It is not from those things which the world acknowledges to be most wrong that the greatest danger is to be apprehended to religion, especially as it relates to the young. When the practise is carried to its highest extremes, all admit the consequences to be fatal; and why not, then, apprehend danger even from its incipient stages? It is certainly in all its stages a fascinating and an infatuating practice. Let it once be introduced and it is difficult to give it limits." (Italics ours.—COMM.)

IDEM, p. 608: "That whilst we regard the practice of promiscuous social dancing by members of the Church as a mournful inconsistency, and the giving of parties for such dancing on the part of the heads of Christian families as tending to compromise their religious profession,

C. CARD-PLAYING AND OTHER GAMES OF CHANCE

There is an important difference between a game of skill and a game of chance. It is conceded that skill plays a more or less important rôle in certain games of chance, while a "chance-element" is present in all or nearly all games of skill. In fact it is present in all of life. By this "chance-element" is meant those events which lie beyond the sphere of human control, and pre-vision. But viewed from God's side, this element of chance is non-existent. Nothing is accidental, everything is providential. Yet the distinction between games of chance and games of skill is a valid one. A game of skill is one in which the factor of skill predominates and the chance-element is removed as much as possible. A game of chance is one in which "chance" predominates or at the very least *constitutes a recognized and essential element* of the game.

Our first conclusion, then, is that the mere presence of chance-happenings in a game does not make it a game of chance. These are present in all or nearly all games of skill and cannot make it morally wrong to participate. But suppose the *game itself requires the presence* of this element, does that make it wrong? Are all games of chance wrong? Are they wrong in principle merely and solely because they are games of chance? We answer:

- a) That it is surely wrong for any player to admit the existence of chance, fortune, or luck and to trust in this nonentity, this imaginary power, for a decision in his favor. For we know that "as a matter of fact or reality there is no such thing as chance. In the place of what men call chance is the living God, omnipresent and omniscient". Who who trusts in chance commits idolatry; he substitutes a false god for the only true and living God.

But suppose the player, instead of believing and trusting in chance, acknowledges that God in his providence directs the course and outcome of the

and the sending of children by Christian parents to the dancing school as a sad error in family discipline; yet we think that the Session of each church is fully competent to decide when discipline is necessary, and the extent to which it should be administered." (Italics ours.)

game? We answer:

- b) That it is sinful, according to the teaching of God's Word, to call in the special providence of God *for trivial reasons*. We do not say that the calling in of special divine providence, that is of divine direction apart from the employment of our own ingenuity, forethought or effort, is always morally wrong. On the contrary, it may be an act of faith which glorifies God. The Bible speaks of it as a casting of the lot. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposal thereof is of Jehovah" (Prov. 16: 33). "The lot causeth contentions to cease and parteth between the mighty" (18: 18). But this casting of lots as a solemn appeal to God's providence is wrong when done in unbelief or *for trivial reasons*. This is plain from the solemn manner in which it was used by the people of God; plain also in the light of a sound Scriptural conception of the connection between God's providence and the use of means. We have no right to ask God to guide and direct or to help us by his providence *apart from our use of the means ordained by Him*—except in exceptional circumstances; when ordinary means fail us. If we do this we are "tempting God" and abusing his providence.
- c) We feel constrained to add, however, that though the great majority of Reformed moralists are agreed that *all* games of chance are wrong in principle, there are also those who do not draw this conclusion.⁸⁾

⁸⁾ We shall first quote five sources in which the position is taken that *all* games of chance, even those which contain an element of skill, are condemnable.

DANÆUS, *Ethices Christianæ* (1588), Lib. III, Folio 239 (Translation by Prof. Albertus J. Rooke).

"It has been asked concerning that gain (making of money) which is in play (game, pastime) whether it is permissible and can be legitimately accepted. ANSWER: *"It certainly cannot be (legitimately accepted) if that play was prohibited, as in a game of chance.* For gain of this kind is pure theft. . . . But from the kinds of play publicly allowed (that is, by the state) it (the gain) can be received. For it is the reward of industry; provided nothing is done with an avaricious mind." (Italics ours.)

B. DE MOOR, *Commentarius in Perpetuus in Joh. Marckii Compendium* (1763), II, p. 751. (Translation by Prof. Albertus J. Rooke.)

"To the use of the divine name in things trivial and done in sport pertains the casting of lots in play and in a joking way, as the play of dice and cards. Certainly to summon the lot to play and for a joke ought to be held as an abuse of the divine name. Hence from plays of this type one ought to abstain zealously. (1) Because the lot is the medium of exploring the most special providence of God and of his judgment (cf. Prov. 16: 33). Moreover, it is the greatest irreverence to explore the judgment of God through play and for the sake of passing away time."

AMESIUS, *Merg der Godgeleerdheid* (1670), II, 11de hoofdstuk.

"Dat het lot een middelmatige zaak is kan niemand betoonen tenzij hij eerst betoogd hebbe dat in hetzelfde geen bijzonder beroep op de goddelijke voorzienigheid is . . . Het spel van dobbelen strijdt niet alleen wegen de omstandigheden en door toeval, maar uit zijn inwendige natuur en *in zich* met den godsdienst. Onder den naam nu van dobbelen worden begrepen ook alle die spelen welke op een louter gebeurlijkheid steunen, schoon ze namaals door vernuft, sneedigheid of eenige kunst bestierd worden als in het Tiktakbord en Kaartspel. Doch die menscheijke oefeningen die op kunst steunen maar ten deele in den voortgang aan het geval onderworpen worden, verschillen geheel en al van het dobbelen. Dat door dobbelen de menschen plegen aangedreven te worden tot zweren, vloeken, en Godlasteren, meer dan in andere oefeningen, dat spruit ten deele uit de natuur van het spel omdat zij het lot waarop zij steunen tegen zich zien keeren. (Language somewhat simplified.—COMM.) (See also: *Vijf Boeken van de Conscientie*, V, cap. 45, by the same author.)

W. GEESINK, D.D., *Van 's Heeren Ordinantiën* (1908), Tweede Deel, I, pp. 435, 436.

"Op dezelfde religieuze gronden is daarom ook het kaartspel den Christen niet geoorloofd.

"Zeker, daar zijn ook andere gronden.

"Schopenhauer, de ongeloovige Duitsche wijsgeer, noemde scherp maar juist het kaartspel: 'een verklaard bankroet aan gedachten'! En hij voegde er aan toe: 'Wijl zij geen gedachten hebben uit te ruilen, ruilen zij kaarten uit en zoeken elkaar guldens af te nemen.'

"Dan, die andere gronden kunnen eerst later besproken.

"Ook weten wij wel, dat het kaartspel evenals domino- en lotto-spel en ook het schijnbaar zoo onschuldige 'ganzenbord'—tegen welk laatste spel reeds in de 17de eeuw onze Wittewrongel in zijn *Christelijke Huis-houding* waarschuwde—evenals alle spelen waarbij geen gelijk begin is, tot de 'gelukspelen' of het 'hazardspel' behoort, en ook daarom zondig is, doch voor den Christen bestaat geen 'hazard'.

"Het gelukspel of het hazardspel—van het Arabische woord *sehar*, met het artikel er voor, *assehar*, de dobbelsteen—onderstelt het *toeval*, het *geluk*, als een geheimzinnige macht naast of in plaats van den levenden God.

"Van zulk een geluk of toeval wil echter de Christen, ook bij het kaartspel en al de straks genoemde spelen, niets weten.

"Ook in deze dingen rekent hij met de voorzienigheid Gods.

"Maar wijl nu juist—of men al of niet om geld speelt, doet er hier niet toe—bij al deze spelen, door het niet-gelijk-begin, de uitslag, niet als bij de geoorloofde gezelschapsspelen, zooals biljart-, dam- en schak-

spel, slechts afhankelijk is van verstandelijke overleg of vaardigheid, maar ook van een boven onzen wil staande oorzaak, die dan voor den Christen niet het 'Geluk' of 'de Fortuin', maar alleen God kan zijn—vallen zij onder het lot.

"Wanneer de kaarten of steenen bij het begin worden verdeeld, waar anders hangt het dan van af, of ge een goed dan een slecht spel hebt?

"Er is toch geen toeval?

"En daarom valt al dit spel onder het lot.

"Maar zoo verstaat ge dan ook, hoe al dit spel, wijl het lot, hetzij dan bewust of onbewust, aanroepen van den Naam is, niet dan misbruiken is van het lot.

"Van het heilige lot.

"Profanatie van den Naam.

"Men mag het lot, dat heilig is, niet gebruiken tot tijdverdrijf.

"Het is met name op dezen grond dat het *kaartspel* en alle lotspel door onze Gereformeerde moralisten steeds is veroordeeld.

"Zij zagen er, voor den Christen, een zonde in tegen het derde gebod."

PRESBYTERIAN DIGEST OF 1907, *The Book of Discipline*, p. 612.

"In reference to card-playing and all games of chance, the Committee respectfully raise the question, or perhaps it is not a question, whether they are not in themselves sinful? and, as tending to the decision of that question we submit the following reasoning, namely:

"As a matter of fact or reality, there is no such thing as chance. In the place of what men call chance is the living God, omnipresent and omniscient. An appeal to God without serious cause is profane. Nor is this reasoning impaired by the suggestion sometimes made, that those who play at games of chance do not intend to be profane. Thus, an habitual swearer is not conscious of an intention to be profane, yet who shall say he is not, while oaths continue to drop from his lips? Ignorance and thoughtlessness are the negative causes of his unconscious guilt. Are they not also in the other case?

"The standard by which right and wrong are determined is the moral law of God. Whether a responsible creature's act is right or not is to be determined by his real relations to God in the act. His relation to God exists. He refers to the nonentity chance for a decision, a matter which God only can and does determine. Hence his appeal proves to be an appeal to God, and an appeal to God without proper cause is profane. If this view carries with it serious consequences, we, on that account, all the more beg of the Assembly, and would of the whole Church, the most thoughtful and prayerful consideration of it; for, if true, it behooves all to acknowledge it and be guided by it.

"The Scriptures show that the lot involving the principle of chance is an ordinance of God. 'The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord' (Prov. 16: 23). Likewise our Standards show the same; and teach that the lot improperly used is sinful. See the answer to the 118th question of the Larger Catechism, where it is declared that among the sins forbidden in the third commandment are 'all sinful cursing, oaths, vows, and lots'."

Among other Reformed authors who take the same view are G.

ings from the pulpit, personal admonitions and church-discipline in certain cases: all of these are indispensable.

1. The Church, through its professors and ministers, must inculcate *sound doctrinal and ethical principles*. Without such instruction frequent warnings from the pulpit against worldliness and even occasional sermons against the theater, the dance and the game of chance will be unavailing. The fundamental remedy for all evils in the Church is education in the broad and deep sense of the word. The Church must use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, against all the foes within its gates and use it well by emphasizing underlying principles. Christians should be persuaded to abstain from worldly pleasures from the motive of deep personal convictions, and not merely because the minister and the elders take a strong stand against them.

It seems to us that as far as doctrinal, dogmatic principles are involved, special emphasis should be placed in season and out of season, *on the peculiar covenant-relation* in which the believers and their children stand to God. There can be no stronger incentive than this to *spiritual separateness* in this world. This does not mean that your Committee fails to see the great importance of a strong evangelical note in the preaching. On the contrary, we believe that our preaching cannot be too intensely evangelical. But who, that understands what is meant by "the covenant", fails to see that there is an inseparable connection between covenant-preaching and evangelical preaching? Lack of a sound covenant conception is perhaps the greatest single cause of the rapid fading away of the boundary line between the Church and the world.

We fear that there has been too much neglect in our circles of *ethical preaching*. We refer especially to those ethical principles which Jesus and the Apostles have taught. Have not our preachers confined themselves too much to the historical material in the gospels and the dogmatical parts of the epistles? Have we not been neglectful in our treatment of such subjects as Christian Liberty and Self-Denial, which receive such careful attention in the New Testament? Thanks to the exposition of the Moral Law in the third part of the Heidelberg Catechism, ethical preaching has not been wanting altogether in churches of the Re-

formed persuasion; but there is room for improvement. And the need is rapidly becoming more urgent in view of the multiplication of ethical problems in our complex world of today and also in view of the breakdown in our circles of Reformed traditions in regards to amusements, especially those under discussion. Are not these traditions beginning to crumble precisely because the principles upon which they rest are no longer understood?

2. The Church must do all it can to develop a stronger type of *spirituality* among its members. Many are convinced that we have permitted the dogmatical and evangelical side of the truth to overshadow not only the ethical, but also the mystical, spiritual side. There is a great wealth of material, especially in Paul's epistles, which pertains to the experiential phase of the Christian's life and which, we fear, has not come to its right in our preaching. Some of our professing members scarcely know what is meant by spiritual experience. There is intellectualism, there is far more formalism, there is increasing emotionalism, but there is, at the root of it all, a widespread dearth of true piety and spirituality. The result is seen in numerous forms of worldliness in personal habits, social customs, business methods and in the life of the family and of the church. The problem of worldliness will not be fully solved until the failing streams of true communion with God are replenished by the abundant showers of the Spirit. "If we walk in the Spirit" we shall "no longer fulfil the lusts of the flesh". The cultivation of a deeper and more vigorous type of spirituality would rid our churches of much worldliness, provided of course other necessary measures would also be used.

3. Our leaders must *warn* without ceasing against the prevailing spirit of worldliness and worldly amusement. The inconsistency and the dangers of worldly living must be made plain and worldly habits mentioned by name, even though the conscience of all Christians does not condemn them. But let the preacher, elder, or teacher be sure that he stands on the solid rock of Holy Writ. These warnings must be given not only from the pulpit, but also in the class-room, in personal contact, and in family-visitation.

4. The question arises whether consistories should ever employ any *disciplinary measures* to combat the prevail-

ing spirit of worldliness. Discipline in the wider sense of the word includes all personal admonitions; but we are now thinking of discipline in the sense of debarring a member from the Lord's Supper, and excluding such a member, or an adult member-by-baptism, from membership in the church. If then by discipline we mean *censure*, the question whether it is proper to use disciplinary measures against the particular forms of worldly amusement under discussion *depends on whether theater- and movie-attendance, dancing and card-playing are censurable sins*. We read in Article 76 of our Church Order: "Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with consent of the Classis."

It appears, first of all, that not all sins are censurable sins; not even all public sins. Then all Christians would have to be censured at times. According to Art. 76 censure must be applied to two sorts of members. We mention the second group first: "*those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin*". A lucid explanation of what must be considered as "gross sins" is given in Art. 80: "Furthermore among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, thefts, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the Church would be considered worthy of excommunication". The question whether theater-attendance, dancing, and card-playing are gross sins cannot be answered in the abstract. Certain forms of these amusements are undoubtedly gross sins, as for example attendance at a low, disreputable theatrical performance, dancing at a public dance-hall or evil repute, and playing cards or any other games of chance for money (gambling).

The fact, however, that many other forms of these amusements are not "*gross sins*" to the extent that they render the perpetrator infamous before the world, does not mean that in these cases disciplinary measures would be out of place. There is another group besides those who commit gross sins which become liable to censure, and these are mentioned first in Art. 76, viz., "*such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory*". The fact that this clause is coördinate with the one that follows ("*and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin*") shows that the two groups are separate, and that those belonging to the first group are not thought of as committing sins which are gross and offensive even to respectable men of the world. Prof. Heyns observes in this connection: "Betrekkelijk geringe zonden kunnen de oorzaak worden van censure en excommunicatie wanneer n.l. iemand daarvan overtuigd zijnde, weigert zijne zonde te belijden. Is het duidelijk dat iemand schuldig staat aan iets dat zonde voor God is, dan moet het door hem met schuld-erkenntenis beleden worden. Wie dat niet wil doen, maakt zich censurabel, niet zelden veel meer om onboetvaardigheid dan om de zonde waar het eerst om ging" (*Kybernetiek*, II, 301, old edition). May we not add that, strictly speaking, no excommunication ever takes place in the ground of the severity of the sin committed, but on the ground of impenitence as revealing an unregenerate state of the heart.

Applying this to the matter in hand, your Committee concludes that it would be contrary to the teachings of Scripture (Matt. 18:15-17) and to the principles of Reformed Church Polity to discipline a member even for a gross form of theater-attendance, dancing or card-playing, who having been privately admonished by the elders, expresses sorrow and faithfully promises to mend his ways. But what about members who indulge in these practices in a more common and less offensive way? May it not be the duty of the Consistory to visit and admonish them also? And suppose they refuse to hearken to admonition and persist in their sin? Then, according to Art. 76 of our Church Order, Lord's Day 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the teaching of Jesus in Matt. 18:15-17, and of the Apostles (for example in 2 Thess. 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye

withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us") such members "shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if they (he), having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, show(s) no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with consent of Classis." Let us add that this has been the stand of our Reformed churches in the past. The Synod of Dordrecht 1578 took the following decision on dancing (translated): "What shall be done with those who attend public dances? Answer: Inasmuch as dances usually are attended with such levity as in unbecoming to a Christian, and stir up fleshly lusts, and besides offend the godly especially in times of general stress, those who participate in them shall be punished, and if they stubbornly, after several admonitions, refuse, be suspended from the fellowship of the Lord's Supper". Similar articles are contained in the Acts of the French National Synod of Poitiers, 1560, and of that of Montpelier, 1598. We read in the *Book of Discipline* of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (edition of 1907) as follows: "*Resolved*, that the fashionable amusement of promiscuous dancing is so entirely unscriptural and eminently and exclusively that of the 'world which lieth in wickedness', and so wholly inconsistent with the spirit of Christ, and with that propriety of Christian deportment and that purity of heart which his followers are bound to maintain, as to render it not only improper and injurious for professing Christians either to partake in it, or to qualify their children for it by teaching them the art; *but also to call for the faithful and judicious exercise of discipline* on the part of church Sessions when any of the members of their church have been guilty." Similar decisions from various sources in regard to other forms of worldly amusements could be added.

Your Committee deems it advisable further to elucidate its position in this matter by calling attention to the following things:

1. We must not be wiser than Christ himself who would

not have instituted spiritual (in distinction from physical) discipline in his Church if he had not deemed it essential both to the welfare of erring members themselves and to the preservation of the purity of the churches. This disposes of the argument which is sometimes used that discipline is unnecessary where the Word is faithfully proclaimed. According to the Scripture the Kingdom of heaven has more than *one* key! (Matt. 16: 19; cf. Lord's Day 31). There is just as little weight in the argument that discipline is unavailing where true spirituality does not prevail in a church and, on the other hand, that where the true spirituality is present, discipline is not needed. It is true, of course, that discipline alone will not purge the Church nor keep it pure. But to say that a vigorous spirituality in the church is sufficient to solve this problem of worldly amusements amounts to putting our own opinion above the teaching of Christ! There are various kinds of church-members. Some are never in need of discipline, scarcely of admonition. They are deeply spiritual, are alert and earnest hearers of the Word and exercise self-discipline continually. But there are also the indifferent, the wayward and the young who usually need outward restraint. Should we not reckon with the fact that many of these will not refrain from worldly conduct unless *fear* of unpleasant consequences restrains them? This fear as the motive for outward conformity to God's law is, of course, not indicative of a high moral standard, but it is nevertheless wholesome in its effects, not only for the members concerned, but also for other members who are easily influenced by their evil example. Paul teaches the leaders in the church to appeal to this motive of fear *for the sake of the repression of evil desires in others* (1 Tim. 5: 20: "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest may be in fear").

2. It should also be remembered that the seriousness of a sin is determined not only by the attitude of the transgressor, but also by the measure of its evil influence upon others. This means that *regnant sins* should be dealt with more severely than those which are infrequent, even though more reprehensible in themselves. Let us adduce a familiar example. There are more serious forms of adultery than the one concerning which we have a special synodical regulation, viz., co-habitation before

marriage. The existence of this regulation is no doubt to be explained and justified, at least in part, by the fact that the particular sin against which it is directed is *more common* than other forms of adultery. If theater- and movie-attendance, dancing and card-playing were indulged in only occasionally by members of our churches, consistories could afford to be lenient. But the situation, especially in some localities, is rather serious. Unless resolute measures are taken to combat these particular forms of worldliness, the situation may be irremediable before long.

3. We have spoken so far of church members, without discriminating between confessing members and adult members by baptism. The question arises whether the latter as well as the former should be admonished, and in certain cases disciplined for participation in the questionable amusements which we are considering. Our reply is that the Church should undoubtedly make a distinction between these two groups, but only to the extent of being more lenient with incomplete members than with those who have solemnly and publicly resolved to forsake the world and to walk in a new and godly life. This does not mean, however, that a non-confessing member should not be disciplined for ungodly and offensive conduct. Our Synods have taken several decisions in which discipline is prescribed for *all* members of our churches, both communicant and non-communicant, who persist in certain sins (for example, lodge membership) or for members by baptism only. All who are baptized are *members* of the visible church, and must be dealt with as such. They belong to the sacred covenant-circle, were baptized as being "sanctified in Christ", and received baptism as a sign and seal of the washing away of their sins through the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. As sons and daughters of the Kingdom they are expected to walk in the ways of the covenant. If, according to the Synod of 1912, adult members by baptism, who persist in the sin of not confessing Christ, "are to be excluded from the church", "*regardless of their walk of life otherwise*" (Church Order, p. 58), the church surely ought not bear indefinitely with those unfaithful baptized members whose outward mode of life is no different than that of the ungodly! But, as we said, greater leniency should be shown to such than to confessing Christians who forsake the straight and narrow path.

On the basis of what has been said in regard to the policy which our churches ought to pursue toward those who indulge in the worldly amusements referred to, we would advise the Synod:

1. To urge all of our professor, ministers, elders and Bible teachers to emphasize in this age of prevailing worldliness especially those *doctrinal and ethical principles* which our people must clearly understand and firmly adhere to in order not to be swept away by this mighty tide. Strong emphasis should be placed on the covenant-position of Christians and their children, on the call to spiritual separation, and on those ethical principles which have been explained in the second part of this report.
2. To urge all our leaders and all our people to pray and labor for the *awakening and deepening of spiritual life* in general, and to be keenly aware of the absolute indispensability of keeping our religious life vital and powerful, through daily prayer, the earnest searching of the Scriptures, and through engaging in those practical christian works which are the best antidote against worldliness.
3. To exhort all our leaders to *warn unceasingly* against the prevailing spirit and forms of worldliness in order that our Reformed principles in these matters may be reëmphasized; to insist that these warnings shall be given not only in the preaching, but also in our Catechism and Sunday School classes, in family-visitation and in personal contact; and to urge that these warnings shall be given also in our school-rooms.
4. To remind consistories and other bodies, such as boards of Christian schools, city missions, etc., that in the nomination or appointment of those who occupy positions of responsibility in our circles, careful attention shall be paid to their conduct in the matter of amusements, and that *no one shall be placed in a position of trust and influence* whose conduct in this as well as in all other matters is not beyond reproach.
5. To urge consistories to deal in the spirit of love, yet

also in view of the strong tide of worldliness which is threatening our churches, very firmly with *all cases of misdemeanor and offensive conduct* in the matter of worldly amusements; and where repeated admonitions by the consistory are left unheeded, to apply discipline as a last resort.

6. To instruct consistories to inquire of those who ask to be examined *previous to making public profession of their faith* and partaking of the Lord's Supper as to their stand and conduct in the matter of worldly amusements, and if it appears that they are not minded to lead the life of christian separation and consecration, to refuse their confession.

B. SHOULD YOUR COMMITTEE SUGGEST WAYS AND MEANS WHEREBY OUR YOUNG PEOPLE MAY BE PROVIDED WITH WHOLESOME AMUSEMENTS?

That is the work which point *d*) of our instructions requires of us. Your Committee, however, is unanimously of the opinion that this is not the business of the Church, and consequently not of its Committee. Christ did not call his Church to provide amusement for its members, nor to suggest the kind of diversions they should provide for themselves. For that reason no practical considerations, whatever their nature or apparent urgency may be, should lead us to follow in the path of the "institutional" churches which maintain expensive equipment for the physical recreation of their members, while neglecting the spiritual work to which they are divinely called. Is it not rather the task of *Christian parents* to provide safe and wholesome recreation for their children and for themselves in so far as they need it? The Church may consider its task in this matter to be fully discharged when it has instructed its members in the principles in the light of which they should judge all amusements.

If this be true, then your Committee has also finished its work. Trusting that it can meet with the hearty approval of your esteemed gathering, we are,

Your humble servants,

E. J. TUUK.
H. J. KUIPER.
R. B. KUIPER.
H. SCHULTZE.
H. HEKMAN.

REPORT II.

RAPPORT DER COMMISSIE IN RE “DEN STATUS VAN LEERAARS DIE ZICH IN DIENST STELLEN VAN BUITEN-KERKELIJKE INRICHTINGEN VAN BARMHARTIGHEID EN ONDERWIJS”

*Aan de Eerw. Synode der Christ. Geref. Kerk in Amerika,
vergaderd in Holland, Mich., den 13den Juni, 1928, e.v.d.*
EERWAARDE EN ZEER GEACHTE BROEDERS:—

ONZE opdracht als Commissie “in re den status van Leeraars die zich in dienst stellen van buiten-kerkelijke inrichtingen van Barmhartigheid en Onderwijs” ligt in het desbetreffend besluit der vorige Synode (Acta, Art. 106), dat van dezen inhoud is:

Classis Wisconsin en de Kerkeraad van Coldbrook brachten ieder een instructie ter Synode, met het verzoek dat de Synode den status zou bepalen van Leeraars die zich in dienst stellen van niet-kerkelijke inrichtingen, zooals b. v. die van barmhartigheid en onderwijs.

Hoewel er in bovengenoemde instructies geen concreet geval ter kennis der Synode wordt gebracht, adviseert Uwe Commissie de Synode toch om een Comm. te benoemen, die deze zaak in studie neemt en op de volgende Synode rapporteert.

Gronden:

- (1) Alle gevallen worden schijnbaar niet gedekt door de K. O., Artt. 12 en 13;
- (2) Zulke gevallen veroorzaken geen kleine moeite aan de Classes die ze te behandelen hebben;
- (3) Voor den goeden gang van het kerkelijk leven is het gewenscht dat hieromtrent helderheid kome.

De aanleiding tot dit Synodaal besluit, alsook tot de ons gegeven opdracht, lag dus in een tweetal instructies die ter Synodale tafel waren gebracht, één van de Classis Wisconsin en één van den Kerkeraad van Coldbrook.

Die van den Kerkeraad van Coldbrook is in het Agendum der vorige Synode niet te vinden; evenmin is de inhoud er van opgenomen in het rapport der Commissie van Prae-advies. Wij hebben pogingen gedaan om het oorspronkelijke of een afschrift er van in handen te krijgen, maar zonder daarin te slagen. Dus hebben wij in dit rapport aan die instructie geen aandacht kunnen wijden.

Met die van Classis Wisconsin staat het gelukkig anders. De inhoud daarvan was volgens het Agendum van 1926 (blz. XLIII, v.) deze:

Leeraars die zich in Dienst Stellen van Buiten-Kerkelijke Inrichtingen.

De Synode bepale den status van Leeraars die zich in dienst stellen van buiten-kerkelijke inrichtingen, zooals die van barmhartigheid en onderwijs.

Gronden:

- a) Zulke gevallen worden niet gedekt door Artt. 12 en 13 der K. O. Van Dellen en Keegstra rangschikken zulke gevallen wel onder Art. 12, doch een Synodale bepaling dienaangaande hebben wij niet. Ook heeft de Synode in het verleden niet in dezen geest geoordeeld (zie Acta 1918, Art. 37, II, p. 38);
- b) Volgens de verklaring van Ds. Joh. Jansen (*Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenordening*, pp. 30-32) vallen zulke gevallen evenmin onder Art. 6, K. O., waarnaar verwezen wordt in voornoemd Synodaal besluit;
- c) Zulke gevallen veroorzaken geen kleine moeite aan de Classes, die ze hebben te behandelen;
- d) Voor den goeden gang van het kerkelijk leven is het gewenscht, dat hieromtrent helderheid kome.

Blijkens deze instructie had de Classis Wisconsin reeds van de zaak studie gemaakt en verschillende autoriteiten geraadpleegd. Het was haar echter niet gelukt tot een resultaat te komen, omdat er bij die autoriteiten zooveel onderlinge tegenspraak was. Van Dellen en Keegstra, zegt de Classis, rangschikken zulke gevallen onder Art. 12 der K. O., maar onze Synode van 1918 heeft in dien geest niet geoordeeld, want volgens Art. 37, II, harer Acta heeft zij voor de behandeling van een geval van aanneming van den dienst in een gesticht verwezen naar Art. 6* in plaats van naar Art. 12. Maar dit Synodaal oordeel had de Classis weer tegengesproken bevonden door Ds. Joh. Jansen, volgens wien Art. 6 voor gevallen van dienst in een gesticht geen beteekenis heeft. Zoo komt de Classis tot de Synode en verzoekt haar omtrent deze kwestie uitspraak te doen.

Deze motiveering der Classis van haar verzoek heeft Uwe Commissie gemeend zich te moeten aantrekken als een

* Cf. de uitspraak der Nederl. Synode van Utrecht 1905: "Voor zoover Dienaren des Woords, die zulk een geestelijken arbeid verrichten, in het kerkelijk ambt blijven, is hunne positie in Art. 6 geregeld" (Acta, Art. 88, blz. 58).

waarschuwing. Het geldt hier een kwestie ten opzichte waarvan er onder ons verschil van opinie is. Bovendien staat zij in verband met verschillende bijzonderheden van kerkrechtelijke theorie en praktijk, waarover er insgelijks verschil van opinie is. Daarom kwam ons raadzaam voor, ten einde die hedendaagsche verschilpunten zooveel mogelijk te ontwijken, ons met de voorstellingen en uitspraken van onzen tijd zoo weinig mogelijk te bemoeien, maar meer bepaald studie te maken van desbetreffende artikelen onzer Kerkorde, en van het licht dat handelingen en uitspraken der oude Nationale en Particuliere Synoden van de Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Kerken daarop laten vallen.

In de instructie van Classis Wisconsin wordt alleen gesproken van *buiten-kerkelijke* inrichtingen van barmhartigheid en onderwijs, alsof de status van Predikanten alleen in gevaar te achten is, wanneer zij een dienst aannemen aan een buiten-kerkelijke, niet wanneer zij een dienst aannemen aan een kerkelijke inrichting van barmhartigheid.

Dit is niet geheel juist.

Het is mogelijk een buiten-kerkelijke inrichting te dienen in een positie die behoud van ambtsbevoegdheid toelaat, en een kerkelijke inrichting te dienen in een positie die behoud van het ambt niet toelaat. Aan dezelfde inrichting kan de eene positie een positie zijn die behoud van het ambt toelaat, en de andere een positie die behoud van het ambt niet toelaat. Zulke inrichtingen te dienen als Geestelijk Verzorger of als Theologisch Professor is iets anders dan ze te dienen als collectant of als onderwijzer in seculaire wetenschappen. Wat over den status beslist is de aard van de positie die men inneemt, of men daarin bezig is en blijft in geestelijken arbeid, in Dienst des Woords, zij het ook in anderen vorm, dan wel of men daarin tot "een anderen staat des levens" is overgegaan.

Wij hebben in de Kerkorde niet minder dan zes artikelen, die betrekking hebben op den status van Predikanten, die een andere positie innemen dan die van den gewonen Dienst des Woords in de plaatselijke Kerk. Slechts één van dat zestal (Art. 12) betreft gevallen, waarin behoud van het ambt niet mogelijk is; de vijf overige betreffen gevallen, waarin behoud van het ambt uitdrukkelijk toegekend wordt.

Met de gevallen van de laatste soort zullen wij ons eerst

bezig houden, daarna met die van de eerste soort.

I. *Gevallen waarin de Kerkorde Behoud van de Ambtsbevoegdheid Toekent.*

De gevallen waarin de Kerkorde bij verlating van den gewonen dienst der plaatselijke Kerk behoud van ambtsbevoegdheid toekent, zijn:

1. *Dienst aan Hoven en Gestichten.* Voor deze diensten heeft de Kerkorde een regeling in Art. 6, een artikel dat voor heel de zaak waarover het hier gaat, van bijzonder belang is, en dat een aanmerkelijk deel van onze aandacht zal vragen.

Van Art. 6 vinden wij in de Acta der oude Synoden drie redacties (*Kerkelijk Handboekje*, Biesterveld en Kuyper, pp. 98, 162, 193).

De eerste redactie is die van de Synode van Dordrecht 1578, Art. VIII, welke aldus luidt:

“Die in eenigher Vorsten ofte anderer Heeren Hoven den dienst des Woordts bedienen sullen oock ordentlick ende wettelick ghelyck andere beroepen werden, der belydenisse des gheloofs ende Kercklike ordeninghe onderschryven ende uit den alderbequaemsten des Hofghesins Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen stellen. Sy sullen oock in Classen ende Synoden verschynen, ende hen het oordeel der selver als andere Dienaers onderwerpen”.

De tweede redactie is die van de Synode van Middelburg 1581, in wier Acta zij te vinden is als No. 7 der “Particuliere Vragen”:

“Oft die gheene, die in Princen ofte andere Heeren Hoven den dienst des Woordt betreden, ordentlyck ende wettelyck soe wel als andere sullen moeten beroepen werden, die belydenisse des Gheloofs ende Discipline onderschryven, uit den bequaemsten des Hofghesins eenighe tot Ouderlinghen ende Dyaconen stellen, op die Classique ende Synodale vergaderingen verschynen, ende haer nae het exempel van andere Dienaren het oordeel der selver onderwerpen?—Antw. Sy sullen alle dese dinghen onderhouden ende naekomen. Ende soe feele der gheener anghaet, die in gasthuysen ofte weeshuysen dienen, die selve sullen oock gehouden zijn naer die kerckelycke ordeninghe oft ordinantie haer te reguleren”.

En *de derde redactie* is die van de Synode van 's Gravenhage 1586, welke aan de bepaling haar plaats in de Kerkorde teruggaf, en haar daarin opnam als Art. 6:

“Sal oock geen Dienaer Dienst moghen aennemen in eenighe besondere heerlijkheden, gasthuizen oft andersins, ten sij dat hij voerhenen gheadmiteert ende toegehlaten sij, volghende voerghaende artikelen, ende sal oock nietmin als andere de kerkenordeninghe onderworpen sijn”.

Deze laatste redactie is door Dordrecht 1618-'19 onveranderd overgenomen, en ook in onze herziening van 1914 dezelfde gebleven.

Als wij deze drie redacties nagaan en met elkander vergelijken, dan vallen de volgende bijzonderheden in het oog:

(1) Dat de regeling dezer zaak begonnen is met een bepaling te maken betreffende Predikanten die den Dienst des Woords vervulden aan het hof van den Prins van Oranje, of aan de heerlijkheden van andere Vorsten. In de eerste redactie is nog maar alleen van zulke diensten sprake.

(2) Dat in de tweede redactie door de Synode van Middelburg 1581 onder denzelfden regel werd gebracht de dienst in hospitalen en weeshuizen, alsmede dat deze toevoeging door 's Gravenhage 1586 en Dordrecht 1618-'19 overgenomen is, en wel in deze nog ruimer gestelde formulering: “dienst in eenige bijzondere heerlijkheden, gasthuizen of anderszins”. En hoe dit “of anderszins” begrepen werd, kan blijken uit de volgende uitspraak der Part. Synode van N. Holland in 1599:

“Aengaende de bedieninghe van het tuchthuis tot Amsterdam is geresolveert, dat de personen, die sulcke plaetsen bedienen, sullen te vooren wettelic geexamineert ende bevesticht worden ende, soo de gelegenheyt mochte vereyschen, de sacramenten ooc bedienen, ende dit alles volgende den 6 art. des nationalen synodi in den Hage” (Reitsema en Van Veen, *Acta der Part. Synoden enz.*, I, 273).

Door deze Part. Synode werd dus ook de dienst in een *staats gevangenis*, een “penitentiary”, geacht tot deze rubriek, tot het “of anderszins” van Art. 6 te behooren. Zoover het dienst in gestichten betreft, werd Art. 6 in den eigen tijd van zijn ontstaan niet beschouwd als een artikel alleen voor inrichtingen van barmhartigheid, noch ook als een artikel alleen voor kerkelijke inrichtingen, want het tuchthuis van Amsterdam behoorde zeker tot geen van beide. Dienst in dat tuchthuis was in alle manieren een dienst in een buiten-kerkelijke inrichting.

(3) Dat het voorschrift van Dordrecht 1578 en Middelburg 1581 betreffende de vorming van hofgezinnen tot hofgemeenten, niet bedoeld kan zijn als een maatregel om hofpredikers op gelijken voet te brengen met de Dienaars in de plaatselijke Kerken, ten einde hun behoud van het ambt te bezorgen. Dat men daar niet aan dacht, blijkt uit de gelijkstelling van diensten in gestichten met die aan hoven. In gestichten als hospitalen of in tuchthuizen was Gemeentestichting uitteraard niet mogelijk. Daar is dan ook geen sprake van. Toch worden Dienaars in gestichten op dezelfde voorwaarden, n.l. die van kerkelijke "beroeping" en van onderwerping aan de kerkelijke orde, dezelfde rechten toegekend als aan hofpredikers, tot het verschijnen in Classicale en Synodale vergaderingen toe. Ook verneemt men na 1581 van dat stichten van hofgemeenten niet meer.

(4) Dat in deze redacties verschil is op te merken in de formuleering van de voor de vervulling van zulke diensten gestelde voorwaarde. Dordrecht 1578 en Middelburg 1581 hadden die voorwaarde uitgedrukt met de woorden: "*ordenlick ende wettelick ghelyck andere beroepen*" te zijn. Door 's Gravenhage 1586 echter is daarvoor in de plaats gesteld: "*ten sij dat hij voorhenen gheadmiteert ende toeghelaten sij*". Deze wijziging is zeker niet aangebracht zonder dan men daarmee een welbewuste bedoeling had, en zij verdient zeer onze aandacht. Zij heeft een zeer belangrijke beteekenis voor de kwestie, of het voor zulk een dienst in een gesticht voor den status van den dienstdoenden Predikant volstrekt noodzakelijk is, dat hij voor dien dienst *beroepen is door een plaatselijke Kerk*.

Zoo wordt tegenwoordig beweerd. Zoo zou het door de Kerkorde in Art. 6 worden voorgeschreven. Zoo was ook het oordeel van onze Synode van 1918, die in het besluit waarnaar Classis Wisconsin in haar instructie verwees, met beroep op Art. 6 uitsprak, dat "de beroeping van een geestelijk verzorger dient te geschieden door een der naburige Kerken". Art. 6 echter zegt daar niets van. Art. 6 zegt: "*tenzij dat hij voorheen geadmitteerd en toegelaten zij*", en dat is iets geheel anders.

Dat beweren kan echter den toets niet doorstaan. *Reeds door de geschiedenis wordt het weersproken*, want zij leert ons:

Vooreerst, dat verkiezing en beroeping voor zulke diensten door een plaatselijke Kerk in den tijd waaruit dit arti-

kel dagteekent, *eenvoudig niet gebeurde*. Gelijk de Prins van Oranje zelf zijn hofprediker aanstelde, zoo deden ook andere Vorsten en Heeren; en gelijk de Burgemeester van Amsterdam den Dienaar voor het burger weeshuis aldaar aanstelde en instrueerde, zoo deden ook andere Magistraten en Regenten. Van beroeping voor zulk een dienst door een plaatselijke Kerk is in de oude Acta geen enkel voorbeeld te vinden.

En ten tweede leert de geschiedenis, dat dit niet-gebeuren niet toe te schrijven is aan ongehoorzaamheid, waaraan de Kerk niet bij machte zou geweest zijn een einde te maken, maar daaraan dat de Kerk *het niet verlangde*. Want nergens is in de Acta der oude Particuliere en Nationale Synoden een spoor te vinden van kerkelijk bezwaar tegen zulke buiten-kerkelijke aanstellingen als zoodanig. Wat wel blijkt is, dat door de Meerdere Vergaderingen op zulke aanstellingen wel degelijk het oog werd gehouden, en dat zij, zoo ze niet geschied waren naar de goede orde, daartegen met kracht opkwamen. Art. 6 zelf, als het artikel voor de regeling van zulke buiten-kerkelijke aanstellingen, is er bewijs voor, dat de Kerk zich in die dingen liet gelden, en niet in gebreke bleef daarvoor haar eischen te stellen. Doch als tegen plaats gehad hebbende aanstellingen bezwaar werd geopperd, dan is het nimmer bezwaar tegen de aanstelling als geschied door een particulier persoon en buiten de plaatselijke Kerk om, maar steeds tegen iets anders.

Een voor ons in dezen zeer merkwaardig geval was dat waarvan melding gemaakt wordt in de Acta der Part. Synode van Rotterdam 1581. Het betrof een gewezen monnik, die door een edelman als prediker aan zijn heerlijkheid was aangesteld, en die nu dien dienst vervulde zonder daartoe kerkelijke bevoegdheid te hebben. Het artikel dat over deze zaak handelt, luidt aldus:

“Aengaende den Minrebroeder WISHAGEN, dewelcke predikt opten Ruygenhil door consent soot schynt van den marquis VAN BERGEN, sonder van de classe van Dordrecht (waeronder de Ruygenhil resorteert) geëxamineert oft geordonneert te syn, waerome dezelve classe last hadde gegeven aen hem te schryven, adviseert de vergadering, dat men schryven sal ende opmanen totten examen etc., onvermindert den marquis syne heerlicheyd” (Reitsema en Van Veen, a. w., II, 208).

Er is dus geen bezwaar tegen de aanstelling door een edelman. Niet alleen heeft het artikel daarover geen enkel

woord van afkeuring, maar zelfs geeft de Synode te verstaan dat zij het billijkt, als een edelman voor zijn eigen heerlijkheid zich voorzien wil van een prediker van zijn eigen keuze, en dat zij niet bedoelt daarop inbreuk te maken. De woorden: “onverminderd den marquis syne heerlijkheit” kunnen wel niets anders beteekenen.

Maar het bezwaar is, dat die aangestelde persoon het Woord bedient, *zonder door de Classis waaronder hij resorteert, geëxamineerd en geordonneerd te zijn*, en de Synode neemt maatregelen om daaraan een einde te maken. Reeds is hij daarover door de Classis Dordrecht aangeschreven, en nu zal hij door de Synode “opgemaand” worden om zich te laten examineeren, enz. Hiermee is de zaak ongetwijfeld in orde gekomen, want we vernemen er verder niet meer van.

Opmerking verdient nog dat deze Synode ook geen bezwaar heeft tegen het peremptoir examineeren door de Classis van een persoon, die in plaats van een roeping door een plaatselijke Kerk, alleen een aanstelling heeft door een edelman. Zij vorderde uitdrukkelijk dat dit geschieden zou.

Niet alleen door de geschiedenis echter, maar beslister en duidelijker en meer principieel nog wordt de bewering betreffende de noodzakelijkheid van beroepen te zijn door een plaatselijke Kerk voor den status van een Dienaar in een gesticht, weersproken *door de genoemde redactie wijziging* van de Synode van 's Gravenhage 1586.

Vooreerst met het oog op *wat door die Synode geschrapt werd*. Dat was de uitdrukking: “sullen oock ordentlick ende wettelick ghelyck andere beroepen werden”.

In die uitdrukking lag voor genoemde bewering schijnbaar een grond, maar ook slechts schijnbaar; niet in werkelijkheid. En dat het een uitdrukking was die slechts schijnbaar die bewering steunde, maakt het te meer merkwaardig dat zij uit de Kerkorde is weggenomen, om vervangen te worden door een andere die in duidelijkheid niets te wenschen overliet.

Die steun was slechts schijnbaar.

Want wel sprak genoemde uitdrukking van “ghelyck andere beroepen werden”, maar het woord “beroepen” had toen blijkbaar *een andere beteekenis* dan die welke het nu voor ons heeft. Wat men toen door “beroeping” ver-

stond, wat de Kerkorde er mede bedoelde en er nog mede bedoelt, blijkt zeer duidelijk uit de omschrijving die zij er van geeft in Art. 4. "De wettelijke *beroeping* dergenen die te voren in den dienst niet geweest zijn", zegt dat artikel, "bestaat: ten eerste in de verkiezing, ten andere in de examinatie, ten derde in de approbatie, en ten laatste in de bevestiging". Dus zijn in de taal der Kerkorde verkiezing, examinatie, approbatie en bevestiging vier elementen van de "beroeping", terwijl ze naar ons spraakgebruik vier elementen zijn van *heel de in het ambt stelling*. Dat wil zeggen, dat "beroeping" in de Kerkorde in het ambt stelling beteekent, met alles wat daartoe behoort.

Als een ander even duidelijk voorbeeld kan genoemd worden het gebruik van het woord "beroepen" in Art. 12, in de uitdrukking: "dewijl een Dienaar des Woords, eens wettelijk als boven beroepen zijnde, zijn leven lang aan de Kerkedienst verbonden is". Ook hier beteekent "beroepen" blijkbaar niet wat wij gewoon zijn er door te verstaan, maar de in het ambt stelling in haar geheel, in den zin van Art. 4, met examinatie en bevestiging ingesloten. Want niemand zal beweren dat een Candidaat, die wel van een plaatselijke Kerk een roeping ontving, maar door de Classis nimmer is "geadmitteerd en toegelaten", en dus nimmer is bevestigd, toch van wege dat beroep van een plaatselijke Kerk voor zijn leven lang aan den kerkedienst zou zijn verbonden.

Het is dus duidelijk, dat de oude redactie van Art. 6 met de woorden "wettelijk als anderen beroepen worden" niet bedoelde voor dienst in gestichten de beroeping door een plaatselijke Kerk aan te wijzen als kerkrechtelijk het eene noodige, of althans het hoofdvereischte, om zulke diensten te kunnen vervullen in de kwaliteit van Dienaar des Woords. Wat die woorden bedoelden was wettige in het ambt stelling volgens Art. 4.

Maar die woorden gaven wel aanleiding om te meenen dat de beroeping door een plaatselijke Kerk *mede* behoorde tot de vereischten om zulke diensten te kunnen vervullen in de kwaliteit van Dienaar des Woords. Want volgens Art. 4 behooren verkiezing en approbatie door een plaatselijke Kerk mede tot de "beroeping". Dus scheen in die woorden opgesloten te liggen, wel niet dat beroeping door de plaatselijke Kerk het eenige noodige was, ook niet dat het hoofdvereischte was, maar dan toch wel dat het *mede* een vereischte was.

Dat was alles wat er uit af te leiden viel, maar dat kon er dan toch uit afgeleid worden.

De Synode van 's Gravenhage 1586 echter schrapte die woorden, waaruit dat afgeleid kon worden.

En wat heeft zij er voor in de plaats gesteld?

Zij heeft er dit voor in de plaats gesteld: "TENZIJ DAT HIJ VOORHEEN GEADMITTEERD EN TOEGELATEN ZIJ, VOLGENS VOORGAANDE ARTIKELEN".

Deze nieuwe formulering spreekt met zooveel duidelijke woorden uit, wat als volstrekt noodzakelijk gevorderd wordt. Het noemt die dingen bij name. En die dingen zijn dan *niet* al de in Art. 4 genoemde elementen van de in het ambt stelling volgens Art. 4, maar (na examinatie natuurlijk) alleen het kerkelijk geadmitteerd en toegelaten zijn. Had men beroeping door de plaatselijke Kerk volstrekt noodzakelijk geacht, dan zou men ook dat genoemd hebben, maar het wordt niet genoemd, het wordt uitgeschakeld.

Met deze redactie wijziging heeft 's Gravenhage 1586 een schijn van grond voor de meening dat beroeping door de plaatselijke Kerk noodig is om een dienst in een gesticht waar te nemen met behoud van zijn radicaal, uit de Kerkorde weggenomen, en Dordrecht 1618-'19 heeft door die wijziging over te nemen, daarop haar zegel gezet.

En deze redactie wijziging is niet op de Haagsche Synode van 1586 plotseling opgekomen, maar was reeds vóór dien tijd in gebruik. Niet precies met dezelfde woorden, maar in denzelfden zin. Wij vinden haar reeds in de boven geciteerde uitspraak van de Part. Synode van Rotterdam, in de zaak van den gewezen monnik Wishagen. Dat was in 1581, vijf jaren vroeger, in het jaar van de Synode van Middelburg, die de oude uitdrukking nog onveranderd liet. In die uitspraak der Part. Synode van Rotterdam heette het: "*sonder van de classe Dordrecht geexamineert oft geordonneert te syn*". In den tijd dus toen de officieele Kerkorde nog de uitdrukking had: "sullen oock ordentlick ende wettelick ghelyck andere beroepen werden", werd door deze Part. Synode deze eisch reeds weergegeven met de woorden: "*sonder van de Classe Dordrecht geexamineert oft geordonneert te syn*". Met het gebruik van deze woorden heeft die Part. Synode te verstaan gegeven, hoe men den eisch van Art. 6 opvatte. Zij heeft ons daarmede een commentaar gegeven op dat "beroepen werden",—en commentaar uit

dien eigen tijd. En vijf jaren later werd dit voorbeeld gevolgd door de Nat. Synode van 's Gravenhage.

Met nu Art. 6 alleen "geadmitteerd en toegelaten te zijn" als noodzakelijk te laten noemen, gaf de Synode van 's Gravenhage te verstaan dat dat element door haar werd aangemerkt als van de verschillende in Art. 4 genoemde elementen der in het ambt stelling *het meest essentieele*. Dat meest essentieele element der in het ambt stelling is dan echter niet iets dat de plaatselijke Kerk doet, maar iets *dat de Classis doet*. Dat het de Classis is, die na examinatie tot het ambt "admitteert en toelaat" is een feit dat niet te loochenen valt. De Part. Synode van Rotterdam sprak uitdrukkelijk van *door de Classis* geëxamineerd en geordonneerd te zijn. *Ordonneeren* wil zeggen: last en macht, of zending geven. Dat doet de Classis. Dat doet de Classis nog altijd, zooals uitdrukkelijk geconstateerd wordt in het zoogenaamde *Classicaal Diploma*. En de desbetreffende woorden van dit *Diploma* zijn heden ten dage zakelijk nog dezelfde als die welke volgens BRAKEL in de 17de eeuw werden gebruikt (*Redelijke Godsdienst*, I, 27, 14).

Hierbij is echter op te merken, dat de Classis dit niet doet krachtens een eigen recht er op, niet alsof dat admitteren en toelaten, dat examineeren en ordonneeren een bijzonder prerogatief zou zijn van Classicale vergaderingen. Het is de zaak der Kerk in haar geheel, of liever, het is de zaak van Christus, die het doet door de Kerk, en de Kerk heeft het in Art. 4 der Kerkorde als regel opgedragen aan de Classes. Volgens Art. 30 zou het behooren tot het werk der Generale Synoden, doch daar zijn praktische bezwaren tegen. Dus als de Classes het doen, doen zij het namens de Kerk. Daarom geldt dan ook haar ordonneering voor heel de Kerk, en niet, gelijk het toelaten van Oefenaars, slechts voor eigen ressort. Tot het doen van dit laatste voor heel de Kerk hebben de Classes geen opdracht, en dus ook geen recht.

En als wij aannemen, dat beroepen te zijn door, en daardoor in ambtelijk verband te staan met een plaatselijke Kerk niet noodig is om als Dienaar des Woords in het ambt te staan, wil dat niet zeggen, dat wij voor het vervullen van den Dienst des Woords ambtelijk verband van geen betekenis achten. Dat hebben ook de oude Gereformeerden niet bedoeld. Het tegendeel blijkt uit Art. 3 der Kerkorde,

waarin zij bepaalden, dat niemand den Dienst des Woords mag betreden, zonder wettelijk daartoe beroepen (in het ambt gesteld) te zijn. Maar wie eens daartoe wettelijk beroepen was, was daarmee ook, zooals zij in Art. 12 hebben geconstateerd, voor zijn leven lang aan den kerkedienst verbonden, d. i. voor zijn leven lang tot de Kerk in ambtelijke betrekking gesteld. Dat ambtelijk verband komt in aanwezen door een "beroeping", waarvan de meest essentiele elementen liggen in hetgeen door de Classis geschiedt, n.l. in "door de Classis geëxamineerd en geordonneerd", of door de Classis "geadmitteerd en toegelaten" te zijn. Dat zijn elementen die door de Classis geschieden namens heel de geïnstitueerde Kerk, en zoo is het ambtelijk verband dat daardoor tot stand komt, een ambtelijk verband met heel de Kerk. Trouwens, zonder in ambtelijk verband te staan met heel de Kerk zouden Dienaren des Woords ook de bevoegdheid niet kunnen hebben, om in al de Gemeenten dier Kerk Woord en Sacramenten te bedienen. Op grond van het "door de Classis geëxamineerd en geordonneerd" te zijn, kan vervolgens voor den Dienst des Woords in de plaatselijke Kerk ook een speciaal ambtelijk verband met die Kerk tot stand komen. Dat ambtelijk verband met de plaatselijke Kerk is geen vereischte om als Dienaar des Woords in het ambt te staan, maar het is wel een vereischte om, voor zoolang men haar dient, in die Kerk de rechten en plichten te hebben, niet alleen van vasten Dienaar des Woords en Herder, maar ook van Ouderling.

Verder is nog omtrent Art. 6 op te merken:

(5) Dat dit artikel zeer beslist de ambtelijke positie van wettig in het ambt gestelde Dienaars aan hoven en in gestichten handhaaft. Het eischt voor de waarneming van die diensten wettige in het ambt stelling, en dit sluit vanzelf in, dat, na wettige in het ambt stelling, het vervullen van zulk een dienst het ambt niet kan doen verliezen, of het behoud er van in eenig gevaar kan brengen. En dat voor behoud van het ambt beroeping door een plaatselijke Kerk voor zulk een positie niet noodig werd geacht, volgt daaruit dat, gelijk wij gezien hebben, het destijds niet gevorderd werd, ook in Art. 6 niet als eisch wordt gesteld, en zelfs, wat in de vorige redactie kon aangemerkt worden als dien eisch in te sluiten, geschrapt is.

(6) Dat niet in te zien is, waarom dat alles niet evenzeer zou gelden van "Geestelijke Verzorgers" in gestichten van barmhartigheid in onzen tijd.

Dit is ontkend. De dienst in een gasthuis in Art. 6, zoo is gezegd, beteekende het bedienen van Woord en Sacramenten in een gasthuiskerk, en was dus niet gelijk te stellen met de positie van "Geestelijk Verzorger" in een gesticht in onzen tijd, naardien nu zulke "Geestelijke Verzorger" aangesteld worden voor arbeid die ook door gewone lidmaten verricht kan worden. Art. 6 zou dus met de positie van "Geestelijk Verzorger" niets uit te staan hebben, en wie er zich voor die zaak op beroept, zou dit ten onrechte doen.

Het wil ons echter voorkomen, dat die beschouwing niet opgaat. Wij willen niet beweren, dat het in geen geval geoorloofd zou zijn een gewoon lidmaat aan te stellen voor geestelijken arbeid in een gesticht, die door zoo'n persoon verricht kan worden, en op zulke gevallen Art. 6 niet van toepassing te achten. Maar wel meenen wij te mogen beweren, dat dit niet anders mag dan uit nood, als een hulpdienst, en als uitzondering, en dat waarneming van zulke diensten door Dienaren des Woords regel moet zijn. Dat veel van dien arbeid door een gewoon lidmaat kan verricht worden, doet niets ter zake. Dat kan men ook zeggen van den dienst in de plaatselijke Kerk. Maar dat is geen reden om daarvoor den dienst van een Oefenaar voldoende te achten, al kan hij ook beter het woord voeren dan menig Predikant, en al munt hij niet minder uit in de private zielzorg. De arbeid in de plaatselijke Kerk moet ambtelijk geschieden, door een gezant van Christus, met de autoriteit der volle ambtsbevoegdheid. Waarom zou hetzelfde niet evenzeer gelden voor dienst in gestichten. Onze vaders hebben bij Art. 6 op geen anderen dienst het oog gehad dan op dien van Dienaren des Woords.

In plaats dus van toe te stemmen, dat Art. 6 met de positie van "Geestelijk Verzorger" in een gesticht in onzen tijd niets uit te staan heeft, meent uwe Commissie op grond van het voorgaande:

- a) dat dienst als "Geestelijk Verzorger" hetzelfde is als wat Art. 6 bedoelt met dienst in gestichten;
- b) dat dus Art. 6 te beschouwen is als het artikel der Kerkorde voor de regeling van zulke diensten, en in de vervulling daarvan dienovereenkomstig is te handelen;
- c) dat volgens Art. 6 voor een Dienaar des Woords het waarnemen van zulk een dienst ten volle vereenig-

baar is met behoud van de ambtsbevoegdheid, en zulks, volgens de oude opvatting van dit artikel, al is hij benoemd door een bestuur.

Dit wat dienst in gestichten betreft. Nu kunnen wij de andere gevallen laten volgen, waarin de Kerkorde bij verlating van den dienst der plaatselijke Kerk behoud van de ambtsbevoegdheid toekent, namelijk:

2. *Het verkrijgen van Emeritaat.* Daarvoor heeft de Kerkorde Art. 13. In deze gevallen is er wel een ophouden met de waarneming van den gewonen dienst der plaatselijke Kerk, maar niet om in plaats daarvan eenig bedrijf van het natuurlijk leven te aanvaarden. Men ontvangt zijn emeritaat, omdat men door ouderdom, ziekte of anderszins tot den dienst onbekwaam was geworden. In deze gevallen waarborgt de Kerkorde het behoud van "de eere en den naam eens Dienaars".

Er is echter op te letten, dat Art. 13 uitdrukkelijk de gevallen noemt waarvoor het bestemd is, n.l. die van "door ouderdom, ziekte of anderszins onbekwaam geworden te zijn tot den dienst". Dus mag het alleen voor die gevallen in werking gesteld worden. Het te doen dienen als een huismiddel, om in gevallen waarin bij verlating van den dienst der plaatselijke Kerk van onbekwaam geworden te zijn tot den dienst van verre geen sprake is, behoud van het ambt te verzorgen, is in strijd met den duidelijken inhoud van het artikel. Onze Synode van 1918 handelde volkomen correct, toen zij emeritaats-verklaring om wille van aanvaarding van den dienst in een gesticht weigerde, oordeelende dat zulk een geval "niet viel onder Art. 13".

Een emeritus Predikant echter blijft de eere en den naam eens Dienaars behouden, al aanvaardt hij ook een taak die buiten het terrein van den Dienst des Woords ligt, bijv., een dienst als collectant voor een gesticht. Zou een dienstdoend Predikant, zonder tot den dienst onbekwaam te zijn geworden, zijn bediening neerleggen om zulk werk op zich te nemen, dan zou hij geacht moeten worden tot een anderen staat des levens te zijn overgegaan. Maar dat een Predikant, die in overeenstemming met inhoud en doel van Art. 13 op emeritaat recht heeft en het op dien grond ontving, door het aanvaarden van zulk werk, om daarin nog de zaak des Heeren te dienen, en nog zelf in zijn onderhoud te voorzien, deswegen zijn recht op de eere en den naam

eens Dienaars zou verliezen, zal wel niemand willen beweren.

3. *Het tijdelijk onderlaten van den dienst*, dat is, het tijdelijk niet waarnemen van den dienst in eigen Gemeente. Daarvoor heeft de Kerkorde Art. 14. Dat artikel wordt geacht gevallen te betreffen van Predikanten die, om wille van vervolging of ook om andere redenen zich daartoe genoodzaakt ziende, met bewilliging van hun Kerkeraad hun Gemeente verlaten hadden, om zoo spoedig dit zou kunnen tot haar weder te keeren. Wat het precies zeggen wil, dat zulke Predikanten gedurende dien tijd van onderlaten van den dienst "de beroeping der Gemeenten (Gemeente) onderworpen zullen zijn en blijven" is niet duidelijk. Ook is die uitdrukking in verschillende uitgaven en redacties niet geheel gelijk. De meeste hebben "de beroeping der Gemeenten" (meerv.), andere hebben "de beroeping der Gemeente" (enkelv.). Het *Kerkelijk Handboekje* van Biesterveld en Kuypers heeft tweemaal "Gemeente" (blz. 98 en 162) en tweemaal "Gemeenten" (blz. 195 en 230). Het gebruik van "Gemeenten" doet denken dat de bedoeling is, dat zij voor andere Gemeenten beroepbaar zijn en blijven, en daardoor in de gelegenheid gesteld kunnen worden om weer een vasten dienst te bekomen. En het gebruik van "Gemeente" doet denken, dat de bedoeling is, dat zij gedurende dien tijd Predikant blijven van de Gemeente die hen beriep en wier beroeping zij aannamen, met de verplichting om tot haar weder te keeren, zoodra zij teruggeroepen worden. Die beide opvattingen sluiten elkander niet uit; veeleer sluit de tweede de eerste in. Misschien is daaruit het gebruik nu eens van "Gemeenten" en dan weer van "Gemeente" te verklaren. En de beide opvattingen sluiten in, dat zulk een Predikant gedurende dien tijd van onderlaten van den dienst *in het ambt blijft*.

Als behorende tot dit artikel zijn ook te beschouwen gevallen van het geven van tijdelijk ontslag voor verdere theologische studie. Deze gevallen worden steeds zoo geregeld, dat, onder voorwaarden die aan Kerkeraad en Gemeente vrijheid geven en het hun mogelijk maken op gewone wijze een ander Predikant te beroepen, de persoon die het ontslag vraagt, Predikant der Gemeente blijft, en derhalve, indien bij het einde van den tijd van zijn ontslag de Gemeente vacant mocht zijn, recht zou hebben tot haar weder te keeren, om zijn dienst in haar midden voort te zetten. Van in gedrang komen van zijn status als Predikant

kan dus geen sprake zijn. Zulk ontslag mag echter volgens het artikel niet anders gegeven worden dan voor *tijdelijk* onderlaten van den dienst. Ook mag het slechts gegeven worden voor studie, die verdere theologische en ambtelijke bekwaming ten doel heeft, en dus met het ambt in direct verband staat. Anders zou het een zaak zijn die zou liggen op de lijn van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens.

Heel iets anders dan wat Art. 14 bedoelt is echter het ontslag geven uit den dienst *voor onbepaalden tijd*, het geven van "unlimited leave of absence", zooals dat in den laatsten tijd schijnt voorgekomen te zijn. Art. 14 geeft tot het verleenen van zulk ontslag allermint het recht; integendeel, het sluit dat uit. Het beperkt het geven van zulk ontslag tot het geven van zulk ontslag *voor een tijd*. Dit "voor een tijd" wil altijd zeggen: voor een periode van beperkten duur, en daar staat "voor onbepaalden tijd" rechtstreeks tegenover. Bovendien is het geven van zulk "unlimited leave of absence" rechtstreeks in strijd met wat de eerste clause van Art. 7 bedoelt. Die clause is gericht tegen een wanorde in het kerkelijk leven van dien tijd, n.l. de aanwezigheid van zwervende, op eigen hand hier en daar Woord en Sacramenten bedienende Predikanten. Het geven van zulk "unlimited leave of absence" daarentegen is metterdaad een opnieuw in het leven roepen en in de hand werken van dat kwaad.

4. *Het aanvaarden van een Theologisch Professoraat.* Daarvoor heeft de Kerkorde Art. 18. Ook in deze gevallen is er een verlaten van den gewonen dienst der plaatselijke Kerk, maar niet een verlaten van den ambtelijken dienst des Woords. De Kerkorde beschrijft het ambt der Theologische Professoren als een ambt "om de Heilige Schriftuur uit te leggen, en de zuivere leer tegen ketterijen en dolingen voor te staan". Dat is dienst des Woords. Het Convent van Wezel 1568 sprak uit, dat "de Leeraren (Doctoren) met de Dienaren een en hetzelfde ambt van onderwijzen hebben, maar de wijze waarop dat geschiedt is verschillend (II, 14). Daarin ligt opgesloten dat men, zulk een dienst vervullende, in het ambtelijk werk en dus in het ambt blijft. Dit veronderstelt echter dat voor dezen dienst "voorheen geadmitteerd en toegelaten te zijn, volgens voorgaande artikelen" even noodzakelijk is als voor dienst in gestichten.

5. *Het aanvaarden van een Missionairen Dienst.* Voor deze positie is gezorgd in Art. 7. Dit artikel begint met

voor te schrijven, dat geen Dienaren des Woords “beroe-
ben” (in het ambt gesteld) zullen worden, zonder dat men
hen in een bepaalde plaats stelle. Dit als maatregel van
orde en van het profijt der Kerk. Een wanorde als die der
niet te controleeren “vagebunde priesteren” van Rome mag
in de Kerk niet geduld worden. Maar op een maatregel van
orde en van het profijt der Kerk zijn zonder beginselverza-
king uitzonderingen mogelijk. Het profijt der Kerk kan in
sommige gevallen anders eischen. En Art. 7 maakt een uit-
zondering, n.l. voor Dienaars “die gezonden worden om hier
of daar Kerken te vergaderen”, d. i. voor Predikanten in
dienst der Inwendige Zending. De uitzondering is, dat zij
in het ambt kunnen worden gesteld, zonder dat zij zullen
gaan dienen in een bepaalde plaats. Daaruit volgt natuur-
lijk, dat zij ook zonder aan een bepaalde plaats verbonden
te zijn, in het ambt kunnen zijn en blijven.

Nu komen wij tot de

II. *GevalLEN waarin men de Ambtsbevoegdheid Verliest.*

Dit zijn de gevallen van *overgang tot een anderen staat des levens*; waarover de Kerkorde handelt in Art. 12.

Ook van Art. 12 bieden ons de oude redacties der Kerk-
orde drieërlei formuleering (*Kerkelijk Handboekje*, Bies-
terveld en Kuyper, pp. 98, 144 en 194). Een vergelijking
van deze drie formuleeringen levert voor ons onderzoek
weinig belangrijks op, zoodat wij de ruimte die het afschrij-
ven in beslag nemen zou, kunnen besparen. In onze Kerk-
orde luidt het artikel aldus:

“Dewijl een Denaar des Woords, eens wettelijk als boven beroepen
zijnde, zijn leven lang aan den Kerkedienst verbonden is, zoo zal hem
niet geoorloofd zijn, zich tot een anderen staat des levens te begeven,
tenzij om groote en gewichtige oorzaken, waarvan de Classe kennis
nemen en oordeelen zal”.

Ter toelichting van dit artikel zijn enkele bijzonderhe-
den te overwegen.

Vooreerst de uitdrukking: *overgaan tot een anderen
staat des levens*. De vraag is, Wat bedoelt de Kerkorde
daarmee?

Het artikel begint met er aan te herinneren, dat een Die-

naar des Woords, eens wettig beroepen of in het ambt gesteld zijnde, "*zijn leven lang aan den kerkedienst verbonden is*". Dit geschiedt blijkbaar met de bedoeling om overgang tot een anderen staat des levens te stellen in het licht van *dat* feit, als daarvan het tegenovergestelde. De in het ambt stelling verbindt aan den kerkedienst *voor heel het leven*. Beiderzijds hebben de persoon die in het ambt gesteld wordt en de Kerk die in het ambt stelt, het zoo bedoeld. De eerste gaf zich aan den kerkedienst voor heel zijn leven, onder betuiging daartoe een Goddelijke roeping te gevoelen, en de laatste nam hem in haar dienst en verleende hem de ambtsbevoegdheid voor heel zijn leven. Er is door de in het ambt stelling een heilig verbond tot stand gekomen, dat niet mag verbroken worden, tenzij om groote en gewichtige oorzaken, die men voor God en de Kerk verantwoorden kan. En nu is overgang tot een anderen staat des levens juist verbreking van dat heilig verbond.

Het woord "kerkedienst" is bedoeld in den zin van dienst der Kerk als geheel in de bediening des Woords. De eerste redactie van het artikel sprak van "verbonden zijn aan hun dienst" (als Dienaars); de tweede redactie veranderde dat in "verbonden zijn aan de Kerke Christi"; en de derde redactie schijnt die beide begrippen te hebben willen samenvatten in het woord "kerkedienst". Duidelijker was de uitdrukking der Fransche Discipline (Art. 16): "om voor zijn leven Dienaar des Woords te zijn" (*pour etre Ministres toute leur vie*). De Kerkorde bedoelt dus met "een anderen staat des levens" een staat die een andere is dan die van de bediening des Woords in den dienst der Kerk.

En "overgaan" wil gewoonweg zeggen: ophouden te zijn wat men tot hiertoe was, om in plaats daarvan iets anders te worden. Wie van een Kerk overgaat naar een andere, houdt op lid te zijn van de eene Kerk om in plaats daarvan lid te worden van de andere. En zoo beteekent het hier: op te houden de Kerk te dienen als Dienaar des Woords, om in plaats daarvan zich te gaan bezig houden met een bedrijf dat buiten het terrein der Kerk ligt, dat tot het natuurlijk leven behoort.

Het kenmerkende van gevallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens ligt dus vooreerst daarin, dat een Predikant *ophoudt Dienaar des Woords te zijn*, zijn Gemeente verlaat en zijn bediening neerlegt, of dat wil doen,

om een positie te aanvaarden, die hem niet toelaat langer in den dienst des Woords werkzaam te zijn, bijv. een positie aan een school, hetzij een Christelijke of een Staats-school, om onderwijs te geven in seculaire wetenschap.

Het kan echter gebeuren, dat een Predikant een seculair bedrijf gaat waarnemen, bijv. dat van landbouwer, of, gelijk het vroeger niet zelden voorkwam, dat van geneesheer of van openbaar notaris, maar toch tegelijk het ambt wil behouden, en daarmee het recht om een Gemeente te dienen of hier en daar uit prediken te gaan.

Met het oog op gevallen van deze soort wordt er in de oude Acta meermalen op gewezen, dat de H. Bediening "*den geheelen mensch vereischt*", de toewijding van al zijn tijd en krachten. Toch bedoelde men dat dan niet zóó, dat een Predikant zich daarom beslist te onthouden had van alle bedrijf, dat tot het natuurlijk leven behoort. Voor "exercitiën die tegen den dienst opentlick niet en strijden" werd zekere ruimte gelaten (Reitsma en Van Veen, a. w., I, 275; I, 206; V, 320). En ging een Predikant daarmee te ver, dan sprak men nog niet van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens, maar beschouwde het als een geval waarin tucht moest worden toegepast. Zoo besloot de Part. Synode van Dordrecht 1590, dat een Predikant, die zich "met knopmaecken geneerde", "van Synode wegen nog eens belastet sal worden tselve nae te laten". "Ende niet afstaende, sal gecensureert worden na behooren" (Reitsma en Van Veen, a. w., II, 369). Men wilde dus niet dat de H. Bediening zou verlaagd worden tot een bijzaak, tot een soort aanhangsel van een aardsch bedrijf. Daartoe staat zij te hoog, is zij te heilig. Hij aan wien het Evangelie des zaligen Gods is toebetrouwd, mag niet tegelijk een ander heer willen dienen.

En in de tweede plaats ligt het kenmerkende van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens *in den aard van de taak die men aanvaardt* of wil aanvaarden. Daarin dat die taak een van den dienst des Woords wezenlijk verschillende is, en niet behorend tot de roeping der Kerk. Of, om woorden te gebruiken der Nederl. Synode van 1920 (Art. 105), een taak die niet is een dienst ten bate der kerken in het gemeen, of niet is een taak die een geestelijk karakter draagt, en met de roeping tot de verkondiging van het Evangelie in verband staat.

Gevallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens

zijn dus die waarin een Predikant uit den Dienst des Woords uittreedt, om een taak te aanvaarden die niet een geestelijk karakter draagt, en niet met de roeping tot de verkondiging van het Evangelie in verband staat. Dat zulke een handeling verlies van het ambt moet tengevolge hebben, ongeacht of de redenen te billijken zijn of niet, wordt in het artikel niet uitdrukkelijk gezegd, maar het ligt duidelijk genoeg opgesloten in de uitdrukking, "overgaan tot een anderen staat des levens". Een *andere* staat des levens dan die welke de ambtsbevoegdheid vereischt, waarbij de ambtsbevoegdheid past, met het oog waarop zij verleend is. Derhalve overgaan tot een staat des levens, welke die bevoegdheid niet vereischt, waarbij zij niet past, met het oog waarop zij niet is verleend. En in zulke gevallen het ambt te laten behouden, zou alweer dienen om in de Kerk het kwaad te stichten van een soort losse predikers te hebben, niet ongelijk aan Rome's "vagabundé priesteren".

(2) Een tweede bijzonderheid van Art. 12, die overwogen moet worden, is *het voorschrift of de opdracht, die hier bij Kerkorde aan de Classis wordt gegeven.*

Met het oog op het feit, dat overgang tot een anderen staat des levens in sommige gevallen geschieden kan om groote en gewichtige oorzaken, wordt in het Art. voorgeschreven, dat door de Classis van de oorzaken kennis genomen en daarover zal geoordeeld worden. Het oordeel over die oorzaken, of zij groot en gewichtig zijn, kan niet aan den persoon zelf worden overgelaten, ook wordt het niet gelegd in de handen van den betrokken Kerkeraad, maar in die der Classis. In de eerste formulering van dit artikel wordt daarvan nog niets gezegd; in de tweede wel, maar zoo, dat dit oordeel wordt opgedragen aan de Part. Synode. Meer en meer echter werden door de oude Synoden de zaken aangaande Predikanten ter behartiging toevertrouwd aan de Classes, en zoo deed de Haagsche Synode van 1586 in haar formulering ook ten aanzien van deze zaak. De Nederl. Synode van 1920 besloot aan Art. 12 toe te voegen: "welk oordeel de Classis niet zal uitspreken, zonder kennis en approbatie van de Deputaten der Part. Synode" (Acta, Art. 105). Zodoende wordt de behandeling mede tot een zaak der Particuliere en zelfs der Generale Synode gemaakt. Want ingevolge deze toevoeging kan de Classis niet beslissen, tenzij de Synodale Deputaten met haar accoord gaan, en in geval van verschil, als men niet tot vereffening kan komen, moet de Generale Synode beslissen. Bij Artt. 11

en 79 was in Nederland die toevoeging reeds in 1905 aangebracht; bij ons in 1914. Bij Art. 12 is zij zeker niet minder op haar plaats.

Vooreerst dan heeft de Classis van de oorzaken *kennis te nemen*. Dat kan niet beteekenen, dat de Classis dit alleen te doen zou hebben, wanneer zoo'n zaak op gewone wijze ter Classicale tafel wordt gebracht, want dat de Classis het dan te doen heeft, spreekt vanzelf. Toch schijnt het zoo begrepen te worden. En dat is te schadelijker, omdat de betrokken persoon tot een anderen staat des levens overgaande, daar niet zelden de Classis liefst buiten houdt. Hij is dan te minder in gevaar dat kerkelijk opzicht zich zal laten gelden, en hem zal verhinderen om voort te gaan met bij gelegenheid Woord en Sacramenten te bedienen. Voor ingrijpen der Classis op eigen hand behoeft hij weinig vrees te hebben.

Maar zoo wil het Gereformeerd Kerkrecht het niet. Bij Kerkorde is aan de Classes opgedragen opzicht te houden over het kerkelijk leven in eigen ressort. Zij hebben daarnaar onderzoek in te stellen, daarvan kennis te nemen door de Classicale rondvraag naar Art. 41, en bovendien door Kerkvisitatie. Dienovereenkomstig wordt haar in Art. 12 in het bijzonder opgedragen van gevallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens kennis *te nemen*. Art. 12 komt niet met een voorschrift voor den betrokken persoon, of voor den betrokken Kerkeraad; maar met een voorschrift voor *de Classis* om van de oorzaken *kennis te nemen*. Evenals de Classis in Art. 4 een opdracht heeft inzake de in het ambt stelling, die zij namens heel de Kerk heeft uit te voeren, zoo heeft zij hier een opdracht inzake gevallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens. Krachtens deze opdracht heeft zij ook die zaken als *haar eigen zaken* te beschouwen en op eigen initiatief in behandeling te nemen, ongeacht of ze bij haar ingediend worden of niet.

En in de tweede plaats heeft de Classis over de oorzaken *te oordeelen*. De vraag is, of de motieven al of niet "groot en gewichtig" zijn, en dus de overgang als geoorloofd, dan wel als ongeoorloofd te beschouwen en te behandelen is.

Dit kennis nemen van en oordeelen over de oorzaken zal vanzelf insluiten een kennis nemen van en oordeelen over *den staat des levens* waartoe men wil overgaan, want

die twee zullen met elkander in nauw verband staan. En vooral uit het laatste moet blijken, of de Classis al dan niet te doen heeft met overgang tot een anderen staat des levens, terwijl ook daaruit, zoowel als uit de oorzaken, moet blijken of de overgang al of niet geoorloofd kan geacht worden. Of de persoon wil overgaan tot een eerbaar bedrijf dan wel tot een positie die geen Christen past, zal zeker voor het oordeel der Classis verschil maken.

Als een voorbeeld van zulke oorzaken, die als groot en gewichtig te beschouwen zijn, noemde de Synode van Dordrecht 1578: "ten ware dat sy gheen ghemeeynte en hadde om te bedienen". Dat kan nog een Predikant overkomen, wanneer hij van zijn Gemeente is losgemaakt, en daarna geen ander beroep ontvangt, zoodat hij zich in de noodzakelijkheid gebracht ziet om voor zijn gezin te gaan doen wat zijn hand te doen vindt. Ook worden als groote en gewichtige oorzaken en dus als geoorloofde gevallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens genoemd: dat een Predikant 'wegens gebrek aan ambtsgaven zijn Gemeente niet langer kan dienen, en ook geen vrijmoedigheid heeft in een andere Gemeente den dienst weer op te nemen; of dat hij door twijfel aan zijn inwendige roeping tot het ambt, of door twijfel aan een of ander punt van Schrift of belijdenis, gedrongen wordt om ontslag te vragen; of wanneer iemand onder Gods voorzienig bestel tot een of ander gewichtig staatsambt verkozen wordt, waarvan hij gelooft, dat God hem tot die taak heeft geroepen; of dat iemand tot rector van een gymnasium, of tot secretaris van een christelijke studenten-vereeniging, of tot professor in de letteren aan een Geref. universiteit wordt benoemd" (Jansen, *Korte Verklaring*, enz., p. 56). Zulke oorzaken kunnen den overgang rechtvaardigen, maar geen recht geven op behoud van het ambt.

(3) En eindelijk is er nog de vraag, *waartoe de Classicale behandeling der zaak dienen moet?*

Dat wij ons niet vereenigen kunnen met de meening, als zou zij moeten dienen om te beslissen of de persoon al of niet *het ambt kan behouden*, hebben wij reeds te kennen gegeven. Is gebleken dat het een geval is niet behoorende tot die waarover het gaat in Artt. 6, 7, 13, 14, en 18, maar van werkelijken overgang tot een anderen staat des levens dan dien van de Bediening des Woords en der Sacramenten, dan is o.i. vanzelf beslist, dat behoud van het ambt niet mogelijk is.

Daaruit volgt dat het kennis nemen en beoordeelen van het geval door de Classis dienen moet om te beslissen, of de overgang als geoorloofd te beschouwen is, en aan den persoon eerlijk ontslag kan worden gegeven, dan wel of de overgang te beschouwen is als een ongeoorloofde daad, waardoor de persoon zich schuldig maakt voor God, zoodat het ambt hem moet ontnomen worden door afzetting als een daad van tucht. Kan hem eerlijk ontslag worden gegeven, dan heeft hij daardoor wel opgehouden Dienaar des Woords te zijn, maar kan hij toch in de Gemeente als een onbestraffelijk lidmaat blijven verkeeren. Maar moet het ambt hem ontnomen worden door afzetting, dan zal ook censure als lidmaat wel niet kunnen uithijven.

Om een overgang tot een anderen staat des levens als geoorloofd te kunnen beschouwen, moeten echter de oorzaken niet alleen groot en gewichtig, maar ook onbestraffelijk zijn, zooals bijv. in het reeds genoemde geval, dat men geen Gemeente heeft om te bedienen, en zich genoodzaakt ziet om door een of ander bedrijf in zijn levensonderhoud te voorzien. Maar ingeval van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens, omdat men bijv. een ongeloovige geworden is, staat de zaak anders. Zulk een motief is wel groot en gewichtig, maar het is niet onbestraffelijk. Zulk een drangreden laat zich niet rechtvaardigen, en daarom ook de overgang niet. Zoo zijn er dus verschillende mogelijkheden, die verschillende manieren van kerkelijke behandeling eischen. Het kan zijn:

dat de oorzaken niet alleen groot en gewichtig, maar ook onbestraffelijk zijn. Dat zijn gevallen waarin zoo niet eervol, dan toch eerbaar ontslag kan gegeven worden, ontslag geheel zonder disciplinaire bedoeling, want voor toepassing van tucht is er dan geenerlei reden;

of dat de oorzaken wel onbestraffelijk zijn, maar niet groot en gewichtig genoeg, niet voldoende om overgang tot een anderen staat des levens te rechtvaardigen, zoodat de Classis oordeelt, dat de persoon van zijn voornemen behoort af te zien, en verplicht is zijn ambtsbediening voort te zetten. Als dan de persoon zich goedsmoeds aan dat oordeel onderwerpt, wellicht zich door dat oordeel der Classis versterkt en bemoeidigd gevoelend, dan is daarmee de zaak afgedaan. Zou hij echter weigeren zich naar dat oordeel der Classis

te voegen en bij zijn voornemen volharden, dan kan de Classis geen eerbaar ontslag geven, maar moet het ambt ontnomen worden als een daad van tucht, en zal ook censure als lidmaat toegepast moeten worden;

of dat de oorzaken niet bepaald bestraffelijk zijn, en ook niet voldoende om overgang tot een anderen staat des levens te rechtvaardigen, maar toch van dien aard, dat de Classis geen vrijmoedigheid gevoelt om den persoon te vermanen om bij zijn ambt te blijven, uit vreeze dat zijn verdere dienst slechts de halfhartige dienst zou zijn van iemand die het ambtelijk werk blijft waarnemen ingevolge kerkelijke pressie en dreigende tucht, of van iemand wien het ambt te zwaar valt, wien het een last is waarvan hij zich ontheven wenscht te zien. Dan laten de eere van Christus, het heil der Kerk, en de heerlijkheid der Evangelie-bediening niet toe zulk een man, al zou hij ook tot afzien van zijn voornemen te bewegen zijn, daartoe aan te sporen en dan ongemoeid te laten voortarbeiden. Staat het geval niet geheel hopeloos, dan zou misschien aan het stellen van een proeftijd gedacht kunnen worden. Zoo niet, dan moet tot verwijdering uit het ambt overgegaan worden, hetzij door ontslag te geven zonder disciplinaire bedoeling of door afzetting;

of dat de oorzaken bepaald bestraffelijk zijn, zooals het zoeken van een ander bedrijf om finantieel voordeel, en voor overgang tot een anderen staat des levens de beteekenis hebben van blijken, dat zulk een persoon geen Dienaar des Woords behoort te zijn. Dan is er alleen plaats voor toepassing van tucht, voor ontneming van het ambt als een daad van discipline, en voor censure als lidmaat.

Tegen toepassing van tucht in zulke gevallen laat zich niet aanvoeren, "dat het niet gewenscht is met dwangmiddelen iemand tot het ambt terug te brengen, die getoond heeft voor de heilige roeping tot dit ambt zoo weinig te gevoelen". Dat zulks niet gewenscht is, is volkomen toe te stemmen, en voorzichtigheid in dat opzicht is alleszins aan te bevelen. Maar men moet ook voorzichtig zijn met tucht voor te stellen als een dwangmiddel. Als men dat wil, kan men met evenveel of even weinig recht de gewone kerkelijke tucht voorstellen als een middel om de menschen te dwingen tot het leiden van een goed zedelijk leven. In

breede kringen wordt over kerkelijke tucht zoo geoordeeld, en dat tot groote schade voor haar handhaving en voor den welstand van het kerkelijk leven. Bovendien is onze bedoeling niet om tucht toe te passen ten einde den persoon terug te brengen tot het ambt, maar om tucht toe te passen ter heilighouding van het ambt, en ter terechtbrenging van den zondaar, die in betrekking tot de heilige roeping tot het ambt zich schuldig heeft gemaakt.

En dat "schorsing of afzetting uit het ambt van een Dienaar des Woords niet kan plaats hebben, wanneer iemand door zijn ambt neer te leggen, *de facto* heeft opgehouden Dienaar des Woords te zijn", kunnen wij niet toestemmen. Gelijk niemand zichzelf in het ambt kan zetten, zoo kan ook niemand zichzelf van het ambt ontdoen. Een eigenwillig uit het ambt weglloopen kan evenmin in de Kerk rechtsgeldigheid hebben als een eigenwillig zichzelf in het ambt indringen. Zoowel in het ambt als uit het ambt zetten is in de handen van Christus, en van Zijnentwege in die der Kerk. Een willekeurig neerleggen van het ambt, alsof men er zelf over te beschikken heeft, kan daarom niet rechtens doen ophouden Dienaar des Woords te zijn, en evenmin het recht en de roeping der Kerk te niet doen, om tuchtwaardigen te maken tot voorwerpen van de haar toevertrouwde discipline, ter handhaving van de eere van Christus en van de heiligheid der Gemeente, en ter terechtbrenging van den zondaar.

Het resultaat van ons voorgaand onderzoeken meenen wij te kunnen samenvatten in de volgende *conclusies*:

Ten aanzien van den status van Leeraars, die den gewonen dienst in de plaatselijke Kerk verlieten om een andere positie in te nemen, is volgens Kerkorde te onderscheiden tusschen gevallen die behoud van het ambt toelaten, en andere die behoud van het ambt niet toelaten.

I. *GevalLEN die behoud van het ambt toelaten.*

(1) Deze gevallen zijn die van:

- a) Dienst als Geestelijk Verzorger in een liefdadigheids-gesticht, Art. 6;
- b) Missionaire Dienst, Art. 7;
- c) Emeritaat, Art. 13;
- d) Tijdelijk onderlaten van den Dienst, Art. 14;
- e) Dienst als Theologisch Professor, Art. 18.

Dat een Predikant in elk dezer gevallen zijn ambt behoudt, wordt in elk der betreffende artikelen op de eene of andere wijze uitgedrukt.

- (2) Ten aanzien van den status van Leeraars, die zich in dienst stellen van niet-kerkelijke *inrichtingen van barmhartigheid*, waarnaar in de instructies van Classis Wisconsin en den Kerkeraad van Coldbrook speciaal werd gevraagd, geeft ons Art. 6 der Kerkorde het noodige licht. Al is uit dat artikel niet af te leiden, dat het nimmer geoorloofd zou zijn een gewoon maar begaafd lidmaat aan te stellen voor geestelijken arbeid, die door een gewoon lidmaat kan verricht worden, toch is het duidelijk, dat het artikel van "Dienst in gestichten" alleen spreekt als ambtelijken dienst, dienst die een wettig in het ambt gesteld Dienaar des Woords vereischt. Dat behoort dus regel te zijn, en het andere uitzondering. En moet een persoon om zulk een dienst te kunnen vervullen, wettig in het ambt gesteld Dienaar des Woords zijn, dan spreekt vanzelf dat hij, zulk een dienst vervullende, Dienaar des Woords blijft. En dat, zooals blijkt uit de toepassing van Art. 6 op een staatsgevangenis, ook wanneer hij zulk een dienst vervult in een buiten-kerkelijke inrichting.

Dit geldt echter alleen voor den dienst als Geestelijk Verzorger, niet voor diensten die een ander karakter dragen. Aanvaarding van een dienst in zulk een gesticht door een Predikant voor arbeid die niet van geestelijken aard is, zou een geval zijn van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens, vallende onder Art. 12; tenzij het geschiedt door een Predikant, die in overeenstemming met inhoud en doel van Art. 13 recht heeft op emeriteering.

- (3) Ten aanzien van diensten aan *inrichtingen van onderwijs*, insgelijks in bewuste instructies genoemd, is eveneens te letten op verschil van gevallen.

Aan hen die zulke inrichtingen dienen als Theologische Professoren wordt behoud van het ambt gewaarborgd in Art. 18. Dat artikel beschrijft hun werk als ambtelijk werk, als wezenlijk Dienaar des Woords, en dus als werk dat niet alleen behoud van het ambt toelaat, maar dat, gelijk de dienst in Art. 6 bedoeld, door wettig in het ambt gestelde Dienaren des Woords behoort verricht te worden. En dit kan ook voor buiten-kerkelijke inrichtingen van onderwijs gelden; want oorspronkelijk kon men bij Art 18 geen andere op het oog hebben, dan Theol. Profes-

soren aan de Staats Universiteiten, waarover aan de Kerk geenerlei opzicht of zeggenschap werd vergund.

Maar wat voor dezen dienst geldt, geldt alweer niet voor posities aan gewone scholen om lager, middelbaar of hooger onderwijs te geven in seculaire kundigheden en wetenschappen. Het aanvaarden van zulk een taak zou alweer zijn een overgaan tot een anderen staat des levens, en vallen onder Art. 12.

Er zijn echter in onzen tijd aan onze inrichtingen van hooger onderwijs, beide kerkelijke en niet-kerkelijke, diensten die wel niet gelijk te stellen zijn met het Theologisch Professoraat, als ambt voor de opleiding tot den Dienst des Woords, maar die toch tot taak hebben onderwijs te geven, dat zich geheel beweegt op Theologisch terrein. Wij bedoelen diensten en onderwijs te geven in de Heilige Schrift en in de Geloofsleer in overeenstemming met de Gereformeerde Belijdenisschriften. Onzes inziens zijn die diensten, zoowel als de dienst van Geestelijke Verzorger, diensten voor werk dat "een geestelijk karakter draagt, en met de roeping tot de verkondiging van het Evangelie in verband staat", en dus diensten die niet alleen behoud van het ambt toelaten, maar die verreweg bij voorkeur door Theologisch gevormde, wettig in het ambt gestelde en in het ambt staande Dienaren des Woords te vervullen zijn.

- (4) Art. 14, betreffende onderlating van den dienst voor een tijd, mag niet opgevat worden, alsof volgens dat artikel ook ontslag kan gegeven worden voor onbepaalden tijd (unlimited leave of absence). *Voor een tijd* wil altijd zeggen: voor een beperkten tijd, en bedoelt dus juist het tegendeel van een *onbepaalden tijd*; het sluit dat uit. Bovendien is het geven van zulk ontslag voor onbepaalden tijd het openen van de deur voor het binnendringen van een kwaad, dat Art. 7 der K. O. bedoelt te bestrijden, namelijk, dat van de aanwezigheid van Predikanten, die een wereldsch bedrijf beoefenen, en tevens de bevoegdheid hebben om als een bijbaantje bij gelegenheid Woord en Sacramenten te bedienen. Aanvragen om ontslag voor onbepaalden tijd zijn te beschouwen en te behandelen als aanvragen om over te mogen gaan tot een anderen staat des levens.

II. *Gevallen die behoud van het ambt niet toelaten.*

- (5) De gevallen van deze soort zijn die van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens (Art. 12). In deze gevallen kan er geen behoud van de ambtsbevoegdheid zijn, omdat men metterdaad "overgaat tot een *anderen* staat des levens", ophoudt Dienaar des Woord te zijn, en in plaats daarvan als levenstaak een bedrijf aanvaardt, dat tot het aard-sche leven behoort, een bedrijf waarvan niet gezegd kan worden, dat het "een geestelijk karakter draagt, en met de roeping tot de verkondiging van het Evangelie in ver-band staat".
- (6) In gevallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des le-vens *emeritaat te verleen*en naar Art. 13, ten einde den persoon behoud van "de eere en den naam eens Dienaars" te bezorgen, is in strijd met den duidelijken inhoud en be-doeling van genoemd artikel, en behoort dus niet te geschieden.
- (7) Ten aanzien van deze gevallen van overgang tot een an-deren staat des levens hebben de Classes bij Kerkorde de opdracht, elk voor eigen ressort, om van de drangredenen er toe kennis te nemen en er over te oordeelen, ten einde zulke gevallen naar eisch te behandelen. Krachtens deze opdracht hebben de Classes last en macht om in dezen te handelen voor heel de Kerk, en hebben zij in eigen res-sort voorkomende gevallen te beschouwen als haar eigen zaken, als zaken door haar op eigen initiatief te behande-len. Komen er in dit opzicht in het kerkelijk leven onge-regeldheden voor, dan zijn de betrokken Classes als zoo-danig daarvoor verantwoordelijk.
- (8) Een Synodaal besluit, dat Classicale behandeling van ge-vallen van overgang tot een anderen staat des levens ge-schieden zal ten overstaan van de Synodale Deputaten ad examina, met dezelfde bepalingen als die welke voor Classicale examens gelden, verdient ook voor ons aan-beveling.

Met Hoogachting en Heilbede,

Uwe Commissie,

Y. P. DE JONG.

W. HEYNS.

P. A. HOEKSTRA.

REPORT III.

REPORT NO. IV OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR PUBLIC WORSHIP

To the Synod of 1928.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:—

WHEN your honorable body convenes it will be twelve years ago that the first steps were taken to obtain a better order of worship for our churches. The first overture concerning this matter was presented at the Synod of 1916 by Classis Illinois (Acta p. 30). Since that time the matter has been before all our Synods, although the committee had no report in 1924.

The committee which was appointed at the Synod of 1916 and consisted of three members was enlarged to seven members at the Synod of 1918 (Acta, pp. 55, 92). This committee began its task with enthusiasm and was able to present its report to the Synod of 1920 (Acta, Bijl. XIII, p. 185).

The controlling idea of that report was that improvement of our worship should not be sought in the addition to our services of adornments and novelties borrowed from other churches but in a return to the worship of Reformation-times and in a restoration of what has been lost in succeeding times of decay. The most characteristic element of the plan which the committee presented for a new order of worship was the Confession of Sin and the Absolution in the morning service—an element introduced in the Reformed Churches of the 16th century by Calvin, a Lasco, Dathenus and others, and generally used in those churches. Your committee deemed the restoration of this element all the more necessary because through its disappearance the reading of the Law and of the Apostles' Creed have become isolated elements without liturgical value.

This report was referred to the Consistories and Classes in order that the following Synod might take final action (Acta 1920, p. 26).

In consequence of this decision several Classes expressed their opinion of the proposed order of worship

at the Synod of 1922 (Agendum, p. XVII ff.—Acta, p. 66). Besides these brief overtures from eight different Classes, there was a broad criticism sent in by Classis Illinois, which is mentioned in the Acta (p. 67) but not printed.

These opinions were as a whole unfavorable. Most of the overtures were brief condemnations of our proposed Order, while the overture of Classis Illinois, though it distinguished itself from the others by the presentation of grounds in a systematic fashion, was nevertheless a challenge to practically the entire report.

The Committee of Preadvice judged—and surely not without reason—that in view of the situation the time was not ripe for the introduction of an Order of Worship as proposed by the committee, not even for a Synodical decision on the principles involved. It advised, however, to continue the committee and instruct it to give further thought to the subject and shed light upon it in our church-papers, declaring it would be deplorable if the entire matter should come to nothing.

Though the decisions of the Synod were kinder and more favorable than the criticism of the Classes, your committee was disheartened nevertheless. At the next Synod, 1924, it had no report and nothing had been done in the way of study or public discussion in our church-papers. What especially discouraged the committee was the fact that the Classes—with the exception of Illinois—had employed strong terms of disapproval (one Classis even spoke of “reprehensible elements”) without taking the trouble to state their objections except in the most general terms and without even attempting to prove their assertions. The committee could not avoid receiving the impression that it was fighting a false conservatism which refused to be convinced. Besides, objections of such a nature cannot be answered because they are too vague. And as regards the decision that the committee should write on the subject in our church-papers, abundant controversy about other and more important subjects made this inadvisable. No wonder it was pleased with the overture of one Classis (1924) to drop the matter and discharge the committee. The Synod, however, did not accept the overture but continued the committee and charged it to do the work which it had been instructed to do by the Synod of 1922.

And so your committee appeared at the Synod of 1926 with its third report (Acta p. 43 and Bijl. XIV, p. 304). But this report was simply a communication that the committee was unable to fulfill its task because after the Synod of 1922 it seemed doubtful whether the Church *really desired a uniform and Synodically prescribed Order of Worship for all our churches*. Former Synods had declared themselves in favor of this but at the Synod of 1922 Classis Illinois took the position that the regulation of public worship is a matter in which Synods should only "enlighten and advise" but that Synodical prescriptions in this matter conflict with the freedom of the local church. Synod did not answer this assertion. Whether it agreed or disagreed with the position of Classis Illinois was unknown to us and to all others. And yet we felt the need of certainty in this matter. As long as there was any uncertainty we felt it would be unfair to require of us to devote our time and strength to a task concerning which it was not even certain that the Synod considered it to be *her task!*

Our request to the Synod of 1926 to declare itself on this point was granted. On grounds taken from Reformed Church Polity and from the history of Reformed Liturgy, which clearly show that it is the privilege of a Synod to prescribe a form or mode of public worship, it declared itself "as favoring a uniform but flexible order of worship for our churches" (Acta p. 43). There was no longer any doubt as to the position of the Church on this fundamental question.

The committee could resume its labors in a spirit of confidence. Rev. D. Zwier, one of its members, wrote a series of articles on the subject in *De Wachter* and the committee faced the question in how far it was possible and advisable to amend its own proposals, as originally made at the Synod of 1920, in order to provide the churches with a more acceptable "uniform but flexible order of worship." It has the pleasure to present the following as the result of its labors.

The criticism of Classis Illinois was levelled especially against that part of our proposed Order of Worship which we called "The Service of Reconciliation," more particularly against the elements of Confession of Sin and Absolution which we sought to combine organically

with the Reading of the Law and the Creed. It seems that these same elements were the chief stumbling-block for the other Classes also. At least we suspect that the word "novelties" in some of the overtures was aimed especially at those features of our report.

The main contention of Classis Illinois was *that there is no need of a separate "Service of Reconciliation" since the entire service is a service of reconciliation.* This, says the Classis, is the material principle of our public worship in distinction from the formal principle that God and His people meet. But the Classis is mistaken in this. It is not correct to say that all the elements of the service revolve or should revolve around the idea of reconciliation with God. This is a confusion of the *basis* of our relation to God with its *essence*. The judicial basis or foundation of our life with God, and for God is our reconciliation in the blood of Jesus Christ. But this is not the essence nor the sum total of all our relations to God. As regards the assertion that "the meeting of God with His people cannot be more than a formal principle of worship" we remark that this too is incorrect. The "meeting of God with His people" is the material as well as formal principle of our worship. *This meeting is of course a meeting for the purpose of exercising fellowship.* God and His people come together and this coming together *implies* the union of God with His people and takes place for the *purpose* of strengthening this union. It would be far more correct to say that the idea of *union with God* underlies the entire service than to say that the entire service is a service of reconciliation. The former concept is far broader than the latter. And if what we stated in our report No. II be true, viz., that all the essential elements of our life and communion with God should come to expression in our public worship, it must be admitted that a "service of reconciliation" is not only an essential but the basic element of such worship, and that it does not receive full and adequate expression in all the other elements of the services.

Perhaps a few words regarding the contents of this service of reconciliation will not be amiss (see also report No. I, Acta 1920). Note first of all that it follows the opening service. In this service the Lord and His people *greet* each other. After the greeting comes the meeting or the actual exercise of communion. But since God's

people are a sinful people, God can have fellowship with them and they with God only on the foundation of divine *grace*, a grace realized for them in Christ's atonement and bearing fruit in God's reconciliation with them and their reconciliation with God. *Hence the service of reconciliation must follow the opening service* in which God and His people greet each other.

This service of reconciliation, to be complete, should consist of the following elements:

1. *The Reading of the Law.* As the Lord came to Abraham at the establishment of the Covenant with the words: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be thou perfect," so He comes here to His people with His law as the rule of their life and the teacher of sin. This is appropriately followed by:

2. *The Confession of Sin.* Shall the church remain silent when she hears the law of her God? In our present form of worship she does. There is no response to the Law. Is that proper? Is it fitting? Abraham fell on his face when he heard the command. Likewise the Church, having heard God's law, falls on her face when she answers, as did the Reformed fathers, and in the words of a Form which they left us, with a humble Confession of Sin. This is not at all a strange innovation but a perfectly legitimate practise in Reformed churches.

3. *The Absolution.* A humble confession of sin cannot be the end of this service since the Lord will not remain silent when his people confess their guilt and plead on his forgiving grace in Christ. He is righteous and true, says His Word, if we confess our sins, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And it is His will that we shall know the things which are granted us from Him. Therefore we may expect a divine response to our confession of sin and that response is the Absolution: the divine declaration that all who have sincerely confessed their sins *have* remission of their sins. And since this element also was present in the liturgies of the times of the Reformation, notably those of Calvin, à Lasco and Dathenus and the forms in which it was embodied still exist for our use, it should not be called an innovation!

Even the absolution cannot be the last element in this service of reconciliation. Shall the Church fail to

express her grateful appropriation of the forgiveness of sins and to glorify God for his wondrous grace? She expresses this in:

4. *The Confession of Faith* and in singing a *psalm of praise and thanksgiving*. In the former she testifies to her faith in God the Father as her Creator, in God the Son as her Redeemer and in God the Holy Spirit as her Sanctifier—hence to her saving faith which responds with a heartfelt Amen! to the gracious assurance of absolution. With this design the Reformers incorporated the Credo in their liturgies. Even apart from this it is eminently proper for the Church to manifest herself as a believing Church in her public gatherings; but where would a formal confession of faith be more fitting than in this connection?

Psalm 103 and others are appropriate conclusions for this service of reconciliation.

Now as a committee we had to face the question: Shall we, in view of the objections presented to the Synod of 1922, particularly against this service of reconciliation, remove its new elements from our proposed Order of Worship? Shall we eliminate the Confession of Sin and the Absolution?

Your committee could not decide to do this. For the following reasons:

1. Without the retention of the elements of Confession of Sin and Absolution it is impossible to find a better place for the reading of the law and of the Apostles' Creed than we have now—no place except as unconnected, isolated actions, the significance of which is neither understood nor appreciated by the congregation and as a result of which they have become and will remain mere formalities without liturgical value and edifying power. The place assigned to them in the overture of Classis Illinois does not satisfy. At least not as far as the Credo is concerned, which is not even mentioned in the main order of worship and constitutes only an isolated element of the second service.

Originally the Law and the Creed did not occupy the independent place in the service which they have today. It is true, that was the case in the very earliest period of the Reformation. But when Calvin returned to Geneva

he endeavored to make the Lord's Prayer, the Law and the Creed *members* of the service rather than mere parts.¹⁾ He saw that every part of the service must be an organic part and must be related to the whole as the members of the body are related to the body. Thus in the liturgy of Calvin, as Dr. Kuyper says, "zijn de losse stukken opgebouwd tot een schoon architectonisch geheel, waarvan de symmetrie bewondering en eerbied afdwingt" (*De Heraut* 1892). Another (Ebrard) has praised it as "a masterpiece of grand simplicity."

This gain was lost afterward when the Confession of Sin and the Absolution were dropped. The question is whether we shall prefer the loss to the gain? Is it not high time to recover what was lost in a time of spiritual decadence, and to return to the liturgy of the Reformation?

2. Confession of Sin and Absolution are elements which originally belong to the Reformed liturgy and were *dropped only under the influence of an unreasonable prejudice against fixed forms of worship*. When we speak of an improved order of worship we certainly mean nothing else than improvement in the direction of Reformation principle and practices! The churches which over ten years ago asked for improvements in our public worship surely did not intend to ask for mere changes! And real improvement always means that we first of all strive to regain the good that we lost in the past.

That these two elements were generally used in the worship of the Reformed Churches in the Reformation-period is an indisputable fact. When *Calvin* came to Strassburg he found a liturgy which included the Confession of Sin and the Absolution. When he returned to Geneva he desired to introduce both elements but was successful only with the Confession of Sin. The rulers were opposed to the Absolution and Calvin yielded in order not to give offence, but "with a heavy heart, since he attached great value to the absolution, and with a hope for better times" (Achelis, I, 541). à Lasco incorporated both elements in his regulations for the worship of the London Refugees Church and he put them in direct connection with the reading of the Law and the Credo, after the manner proposed by your committee,

See Notes 1 and 2 on page 94.

with this sole difference that he let them follow instead of precede the sermon. *Dathenus* also, a man of great significance for the liturgy of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, incorporated the Confession of Sin and the Absolution in his order of worship for this church. According to his liturgy the law must be read or sung in the morning service and then the church "must be admonished to repentance and to confession of her transgressions and to faith in the promises of the gospel. Thereupon the penalties of God must be proclaimed to the impenitent and the grace of God in Christ to the penitent." For this part of the service he provided a form-prayer, which consists of a confession of sin, a prayer for the sermon, the Lord's Prayer and the Twelve Articles and which is still printed in our Dutch Psalter (not the American) as one of our official liturgical documents.

Hence in the days of the Reformation the Confession of Sin and the Absolution were in use in the Reformed Churches of Switzerland, France, The Netherlands, Germany, England and Scotland; and in some of these countries they are still in use.

It appears from an ancient writing (the Didache) that the Confession of Sin formed a part of the liturgy of the church as early as the 2nd century. It is called the Confiteor.

3. We would plead for the restoration of the Confession of Sin and the Absolution with a view to a very serious weakness in the spiritual life of our people, viz., the disease of a constant uncertainty concerning their salvation. This is a very serious situation.²⁾ It touches a matter which is the very foundation of the welfare both of the individual believer and of the Church as a whole.

The significance of the Confession of Sin and the Absolution as means for the removal of this disease lies in this that it points with all the solemnity characteristic of a liturgical action to the inseparable connection which God in his grace has established between the sinners penitence and faith on the one hand and his certain salvation on the other hand—in accordance with the divine promise: he that believeth in the Son hath eternal life. Many a person still seeks a ground for his hope

of eternal life in various particulars of his emotional experience without finding the assurance he seeks because there is no stability in one's feelings. But how firm a ground for our faith is furnished by such a formula of Absolution as the one given by Calvin, which declares: "To all who in this manner are sorry for their sins and seek their salvation in Jesus Christ, I proclaim the forgiveness of sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

"Granted," one asks, "that there is great need of the building up of the church in a Scripturally grounded and living hope of eternal life, and granted that also the Confession of Sin and the Absolution can serve this purpose, is the preaching not sufficient?"

We reply by reminding of the *many things* which God has done to explain and to certify to his people the rich and gracious contents and the full trustworthiness of the gospel as an invitation to come to God's fountain of salvation and to take freely of the water of life. A single divine announcement of the gospel should be enough for us, enough to take God at his Word. Not to receive that one assurance would already amount to declaring God a liar. But instead of letting this suffice, He who knows our frame, who knows how difficult it is for us to accept in childlike faith his assurance of forgiveness and reconciliation, and to regard ourselves, in the face of our ever-present workings of sin and in the absence of all visible and rational proofs, as the heirs of salvation—He who knows all this has, in condescending grace and according to his great mercy, *done many things* to elucidate the gospel for us, impress it upon us and confirm it to us. All this in view of the weakness of our faith!

We refer to things like these: the fact that God has repeated the promise of the gospel again and again; that He has symbolized and typified it in various events and ceremonies of the Old Testament; that he has given the promise of salvation not only in the form of a declaration, but also in the form of a formal covenant-transaction, confirmed with an oath; that He has revealed the Name Jehovah as his covenant-name; and that He, to make the measure overflowing, has added the Sacraments to his Covenant.

All this to elucidate and confirm the wonderful gospel-promise! All this to aid our weak faith! Frequent Repetition—Types—the Covenant—the Name Jehovah—the Sacraments—and other means besides! In this manner the Lord has clearly shown that in his eye it is of the highest importance that his people should have the full assurance of faith till the end; that they should know the things given them of God; that they should enjoy the rich comfort which this assurance brings and that their gratitude for this certain salvation should move them to walk constantly in holiness and godliness.

In this divine example a special liturgical action, whose purpose is the strengthening of the faith of God's people, has its sanction. We do not mean to say that the Absolution as a permanent element of public worship would remove that lamentable weakness of faith which is found abundantly in the churches. But we do claim that it would help to remove it; and especially that no divine service is complete without it since it is an essential element of the fellowship of God with his people and of his people with Him.

1) Zwingli in Zurich and Farel in Geneva judged that the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Twelve Articles of Faith should be read by the minister after the sermon in order that "the three most important parts of the Christian religion, prayer, precept, and faith, be inculcated more deeply." They were three loose parts to be read to the people not as elements of the service but as means to instruct the ignorant. When Calvin left Geneva and came to Strassburg he found that these three parts were used in connection with the elements of Confession and Absolution, and at his return to Geneva lost no time in trying to persuade those in authority to follow Strassburg's example.

2) We trust that a few words about the cause of this disease will not be considered irrelevant.

It is known that in the period of the Reformation this constant anxiety concerning one's salvation was rare among the believers. The believers then stood, as Dr. Bavinck writes, "in the plerophory (full assurance) of faith" (*Dogmatiek*, IV², p. 105). Their conception of the gospel was that of the canons of Dordt: as a general, sincere offer of salvation. Those who received the gospel by faith believed that they were heirs of salvation and, like the jailer at Philippi, tasted the joy of salvation. Did not the Scriptures assure them that as many as have received Christ have received the right to become children of God; and that whosoever believes in Him *has* eternal life?

But conditions changed. The Arminians attacked those who were Reformed with the contention that their idea of a particular

Now the question arises: How about the rest of our proposed order of worship? Are there any elements which could be omitted? Are there changes which would be improvements? We would remark:

1. Your committee had divided its proposed order into five parts, each with its own name and had characterized the various elements as "actions from the side of God (*a parte Dei*)" and as "actions from the side of the Church (*a parte ecclesiae*).¹" The design of all this explanatory material was to bring out the logical and psychological order of the various parts. We judge, however, from the criticism which was offered that all these particulars obscured the plan for not a few and created the impression that it was replete with all kinds of innovations. We shall now omit these particulars.

atonement conflicted with their conception of the gospel as an indiscriminate offer of salvation. From a human viewpoint this must be conceded. But rather than acknowledge the existence of an apparent conflict, and desirous to defend the Reformed teaching as being perfectly consistent even from the viewpoint of human logic, many orthodox people sought refuge in the theory that the gospel is offered only to the elect. It was preached as an offer of grace only to the meek and broken-hearted, or only to those who believe and repent. One had not right to believe that the promise of the gospel was meant for him unless he discovered in himself the evidences of the saving operations of the Holy Spirit and of divine election. And to guard against all deception on this score it was necessary for such an inquirer to scrutinize his heart closely in order to be sure that his penitence was genuine. Such an investigation naturally resulted in fear rather than faith—at least in those who were truly contrite, who felt the weight of their sins and who for that very reason should have rejoiced in the assurance of forgiveness! Constant doubt and fear was the inevitable result of such a conception of the gospel.

At this time Pietism arose. Its conscious purpose was to combat this anxious, fearful type of Christianity, but it failed because usually it likewise preached a gospel only for the elect. Its basic thought that more and closer introspection would produce spiritual clarity and certainty was wrong; and this accounts for its failure. There must be spiritual introspection and close self-examination as a means of guarding against self deception; but if this is the end of our quest for the blessed assurance of faith instead of a mere beginning or pre-requisite, if it does not issue in a looking away from self to Christ and to the sure promise of God, the fear will remain. Pietism sought its strength in making fine distinctions between true and false marks of grace and it has left behind a great wealth of spiritual psychology. Still in spite of all pietistic sermons and writings the cloudy, timorous type of faith which it sought to banish remained. It stimulated doubt rather than faith.

2. In order that the Synod may have a clear conception of the difference, we shall place the present order of worship alongside of the one proposed by us in 1920.

The Present Order	The Proposed Order
Votum or Invocation	Votum Psalm
Salutation	Salutation or Invocation
Psalm	Psalm Salutation
	Summary of the Law
	Confession of Sin and Penitential
	Psalm (or both)
	Absolution
	Apostles' Creed (by Minister and
	Congregation)
	Psalm
	General Prayer and Lord's Prayer
	(Minister and Congregation)
	Offering and Psalm
	Scripture-reading
	Sermon
	Closing Prayer
	Psalm (and doxology if desired)
	Benediction
The Law	
Scripture Lesson	
Psalm	
General Prayer	
Offering	
Psalm	
or simultaneous	
Sermon	
Closing Prayer	
Psalm (and doxology)	
Benediction	

A comparison of these two schemes or plans brings out the fact that, *with the exception of the Confession of Sin, the Absolution, and the Credo*, there is not a single element in the one proposed by us which is not present in the present order. This means that the order proposed by us does not contain a single element which is new and strange and of unreformed or non-reformed origin.

The difference consists only in subordinate things, in matters of detail. Of these the two that follow surely cannot be objectionable.

a) The use of the Lord's Prayer at the conclusion of the General Prayer. A casual inspection of the liturgical prayers found in the supplement of our Dutch Psalters will convince every one that this is merely a return to old paths.

b) The reading of the Scripture immediately before the sermon, instead of at the beginning after the reading of the Law. It hardly needs to be said that the Scripture lesson should stand in close connection with the

preaching and that the sermon should be based on the portion read. It follows that the natural, logical place for it is at the close of the Service of Thanksgiving and at the beginning of the Service of the Word. When the Scripture is read at the beginning of the service it is an unconnected, isolated element without much liturgical significance.

There are, however, other differences which may seem somewhat objectionable to some and in the use of which freedom may be left to the local church.

a) First the Votum. We already stated in our first report that three of the seven members of the committee preferred a Psalm and an Invocation at the beginning of the service. Classis Illinois has also expressed its preference for these elements. Others, however, have always used the Votum and would not like to change.

In view of this and also in the interest of greater flexibility your committee now proposes to make the use of either of the two following groups of opening elements optional. Thus:

Votum		Psalm
Salutation	or	Invocation
Psalm		Salutation

b) We also proposed in our report of 1920 to substitute the reading of Christ's Summary of the Law for the Ten Commandments and to make the latter one of the elements of the second service. This was condemned in the overture of Classis Illinois. It replied to our argument that the Law should be read as the Teacher of Sin by saying that the Law is the Teacher of Sin only as our Rule of Life. This point we concede to Illinois. It is also more in accord with the example of the Heidelberg Catechism to use the Ten Commandments for this purpose rather than the Summary of Matt. 22. For other reasons also we now prefer to see the entire Law read here. First, because it is hard to find an organic place for it in the second service. In fact this is impossible without the repetition of the entire Service of Reconciliation. And second, the omission of the time-honored custom of reading the Law from the morning service might create the impression that your committee is indeed seeking to introduce things new and strange. We would insist, however, that the reading of the Law be

followed by the reading of Christ's Summary as a constant reminder of the spiritual character of God's commandments and of their inner unity. Thus it will be far easier for the worshipper to feel that he is a transgressor of God's Law and in need of the Lord's forgiving grace. The fact that the adding of the Summary will lengthen the service by a minute or less can surely not be considered a worthwhile argument against the change.

c) Your committee also proposed that the Confession of Sin be followed by the singing of a penitential psalm. Since this is in some sense a duplication, we now propose to leave it to the discretion of every Consistory whether it wishes to use one or both of these closely related elements. Those who wish to shorten this part of the service as much as possible will use only one of these two elements.

These two changes make the second group of elements, which we have called the service of reconciliation, considerably more flexible than it was as we first proposed it. This can be seen from the following:

Law and Summary	Law and Summary	Law and Summary
Confession of Sin	Confession of Sin	Penitential Psalm
and	Absolution	Absolution
Penitential Psalm	Credo	Credo
Absolution	Psalm	Psalm
Credo		
Psalm		

d) We now come to the third part of the service which we called the Service of Thanksgiving. It consisted as proposed by us of the General Prayer concluded with the Lord's Prayer in unison, the Offering and a Psalm of Thanksgiving. There is nothing new here except the recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the congregation at the conclusion of the General Prayer. And in regard to the second part of the service we proposed that the Apostles' Creed should be recited by the congregation. Our proposal was made in the interest of a more active participation of the congregation in the services—something which the very first overture touching the improvement of our public worship specifically mentioned and requested. We explained in our first report why we believe it to be proper for the congregation to recite the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. There are weighty ob-

jections against *singing them*, but the only objection we are aware of against *reciting* them is the fact that our people are not accustomed to this. They would, however, soon become accustomed to it. Now our first report took cognizance of the fact that some, perhaps many of our congregations, especially the Holland-speaking, would object to the introduction of this custom and we consequently suggested that the Synod do no more than "urge the Churches to keep this before them as an ideal." However, believing that it will please the Synod better, we now propose that it be left to the judgment of every individual church whether to let the minister in charge pronounce the Lord's Prayer and the Credo or to permit the congregation to join in with him.

e) It appears that the Presbyterian custom of letting the officiating minister offer a short prayer after the offering in which the Lord's blessing upon the gift is asked finds considerable favor in our circles. Your committee had to face the question whether it should recommend this custom, disapprove it or propose to leave its use optional. We have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in this custom which conflicts with the Reformed conception and principles of worship. In its favor is the fact that it emphasizes the importance of the offering as an integral and indispensable part of the service. We propose, however, that the Synod leave its use optional, with the understanding that it advises those who use the longest possible form of the order of worship which we shall propose, not to introduce this offertory prayer since there should remain sufficient time for the sermon.

The third part of the service would then be as follows:

General Prayer and Lord's Prayer (in unison)
Offering and Psalm
Offertory Prayer

OR

General Prayer and Lord's Prayer (Minister)
Offering and Psalm
Offertory Prayer

OR

General Prayer and Lord's Prayer (Minister or in unison)
Offering and Psalm

The rest of the service would be as follows:

Scripture Reading
The Sermon
Closing Prayer
Psalm (with or without doxology)
Benediction

These elements are exactly as in our original plan. We have left them unchanged since, judging by the absence of criticism, no one had objections.

We call attention to the fact that the order we now propose differs in one more particular from the one proposed by us to the Synod of 1920. There we proposed that while the offering is taken no other liturgical actions should take place as e.g. the singing of a Psalm. We advocated this on the ground that a coupling up of elements makes it impossible to participate in them properly and that the worshipper should cultivate a devotional spirit while the offering is being received. And to make the silence less painful we suggested that the organist should meanwhile play.

Experience is responsible for our change of mind and for our present proposal that while the offering is taken, the congregation shall sing a Psalm. When the organist plays an offertory the congregation pays far more attention to his or her musical efforts than to the cause to which it is contributing and its solemn obligation of stewardship. Your committee proposes that the organ offertory be abolished. We fear it is stimulating a desire for entertainment in our divine services.

Let us now unite these various parts of the service as proposed by us into one whole. The order of worship for the morning service would then be as follows:

- | | | |
|---------------|----|---------------|
| 1. Votum | | 1. Psalm |
| 2. Salutation | or | 2. Invocation |
| 3. Psalm | | 3. Salutation |
-
4. The Law and Summary of the Law
 5. Confession of Sin or Penitential Psalm (or both)
 6. Absolution
 7. Apostles' Creed (by minister only or minister and congregation)
 8. Psalm
 9. General Prayer and Lord's Prayer (latter by minister only or minister and congregation)

10. Offering and Psalm
11. Offertory Prayer (optional)
12. Scripture Lesson
13. Sermon
14. Closing Prayer
15. Psalm (with or without Doxology)
16. Benediction

Concerning this order of worship we would remark (1) that though it is a little more elaborate than our present order, it still has the simplicity which is characteristic of Calvinistic worship. There is nothing that smacks of ritualism, that is of symbolism; (2) that it has considerable flexibility but at the same time in its various possible arrangements preserves its logical unity; (3) that all the new elements, even if all of them are used, will add only a few minutes to that part of the service that precedes the sermon; (4) that there are no loose, unconnected elements in this plan of worship, since all the elements within their own group are related to all the other elements and all the groups are logically related to one another; (5) that according to this plan the congregation will be able to take a more active part in public worship.

The following *Directory* with comments is given for the benefit of those who have no access to our first report:

Announcements. Observe that no provision was made for announcements. Churches having no printed bulletins should make necessary announcements before the service.

Votum or Invocation. As regards the former, the exact words of Psalm 124:8 should be used. Alterations should not be made since the Scriptures cannot be improved upon.

Words of the votum: "Our help is in the name of Jehovah who made heaven and earth."

Those who use the invocation instead of the votum should make it short, confining it strictly to the request to God for his blessing upon the services.

Salutation. Your committee recommends the use of the Pauline salutation as found in Rom. 1:7 and in literally the same words in six other places. The officiating minister should not add the superfluous phrase: "through the Holy Spirit." All expositors are agreed that the Triune God, not the first Person of the Holy Trinity, is

meant by the words, "God our Father." The possessive pronoun "our" before "Father" points in this direction. The doctrinal implication of this salutation is that we have fellowship with God our Father (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost) only in the face of our Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Words of the Salutation: "*Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*"

Psalm. One should be selected which dwells on the duty to worship God or the delights of God's courts.

The Law and Summary. The former is found in Exodus 20:1-17 and the latter in Matt. 22:37-40. We suggest that the minister connect the two by these or similar words: *Of this holy law of God our Lord Jesus Christ has given us a summary in the following words: "Thou shalt love . . ."*

The Confession of Sin or a *Penitential Psalm* or both. For the latter we suggested in our first report the words of our Psalter in No. 142:2. The Dutch Psalter has many fitting stanzas, e.g., Ps. 51:1; 103:2. It is hardly necessary to say that the congregation should not rise while singing a single verse, especially not at this place where the connection between the elements is so close.

Whether the reading of the Law is followed by a Psalm or a Prayer of Confession it would seem to be very desirable to insert a short sentence in which the purpose of the former and its relation to the latter is clearly brought out. We suggest the following:

"This holy law clearly teaches us our sinful deeds and sinful nature, which it behooves us to confess before God with contrite hearts. Let us do this in the words of the Psalmist . . . (Or: Let us do this as we pray: . . .

The Confession of Sin which your committee compiled from our own liturgical prayers and is contained in our first report (Acta, 1920, p. 192) is herewith presented again in a briefer and altered form:

"Eternal God and Gracious Father! We confess before Thy Divine Majesty that we are poor, miserable sinners, conceived in sin and born in unrighteousness, incapable in ourselves of any good and prone to all manner of wickedness. Our sins rise up and testify against us. We have transgressed all Thy command-

*ments in thought, word, and deed. All we like sheep have gone astray and are unworthy to be called Thy children. But we repent, O Lord, and are sorry for having provoked Thee, seeking refuge in Thine infinite grace and mercy. Calling upon Thee from the heart and trusting in the merits of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, we implore Thee to forgive us all our sins for His sake. Wash us in the pure fountain of His blood, that we may become pure and white as snow. Cover our nakedness with His innocence and righteousness, unto the glory of Thy name and the joy of our hearts. This we beseech Thee, O Father! in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."*³⁾

Absolution. The form which the committee has drafted is taken from the liturgies of Calvin and à Lasco and reads as follows:

"Unto all who thus repent and seek in Jesus Christ their salvation, I proclaim, on the ground of God's sure promise, that all their sins are forgiven them for the sake of the merits of Christ. On the contrary, unto those who do not repent from the heart, but seek for themselves other means for salvation, I proclaim from the Word of God that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest upon them as long as they do not turn unto God with heartfelt repentance."

Apostles' Creed. We would again suggest the following introduction: *"Let us now together profess our catholic, undoubted, Christian faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. Let every one speak with his heart thus: "I believe in God"*

Psalm. This should be a Psalm of praise expressing the joy of forgiveness and the assurance of faith. A mournful psalm would naturally be out of place here.

General Prayer and Lord's Prayer. Especially when the latter is recited by the congregation a short sentence of transition is desirable. We suggest the following:

" . . . We ask all this in the name of Him who taught us to pray, 'Our Father, who art in heaven"

Offering and Psalm. As we have already stated, we have revised our opinion about the inadvisability of combining these two liturgical actions into one. There will be no

³⁾ If our recommendations are adopted a Dutch translation of these forms should be provided.

conflict between these two elements if a Psalm is selected which expresses the very same sentiments which actuate the true worshipper in bringing to God his gift of thanks.

Offertory Prayer (optional). In churches where this prayer is in vogue the deacons wait for one another in the rear of the church until the offering is taken, and then walk to the front of the church. They place the collection-plates on the table and remain standing there until the minister has offered a brief prayer.

Scripture Lesson. The fact that in our churches the minister always reads the chapter from which he has selected his text or which, in the case of a catechism sermon, contains the truth which he intends to preach, shows clearly that the Scripture lesson is regarded as being intimately connected with the sermon. This is correct; yet at the present time these two elements stand far apart from each other in the service. A Psalm, the General Prayer, the Offering and still another Psalm separate these two elements. If our Order of Worship is adopted, the Scripture-lesson will be read at the logical and natural place.

Preaching.

Prayer. This is the first element of the closing service. No comments are needed.

Psalm (with or without Doxology). Here again the committee has left room for individual preference. And even as regards the choice of a doxology nothing is prescribed. We merely wish to suggest that the familiar "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" is not the only doxology which we can use. No. 197 of our English Psalter serves this purpose admirably. In churches which use a doxology in both services the former can be used in the morning service and the latter in the evening service or vice versa.

Benediction. This and not the doxology should be the last thing in the service. One should not invert the order for the utilitarian purpose of giving the minister an opportunity to hasten to the rear of the church to be able to shake hands with the people. Apart from the fact that when the Benediction has been pronounced the Lord has, dismissed His people, as it were, we can see no good in this hand-shaking affair. Does it not detract from the

dignity of divine worship? Does it not leave the impression that the church is at least in certain respects a business-institution which needs to cultivate the favor of its customers?

It is hardly necessary to remark that the administration of *Holy Baptism* should take place just before the General Prayer.

Some may wonder why we have said nothing about *Responsive Scripture Readings*. It stands to reason that your committee would not recommend them. Any one with but a little liturgical instinct feels clearly that it is improper in a church service. The Scripture is God's Word and when it is read in the service *God Himself* is speaking to His people by the mouth of His servant. This fact is wholly obscured when the minister (representing the Lord) and the congregation read alternately. The only argument which we have ever heard used in favor of responsive reading is that it makes it easier for the people to center their attention on the lesson. We question this, but even if it were true it would be an insufficient reason for introducing it.

In our first report we offered plans of worship not only for the second and third service but also for Communion services and special week-day services. The few changes we have made render this unnecessary. We propose that the same order of worship be used but with the omission of the entire "Service of Reconciliation"—except when the Lord's Supper is celebrated. On this occasion the Service of Reconciliation should not be omitted. The Communion Service, including the reading of the second part of the Form (see below), Psalm, Communion Proper and the concluding part of the Form (where this is read in the morning service), should be inserted between the "Service of the Word" and the "Closing Service"—that is between the sermon and the closing psalm. One may object that if the "Service of Reconciliation" is not omitted on Communion Sunday the services will be altogether too long. We reply (1) that a service of reconciliation is never more appropriate than when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, and (2) that the objection will fall if our recommendation is adopted to read the first part of the Form on Preparatory Sunday. This part included everything up to

the words: "Let us now also consider to what end the Lord" and should be heard by the congregation when the preparatory message is preached rather than when the week of preparation is past. Since this part of the Form comprises nearly half of the Pre-Communion section the time otherwise spent in reading it can be used for the Service of Reconciliation.

It will also be observed that the committee has not mentioned choir-singing, not even as an optional element of the service. The reason is that the Synod of 1926 has advised against the introduction of choirs, although it declared at the same time that this is left to the discretion of the individual consistories. In connection with this your committee feels constrained to say that:

(1) We deem it strange that the Synod of 1926 did not defer action on this question in view of the existence of our committee.

(2) It is our conviction that the decision of said Synod, viz., that in the final analysis each consistory may decide on this matter for its own church embodies an unreformed principle and that it is *direct conflict with a decision by the same Synod that Reformed Church Polity requires that our churches should have a uniform though flexible order of worship*. This means, if it means anything at all, that the Synod, not the local church, decides whether such prominent elements as singing by a choir shall be introduced or not; in other words whether the singing in our public worship shall be exclusively an action "*a parte ecclesiae*" (in which the church praises God) or also an action in which part of the congregation *edifies* the other part. In this case whom does the choir represent? It cannot represent the congregation if the purpose of its singing is to edify the congregation. If its purpose is to glorify God through song, is it not usurping a function which belongs to the whole church? If its purpose is to edify the church it must represent God as the minister represents God? Does our Reformed conception of the public worship leave room for this?

(3) This decision is a fundamental subversion of Article 69 of our Church Order which says that "in the Churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon, the

Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung." Now it is plain to all that the singing of anthems by a choir means the introduction of hymns. Yet our Church is up to the present time a Psalm-singing church almost exclusively. It also means the introduction of such hymns which do not have the approval of the Church as a whole and in actual practise not even of the Consistory. The choir alone decides what it will sing. A more effective way of setting the door of the church wide open to the singing of hymns can hardly be conceived. Your committee does not mean to say that it would be wrong for a Synod ever to revise Art. 69 of our Church Order. But we do claim that the decision regarding choirs conflicts with one of the fundamental principles underlying this article.

In conclusion your Committee has the honor to present the following *recommendations*:

A. The Synod declare

- (1) That our Churches are in need of an improved order of worship:
 - a) Because the order and succession of the various elements in our present mode of worship is in many particulars not systematic and fails to embody properly the underlying idea that public worship is the meeting of God and His people for the purpose of exercising fellowship;
 - b) Because the congregation does not take a sufficiently active part in the services;
 - c) Because the loss of the Confession of Sin and the Absolution as in vogue in the churches of the Reformation has impoverished our public worship, robbing it of one of the essential elements of our communion with God as the assembled Churches of Jesus Christ;
 - d) Because in consequence of the loss of the Confession of Sin and the Absolution, the reading of the Law and of the Creed have become isolated elements with practically no liturgical value;
 - e) Because also the Scripture-lesson has become an isolated part of the service, separated by several elements in the service, and by at least twenty minutes in time, from the Sermon with which it should be united.

- (2) That our public worship cannot really be improved by the omission of those elements which now stand alone nor by the addition of elements observed in other churches, but only by the introduction of such an order of worship which retains all the elements we now have, in which all the elements are re-arranged where necessary, so that the entire service forms one organic whole, and in which no new elements are introduced which are foreign to Reformed principles and practice.
- (3) That the regulation of public worship should not be left to the individual churches, since our denominational existence requires unity of doctrine, discipline, and *worship*. Consequently that it is the task of the Synod, representing all the churches, to alter our present form of worship, and that only minor details should be left to the individual consistories. In short, that our churches should have a uniform though flexible order of worship.
- (4) That the introduction of an improved order of worship should not take place in any local church until it appears to be ripe for the change. On the other hand, the Synod cannot wait until all the churches are ready for the change in view of the greatly varying circumstances in different congregations.

B. The Synod decide:

- (1) That it approve the following order of worship for the main service on the Lord's Day:
 1. Votum
 2. Salutation
 3. Psalm
 4. Reading of the Law and Summary of the Law in Matthew 22.
 5. Confession of Sin and Penitential Psalm (or both).
 6. Absolution.
 7. Apostles' Creed (by Minister only or Minister and Congregation).
 8. Psalm.
 9. General Prayer, concluded with the Lord's Prayer (the latter by Minister only or Minister and Congregation).
 10. Offering and Psalm.

11. Offertory Prayer (optional).
 12. Scripture Lesson.
 13. Sermon.
 14. Prayer.
 15. Psalm (with or without Doxology).
 16. Benediction.
- (2) That in the other services of the Lord's Day, and in the special services on week-days, the "Service of Reconciliation" (4, 5, 6, 7, 8) should be omitted. Likewise that it should be omitted when the services are in charge of unordained men such as theological students, candidates, and all others who are not qualified to administer the Sacraments.
- Ground:* The center and core of the service of reconciliation is the Absolution. When this is omitted, the rest is meaningless from a liturgical point of view. And since the Absolution is an authoritative declaration of the forgiveness of sins on the condition of true repentance, only an ordained Minister of the Gospel, speaking as an ambassador of Jesus Christ and servant of God, has the right to proclaim it.
- (3) That the complete service shall be used on Communion Sunday, but that the first part of the Form for the Lord's Supper, consisting of the self-examination, shall be read in the Preparatory Service of the preceding Sunday, and the remainder on Communion Sunday
- (4) That it repeals the decision of the Synod of 1926 regarding choir-singing, and declare that there shall be no singing in our public services except by the congregation as a whole, on the ground:
- a) That there is no place for such singing according to our Reformed conception of public worship. Since God meets and fellowships with His Church in public worship, every element must be either an act of God (through the Minister) having the congregation as its object or an act of the congregation (directly or through the Minister) having God as its object. Anthem-singing by a choir or a soloist is neither. It is in reality a usurpation of the privilege and duty of the whole congregation to sing praise to God;

- b) It conflicts with Article 69 of the Church Order which permits the singing of only a few hymns specifically mentioned;
 - c) It conflicts with the basic principle of Article 69 of the Church Order, namely, that the Church as a whole, through the Synod, shall determine what shall be sung in our churches.
- (5) That ministers and consistories are urged to take the necessary steps to introduce the new order of worship, with this understanding, however, that the peace and welfare of those churches in which there is considerable opposition, shall not be imperiled. At the same time the Classes shall strengthen the hands of the consistories by urging them, especially through the church-visitors, to make progress in the matter.

To illustrate the importance of the measure proposed in the preceding recommendation, your Committee reminds Synod of the fact that the custom of baptizing children of non-confessing members soon disappeared when the Classes by order of the Synod made it a special point of inquiry in church visitation, while the excellent report concerning the improvement of catechetical instruction, adopted at the Synod of 1912, has borne practically no fruits. The same fate threatens to overtake a more recent report on the subject presented in 1924.

- (6) that in case of adoption of this report, this Committee be continued to prepare a brief *directory of worship*, for the convenience of ministers and congregations, and to publish the same with the understanding that it shall be incorporated in succeeding editions of our Psalter.

Your Committee would strongly urge Synod to warn our Consistories *not to make any changes in their public worship other than those included in the proposed order, when this shall have been adopted*; to impress upon them the fact that denominational unity and loyalty require that all the Churches shall conform to whatever decisions touching this matter shall be taken, unless they shall be proved to be contrary to God's Word; and to insist that Consistories which subsequently might desire other changes, should refrain from intro-

ducing them by independent action, but make known their desires through the regular channels.

Respectfully,

Your Committee,

W. HEYNS.

H. J. KUIPER.

L. TRAP.

D. ZWIER.

J. VAN LONKHUYZEN.

W. STUART.

Y. P. DE JONG.

P. S. Indien men exemplaren van een vertaling van dit Rapport in het Hollandsch mocht begeeren, gelieve men daarvan kennis te geven aan Rev. H. J. Kuiper, 1137 Turner Ave., NW., Grand Rapids, Mich., niet later dan 1 Maart, en met opgave van het begeerde getal.

REPORT IV.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE IN RE REDUCTION OF CURATORIUM

YOUR COMMITTEE has the following instruction of the Synod of 1926: "To make a study of the problem of delegation to Curatorium in connection with the plan proposed by Classis Illinois, and other possible solutions, and to submit a plan to the next Synod." Acts 1926, Art. 31, page 30, 12.

I. CONSIDERATIONS

This instruction calls therefore for a consideration of the following items:

- A. The problem of delegation.
- B. The plan of Illinois.
- C. Other possible solutions.
- D. A plan for the next Synod.

A. *The problem of delegation.*

1. According to the available historical data the Church had its first Curatorium appointed in 1876 consisting of four ministers, two of each Classis. In the year 1878 the Theological School was incorporated and now a "Board of Trustees" was appointed consisting of two ministers and three laymen. In 1879 four other men were added. Rev. J. Noordewier informs us (see Semi-Centennial Volume, p. 13) that for several years there were a Board of Trustees and a "Curatorium." The same Rev. Noordewier tells us that this Board of Trustees was appointed to take care of the finances.

Synod of 1890 decided that not Synod, but that each classis was to elect its members for the Board of Trustees and Curatorium. In 1894 we find "Synod decided to amend the Articles of Association so that the Curators, appointed by Classes, and their appointment ratified by Synod, were to act as Board of Trustees (Syn. Acts 1894, Art. 44). Hence after this date the term "Curatorium" and "Board of Trustees" refer to the same body" (Semi-Cent. Vol., p. 45).

On page 27 of this Volume we find: "The Curatorium shall supervise the instruction of the docent, examine applicants for entrance, examine the students and decide whether these can be promoted or declared eligible for the ministry. They had to do this according to their best knowledge and conscience.

The Board of Trustees shall handle the financial affairs of the school and buy books for the library."

It is evident that from the beginning it was in the mind of our leaders (1) that Curatorium should look after the material as well as the spiritual interests of the school; and (2) that the lay members of the Curatorium should have the principal supervision of the finances. And although the Board of Trustees and Curatorium were made one body in 1894, Synod continued to appoint laymen as members of Curatorium. For some unexplained reason this custom has been abandoned. However, Curatorium has since 1894, always retained a finance committee. This was done for the sake of efficiency.

2. Members of Curatorium are appointed by the various Classes. The principle underlying the method of delegation is the fact that the school is the school of the churches and that all the churches are entitled to be represented in the Board. Another principle is that of the equality (*gelijkheid*) of the churches. For that reason each Classis has an equal number (2) of representatives in the Board.

3. For the last 27 years efforts have been made repeatedly to reduce the number of delegates to Curatorium. The number of Classes has increased to the extent that the number of delegates has become larger and larger. Several instructions of different Classes have come before our Synodical meetings with requests to have the number reduced. Two main reasons were always advanced, viz., the reduction of expenses, and greater efficiency. All efforts have failed, however, and we still follow the old beaten path and send two ministers of each Classis, while there is no layman in the Board.

4. One must, however, take notice of the tremendous development of our school and the consequent increase of work and responsibility of its supervision. During the last few years there has been a great increase in the number of instructors and of students. Great changes and additions have been made in the curriculum. But

especially has the material side advanced. Our finances have increased, our annual budget, our endowment fund, our buildings, equipment, grounds, library, etc., make greater efficiency and specialization more imperative. The work of supervising the instruction, the educational, moral, spiritual interests of the school has, since 1900, become a much greater problem. The control, that is the investment of our money, the proper supervision of our finances, the care of our buildings and grounds require the skill of experienced business men.

B. *The plan of Classis Illinois*, Acts 1926, page 28, II A.

1. Classis Illinois first desires that the principles referred to, viz., equal representation shall be maintained. Each Classis shall be equally represented in the Board.

2. Classis has also taken notice of the increased amount of work of the Board and therefore suggests a proper division of labor, viz., the proper care or supervision of the material interests of the institution, and secondly the supervision of the educational, moral and spiritual interests.

3. The Classis proposes to refer each of these interests to a body of experienced business or professional men, and other interests to a body of ministers.

4. For that reason it becomes necessary to elect laymen to our Board, and to have an equal number of ministers and laymen in the Board. These laymen are to be appointed one from each Classis, because of the principle of equal representation.

5. Classis Illinois seems to have two separate bodies in mind. The idea is, however, that the ministers and laymen constitute the one Curatorium.

6. Although Classis Illinois does not further specify the arrangement or division of labor, the plan states that it would reduce the work of the Curatorium, i.e., of the ministers, and enable that part of the Curatorium to devote its time to "the quality, character, and efficiency of the instruction given; to the personnel of the institution, professors and students, examinations," etc. The other members of the Curatorium could devote all their time to the material interests.

C. *Other possible solutions.*

1. Curatorium be reduced to one-half of its present number so that one delegate be sent by each Classis instead of two.

2. Curatorium be composed of one delegate of each Classis plus the Board of Finance, appointed by Synod.

3. Each Classis appoint two delegates, one minister and one layman, preferably a competent business or professional man. These constitute the Curatorium. It is, of course, understood that these appointments are to be approved by Synod, as is done at present. Such laymen must either have served or serve as consistory members.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Your Committee has carefully considered these items and has come to the following conclusions:

1. *Problem of delegation.* Efforts have been made repeatedly to reduce the number of delegates. For at least 25 years several Classes have petitioned Synod to do so. In the face of these repeated requests, and considering that the number of Classes has since increased so that the number of delegates is larger now than when such requests were made to Synod, and considering also that the expense of a meeting of Curatorium amounts to about \$2,000.00, and considering, finally, that arrangements can be made so that the work of the Curatorium can be done in a more efficient way, your Committee is of the opinion that the number of delegates should be reduced, and that each Classis appoint one instead of two to serve as members of Curatorium, but that at the same time Synod appoint six "laymen," preferably business men to represent the Church at large in Curatorium and to devote themselves largely to the financial matters.

2. *Division of Labor.* Formerly there was such a division. At Synodical meetings laymen were appointed as members of Curatorium and this was done for "greater efficiency." Since the institution has developed and its financial interests, its equipment, buildings, etc., require more expert attention, it would seem that the former consideration of efficiency should again be considered. It is true that at present a Board of Finance has charge of the finances, but the powers of this Board are very limited, its actions are always subject to the approval

of the Curatorium; Curatorium itself decides over the financial and material interests without even consulting the Board of Finance, so that in the present arrangement (as history repeatedly shows) there is no end of uncertainty, overlapping, lack of efficiency and centralization. In general it may be said that a body of ministers is not as well qualified to have charge of the business end of the school as a body of competent business or professional men. Let us not forget that the institution has developed to such an extent that its annual budget exceeds \$100,000.00 and that the investment in buildings, grounds, equipment, funds, etc., amounts to over \$500,000.00. For the present as well as for the future we need the best possible method of administration. For that reason your Committee is of the opinion that the Board of Finance should be composed of six competent business or professional men, and that they should be members of Curatorium: appointed by Synod upon recommendation of Curatorium.

3. *The proposed plan of Classis Illinois.* There are especially three ideas in this plan which appeal to the Committee, namely:

- a) The idea that each Classis has an equal number of representatives in the Curatorium, that is, one minister of each Classis;
- b) The suggestion of a division of labor, namely, the material interests and the educational, spiritual and moral;
- c) The demand for greater efficiency and more system.

It can not be denied that these considerations are entirely in harmony with the policy of the past, with our Reformed Church Polity, and also with modern business methods. We may add that they are also in harmony with the methods followed by other denominational educational institutions.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee has the honor to recommend the following plan (see I, D):

1. The number of Curators be reduced to one-half of its present number, i.e., one from each Classis, plus six business or professional laymen.

2. The work of Curatorium shall be so divided that the educational, spiritual, and moral interests are referred to the ministers, while all matters pertaining to finances, buildings, etc., shall be referred to the laymen. Hence Curatorium shall be divided into two sections.

3. In case of uncertainty as to the proper domain of any problem the Curatorium shall meet in joint session in order to settle such problem. Each section may ask for such a joint session.

4. The full Curatorium shall hold its annual meeting at the close of each school year.

5. During the school year the Supervisory Committee shall hold its regular meetings as heretofore, and the six laymen shall constitute the Board of Finance and hold their regular meetings as heretofore. If necessary these two committees meet in joint session.

6. Each of these two committees shall submit a full report of its actions to the annual meeting of Curatorium.

7. The Secretary of Curatorium shall, as heretofore, submit a complete report of the Curatorium to Synod. In all matters Synod shall have the final decision.

P. S. The term "laymen" in this report, although not ideal, is used to designate such men who are not clergymen. It is to be understood that such men should be competent for such a responsible position, and therefore the term business men is too limited inasmuch as professional men should also be considered. Preferably these six men should be chosen from the Classes not too far from the school. Curatorium shall submit candidates for that position to Synod, six of whom shall be appointed as members of Curatorium.

Respectfully submitted,

Committee

J. J. HIEMENGA
E. VAN HALSEMA
L. LAMBERTS
C. BROODMAN
J. HEKMAN

REPORT V.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE ENGLISH SERMONS FOR READING SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting
in Holland, Mich., June, 1928.*

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:—

YOUR COMMITTEE wishes to report that after surveying the situation and finding but little demand for any sermons it could supply, it decided to enter into correspondence with Rev. P. J. Hoekenga in regard to his work of supplying vacant churches with English sermons. It soon became evident to your Committee that most of the churches demanding English sermons are located in the far west and southwest and the Rev. Hoekenga was regularly and sufficiently supplying the demand of these churches by an ingenious system of having each church send the sermons to the next church on the list.

Your Committee has nothing but praise for the splendid work the brother has done. In reply to a letter from your Committee requesting information and the possibility of co-operating, the brother very frankly stated that he believed that he was covering the field pretty well and he did not see how any advantage could be obtained by putting the work into the hands of your Committee. He was also of the same opinion as the previous Committee that reported to Synod in 1924, namely, that this work can best be left to private initiative.

Your Committee thereupon wrote the brother to the effect that it regretted the fact that he saw no way in which it could co-operate with him in this work and that he had put the supplying of vacant churches with sermons on such a low basis financially that it would be very difficult if not impossible to co-operate with him under the circumstances, and finally that co-operation in this matter in the future would be conditioned by his

training the consistories concerned to pay a more reasonable price for sermons.

Meanwhile Rev. Hoekenga was splendidly and efficiently supplying the vacant churches with sermons.

On the very afternoon that your Committee was met to draft its final report to Synod, it received the sad news of the sudden demise of brother Hoekenga. It was ready to advise Synod to leave the whole matter to brother Hoekenga and to relieve the Committee of its charge.

In view of the peculiar character of the work, the experience of the past six years and the very limited demand, your Committee advises Synod to leave this problem for private initiative to solve.

The financial statement of our Treasurer is as follows:

Balance on hand, reported last Synod.....	\$ 98.65
Received for Sermons.....	8.25
Total	\$106.90
Paid out for postage.....	1.25
Balance on hand.....	\$105.65

If Synod decides to discontinue the work the balance on hand should be returned to the General Home Mission Fund from which the original fund was drawn.

Respectfully submitted

D. H. KROMMINGA.
P. A. HOEKSTRA
J. M. GHYSELS
J. B. HULST
M. BERGHAGE

REPORT VI.

REPORT OF THE PATERSON HEBREW MISSION COMMITTEE

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting
in Holland, Mich., June, 1928.*

ESTEEMED FATHERS AND BRETHREN:—

YOUR COMMITTEE, appointed to investigate the advisability of continuing to subsidize the Paterson Hebrew Mission Work, submits the following report:

The task assigned us by the Synod of 1926 (see Acts of Synod of 1926, p. 19) we have interpreted as including not only an investigation as to the efficiency of the mission-workers and Board, but also the need and value of the Mission in Paterson.

I. In regard to the first matter your Committee found:

(1) **That the Missionary—**

- a) has great love for the work and a zeal for Israel that it might be saved;
- b) is faithfully witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ before the Jews;
- c) is fearless and persistent in his efforts to win them;
- d) has acquired an efficient use of the Yiddish language (the conversational language of the Jews) and has also kept up his study of the Hebrew language so that he can argue with the Jews on the basis of their own Hebrew Scriptures with tact and effectiveness;
- e) has the respect of many of the Jews, and in some cases even their affection, their homes being open to him even when only the women folks are at home;

- f) has been more successful and his work more effective than the records of conversions would tend to indicate, for we are convinced that many Jews are reading the New Testament Scriptures and are interested in the Christ of the New Testament even to the point of having faith in Him, but refrain from openly breaking with Judaism and revealing their acceptance of the New Testament because of fear of persecution, and a hesitancy to break all family-ties.
- (2) **That the missionary-helpers** are at present co-operating with the missionary, and that good-will is in evidence among the workers.
 - (3) **That the Board** has confidence in the workers, and labors together in harmony with the missionary and the helpers.
 - (4) **That the wife of the missionary** willingly and ably assists him in the work.

II. In regard to the need, scope, and value of the work, your Committee found:

- (1) **That there are about 35,000 Jews** in Paterson and Passaic;
- (2) **The following schedule of activities** is being carried on by the Mission force:

MONDAY—The Missionary visits the Jews in their homes.

7:30 to 9:00 P. M. Night School and Bible Hour is conducted in the Mission for Jewish men.

The Helpers have this day off.

TUESDAY—Mission opens at 9:00 A. M.

9:00 to 9:30 Devotional exercises.

9:30 to 11:45 House-to-house visitation by all the workers.

1:30 to 4:30 House-to-house visitation by all the workers.

7:30 to 9:30 Night School and Bible hour for Jewish men.

WEDNESDAY—Mission opens at 9:00 A. M. The Missionary has this day off.

- 9:00 to 9:30 Devotional exercises by the helpers.
- 9:30 to 11:45 House-to-house visitation by the helpers.
- 1:30 to 3:00 Preparation for the Sewing Class.
- 3:00 to 5:00 Meeting of the Sewing Class.

THURSDAY—House-to-house visitation in Passaic in the morning.

- 1:30 to 3:00 Preparation for the Dispensary.
- 3:00 to 5:00 Dispensary. The nurse assists the Doctor, and the Missionary gives a message to those who are waiting for treatment. The other helper goes out to look up Jewish friends.

FRIDAY—Mission opens at 9:00 A. M.

- 9:00 to 9:30 Devotional exercises.
- 9:30 to 11:45 House-to-house visitation by the workers.
- 1:30 to 4:30 House-to-house visitation or other necessary work pertaining to the Mission, such as hospital calls, etc.

SATURDAY—Mission open all day.

In the morning the Missionary has charge, receiving and entertaining the Jews.

In the afternoon the helpers receive and entertain the Jews who come.

- 7:30 to 9:00 Gospel Meeting, in which all the workers take part.

SUNDAY—7:30 to 9:30 Gospel Meeting. These meetings are held in the hall in the winter, and on the streets in the summer.

- (3) From the monthly reports of the Board we found that in one month the total attendance of the Jews at the Night School was 71, at the indoor meetings 20, at the Sewing Classes 40, and at the Dispensary 70. Besides the Jews, there were many Gentiles present at these meetings. During that same month there were 176 calls made, 245 tracts distributed, 3 New Testaments, 1 Bible, and 25 Gospels in the city of Paterson, and 81 calls made, 136 tracts distributed and 35 Gospels in the city of Passaic.

From the semi-annual report to the Classis we found that during the months from October, 1926, to March, 1927, there were 1,067 visits made to Jewish homes, 1,379 tracts, 196 Gospels, and 7 Bibles distributed in Paterson. During that same time there were 458 visits made, 930 tracts, 193 Gospels and 1 Bible distributed in Passaic.

- (4) That there is need of this work from another point of view. It is from the point of view of the churches in the East. It is the opinion of your Committee that it would be very detrimental to the mission spirit in the East if the subsidy should be withheld and the work discontinued.

It would also be unwise, because we believe that every effort should be made to strengthen the feeling of unity between the East and the rest of the Church. To withdraw from their distinctly local mission work, and to withhold the needed subsidy at this time would not tend to strengthen this feeling. This mission work has the love and support of a great number of our Eastern people, and to handicap it, or cause it to be discontinued would, to say the least, sorely grieve them.

It would also, we believe, be unwise because of the fact that the work is now thoroughly organized. Into it years of labor and prayers have been put. Much seed has been sown. Who knows when the harvest will come. To withdraw now would not only signify defeat in the eyes of a great number of Jews who have become interested in the work and have come in contact with the mission, as well as many who are watching the work, but it would tend to destroy the fruit of many years of labor and expense. Certain it is that our Church is witnessing for Christ among the Jews, and that witness will bear fruit.

Your Committee therefore **advises Synod:**

- (1) To continue to subsidize the work of the Paterson Hebrew Mission work to the extent of the sum of \$3,500;
- (2) For the benefit of the work and with a view to increasing the prestige of the Mission and also of the

Missionary, to urge or express the desirability to the Board of having one of the Classes take the required steps to ordain Candidate H. Schultz;

- (3) Since the churches of our Eastern Classes have at times had no regular offering for the Paterson Hebrew Mission, Synod urge these Classes to have regular offerings in order to increase the spirit and love for this their particularly local mission work.

Respectfully submitted,

The Committee,

G. GORIS.

H. VERDUIN.

H. KEEGSTRA.

REPORT VII.

RAPPORT VAN DE COMMISSIE IN RE DE HERZIENING ONZER LITURGISCHE FORMULIEREN

Aan de Synode der Chr. Geref. Kerken vergaderd in Holland, Mich., Juni, 1928.

EERWAARDE VADERS EN BROEDERS:—

DE COMMISSIE aangesteld door de Synode van 1920, en vermeerderd door die van 1924, ten einde in verband met de Correspondeerende Kerken van Nederland en Zuid-Afrika de herziening onzer liturgische formulieren te overwegen, heeft het volgende te rapporteeren:

De Commissie is in 1927 met de haar opgedragen taak begonnen, en is daar thans geregeld aan bezig.

Aleer zij op haar eigenlijke taak inging, werd tot hare kennis gebracht hetgeen vermeld staat in Art. 146 der Acta van de Synode van 1926, namelijk dat een stuk uit Zuid-Afrika betreffende den uitbouw der Belijdenis in handen van onze Commissie werd gelegd. Onze Commissie echter oordeelde, dat dit stuk en dit onderwerp een geheel ander terrein betraden dan dat deze taak als terloops aan onze Commissie kon worden opgedragen. De zaak van den uitbouw der Belijdenis is toch een geheel andere dan het herzien der liturgische formulieren. Bovendien is de uitbouw der Belijdenis een enorme taak welke niet zoo in het voorbijgaan als een neventaak aan een Commissie kan worden opgedragen. En eindelijk heeft nog geen Synode onze Kerk immer uitgesproken, dat onze kerken zulk een uitbouw begeeren, of op dat onderwerp willen ingaan. Weshalve onze Commissie meent, dat dit stuk uit Zuid-Afrika, handelende over den uitbouw der Belijdenis, als niet direct tot haar opdracht, zooals deze oorspronkelijk aan de Commissie gegeven was, te behooren, ter zijde te mogen leggen, en aan uwe vergadering voor nadere consideratie, en zoo gewenscht, ter behandeling door een afzonderlijke Commissie terug te mogen zenden.

De Commissie, haar eigenlijke taak aanvaardende, besloot verder elk Formulier naar bevind van zaken te behandelen, hetzij meer verkortend of wijzigend, naar het noodig bleek, echter zoo dat de symmetrie in de formulieren behouden bleef.

Besloten werd, ten slotte, met het Huwelijks-formulier te beginnen, daar de onvoldaanheid met dit formulier historisch de aanleiding was tot het instellen onzer Commissie (zie Acta 1920, Art. 26). En ook aangezien hier een wijziging of herziening onzes inziens meest urgent geacht moest worden.

De Commissie is thans met dezen arbeid bezig, en hoopt een volgende Synode een proeve van haar arbeid te kunnen aanbieden.

U de leiding van Gods Geest toebiddende,

Met eerbied onderworpen,

S. Volbeda

H. H. Meeter

L. Berkhof

C. Bouma

J. Van Lonkhuyzen, Rapp.

REPORT VIII.

RAPPORT DER COMMISSIE INZAKE DE ECHTSCHIEDINGS-KWESTIE

Aan de Synode der Chr. Geref. Kerken vergaderd in Holland, Mich., Juni, 1928.

EERWAARDE VADERS EN BROEDERS:—

DE Commissie aan wie werd opgedragen de Synode te dienen met rapport aangaande de huwelijks-kwestie heeft de eer het volgende ter uwer kennis te brengen:

(1) Dr. H. H. Meeter meende zich aan de Commissie te moeten onttrekken wegens gebrek aan den noodigen tijd.

(2) De Commissie is met haren arbeid nog niet gereed, hoewel zij gedurig vergaderd is geweest. Zij bepaalde zich niet tot de praktische kwestie naar aanleiding waarvan zij benoemd werd, maar stelde zich ook voor de vraag, of de Schrift slechts één dan wel meer dan één grond voor echtscheiding aangeeft. Zij meende dat deze laatste kwestie in verloop van tijd zich gevoegd heeft bij de oorspronkelijke materie. Het lijdt dan ook geen twijfel of het verdient aanbeveling heel de huwelijks-kwestie in behandeling te nemen. De Nederlandsche Commissie ad hoc zag de zaak ook zoo in.

(3) In verband met hare behandeling van de gronden van echtscheiding kwam de Commissie te staan voor de vraag, of de Schrift wel recht geeft tot volstreckte echtscheiding, al is het dan ook op één, of hoogstens twee gronden, dan wel of zij de volstreckte onontbindbaarheid van het huwelijk, behalve door den dood, leert, en alzoo geen volstreckte echtscheiding met bijgaand recht tot hertrouw, toestaat. Het ligt voor de hand dat de Commissie hiermede voor de prae-alabele kwestie zich zag geplaatst.

(4) De Commissie hoopt, D. V., tegen den zomer van 1929 met haar rapport gereed te zijn.

Met verschuldigden eerbied onderworpen,

De Commissie voornoemd,

F. M. TEN HOOR

S. VOLBEDA

H. J. KUIPER

G. HOEKSEMA

REPORT IX.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting
in Holland, Mich., June, 1928.*

ESTEEMED BRETHREN :—

THE Committee on Education, appointed by the Synod of 1926, respectfully submits the following report:

In its conferences the Committee has confined itself largely to a discussion of the situation in general, and of the problems that confront us as Christian Reformed churches with respect to the instruction and training of our youth. It is doubted by no one among us that the Christian education of our children and young people is of vital importance, and that upon it depends to a large extent not only the future growth and usefulness of our churches, but even their very existence. Too much prayerful and careful thought and effort cannot be devoted to this subject.

As time goes on we have increasing cause for gratitude that from the beginning the churches of the Reformed persuasion have stood definitely committed to a thorough program of Christian education. It may safely be said that whatever of thoroughness in Bible knowledge and knowledge of the standards of our faith may distinguish our membership, and whatever of stability in Christian faith may be found among us in these days of religious turmoil and upheaval, is largely due, under God, to the faithful indoctrination of the youth of the Church by means of catechetical instruction and to the work of other educational agencies in our midst. A realization of the fundamental importance of catechetical instruction and of a thorough Christian education has been bred into the very bone and marrow of our people. It is to be hoped that we may never be led to deviate from this course or to relinquish this ideal.

The thorough and intelligent instruction and training of our youth becomes increasingly important as the battle against unbelief and worldliness progresses. For this reason the religious education provided by the churches will in an increasing measure require the care and encouragement of the Church, so that both in material and method it may keep pace with the requirements of the times.

Your Committee takes it that it was with this need in mind that a Committee on Education has been appointed. The instruction reads:

"This Committee will have the task of interesting itself in the instruction of our youth as it is given in and by our churches, and of searching for means by which this instruction may be furthered.

"This Committee will be expected to make a study of the needs arising in this sphere, and to serve the congregations with information and advice."
(Acta Syn. 1926, p. 47, under VIII.)

This instruction is taken to mean that it was the purpose of Synod to maintain a Committee on Education as a permanent organ in service of the churches, as we also have permanent committees for other purposes: Missions, Theological School, Emeritus Fund, etc. However with this difference, that the Committee on Education has no supervisory but only advisory powers.

The Committee conceives its task to be:

- (1) To make a study of the needs and problems in the field of education provided by and under the auspices of the churches. This study will include a survey of the educational work conducted by the various churches of our denomination. It will of necessity include also a study of the educational work carried on by other denominational groups of our country and by the Reformed churches of the Netherlands;
- (2) To promote the cause of religious instruction in our churches by encouraging constant improvement with respect to material, methods, and class-room facilities. To this end pastors and teachers are in-

vited to correspond with the Committee. The Committee will be interested to know of any material or method that has been used with marked success, or to receive any helpful suggestions from those who are engaged in the work of religious instruction;

It is further suggested that a department on Religious Education be opened in *De Wachter*, and be re-opened in *The Banner*, so that our people may more regularly be kept in touch with the problems and the work of religious education, and be led to take a greater personal interest in this matter;

- (3) To act as an advisory committee in the matter of religious education, to which pastors and consistories are invited to come with their particular problems and needs. Situations vary, and it is impossible to make up a program that will be suitable for all. Nor is it possible to outline a course of instruction that will be effective for all times. While sound and thorough instruction is necessary under all circumstances, and sound methods of teaching should be followed everywhere, a sufficient number of problems remain that must be solved in the light of the peculiar situation in which the congregation finds itself. The Committee stands ready to advise pastors and consistories in these matters to the best of its ability;
- (4) To function as a point of contact between the Church at large and other organizations that have the cause of religious instruction and training at heart. Here are to be mentioned our Christian Schools, especially as represented by the Union of Christian Schools, The American Federation of Reformed Young Men's Societies, Mission Training Schools, and similar organizations. While the Church in no way proposes to intrude upon the activities of these organizations, it is highly desirable that a closer contact between them be established. Occasional conferences of the authorized representatives of these organizations would undoubtedly do much to encourage each one in the work of its own sphere, and to bring about a larger measure of co-ordination and mutual helpfulness. It is sug-

gested that delegates chosen by the Educational Committee be considered as representatives of the Church and its educational work in conferences of this kind.

While the Committee is not ready at this time to come to Synod with many specific proposals, there are a few matters upon which it begs Synod to take action:

- (1) As to the number of members to constitute this Committee it is proposed that six members be appointed, and that their terms of service be so arranged that two of the members complete their term each synodical year, since
 - a) A term of six years will insure members of the Committee an opportunity to become familiar with the needs and the work in the field of education;
 - b) The proposed arrangement of terms of service will insure the needed continuity in the personnel of the Committee.
- (2) Synod recommend a survey of the educational work of our churches by means of a questionnaire to be sent to every consistory, said survey to include information as to teaching material, methods, equipment, organization, etc., of catechetical classes, Sunday schools, and other organizations of the church.
- (3) Synod recommend a general conference composed of authorized delegates of the Church, Sunday Schools, American Federation of Ref. Young Men's Societies, and Mission Schools, to discuss the problems in the field of Christian education and training and, if possible, to arrive at a plan for greater co-ordination and co-operation in the work.
- (4) The Committee also points to the fact that in its estimation the annual term of catechetical instruction is in general not long enough. There seems to be a tendency to shorten these periods to six or seven months. The Committee asks Synod to recommend and encourage a nine-month term of catechetical instruction. *Reasons:*

- a) Because it is not possible to complete an adequate course of study during the abbreviated terms which generally obtain;
 - b) Because the continuity of the work is broken for too long a period;
 - c) Also psychologically the effect of these shortened periods is detrimental. The impression is given that catechetical instruction is of only secondary importance as compared with the work of the day school. Even without this derogatory estimate of the work of the Church gaining headway in the minds of the pupils and of many of the parents, the Church has in most cases sufficient difficulty in inducing the pupil to study the Catechism and Sunday School lessons because of the tendency of many day schools to monopolize almost all the time of the child;
 - d) If the pressure of pastoral work makes a longer period of catechetical instruction difficult for the pastor, the suggestion is offered that the consistory take over a larger share of this work, since undoubtedly the education and training of the youth of the Church is of paramount importance;
 - e) If, on the other hand, in certain communities the season of catechetical instruction opens late in the fall and closes early in the spring because of field labor, we ask Synod to remind pastors and parents that nothing can outweigh the spiritual interests of our youth, and that the time of youth is incomparably precious for a thorough founding in the teachings of Scripture. Certainly only the saddest results can be expected if other things are allowed to rob the child of his opportunities for spiritual nurture.
- (5) Another feature which the Committee recommends pertains to those communities where it is impracticable to maintain Christian schools. Nothing can take the place of the Christian school, and Christian parents are in duty bound to provide and maintain such schools wherever possible. In many of our smaller congregations, however, the limited number

of families and the scattered nature of the communities makes it impracticable to maintain a Christian school.

Your Committee feels that much may be done for the children of these communities to make up in a measure for the lack of Christian instruction in the day school. One of the many benefits of the Christian school lies in the fact that daily and in a systematic fashion children are made familiar with the contents of the Bible. A knowledge of the Bible as a whole, Bible stories, biblical history and Bible contents is of great importance, and also offers an almost indispensable background for later catechetical instruction in biblical doctrine. Where Christian Schools do not exist, the Sunday Schools can be, and in our opinion should be, so organized as far as this is possible, that this systematic instruction in the Bible is provided. It is possible to provide a systematic course of Bible stories for the younger children and of biblical history and general Bible contents for the older pupils. In some of our churches this method has been used with gratifying results. Your Committee recommends that efforts to this end be encouraged, and that especially those of our congregations that find it impossible to maintain Christian schools be urged to supply this lack as much as possible by means of appropriate home and Sunday School studies.

- (6) While it remains true that no single course of study can be devised that will in the best fashion meet the needs of every congregation, it is also true that an effort toward better co-ordination of the work of the Sunday schools and catechetical instruction will prove to be of great benefit everywhere. Whatever difference may be conceived to exist in status and character between Sunday School and catechetical instruction, both are given under the auspices of the Church and both are given largely to the same children. In the one instance the educational material is found in Bible story and Bible history, and in the other the object is to acquaint the children with the great doctrines of Scripture. These are found to supplement each

other. It would therefore seem to be the part of wisdom to co-ordinate these two branches of instruction in such a way that, instead of being entirely unrelated, as is now the case, one may be helpful to the other, and both may work together to form a unified program of instruction in scriptural truth.

In order to make more clear what the Committee has in mind when it urges a co-ordinated course of instruction in the Sunday School and catechetical classes, we append the outline which Rev. Hylkema has submitted to the Committee, and which serves as a suggestion and forms the basis of further discussion.

L. J. LAMBERTS.
G. W. HYLKEMA.
W. STUART.
E. J. TUUK.
H. H. MEETER.

A COURSE OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

AGE AND GRADE																
5	0	BEGINNERS AND PRIMARY Three years of progressive Bible story and picture work. Memory work: simple Scripture texts and children's songs. Some very good work along this line is on the market, and may be used to advantage for children of this age.														
6	1															
7	2															
8	3	JUNIORS A three-years' course, in which all the great Bible stories are studied in a consecutive fashion. What is needed for this course is a series of children's readers containing the story and simple questions and answers to be memorized. The value of these readers will be greatly enhanced if they are properly illustrated.														
9	4															
10	5															
11	6															
		<table><tr><th>CLASS</th><th>Catechetical Classes</th></tr><tr><td>I</td><td>Rudiments of Christian doctrine. Bible story material used wherever possible to clarify the doctrinal truths.</td></tr><tr><td>II</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>III</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>IV</td><td>A two years' course of more advanced work in Christian doctrine.</td></tr><tr><td>V</td><td>A two years' course designed especially to lead the child to make public confession of faith. Consisting of short courses: the problems of Christian living, Church History and Church government.</td></tr><tr><td>VI</td><td></td></tr></table>	CLASS	Catechetical Classes	I	Rudiments of Christian doctrine. Bible story material used wherever possible to clarify the doctrinal truths.	II		III		IV	A two years' course of more advanced work in Christian doctrine.	V	A two years' course designed especially to lead the child to make public confession of faith. Consisting of short courses: the problems of Christian living, Church History and Church government.	VI	
CLASS	Catechetical Classes															
I	Rudiments of Christian doctrine. Bible story material used wherever possible to clarify the doctrinal truths.															
II																
III																
IV	A two years' course of more advanced work in Christian doctrine.															
V	A two years' course designed especially to lead the child to make public confession of faith. Consisting of short courses: the problems of Christian living, Church History and Church government.															
VI																
12	7	Early Intermediates Two years of O. T. History, especially in biographical form. The history should of course be simple and lead the child to make use of the Bible.														
13	8	Later Intermediates Two years of N. T. History with especial emphasis on the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. Also here the pupil should be led to make use of his Bible.														
14	9															
15	10	Adolescents Organized classes taking up especially Mission Biography and History, and the teachings of Scripture bearing on mission work.														
16	11															
17		Followed by organized Senior and Adult Classes.														