

AGENDA

Synod
Christian Reformed Church

*To convene June 10, 1936
at Grand Rapids, Mich.*

**[PART I:
REPORTS]**

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

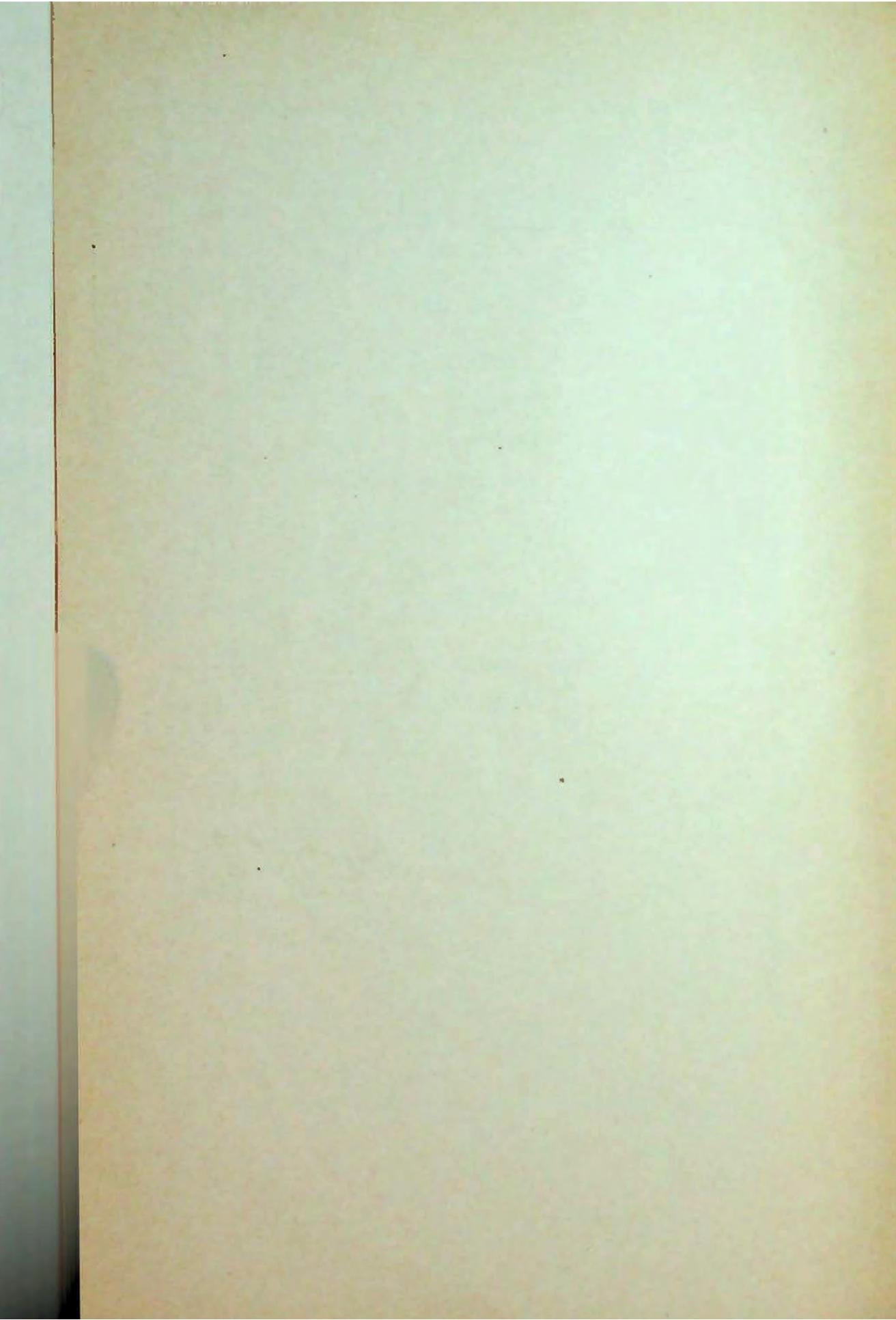
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PREFACE

THE Synod of 1926, p. 174 of its "Acta," 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. The second part is to appear on or before May 1, 1936. Classical stated clerks, please send us the overtures, the names of all the delegates, and the ADDRESSES of the elders by the middle of April.

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. Het tweede stuk, met voorstellen voor de Synode, verschijnt D. V. op of vóór 1 Mei, 1936, zie "Acta" der Synode van 1926, bl. 174. De classicale stated clerks worden bij dezen vriendelijk uitgenoodigd om ons die voorstellen, alsmede de namen der gekozen deputaten, en de ADDRESSEN der ouderlingen, half April doen toekomen.

Henry Beets, S. C.

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

AGENDA

PART I

REPORTS

REPORT I.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR REVISION OF RULES FOR SYNODICAL COMMITTEE

ESTEEMED BRETHERN OF SYNOD:

THE Synodical Committee in its report to the Synod of 1934 included the following paragraph:

"We take the liberty of stating that we consider the existing Rules and Regulations governing our Committee to be rather inadequate, and suggest to your honorable body to appoint a committee to *Revise* them, such committee to report to the next Synod, because we realize it would not be very wise to settle this matter off hand or only after brief deliberation." (Acts 1934, p. 193.)

The sentiment expressed on the floor of Synod was that Synod should try at that meeting to make this revision. Accordingly the advisory committee on "Varia" was asked to prepare such a revision. But this committee reported that it was impossible to do so because they had not the time to gather the necessary data. So Synod after all decided, as had first been suggested, to appoint a committee to submit such a revision to the next Synod (Acts 1934, pp. 127-128, 183). This is the committee now presenting its report.

To us was also submitted an overture of Classis Grand Rapids West reading as follows:

"Classis Grand Rapids West overtures Synod, since provision has been made in Acts 1922, Art. 37, XI, for early or advanced meetings of Synod, that Synod decide that in time of emergency the right be given to the Synodical Committee, in consultation with the various Classes, to make imperatively necessary deviations from established rules, providing at least one-half of the number of Classes concur."

The thought was that this overture should be considered by us and, if deemed for the best interest of the Church, to incorporate it in the revision of said Rules (Acts 1934, p. 128).

As a committee we were mindful of the fact that we had been appointed because the Synodical Committee considered the rules governing their work "to be rather inadequate." Accordingly we asked the clerk of that committee for suggestions as to improvements that could and should be made. He, with the approval of the president, suggested several points which were gratefully received and proved very helpful.

After careful study we submit the following recommendations:

1. To revise the "Rules for the Synodical Committee" as follows:

- a) To drop from Art. 2 the words "by regular ballot."

Reason: It has not been practised for years and it is not desirable: it seems better that the members be nominated by a committee and thus approved by Synod than that they be voted by ballot.

- b) To erase from Art. 3 the words "and a Treasurer."

Reason: No such Treasurer is necessary: the Treasurer of Synod takes care of the expenses of the committee and there is no apparent reason why he should not continue to do so.

- c) In Art. 5, after the first paragraph, to add the following as a new paragraph:

"The Committee is authorized to appoint delegates to corresponding churches in cases overlooked by Synod or that arise in the interim between Synods."

Reason: At present there is no provision for such cases. The committee in the past has acted in such cases, which action was approved by Synod. It would be better to have a rule.

- d) To change the present second paragraph of Art. 5 (which, if the above be adopted, would become the third) as follows:

"The Committee is also charged by Synod in case of general, outstanding sins, such as Sabbath desecration, divorce, and drunkenness, to agitate against these, for instance by petitions to govern-

ments of State and Nation, and other responsible bodies, in the name of the whole Church.”

We consider this an improvement upon the present wording of it for several reasons:

- 1) It does away with the expression “crying sins,” which we consider poor diction;
 - 2) It widens the scope of such petitions by changing “in case of Sabbath desecration . . .” to “in case of general outstanding sins, such as Sabbath desecration . . .” Then the Committee is not limited to the three sins mentioned in the original article, but may petition against other sins of like nature;
 - 3) It makes the task of the Committee more definite by adding that the petitions are to be presented to governments of State and Nation, and other responsible bodies.
- e) To add to Art. 5 still another new paragraph as follows:
- “The Committee is made the official body to deal with the government, in the name of the Church, in recommending applicants for campwork or a position as chaplain, and to take care of such governmental matters as need attention before Synod convenes.”
- Reason:* There is at present no body officially appointed for such purpose, and experience has shown that one is needed. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have a special committee for correspondence with the government. That does not appear necessary in our case. But matters do come up at times that make it desirable that there be some body that is authorized to act in such cases, and the Synodical Committee would seem to be the logical body to function in such cases.
- f) In the first clause of Art. 6 to change the expression, “to serve it with good counsel or to give advice,” so as to read: “to serve with its good counsel or advice.”
- Reason:* This expresses the thought more directly and tersely.
- g) To change the last clause of Art. 6 so as to read: “but never to interfere with the free action of any ecclesiastical assembly.”

Reason: We feel that the present wording, "never to obstruct," sounds unnecessarily harsh and that our proposed reading expresses the thought intended just as well, without the harshness attaching to the original.

- h) In Art. 10 to insert after "the members of the Committee" the phrase, "and the delegates to corresponding churches appointed by the Committee."

Reason: We were informed by the secretary of the Synodical Committee that now each of these appointees is "left to fend for himself to get his expenses back." This should not be. Such appointees as are appointed by the Committee should be reimbursed as well as those directly appointed by Synod, and it would be well to have that definitely stated in a rule.

- i) In Art. 11 to change the expression, "with respect to the church," to: "with respect to the given case."

Reason: The article as it now stands is ambiguous and too sweeping.

- j) To make Art. 12 up-to-date by inserting after 1890: "and revised by that of 1936." The reason is obvious.

2. Not to give the Synodical Committee the right "in consultation with the various Classes to make imperatively necessary deviations from established rules, providing at least one-half of the number of Classes concur" (see overture of Classis Grand Rapids West quoted above).

Reasons:

- 1) We have a rule for emergencies made by Synod of 1922 (Acts 1922, Art. 37, XI). This would seem to be sufficient for most cases;
 - 2) If the emergency be acute, matters will naturally be dealt with in an emergency way, whether there be a rule or not; for acute emergencies from the nature of the case no rules can be made;
 - 3) We fear that if the suggestion of Classis Grand Rapids West be adopted, it may lead to a multiplication of supposed emergencies, and this may not be for the best of the churches.
3. To add to the rule made in 1922 (Acts 1922, p. 75, being Art. 37, XI, above referred to) that the calling

church, in case one-half of the Classes agree, shall call an advanced Synod "in consultation with the Synodical Committee."

Reason: It would seem well that the Synodical Committee, which may be expected to be in touch with conditions in the Church in general, be recognized in this.

4. To print the Rules for the Synodical Committee as revised at this Synod in the Supplements in the Acts of Synod, so that they may be readily accessible in up-to-date form.

Respectfully submitted,

R. L. HAAN,

J. GRITTER,

J. M. DYKSTRA,

A. WASSINK.

REPORT II.

REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE OF THE U. S.

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church,
to be held in Grand Rapids, June, 1936.*

ESTEEMED BRETHREN :

IT IS with a good deal of pleasure that we present our report to you at this time. Since last Synod, the Lord's Day Alliance of the U. S. has again tried to faithfully and persistently perform its work in the face of many obstacles and discouragements. Some of these discouragements could not be prevented. Due to the general depression of the last few years, the finances of the organization have suffered considerably. The churches have had (and still have) their own financial problems, and it is not surprising that the contributions for the Lord's Day Alliance have been reduced a good deal. Because of this condition the work has been greatly handicapped. The salary of the President has been reduced to \$1,500.00 per annum, while the salary of the General Secretary is \$3,500.00 at present. These salaries may seem somewhat out of proportion, but the President, John H. Willey, Ph.D., S.T.D., voluntarily consented to reduce his salary to \$1,500.00. The General Secretary, H. L. Bowlby, who is in charge of most of the work in the office as well as of the work at large, also consented to receive \$3,500.00 for the time being. The Board of Managers reluctantly accepted this voluntary reduction, but because of present circumstances acquiesced.

Speaking about the finances, we beg to report that the Lord's Day Alliance of the U. S. has a Board of Finance, of which your representative is chairman. Mr. George M. Thompson, a prominent attorney of the city of New York, is the treasurer of the Alliance. Every month a financial statement is sent by the office to every member of the Board of Finance. At its October meeting the budget for the following year is prepared to be submitted to the Board of Managers at its annual meeting in December. The budget for the year 1936 amounts to \$10,350.00.

Another discouraging element, that always enters into the work in the Kingdom of God, is the failure on the part of the churches to fully appreciate the importance of the work that is done, or that is to be done; and the powerful forces that try to oppose it. The American Churches are gradually drifting away from the observation of the sacred day of the Lord. It becomes more and more a day of recreation and of sport. Even in our own denomination we begin to see signs, that point in the same direction. It is but natural that churches that fail to uphold the sacredness of the Day of the Lord, are becoming lukewarm to all efforts that are put forth to keep this day "a Holy Day."

And then, also, it can be expected that all efforts in behalf of the Lord's cause will meet with opposition from the world. The Lord's Day Alliance of the U. S. is no exception in this respect. The more it tries to demand respect for the Lord's Day by means of its publications in magazines or pamphlets and books and speeches, the more it uses its influence to enforce the Sunday laws on the statutes of the various States, and to prevent the passage of laws that would completely open the way to commercialize the Sunday; the more it meets with opposition and criticism. This, however, is to be expected, and may be regarded as a healthy sign.

During the last three years some animosity and criticism developed from a source from where it was not expected. The attacks which resulted were not so much directed against the Alliance as against some of its personnel. It came from two men who seemed to have some personal grievances against the General Secretary, Dr. Bowlby. Since the rumors of this unpleasant and unwarranted attack reached even the floor of our Synod in 1934, we thought best to refer to it in our report at this time.

Two individuals who had some personal grievances against Dr. Bowlby, influenced the Newark Conference of the M. E. Church to appoint a committee of investigation. The said Conference actually did appoint a Committee of Seven for that purpose. In the meantime, while this Committee was collecting its material, one of these two individuals proceeded to organize an independent Sunday League in New Jersey, of which he himself became the State Secretary, his son the Assistant Secretary, his son's wife the bookkeeper, his front room the office, at a total cost, including his auto expenses, of about \$10,000 per annum. In order to obtain these funds, an active campaign

was started in New Jersey, with the slogan, "All the money raised in this state is to be spent in this state." Of course. The officers of the L. D. A. were told that they were not permitted to speak in any of the New Jersey churches. Several ministers in New Jersey were asked to serve as Board Members of this new independent organization or League. Rev. J. M. Vande Kieft of Paterson was also asked to represent our Church. Of course, he refused. The propaganda campaign was accompanied with a good deal of "mud slinging" at Dr. Bowlby.

The special Committee of Seven of the Newark Conference of the M. E. Church requested the Board of the L. D. A. also to appoint a committee in order that a thorough investigation with respect to the grievances against Dr. Bowlby, and indirectly with respect to some of the policies of the L. D. A. might be made. The L. D. A. gladly accepted this request, and a committee was appointed of which your representative was named the Chairman. These two committees held several meetings. The results have been most gratifying. At least three things were accomplished:

- a) These meetings brought out clearly the honesty and the integrity of Dr. Bowlby as well as the malice behind the attempt to ruin his influence;
- b) They also revealed the fact that the unchristian charges against the General Secretary were without the least foundation;
- c) And the result was the withdrawal of all support to the new League by the Newark Conference. The charges were dropped, the committee discontinued, and the M. E. Church is still on the list of co-operating Churches and supporting the L. D. A.

The purpose of the L. D. A. is set forth in its constitution. It was embodied in our report to our last Synod. It is not necessary to repeat that now. The headquarters of the L. D. A. are in New York City, at 156 Fifth Ave. It has affiliated organizations in various states of the Union. It is the object of the L. D. A. to have similar organizations in every state. In connection with the 47th anniversary of the L. D. A. in December, 1935, telegrams have been received so far from 14 state organizations expressing good-will and hearty co-operation with the L. D. A. Undoubtedly some of these messages will appear in the L. D. A.'s publication: "The Leader."

Your representative, who serves as member of the Board of Directors, has been to most every meeting of said Board. There are no expenses connected with his attendance of these meetings. He has kept a record of all the transactions of the Alliance. The influence of this organization is growing and expanding, notwithstanding the difficulties which it has encountered. The churches begin to manifest renewed interest in the work of the L. D. A. Are the world conditions, and the signs of the times responsible for this? Let us hope and pray that a much-needed revival of interest in the Day of the Lord may be in the making.

Brethren, we have given a rather lengthy report. Our instructions required us to give a full report of the activities of the L. D. A. This we have tried to do. It is our earnest desire and prayer that the L. D. A. may continue to be one of the great agencies of the churches for "the preservation of the first day of the week as the time set apart for rest, worship, religious education, and the service of God."

We therefore recommend the Lord's Day Alliance of the U. S. to the continued moral and financial support of the Chr. Ref. Church. And may it also share in our prayers.

We understand that representatives will have to be appointed for the next two years, if our Church continues its relation with the Alliance. At present Dr. H. Beets serves as an Honorary Vice-President, and Rev. J. J. Hiemenga as member of the Board of Managers.

Respectfully submitted,
J. J. HIEMENGA.

REPORT III.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE FOR STUDY OF THE PHRASE REFERRING TO "SCHOOLS" IN ARTICLE 41, CHURCH ORDER

To the Synod at Grand Rapids, June, 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

YOUR committee finds its mandate stated on page 137 of the Acts of 1934, where it is charged to give Synod an answer to the following three questions presented by Classis Sioux Center in its overture:

- a) Which schools are meant in the question under Article 41?
- b) What does the expression, "Scholen onderhouden" (English revision of 1930, "support the cause of the Christian Schools") signify? Does this refer to having and supporting a local school or co-operating in support of schools outside of the sphere of the local church, as Calvin College and Seminary or some other school?
- c) What is Classis to do about it if in its judgment a consistory does not support such schools according to its ability?

Right here your committee should call attention to the fact that in the ground added to this recommendation by the Preadvisory Committee and adopted by Synod reference is made to Art. 21, and it is stated that the "question of the relation of the Church to the School is raised" in the overture of Sioux Center. However, your committee understands its mandate to include reference to Art. 21 and a discussion of the question of the relation of the Church to the School, only in so far as the above three questions and the interpretation of Art. 41 involve these matters. If Synod desired an extensive discussion of the whole question of the relation of the Church to the school in all its ramifications, it should have given that as a definitely circumscribed, separate mandate and not have attached it as a "rider" to another charge.

(a) Which schools are meant in the question under Article 41? A historical study of the pronouncements of the famous Synod of Dordt of 1618-'19 and of the synods that preceded it would seem to point unmistakably to the fact that the Reformed Church of that day meant by the "scholen" in the question in Art. 41 (the use of which dates way back to these Synods) mainly, if not exclusively, what we might today call the common school where the bulk of our covenant children receive their general education. The Acts of Wesel 1568, Dordt 1574, Dordt 1578, Middelburg 1581, The Hague 1586, and especially Dordt 1618-'19, all refer emphatically to the duty of the church to concern itself with the "cause of the Christian Schools." But in every case the reference is to the schools where the children are educated in reading, writing, music, and the knowledge of the Catechism, and the emphasis is upon the duty of the church to see to it that there are good school teachers appointed who are able to teach the Catechism.

The emphasis in these early Acts is uniformly upon the school training that was common to all the children, therefore to what today is called common school education. Roughly that would correspond to the primary and grammar and high school education as it is being given today. For at present there is no hard and fast line of demarcation separating the grammar school from the high school. In the 6-3-3 system the one fades into the other. It is all just one system. And in the measure in which college training were to become the common privilege of all the youth in the future, in that measure even the college would have to be grouped under the same head. Professional theological training in the Seminary and the directly preparatory training in the College is, in the opinion of your committee, not emphasized in this question. Reference to this special task of the Church is to be found elsewhere in the Church Order.

Accordingly, in the opinion of your committee the term "scholen," or, as the new version of 1930 reads in English, "the cause of Christian Schools," refers to the Christian primary and grammar and high schools (or Academies) where the bulk of our children get their general school education as distinguished from technical and professional schools, while the college would fall under the question of Art. 41 in the measure in which it might become the common instrument of a general education.

(b) What does the expression, "scholen onderhouden" or "support the cause of Christian Schools," signify?

We may remark that what follows under "b" in the formulation of the question by Sioux Center ("Does this refer to having and supporting a local school or co-operating in support of schools outside of the sphere of the local church, as Calvin College and Seminary or some other school") really belongs under "a" and has already been answered.

Your committee does not hesitate to state as its interpretation of the question that "onderhouden," "support," includes the duty of the consistory to do what it properly and wisely can do in bringing such schools into existence whether in the immediate locality of the church or in the larger circle of the group of churches. In fact, the English version, "support the cause of Christian Schools," is very comprehensive and does not suggest any geographical limitation. Nor need we limit ourselves to our own community provided the primary emphasis is, of course, on the cause of Christian Schools within the local church and immediate vicinity. There is no good reason why, as an emergency measure, a consistory cannot itself proceed to call a Christian School into existence, though, as a rule, experience will teach that, if a consistory is able to do it, it will be equally able to induce a group of parents to do it, and this latter method is by far the wiser and the sounder.

Your committee believes that the word "onderhouden" "support," refers primarily to moral support and only secondarily to financial support as a matter of emergency, and then only to an extent. That is evident from history. In the 16th and 17th centuries the schools were supported entirely by the state while the choice of teachers and supervision over the instruction was left largely to the churches, their consistories and especially their ministers.

The primary emphasis of the question therefore seems to be: Is your consistory whole-heartedly and unreservedly back of the cause of the Christian schools? Do you use all legitimate means to propagate the cause? Do you defend and promote the cause in personal conversation, family visiting, from the pulpit and in every way you can? Do you promote the cause by word and also by example? (See Acta 1934, Art. 162, pp. 167, 168.)

No doubt the question must also include the thought of a measure of financial support in time of need. But such support can only be asked as a matter of emergency, and to an extent. For if the Church were to assume complete

financial support the school would really become a church school.

The Committee of Preadvice of 1934 calls attention to the fact that the question of the relation of the Church to the school is raised in this overture on the question under Art. 41. That is true to an extent, that is, to the extent that the question under Art. 41 indicates the duty of the consistory to support the cause of Christian schools. Beyond that this question does not properly go and beyond that a study of this question cannot properly go either. A larger study of the mooted question of the right and duty of the Church to exercise some kind of supervision over the religious instruction in the school would not properly come under Article 41 but it undoubtedly would belong to a study of Article 21, where the Consistories are charged with the responsibility to see to it that there are *good* Christian schools, etc. It seems quite evident that Article 21 involves the need of some kind of supervision established possibly by mutual agreement, whereby it will be possible for the consistory to assure itself that the schools it supports are *good* Christian schools. However, though Art. 21 is presupposed in Art. 41 and is in part basic to its interpretation, this particular phase of the relation of the Church to the School is not properly a part of the question under Article 41.

Accordingly, in the opinion of your committee, the expression "onderhouden," "support," here means that it is the duty of the consistory to use every proper means to the end that a Christian school may be established where it does not already exist, and to give whole-hearted and unreserved moral backing to existing Christian schools and a measure of financial help in case of need.

(c) What is Classis to do about it if, in its judgment, a consistory does not support such schools according to its ability?

In the opinion of your committee, Classis should continue earnestly to admonish such a consistory publicly in its classical meeting and privately through the church visitors until it truly repents.

A. S. DE JONG,
N. YFF,
H. KUIPER,
F. DOEZEMA,
P. A. HOEKSTRA.

REPORT IV.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE IN RE' A SEMINARY COURSE FOR EVANGELISTIC WORK

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church,
convening at Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 10, 1936.*

ESTEEMED BRETHERN:

THE instruction given to your Committee as found in Article 141, page 125 of the Acts of the previous Synod, reads as follows: "A *Seminary Course for Evangelistic Work.*" The Synod of 1932, as part of its evangelistic program, gave to the Faculty of Calvin Seminary the following mandate: "Synod instruct the Faculty of Calvin Seminary to draw up, in consultation with experienced evangelistic workers, a course of study with a view to special evangelistic work, and that, as soon as it has received the approval of Curatorium, this course be offered temporarily by the present Faculty, (Acts 1932, p. 20, B).

"The Faculty, as is evident from a letter received from this body, saw difficulties in the way, and felt that at the present time it could not proceed to carry out the instruction received from Synod. It also asks for further clarification by Synod of the mandate given to the Seminary Faculty.

"Your Committee advises that a Committee be appointed which, together with representatives of the Faculty, is to study the question whether such a course is feasible, and to report to the next Synod. Adopted."

The letter of the Seminary Faculty referred to in that minute, requested clarity concerning the meaning of a statement in the minute of the Synod of 1932, instructing the Faculty of the Seminary to draw up "a course of study with a view to special evangelistic work." The ambiguity in that statement relates to the following matter. Did the Synod of 1932 have in mind a course of study only "for prospective Evangelistic Ministers" as the Committee in re Missionary Training and Bible School proposed, or did that Synod intend a course to which also lay evangelistic workers were to be admitted? This clarification, requested by the Seminary Faculty, was not given by the Synod of 1934.

Instead, the Synod of 1934 appointed the present Committee "to study the question whether such a course is feasible and to report to the next Synod."

Your Committee finds itself confronted with the same difficulty as the Seminary Faculty expressed, and cannot proceed to determine whether such a course is feasible until this ambiguity is removed. It therefore recommends that Synod of 1936 express itself upon the question whether a course of study with a view to special evangelistic work is intended only for prospective evangelistic ministers, or one open also to lay evangelistic workers, and that Synod inform the Calvin Seminary Faculty of its decision.

In case the statement is intended to refer only to "prospective Evangelistic Ministers" (which means, as we understand it, those who wish to specialize, as future ministers, **in mission work**), the question as to the feasibility of such a course of study should in our judgment be referred to the Seminary Faculty. The addition of either elective or graduate seminary courses, devoted to missions, would involve the consideration of various relationships of these proposed courses to the undergraduate curriculum and to the graduate courses now offered, before definite action could very well be recommended to the Board of Trustees or to the Synod. Your Committee was assured by those Professors of Calvin Seminary who are members of our Committee, that several subjects available for a course of study for prospective evangelistic ministers are already being offered. This information is corroborated by the current Calvin Seminary catalogue.

Respectfully submitted,

Your Committee,
Y. P. DE JONG,
H. H. MEETER,
L. BERKHOF,
M. J. WYNGAARDEN,
W. VAN PEURSEM.

REPORT V.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON BIBLE SCHOOL FOR LAY WORKERS

*To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church,
in session at Grand Rapids, Mich., June, 1936.*

ESTEEMED BRETHREN :

YOUR Committee in re "Missionary Training and Bible School" (See Acts of Synod 1934, Art. 96, 1V, 2-3) begs leave to submit the following Report —

Inasmuch as Synod had instructed its COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION to open a BIBLE SCHOOL in Grand Rapids for experimental purposes and to make the experiment "in connection with the Missionary Training and Bible School and to be represented on the Board of Directors of that School — your committee at once sought contact with the Committee on Education in order to combine the two Schools, if possible.

The Committee on Education delegated the brethren Dean Rooks and the Rev. W. Stuart to act as Directors on their behalf and were so received by the committee.

The combined group set about at once to organize one school that was to combine the Bible School, specifically aiming at the training for Sunday School work — with a Training School for Lay Workers. In the closest and most harmonious coöperation the new School was launched under the name of BIBLE TRAINING SCHOOL FOR LAY-WORKERS.

Since Synod had conditioned the establishment of this School so that no expense for the denomination was to be incurred, the committee decided to begin the institution with volunteer workers. Selecting the men according to their various ability for the courses to be taught, your committee found readiness in the brethren to render their services free of charge.

The following Curriculum was adopted:

I. BIBLICAL STUDIES

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Biblical Introduction and Contents | One hour per week for 3 years |
| 2. Biblical History | One hour per week for 2 years |
| 3. Biblical Archeology | One hour per week for 1 year |

II. SYSTEMATIC STUDIES

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Christian Doctrine | One hour per week for 2 years |
| 2. Controversy | One hour per week for 1 year |

III. MISSION STUDIES

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. History of Missions | One hour per week for 1 year |
| 2. Principles of Missions | One hour per week for 1 year |
| 3. Education Psychology | One hour per week for 1 year |
| 4. Personal Evangelism (Theory and Practice) | One hour in class and one hour in the field |

IV. EXPRESSION STUDIES

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Homiletics | One hour per week for 1 year |
| 2. Elocution and Song Leadership | One hour per week for 1 year |

V. SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDIES

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Sunday School Lesson | One hour per week continuously |
| 2. Sunday School Pedagogy | One hour per week for 1 year |

A three-year course was mapped out as follows:

FIRST YEAR 1934-1935

- Tuesday, 7:30 p. m. Biblical Introduction and Contents (Old Test.).
Rev. W. Stuart.
8:15 p. m. Sunday School Lesson. Prof. H. Schultze.
9:00 p. m. Sunday School Pedagogy. Prof. H. VanZyl.
- Friday, 7:30 p. m. Christian Doctrine. Rev. H. Bel.
8:15 p. m. Biblical Archeology. Rev. H. VerDuin and Rev.
M. Arnoys.
9:00 p. m. Biblical History. Mr. Kooistra.

SECOND YEAR 1935-1936

- Tuesday, 7:00 p. m. Song Leadership. Mr. H. Brandt Rose.
7:30 p. m. Biblical History. Mr. R. Postma.
8:15 p. m. Principles of Missions. Prof. S. Volbeda.
9:00 p. m. Christian Doctrine. Rev. H. Bel.
- Friday, 7:30 p. m. Biblical Intr'n and Contents (O. Test.). Rev.
W. Stuart.
8:15 p. m. Educational Psychology. Dr. G. Goris.
9:00 p. m. The Sunday School Lesson. Prof. H. Schultze.

THIRD YEAR 1936-1937

- Tuesday, 7:30 p. m. Church History.
8:15 p. m. Sunday School Lesson.
9:00 p. m. Controversy.
- Friday, 7:00 p. m. Elocution.
7:35 p. m. History of Missions.
8:15 p. m. Homiletics.
9:00 p. m. Personal Evangelism and Practice.

On Oct. 16, 1934, the School was formally opened at Calvin College. A large enrolment showed the need of and the interest in the School.

A tuition fee of \$1.00 per course was charged to defray unavoidable expenses. At the close of the school year the treasury showed a balance after the teachers had been allowed a small remuneration and a donation of \$25.00 was made to Calvin College.

In view of the establishment of similar schools in other communities your committee would advise Synod to charge the Committee on Education to draw up a plan for the interrelation of these schools and for their synodical supervision in the matter of courses of study, terms, textbooks, credits, teachers, etc.

Respectfully submitted,
your committee ad hoc,
W. STUART, *Secr'y.*

REPORT VI.

CHRISTIAN REFORMED JEWISH MISSIONS

To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1936.

ESTEEMED FATHERS AND BRETHREN:

SHORTLY after the 1934 session of Synod, the Reverend J. L. Van Tielen was taken out of this life to his eternal reward. He was the trusted and faithful treasurer of the General Fund for Jewish Missions. He had served in this capacity since 1920. In his passing our Church has lost the services of one intimately acquainted with Jewish Mission work.

The undersigned, having been appointed alternate to the deceased by the last Synod, immediately took charge of the Fund. The books were audited and since that time the receipts have been distributed in accordance with the decision of the last Synod.

We are happy to report that the work has been carried forward at both Chicago and Paterson Missions. This is due to the response of our people to the call made upon them in the providence of God. We earnestly request their continued support, hoping to receive more liberally should God prosper them in their undertakings.

We regret having to report that neither one of our Missions was able to put on full time those who had been placed on half time for financial reasons. Consequently they were unable to put on an additional lady worker for which Synod had given its approval in case funds were available. This is regrettable, for the workers are needed.

We are thankful to have received as much as we did for this work. We did not receive according to the assessment. The last Synod reduced the assessment to seventy-five cents per family. Fifty cents for Chicago, and twenty-five cents for Paterson. Had this been paid we should have received a little more than twenty-six thousand dollars from July, 1934, to December, 1935, a period of eighteen months. To date, after seventeen months, we had received almost two-thirds. This has made necessary further salary reductions in the Chicago Mission. The Paterson Mission was unable to pay off a note of nine hundred dollars.

In spite of these difficulties we have gone forward. Though the response is not great the seed is being sown. The missionaries believe there are secret believers who fear to come forward because of resultant persecution from their own kind. The field is large. There are millions of Jews. There is ample room for expansion. But there is need for more workers. For these we need more funds. If we can raise the seventy-five cents we should do much more.

During the past year we have been notified that we are beneficiaries under the will of Mr. Henry Schaafsma of Grand Rapids, Michigan. No information is available as to the amount. The will is now in probate.

Considering that there may be others who consider this cause as worthy of their bequests, we suggest to such the following form:

"I devise, give, and bequeath to the Christian Reformed Board of Missions, the sum of.....Dollars, to be applied to mission work among the Jews, as, and wherever carried on by the Christian Reformed Church."

Commending this cause to God for His blessings and to the Church for her prayers and her offerings,

I am respectfully your Treasurer,

PETER HOLWERDA.

November 29, 1935.

REPORT VII.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION OF CHURCHES IN CHINA

(Appointed according to the Acts of Synod of 1934,
Article 169, 19)

THE history that resulted in the appointment of this Committee is recorded on pages 137-139 of the Acts of the Synod of 1934, under number XV of the Report of the Pre-Advisory Committee on Church Order and Emeriti Matters. We shall briefly recount it.

At its June meeting in 1934, the Board of Missions resolved to inform Synod as follows:

“Since an overture from one of our Classes on the subject appears on the Agenda of Synod, the Board expresses itself as being delighted to turn over to Synod the above mentioned report on the subject of Church organization in China. Furthermore it suggests to Synod that a Committee be appointed to be composed in part of members of the Board and in part by outsiders to deliberate on conclusions to be placed before our Synod of 1936.”

The Pre-Advisory Committee seconded this suggestion, and the Synod adopted it.

This action was taken in view of the fact, that the overture and the report of which the above resolution of the Board speaks, advocated conflicting policies in the matter of church organization in China, and since the adoption of the overture would mean taking a step contrary to the advice of our own Chinese Mission Force, which should not be done except after deliberate consideration of the matter.

The overture, which came from Classis Pella, urges Synod to declare, that our missionary ministers of the Word are called to prepare for the organization of such churches (viz., on our mission field) with the understanding, that they be organized as Christian Reformed churches and continue in union with our church group. The report of our China Mission Force to the Board advised “the linking up of our future churches, as soon as possible, with the Chu

Huei (Classis) of the Church of the Elders in China, commonly known as 'The Presbyterian Church of Christ in China'."

From this history it appears, that this Committee has to deal with a report on the subject of Church *organization* in China; but it also appears, that this Committee has to prepare conclusions to be placed before our Synod of 1936, which are to help Synod to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problem of church *affiliation* in China. In fact, it is on this subject of affiliation, that the overture from the Classis and the report of the Mission Force advocate conflicting policies. The Committee is of the opinion, that its task is to be found in connection with the problem of church affiliation, and that all other matters connected with church organization can be left to one side as hardly mentioned by the report of the Mission Force, and as tabled by the Synod till the matter of affiliation shall be settled (p. 139 of the Acts).

With regard to church affiliation in China, our China Mission Force has always consistently advocated what is essentially the same policy as formulated in its report to the Board in 1934. Since 1924, our churches have been informed of the fact, that the Mission Force was advocating that policy, as can be seen from the synodical Acts of that year, page 270. Objections to the soundness of that policy have never before been brought to the attention of Synod. Even the overture of 1934 raises no such objections whatever, but merely states what in the absence of all supporting grounds must be qualified as a subjective desire. The desire as such can be very well understood, but is hardly sufficient to determine a policy.

Nevertheless we do not advise the adoption by Synod of the policy advocated by the Mission Force at this time, but rather the continuance of an attitude of watchful waiting. The considerations which have led to this judgment are the following, which fairly well cover the entire situation which we face with respect to the problem of church affiliation on our China Mission Field:

I. On the Chinese Mission Field of the Christian Reformed Church the organization of churches ought, as a matter of course, to proceed in harmony with the principles of Reformed church polity. This applies equally to the formation of local churches and to their fellowship and affiliation.

II. Concerning conditions in general in China and on our Mission Field in particular, our churches and Synods normally receive their information through our mission force on the field, and only very extraordinary circumstances could suggest the feasibility and necessity of going back of that information. In the determination of what the application of Reformed principles in the matter of church organization and fellowship in China demands, great weight should therefore be attached to the judgment of our missionaries, and wide discretion should be allowed them, in order that they may not be unduly hampered in the guidance of the Chinese Christians that are entrusted to their care.

III. When our missionaries gather believers in China, it is as natural as it is in harmony with Reformed principles, that they affiliate with that Church, of which the missionaries themselves are members. When such believers have become sufficiently numerous and strong to desire and receive organization in self-supporting and self-propagating churches of their own, such churches will, with the same inevitableness, have a very distinctly Christian Reformed origin and stamp.

IV. Even though our missionaries may organize Christian Reformed churches, there is, in view of the formidable barriers which the providence of God has reared between us and the Chinese, no ground for the expectation that something approaching an exact duplicate of our Christian Reformed Church life here will arise in China. What may be expected, if the Lord grants the organization of Chinese churches to our missionaries, is, that those churches will live in closer contact with our Church than with any other group of Occidental churches. But ecclesiastical fellowship to the extent in which our churches are enjoying that privilege amongst themselves will from the nature of the case be impossible of achievement.

V. It will be thoroughly in line with Reformed principles, that such churches seek the closest possible cooperation with one another and with all other churches that are actually Reformed in creed and government. And, as long as the truth of God is not curtailed, it is not in the nature of Reformed principles, to dispute the right of such churches to seek such ecclesiastical cooperation and connection (*kerkverband*) as is agreeable to their geographical location, their national character, their historical background, and their very distinct language.

VI. The "Elder's Church of Christ in China" (Chung Hua Chi Tu Chiao Chang Lao Hui), a small group of presbyterially organized Chinese churches that have resisted absorption in the large and inclusive "Church of Christ in China" and are continuing their ecclesiastical life independently in six presbyteries, seem at the present time to satisfy fairly well the requirements for Reformed cooperation in the ecclesiastical field. However, the instability of conditions in China and the uncertainty of the effects of a possible future relaxation of the bond between these churches and the missions that have fostered them forbid all prognostication as to whether this will also still be the case when our missionary endeavors shall be crowned by the organization of native churches.

May the Lord graciously guide Synod in this as well as in all other matters.

Respectfully submitted,

H. KEEGSTRA,

D. H. KROMMINGA,

S. VOLBEDA,

H. BEETS,

J. C. DE KORNE,

H. A. DYKSTRA.

REPORT VIII.

FINAL REPORT OF THE PSALTER HYMNAL COMMITTEE

To the Synod of 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

WE have the honor herewith to submit to you the final report of the committee charged with the preparation of our new book of praise.

The last synodical decisions respecting the material to be included in this book were made at the synod of 1934. The full committee met several times after synod adjourned while the sub-committee met once a week for such detail work as proof-reading and the preparation of Indices. Regarding the latter, the preparation of the *Index of Subjects* in particular consumed much time. It was our aim to prepare an index which would be neither too broad nor too limited to enable our ministers, and others who find this part of the book helpful, to find their way rather easily and quickly among the 468 numbers of Psalms and Hymns. We have refrained from making the index as exhaustive as that of the *Psalter* since there has been a rather common complaint that the latter compelled the user to examine too many numbers. We believe that a reference to, let us say, six numbers which plainly and directly bear on a certain subject is much more serviceable than the indication of twice or thrice that many selections when their connection with the subject is in a number of cases only casual or remote. But if synod would prefer to have a somewhat broader index of subjects, this could be taken care of in subsequent editions at a not very great expense.

It will be almost impossible for us to report all the details which had to be taken care of in preparing our new book of praise for the press. We trust synod will not expect this. We also feel confident that it will be understood that as the work progressed decisions had to be made on matters which we would have preferred to submit to synod. In an undertaking of this sort, problems arise which cannot be foreseen and which require im-

mediate action. In a few instances the committee made changes of an important nature, which we feel should be reported, realizing that we were but servants of synod, having no authority of our own.

First, the committee took the liberty to include among the closing hymns the familiar "May the Grace of Christ our Savior." (No. 463.) It was not on the list of hymns we had previously presented to synod for approval, because no member of the committee thought of suggesting it. But since many of our congregations have been using it for years, with evident satisfaction; since its presence in *The Psalter* and its use in our churches has never been challenged at any classical or synodical gathering; and since the contents are unobjectionable and especially suitable for a closing song, your committee took the liberty to include it in the Psalter Hymnal. We are sure that it will become a great favorite with our congregations, especially because of its union with the popular but good tune *Converse*.

One other closing number was not included in the selections from *The Psalter* which we recommended for retention, namely 466. It is an excellent doxology to which the tune *Winchester Old* is very well suited. The words are those of No. 411 in *The Psalter*. As such they already had the approval of our Church. The committee selected this number not only because of its worth as a doxology but also to fill out page 528, only half of which could be covered by the short response, *Hear Our Prayer, O Lord*.

Number 406 is the only other hymn in our praise-book whose text was not submitted to synod for approval. It is one of the most beautiful of the hymns for children, deeply spiritual in its sentiment, and at the same time thoroughly sound from the point of view of our covenant doctrine. After the adjournment of the synod of 1934, your committee discovered that the brevity of number 405 would compel us, either to leave one half of page 460 blank — this would not look well at all — or to eliminate this hymn. The latter would reduce our number of baptism-hymns to two. This, in connection with the fact that the number of recommended selections for hymns appropriate for baptism was really too small, led us to cast about for a fitting selection which would fill only half a page or one and one half page. One was found in the hymn, *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us*. We hope synod

will see its way clear to approve this action, in spite of its irregularity. We feel sure that no one will find fault with the contents of this hymn — and its fine tune makes it a favorite with our people.

In the Agenda, Part I, for the synod of 1932, your committee recommended the retention of No. 404 of *The Psalter*. Subsequently we tried to find a better tune for this number but were not successful. Good tunes for the so-called Hallelujah Meter (H. M.) of that selection are rare. Finally the committee decided to substitute the *Bible Song* version of Psalm 148 for that number. This is now No. 321 in our new book of praise. It is a stirring song and bids fair to become one of the most popular of its selections.

The first edition of the Psalter Hymnal appeared in the month of January, 1935. The minutes of our meeting of Feb. 7, 1935, article 3, read as follows: "Mr. Buiten reports in re progress of sale of the book. Orders for more than 15,000 copies have been received from approximately one-third of our churches. Received as information." To this we can add that the entire first edition of twenty thousand books was sold before the end of that month — long before all the books were shipped to us. This was gratifying indeed; but there was another side to the story. The sub-committee had no time to go over the first edition carefully before the second went to press. Again twenty thousand copies were ordered. Let us add that at the time of this writing (December, 1935) only seven thousand copies are left. Meanwhile the sub-committee is still scanning the book to see where improvements can be made when it will appear necessary to order a third edition. Those who have seen the second edition have no doubt observed that its cover is more beautiful than that of the first. It is just as strong and in addition moisture and moth proof. We can also say that we ordered the strongest possible binding which the manufacturers, the Haddon Craftsmen of Camden, New Jersey, were able to make.

No doubt the Publication Committee which was charged with the publication of the Psalter Hymnal, will report to synod on the material and financial side of this work. We should like to state that our dealings with this committee have been most agreeable and that we are very thankful for their excellent coöperation.

In the *Foreword* of the Psalter Hymnal the following statement is made by your committee: "A list of the textual changes which the committee has made in the hymns will be printed in the Acts of the Synod of 1936 for possible future reference." We expect to give this list to the clerk of synod after it convenes and would urge its preservation in the Acts.

* * * *

An important part of the Psalter Hymnal is the supplement, containing our Doctrinal Standards (including the ecumenical creeds), the Form of Subscription, and our Liturgy.

Before the Synod of 1934 your Committee's time was largely taken up with the Psalter Hymnal part of the book. This required a tremendous amount of labor. We also spent a great deal of time in preparing a thorough revision of the translation of the Heidelberg Catechism and those Liturgical Forms which were not revised by the Liturgy Revision Committee. Synod graciously received our work, and after making a few alterations suggested by the Advisory Committee, adopted the revised translations and authorized us to include them in our new praise book. We did not find sufficient time, however, to make a thorough study of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, but suggested a number of changes in the translation of these documents, nearly all of which were adopted by Synod, together with some alterations proposed by the Advisory Committee.

In preparing the final copy of all this material for the press, as well as in reading and correcting the proofs, we have conscientiously striven to include all the changes adopted by Synod, and to keep the book as free from errors as possible. As we were engaged in this work, which compelled us to give careful attention to every little detail, it was inevitable that we should discover a number of inaccuracies which up to this time had escaped our attention, and we felt constrained to make a few corrections and improvements which we shall now submit to the approval of Synod. These changes were mainly of two kinds:

First, those suggested by a comparison of the English text with the original. The Advisory Committee of the Synod of 1934 had already called attention to the fact that it had practically restricted itself to a scrutiny of the changes proposed by us, and that it did not in any way pass on the

correctness of the rest of the text (Acts 1934, p. 155). Of course, there was no time to do this during the sessions of Synod. The result was that in the preparation of this material for the press we found a considerable number of errors, particularly in the translation of the Canons of Dort, which until now had received but little attention. When these concerned only minor matters of grammar or diction, we did not hesitate to make the needed correction. But what to do when a comparison of the English text with the original Latin and/or Dutch versions clearly showed an inaccuracy in translation, an omission of words found in the original, or an addition of words not found in the original? Your Committee did not feel justified in allowing such incorrect or awkward renderings to pass into a book which no doubt will be used by our churches for a quarter of a century or longer. If these corrections and improvements were to be made, *now* was the time to make them, before the metal plates for printing the book were manufactured. After careful consideration of the matter, your Committee decided to make these corrections and to report the complete list to the Synod of 1936.

Second, those suggested by the new edition of the Dutch *Psalmboek*. Shortly after our Synod of 1934, the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands adopted an improved edition of the Liturgical Forms. A copy of this was obtained by your committee as soon as possible, before sending our manuscript to the press. We found most of the changes adopted by these churches to be of a minor, but also a few of considerable importance, the latter particularly in the Form for the Ordination of Ministers. Your Committee, having carefully considered the improvements made by the mother churches in the Netherlands, could not resist the temptation to include them in our version of these Forms, in the confident expectation that our Synod will approve them.

As we now submit our work to Synod's approval, it is well to bear in mind that your Committee has not unalterably committed our churches to any rendering adopted by us. We have already mentioned the fact that only about 7,000 copies are left of the second edition of the Psalter Hymnal. In a very short time we shall have to make preparations for issuing a third edition. If Synod does not approve all of our renderings, or desires to make further improvements in the text, changes can be made in the plates at comparatively little expense at that time.

We shall now take up each of the Doctrinal Standards and the Liturgical Forms in the same order as they appear in the Psalter Hymnal, and report the changes made by us. Many of these, no doubt, are very trivial, hardly worth reporting, but we feel that in an authorized edition of official documents even apparent trivialities should be subjected to close scrutiny.

There are, however, a few matters pertaining not to one, but to several of these documents, to which we desire to call attention before taking up each document separately:

1. We have taken the liberty, not only in the Confession, but also in some of the other documents, e. g., in the Collection of Prayers, to divide very long paragraphs into two or more shorter paragraphs (cf. e. g., in the Confession Art. IX, XII, etc.). We feel sure that this change will commend itself to all.

2. It should also be borne in mind that we have changed all quotations from Scripture to conform to the American Revised Version, except in a few passages in which this Version is not in accord with the sense conveyed by the Creed or Liturgy. In such cases the Authorized Version was retained, and this was indicated by the addition of the letters: A. V. This matter, however, does not again need Synod's approval because it is according to the instructions we received in 1934.

3. All quotations from Scripture, it will be noted, have been printed in italics. In cases of indirect or free quotations it was sometimes very difficult to decide whether to italicize or not, but in such cases we have generally followed the example of Rutgers' edition.

4. The critical reader will observe that in a few cases we have made a slight change in the word order of a sentence, for the sake of obtaining a better sentence construction. To save space, we shall not report such slight alterations which do not at all affect the meaning of the sentences.

5. In regard to capitalization we have tried to be consistent. Pronouns referring to the Deity have been printed with a capital, except in quotations from Scripture, which does not capitalize them. The word *Church* has been capitalized when it refers to the Church in general, but not when it means a local congregation. In some cases, however, the decision whether to capitalize or not was not easy. But — we have done our best.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. The headings above the Articles, as far as we were able to discover, were never officially adopted by any Synod. They are not found in the original French, but do appear in later Latin, Dutch, and English editions. Because of their undoubted usefulness, we have retained them, somewhat simplified, e. g. by the omission of the word *that* (cf. Art. I, VIII, X, etc.) and the word *of* (cf. Art. III, XII, XIII, etc.). We also made a few other changes, to make them conform to the Rutgers' edition (cf. Art. XII, XIII, etc.).

2. All the corrections adopted by the previous Synod have been inserted, but we are sorry to say that the word *also* in the last clause of the first sentence of Art. V was overlooked by us. This clause should read: *and also because they carry the evidence*, etc.

3. In Art. V, last line, *fulfilling* was changed to *being fulfilled*.

4. In Art. VI, *do in neither do we consider* was changed to *may*. The Dutch has *mag*.

5. In Art. VI, *for in for the truth is above all* was changed to *since*.

6. In Art. XI, *the* was inserted before *Son*.

7. In Art. XXIX, *she, her, and herself*, referring to the Church, were changed to *it, its, and itself*.

8. In Art. XXX, *policy* was changed to *polity*.

9. In Art. XXXI, *indecent* was changed to *improper*. The Dutch has *onbehoorlijk*.

10. In Art. XXXV, next to the last sentence, *excited* was changed to *moved*. (Perhaps *prompted* would have been still better.)

11. In Art. XXXVII, fifth line from the top of p. 21, the clause: *being immortal, shall be tormented* was changed to: *shall become immortal, but only to be tormented*, in harmony with the Dutch: *zullen onsterfelijk worden, doch in zulker voege, dat het zal zijn om gepijnigd te worden*.

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

As will be recalled, a thorough revision of the translation of the Catechism was submitted to Synod's approval in 1934, and adopted. No additional changes suggested themselves.

In the matter of proof-texts from Scripture, your Com-

mittee has followed the Dutch edition of Rutgers rather than the old English edition. The former contains many texts in addition to those found in the latter. We hope that this change will be found an improvement, even though we do not guarantee that every text under every answer is pertinent. In fact, we believe that there is further need of improvement here. This or a future Synod might well charge a committee with the task of reviewing and improving the lists of proof-texts in our Catechism.

CANONS OF DORT

As already stated, this document had received but scant attention before the Synod of 1934. We had made a hasty review, but could not devote the proper amount of time to a study of the text. And even now, altho in proof-reading we discovered and tried to correct a number of errors, we desire to repeat the statement of the previous Synod's Advisory Committee that we do not in any way pass on the correctness of the rest of the text. We suspect that there are more inaccuracies than we discovered. We are sure that the English style might be greatly improved. A thorough revision of the translation of this important document would surely be in order.

In addition to the few corrections proposed by your Committee and adopted by Synod in 1934, which have been incorporated in the text, we list the following corrections and improvements:

1. In the headings of the various chapters we have omitted the word *of*. Present day usage does not require either *of* or *on* here.

2. The heading of the first chapter: *Divine Predestination* was changed to: *Divine Election and Reprobation*, in conformity with the official Dutch edition: *De Goddelijke Verkiezing en Verwerping*. (Later, however, we discovered that the official Latin edition has: *De Divina Praedestinatione*. It is a matter of choice. Both are official. We have followed Rutgers.)

3. In Chap. I, Art. 6, next to the last line, the word *it* has been inserted as the object of the verb *wrest*.

4. In Chap. I, Art. 8, as well as in some other Articles and in some of the Liturgical Forms, the word *the* has been inserted before *New Testament*.

5. In the same Article, the word *to* has been inserted before *glory* and before *the way*. The Latin has it: *ad*

gratiam et ad gloriam, et ad salutem et ad viam salutis. Also the Dutch: *tot de genade en tot de heerlijkheid, tot de zaligheid en tot den weg der zaligheid.*

6. At the close of the same Article, the proof-texts *Eph. 1:4, 5; 2:10* have been added. Altho absent in the Latin, they are found in the Dutch edition.

7. In Chap. I, Art. 9, *according to that of the apostle* has been changed to *according to the testimony of the apostle*, in conformity with the Dutch: *naar het getuigenis des apostels.*

8. In Chap. II, Art. 4, the bungling translation: *This death derives its infinite value and dignity from these considerations, because the person . . .* has been improved as follows: *This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person . . .*

9. In the same Article, the word *moreover* has been inserted in the last clause, in conformity with the Latin *deinde* and the Dutch *daarenboven.*

10. In Chap. II, Par. 6, *has been minded of applying* was changed to *has been minded to apply.* (The Committee of Synod 1910, charged with the translation of the Rejection of Errors, rendered this clause: *has been desirous of applying.* The Committee of Synod 1912 changed *desirous* to *minded*, but evidently forgot to change *of applying* to *to apply.*)

11. In Chap. II, Par. 7, first sentence, there is an awkward and superfluous repetition of the words *did not die.* This repetition is not found in the original: *mori nec potuisse, nec debuisse, nec mortuum esse.* Neither is it found in the Dutch: *niet heeft kunnen noch moeten ster-ven, en ook niet gestorven is.* We have eliminated the repetition.

12. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 1, *and abusing the freedom of his own will* was changed to: *and by his own free will*, in harmony with the Latin: *et libera sua voluntate* and the Dutch: *en (door) zijnen vrijen wil.*

13. In the same Article, *entailed on himself* was changed to *became involved in*, a better translation of the Latin *contraxit* and the Dutch *over zich gehaald.*

14. In the following Article, the words *in consequence of the just judgment of God*, found in the Latin: *justo Dei iudicio*, and in the Dutch: *naar Gods rechtvaardig oordeel*, but missing in the old English edition, were added by your Committee.

15. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 4, the word *discovers* was changed to *shows*, a better translation of the Latin *ostendit* and the Dutch *betoont*.

16. In the same Article, the old English edition has some words not found in the original Latin nor in the Dutch, namely, *good order in society*. These seem to have been added by the English translator. We have eliminated them.

17. In the same Article, the words *and for maintaining an orderly external deportment* were simplified as follows: *and for good outward behavior*. The Latin has: *ac disciplinae externae*, the Dutch: *en tot uiterlijke tucht*.

18. In the same Article, next to the last line, the words *holds it* were changed to *hinders*, in conformity with the A. R. V. of Rom. 1:18.

19. In the following Article, *it discovers the greatness of sin* was changed to *it reveals the greatness of sin*, a better translation. Also in Art. 7 the word *discovered* was changed to *revealed*.

20. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 7, the first sentence has been greatly improved. The redundant phrase: *without any distinction of people*, has been deleted. It is found neither in the Latin nor in the Dutch. The object of *reveals* is not *himself*, but *it*, referring to *mystery*. The word *Testament* has been inserted after *New*. It is found both in the Latin and in the Dutch.

21. In the second sentence of the same Article, the words *making a* were deleted because superfluous and not found in the original. In the last sentence, the word *not* was changed to *but in no wise*. The Latin has *nequaquam*, the Dutch *geenszins*.

22. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 8, second sentence, *what will be acceptable* was changed to: *what is acceptable* (Latin: *quid sibi gratum sit*; Dutch: *wat Hem aangenaam is*). The word *all* has been deleted, because not found in the original. The words *should comply with the invitation* were changed to: *should come unto Him*. In the Latin this clause reads: *ut vocati ad se veniant*; in the Dutch: *dat de geroepen tot Hem komen*.

23. The last sentence of the same Article: *He moreover promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to him and believe on him* was corrected as follows: *He also seriously promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who*

come to Him and believe. The Dutch has: *Hij belooft ook met ernst allen, die tot Hem komen en gelooven, de rust der zielen en het eeuwige leven.* This is a correct translation of the Latin.

24. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 10, the words: *calls them effectually in time* were inserted (about the middle of the Article). They are found in the Latin: *eosdem in tempore efficaciter vocat*, and in the Dutch: *diezelfden in den tijd krachtiglijk roept*, but were omitted in the old English edition.

25. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 12, the first sentence has been recast, to conform to the Dutch: *En dit is die wedergeboorte, die vernieuwing, nieuwe schepping, opwekking van de dooden, en levendmaking, waarvan zoo heerlijk in de Schrift gesproken wordt, dewelke God zonder ons in ons werkt.*

26. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 13, the second sentence, a very bungling translation in the old English edition, has been cast into better English, without any change of meaning.

27. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 14, the words *upon him* were inserted after *conferred*, because *into him* does not agree with this verb.

28. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 15, the words *how can He be indebted to one* were inserted in the second sentence. They are found in the Latin: *quid debeat ei*, and in the Dutch: *wat zoude God dien schuldig zijn.*

29. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 16, the last sentence was made more readable, and brought into conformity with the Dutch: *En ten ware dat die wonderbaarlijke Werkmeester alles goeds in dezer voege met ons handelde . . . etc.*

30. In Chap. III-IV, Art. 17, the second part, beginning with: *Wherefore, as the apostles . . . etc.*, has been considerably improved, and brought into conformity with the Latin and the Dutch. We call attention especially to such a bungling translation as the following: *so even to this day be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church . . . etc.* The Dutch reads: *alzo moet het ook nu verre van daar zijn, dat diegenen, die anderen in de gemeente leeren, of die geleerd worden, zich zouden vermeten God te verzoeken . . . etc.* We rendered this as follows: *so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God . . . etc.* Note also, in the last sentence, this: *the more eminent usually is this*

blessing of God working in us, a very poor translation. The Dutch has: *des te heerlijker vertoont zich ook de weldaad Gods, die in ons werkt*. We translated: *the more clearly this favor of God, working in us, usually manifests itself*. A few more changes were made in this Article, all of which, we trust, will commend themselves to any one who compares the old rendering with the new.

31. In Chap. III-IV, Par. 4, *For these are contrary* was changed to: *For these things are contrary*, in harmony with the Dutch: *Want deze dingen strijden*.

32. In Chap. III-IV, Par. 6, the word *continuous* was changed to *constant*. The Dutch has *standvastig*.

33. In Chap. V, Art. 1, we found a very poor and even erroneous translation: *He delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life*. The prepositional phrase: *in this life*, does not belong with this clause, but with the following: *though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh*. And then, to correct this error, it is added: *so long as they continue in this world*, words that are not even found in the original Latin or Dutch! The latter reads: *die verlost Hij wel van de heerschappij en slavernij der zonde, doch Hij verlost hen in dit leven niet ganschelijk van het vleesch en het lichaam der zonde*. We translated: *He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh*. Besides correcting this error, we also improved the word order in this Article.

34. In Chap. V, Art. 2 has been altered considerably in construction and diction, but no change was made that in any way affects the meaning. We believe that the critical reader, who compares the new with the old rendering, will find improvement here.

35. In Chap. V, Art. 3 was in need of correction. We inserted the words: *also because of*, as a translation of the Dutch: *ook vanwege*. Further, *the temptations of sin and of the world* would not do as a translation of the Latin: *mundi ac Satanae tentationes*. This should be: *the temptations of the world and of Satan*. And finally, we deleted the words: *a state of*, because not found in the original, and substituted the word *that* (Latin: *ista*).

36. In Chap. V, Art. 4, a few small changes were made. *Satan, the world, and the flesh*, was changed to: *the flesh, the world, and Satan*, as in the original. *Fall into these*

evils was changed to: *are drawn into these evils*, as a more literal translation of the Latin *abripiuntur* and the Dutch *vervoerd worden*.

37. In Chap. V, Art. 5, *on their returning into the right way* was changed to: *when they change their course*, a more exact translation.

38. In Chap. V, Art. 6, *melancholy falls* was changed to: *grievous falls*. The words: *or against the Holy Spirit*, were inserted because found in the original Latin and Dutch.

39. In Chap. V, Art. 9, *whereby they arrive at a certain persuasion* was changed to: *whereby they surely believe* (Dutch: *waarmede zij zekerlijk gelooven*; Latin: *qua certo credunt*). *They experience forgiveness of sins and will at last inherit eternal life* was changed to: *they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal* (Dutch: *zij hebben vergeving der zonden en het eeuwige leven*; Latin: *habere remissionem peccatorum et vitam aeternam*).

40. In Chap. V, Art. 10, the words *or earnest* were deleted because not found in the Latin nor in the Dutch.

41. In Chap. V, Art. 11, *they are not always sensible of* was changed to: *they do not always feel* (Dutch: *niet altijd gevoelen*; Latin: *non semper sentire*).

42. In Chap. V, Art. 13, *maintain an assurance* was changed to: *keep the assurance* (Dutch: *de verzekerdheid behouden*). The faulty construction of the clause: *lest by abusing His fatherly kindness, God should turn away . . .* etc., was corrected as follows: *lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away . . .* etc. The clause: *to behold which is to the godly . . .* etc., was placed between parentheses, as in the Latin and the Dutch.

43. In Chap. V, Art. 15, *the faithful* was changed to: *the believers*. *Spouse* was changed to *Bride*. *To continue this conduct* was changed to: *so to continue*.

44. In Chap. V, Par. 5, the word *very* was inserted before *constant* (Latin: *constantissimus*; Dutch: *zeer standvastige*).

ECUMENICAL CREEDS

No changes in addition to those adopted by the Synod of 1934.

FORM OF SUBSCRIPTION

No changes in addition to those adopted by the Synod of 1934.

INTRODUCTION TO LITURGY

While engaged in proof-reading, we noticed that the mechanical make-up of the book would leave page 72 blank. We utilized this space by inserting a brief historical and explanatory introduction to our Liturgy. This is hereby submitted to Synod for approval.

CHRISTIAN PRAYERS

No changes, except that long paragraphs have been divided into shorter ones.

FORM FOR THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS

No changes in the Form as adopted by the previous Synod, except these:

1. The last clause of the paragraph explaining infant baptism: *and parents shall be bound to give further instruction herein to their children as they grow up*, was justly criticized by some of our colleagues as bringing this paragraph to a rather lame ending. We changed it as follows: *and as they grow up, the parents shall be bound to give them further instruction in these things.*

2. The word order of the first question to the parents was improved.

3. The answer of the parents: *I do*, was changed to: *We do*. Father and mother jointly undertake this responsibility, except in case only one of the parents is a confessing member.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

No changes of any importance, except that we substituted *profession* here and in the following Form for *confession*. Present day usage favors *profession* in this connection. We say *confession of sin*, but *profession of faith*.

FORM FOR THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS

The introductory paragraph, printed in italics, was not found in the old English edition. We translated it from the official Dutch edition, and inserted it.

In the Address to the person to be baptized we deleted the word *privately* from the clause: *in which you have been privately instructed by us*. It is no longer found in the latest official Dutch edition, adopted in 1934.

Your Committee would have preferred to delete the answer: *I do*, below the first, second, third, and fourth question, and leave it only under the fifth. This has been

done in the latest official Dutch edition. But we feared to take too much liberty. We hereby propose that this be done in the third edition of our book, which will soon be needed.

FORM FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

No changes in the Form as adopted by the previous Synod, except the following, mostly of minor importance:

1. In the third part of the self-examination the word *neighbor* has been put in the plural, to conform to the Dutch *naasten*.

2. In the paragraph beginning: *But this is not designed* etc., the words: *in the Lord* have been deleted. They are not found in the original.

3. In the paragraph beginning: *Besides, by this same Spirit . . .* etc., we made a correction in the translation. This sentence should not be hortatory: *Let us by this same Spirit also be united . . .* etc., but declarative: *By this same Spirit we are also united . . .* etc.

4. In the prayer we changed the clause: *we practice the glorious remembrance*, to: *we exercise the blessed remembrance* (Dutch: *wij oefenen de heerlijke gedachtenis*).

FORM FOR EXCOMMUNICATION

No changes in addition to those adopted by the Synod of 1934.

FORM FOR READMISSION

No changes in addition to those adopted by the Synod of 1934.

FORM FOR THE ORDINATION OF MINISTERS OF GOD'S WORD

1. In the first paragraph the words: *installed in this church*, and *installation* have been inserted between parentheses, to be used when installing one already in the ministry.

2. In the first paragraph explaining the requirements of the office of the ministers we have added a sentence from the latest official Dutch edition: *Mede is hun ambt het zaad der kerk in de leer des heils te onderwijzen, de leden der gemeente aan hun huizen te bezoeken, en de zieken te vertroosten met Gods Woord*. We have translated this as follows: *It also belongs to their office to instruct the children of the church in the doctrine of salva-*

tion, to visit the members of the congregation at their homes, and to comfort the sick with the Word of God.

3. In the third paragraph of the same section we have simplified the construction by omitting the quotations from Scripture. This is also done in the latest Dutch edition.

4. In the fourth paragraph of the same section we have inserted the words: *with the elders*, again in conformity with the latest Dutch edition: *met de ouderlingen*.

FORM FOR THE ORDINATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

No changes except that the redundant expressions (*set an example, be exemplary, and be models*) in the first sentence of the paragraph beginning: *To fill worthily so sacred an office*, have been removed (cf. Acts of Synod 1934, p. 292). The sentence now reads: *To fill worthily so sacred an office, the elders should set an example of godliness in their personal life, in their home life, and in their relations with their fellow-men.*

The same tautology has been removed in the paragraph pertaining to the deacons.

FORM FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PROFESSORS OF THEOLOGY

In the second question the professor-elect was requested to declare that he accepted the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church as *the purest interpretation* of the doctrine of salvation. Was not this asking too much? It is very well conceivable that a professor-elect might consider e. g. the Westminster Confession and Catechism as of equal purity. Hence we changed this expression to: *a pure interpretation*.

In the old edition this Form ended very abruptly. We have taken the liberty to give it a more appropriate ending, in words taken from the Form for the Installation of Ministers, words which are fitting also on this occasion.

FORM FOR THE ORDINATION OF MISSIONARIES

No changes, except that the words *to arise* have been deleted from the second paragraph. They are not found in the Form for the Ordination of Ministers. Why should a missionary be requested to stand during the reading of the Form? The Form is read for the benefit of the whole congregation.

FORM FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE

No changes in addition to those adopted by the Synod of 1934.

* * * * *

Herewith we can close our report. We have tried to give a faithful account of our stewardship. Our task involved a great amount of painstaking labor, but it has been to us a labor of love. Imperfections cleave to it. No one is better aware of that than we ourselves. But we are happy with the enthusiastic reception our churches have given to our new praise book, and at the general satisfaction with it expressed by our people. May the Lord's blessing rest upon its continued use for many years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

THE PSALTER HYMNAL COMMITTEE,

H. J. KUIPER, *Pres.*,

D. ZWIER, *Sec'y*,

H. J. VAN ANDEL,

S. SWETS,

H. DENKEMA,

J. B. HULST.

REPORT IX.
REPORT OF THE SYNODICAL COMMITTEE
IN RE BIRTH CONTROL

To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church:

ESTEEMED BRETHERN:

IN ANSWER to the threefold mandate (see Acta 1934, p. 127) given your committee with respect to the practice or mal-practice of *birth control*, your committee has the honor to report as follows:

A. We have made as exhaustive a study of the subject as was practicable, from the physical, social, moral, and Biblical viewpoints. Dividing the committee into four groups, reports were prepared on these four captions. We determined, however, not to lay these before Synod because in our estimation they offer no satisfactory solution and no approved course of conduct in general.

B. In regard to "reported findings" your committee is of the opinion, since the problem has complications so numerous and involved, that it is the part of wisdom not to make any definite pronouncement, for fear that this would serve rather to confuse the issue, leading to false conclusions or to increasingly worse practices.

C. As to preparing a "Testimony" it is our view:

- 1) That contraceptive advice and practice as found today, are a *blight* on the church, the nation, society and the personal spiritual life, and are to be deplored and severely condemned.
- 2) Yet the actual conditions resulting from the fall of the race into sin demand a serious recognition of the real need of *planned* conception.
- 3) That the Church should not take an official stand through Synod, since it is a problem of individual nature, and it belongs pre-eminently to the medical profession. If personal advice is needed the individual can best be served by the guidance of the pastor or the advice of a physician who honors God's law.
- 4) That in our opinion the interest of our people would be best served if individuals, moved by personal conviction, should produce and publish articles, pamphlets, or books on the subject.

Respectfully submitted,

Your Committee ad hoc,

J. J. WEERSING, DR. H. RYSKAMP, DR. G. J.
STUART, DR. J. MULDER, D. D. BONNEMA.

REPORT X.
REPORT ON THE DIVORCE QUESTION
Bouma-Hendriksen Report

O U T L I N E

- A. Introduction.
 - Our mandate and mode of procedure.
- B. The 1890/1908 Position Stated and Analyzed.
- C. The 1890/1908 Position and Its Implications Vindicated from Scripture: Five Questions Discussed.
 - I. Does Scripture accord any right of divorce or of remarriage to persons who are guilty of violating the covenant of marriage?
 - A. Deut. 22:22.
 - B. Deut. 24:1-4.
 - C. Mal. 2:16.
 - D. John 8:3-11.
 - E. Four Parallel Gospel Passages.
 - F. Conclusion.
 - II. What is the status of the innocent person in a legitimate divorce? What is the status of the innocent person in an illegitimate divorce? Has that innocent individual the right to contract another marriage? If so, under what conditions?
 - Exegesis of Mat. 5:32.
 - III. Does the fact that the innocent party has been freed from his marriage obligations necessarily mean that the guilty party has also been freed?
 - IV. If marriage is begun in adultery, is it also continued in adultery?
 - V. What is the ecclesiastical status of persons who have made themselves guilty in the matter of divorce and remarriage? Is it proper and biblical to readmit them to church membership upon confession of their sin?
- D. The 1890/1908 Position Confirmed by the Testimony of History and Theology.
 - I. Testimony of authorities that only the innocent party in a legitimate divorce has the right to remarry.
 - II. The stand of other churches in our country on membership of illegitimately divorced and remarried parties.
- E. The 1890/1908/1934 Position Vindicated over against Current Objections.
 - Six Objections discussed.
- F. Advice to Synod.

To the Synod of 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN :

A. INTRODUCTION

THE Synod of 1934 by a large majority (43 to 25) re-jected the advice of the Majority Report to the effect that all unbiblically divorced and subsequently remarried persons could enjoy the full rights and privileges of membership in the Church if only they sincerely repented of and confessed their sins on this score, regardless of the fact whether they continued in their present marriage

during the lifetime of their original marriage partner.

By this decision Synod decisively repudiated a position which had been proposed for some years and which, if adopted, would have been a reversal of decisions on the subject taken by the Synods of 1890 and 1908. Synod next took up the advice of the minority report, which proposed "to reaffirm the deliverances upon the status of persons divorced and remarried made by the Synods of 1890 and 1908, and to declare that a person divorced on non-biblical ground and remarried during the lifetime of the other marriage partner cannot enjoy the privileges of membership in the Christian Reformed Church so long as the present marriage union continues or the original marriage partner continues to live," with three exceptions, however, which were there and then specified.

In the ensuing discussion some uncertainty was expressed about the proposed exceptions. From the previous decisive vote it was clear that Synod would undoubtedly have adopted the advice of the minority opinion (in all probability with an equally decisive vote) if it had not been for the uncertainty about some or all of these proposed exceptions. Now this uncertainty was not surprising when one remembers that this element had been quite new in the discussion on divorce in recent years and had not been before the attention of the Church very long, seeing the divorce reports had been published in Part II (not in the earlier Part I) of the Agenda. In view of this fact, the author of the minority report himself suggested the advisability that Synod, having taken such a decisive step forward in this matter, now decide to give the Church two years more to come to maturer judgment on the minority opinion and the propriety of all or any of its proposed exceptions.

After some discussion Synod decided to lay the minority advice on the table and "to appoint a Committee to consider the practical application of the principle adopted by the Synod of 1890 and reaffirmed by the Synod of 1908, this Committee also to consider the minority report and both the reports of the Pre-Advisory Committee of this Synod, and to present its conclusions to the Synod of 1936." (Acts 1934, p. 146.)

The Committee appointed consisted of the following brethren: Rev. Z. Sherda, Rev. W. Hendriksen, Rev. G. Hoeksema, Dr. C. Bouma, and Prof. D. H. Kromminga. At the first meeting of the Committee the Secretary re-

ported that he had received a letter from Prof. Kromminga stating that after he had served for some years on synodical divorce committees, and after the 1934 Synod had taken the stand which it did, he felt he should not continue to serve the Church in this capacity, hereby withdrawing from the Committee. Although an effort was made to induce Prof. Kromminga to serve, the Committee did not succeed in this endeavor. Consequently our Committee at no time actually consisted of more than four members.

A number of meetings were held at which the issue was discussed. But it soon became evident that, owing to a fundamental difference of conviction on the subject of divorce and remarriage, the possibility of presenting a united advice did not exist. Two of the brethren apparently found themselves out of harmony with the decision of the 1934 Synod, which had rejected the advice of the majority group, and equally out of sympathy with the decisions of the 1890 and 1908 Synods. The other two members, the undersigned, finding themselves in agreement with all three of these synodical decisions, herewith present their report to your honorable body.

The question arises how our Committee can best carry out the synodical mandate. It is clear that our main task centers on the study of the meaning and application of the principle adopted by the 1890 and reaffirmed by the 1908 Synod. Besides this we were also charged to "consider the minority report and both the reports of the Pre-Advisory Committee of this Synod."

No doubt the most effective and most helpful way to proceed in this report is to take our point of departure in the 1890/1908 decision; analyze this position; subject it (together with proposed counterpositions) to a critical study in the light of the teaching of Scripture; and formulate the definite implications which this position has with a view to an ecclesiastical stand on the question of church membership of the parties concerned. The elements raised in the Pre-Advisory reports will then also come up for discussion in their appropriate place. Also the agreement (or, possibly, disagreement) with the Minority Opinion presented to the 1934 Synod will then become apparent.

We have followed this procedure. Moreover, we have gone into an extensive and careful exegesis of the Scripture passages bearing upon this subject. It will be of

interest to Synod to know that this exegesis (though agreeing at all points with the Minority Judgment of 1934) is no repetition of the argument found in that document. In fact, the exegesis here presented was not drawn up by that member of your present Committee who offered the Minority Opinion in 1934, though he is in hearty agreement with it. What we offer Synod at this time is an entirely new and independent exegesis of the relevant passages in the Word of God with a view to substantiating the soundness of the 1890/1908 position of our Church.

The importance and value of such a study must be apparent. Again and again it has been contended by both sides that everything ultimately hinges on the teaching of Scripture on this subject. One might possibly argue that, seeing Synod has decisively rejected the position of the Majority Committee presented to the 1934 Synod, there is no need to show the scripturalness of the 1890/1908 position and the unscripturalness of the position rejected in 1934. However, it must not be forgotten:

(a) That, although the 1934 Synod did decisively reject the majority position, it has not positively expressed itself on the position it does hold to be scriptural.

(b) That one of the chief points at issue between the Pre-Advisory majority committee at the Synod of 1934 and the Pre-Advisory minority opinion (Rev. Henry Baker) at that Synod (both of which reports our Committee has been charged to consider) hinges on the question as to what Scripture teaches and what we have a right to conclude on this matter from an alleged silence of Scripture.

(c) That we have every reason to expect at this time that the other two members of this Committee will present an opinion to Synod which will disagree with the stand of the 1934 Synod.

(d) That even now in the Church at large propaganda is being made for the position which was rejected by the 1934 Synod and arguments for its alleged unscripturalness are being circulated to consistories.

(e) That an entirely new and independent exegetical investigation (which does not repeat the argumentation as presented before) must be conceded to have a value of its own at this stage of the problem in our Church, the

more so if it takes its point of departure from the 1890/1908 position.

We hence proceed to offer a study of the 1890/1908 stand of our Church in the light of the Word of God and then shall try to determine what this position implies for our stand as a Church at the present time.

B. *THE 1890/1908 POSITION STATED AND ANALYZED*

The decision of 1890 is found in the Acts of that year, art. 66, and reads as follows: "Een andere vraag uit het Agendum komt aan de orde: 'Mag een man van wien de vrouw zich wettig liet scheiden omdat hij overspel be-dreef, ingeval hij bij het leven zijner eerste vrouw weer in het huwelijk treedt, lid der Gemeente zijn?' De Synode antwoordt ontkennend."

The Synod of 1908 in reaffirming the decision of 1890 added the following grounds:

"Zulk een man kan geen lid der Gemeente zijn, omdat zijn overspel wel zijn beleedigde vrouw heeft vrijge-maakt, maar niet hem. Hij bleef desniettemin voor God aan die vrouw gebonden, en zijn tweede huwelijk is mitsdien een leven in overspel. Ware dit niet zoo, dan stond voor ieder de weg open, om door overspel zich van zijn wettige vrouw te bevrijden, en een ander, die het voorwerp is van een overspelige begeerte, te huwen, en toch in vrede met de kerk te blijven, door nadat alles met goddeloos opzet geschied is, door een openbare belijdenis zich met de kerk te verzoenen. De spits van de godde-lijke ordinantie: Wie zijn vrouw verlaat anders dan om hoererij, die doet overspel, ware dan afgebroken; zij ware van haar kracht beroofd. Er zou, naar de wijze der Schriftgeleerden, een weg gevonden zijn om Gods gebod te ontduiken, en een besluit dat zoo iemand wel lid der gemeente kon zijn, zou het karakter dragen van een in-stelling waardoor God's gebod krachteloos wordt ge-maakt."

Briefly analyzed, this decision of 1890/1908 contains the following elements:

First, Synod definitely affirmed that the man who was the guilty party in a legitimate divorce committed adul-tery when he contracted a second marriage while his former, that is, real wife, was still living. Notice in this connection that the question whether or not the first wife married again does not enter into the decision at all.

Yet the decision very clearly implies that the second marriage contracted by the *innocent* woman does not give the *guilty* husband a right to remarry. The decision plainly states that as long as the first wife lives — whether married or not married — the *guilty* man has not the right to enter upon a second marriage.

Secondly, the Synods of 1890 and 1908 definitely affirmed that the second marriage entered upon by the guilty party in a legitimate divorce is a "living in adultery." The marriage, begun in adultery, is continued in adultery. The adultery does not cease with the initial act of contracting a new marriage but continues.

Thirdly, the Synods of 1890 and 1908 definitely took the stand that such an adulterous person who, while his former mate is still living, has married again and is living with another consort, cannot be a member of the church.

This position of the Synods of 1890 and 1908 is still the official position of our denomination. Grounds:

First, No Synod has ever rescinded the decisions of 1890 and 1908. Hence, they stand. (Cf. art. 31 of the Church Order.)

Secondly, The Synod of 1934, by a very substantial majority, rejected the advice of the Majority Report, an advice which was in direct conflict with the 1890/1908 decision and would have superseded it in case it had been adopted.

Thirdly, the Synod of 1934 in its mandate charges the committee to study "the practical application of the principle adopted by the Synod of 1890 and reaffirmed by the Synod of 1908," thereby clearly implying that these decisions are still binding for our Church today.

C. THE 1890/1908 POSITION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS VINDICATED FROM SCRIPTURE

The decision of 1890/1908 suggests the following questions:

(1) In the light of Scripture, does the guilty party in a legitimate divorce commit adultery in contracting a second marriage as long as the first partner is still living, regardless of the question whether or not the latter has remarried?

Again, does the guilty and responsible party in an illegitimate divorce commit adultery in contracting a

second marriage even though the innocent party has already remarried?

The two questions may be reduced to one:

Does Scripture accord any right of divorce or of remarriage to persons who are *guilty* of violating the covenant of marriage?

(2) What is the status of the innocent person in a legitimate divorce?

Again, what is the status of the innocent person in an illegitimate divorce? Has such an innocent person the right to contract another marriage? If so, under what conditions?

(3) Does the fact that the innocent party has been freed from his marriage-obligations necessarily mean that the guilty party has also been freed?—In other words, is legal divorce a leveling force which equalizes the rights of the innocent and the guilty?

(4) If a marriage is begun in adultery, is it also continued in adultery?

(5) What is the ecclesiastical status of persons who have made themselves guilty in the matter of divorce and/or remarriage? Is it proper and biblical to readmit them to church-membership upon confession of their sin?

THE FIRST QUESTION

I. DOES SCRIPTURE ACCORD ANY RIGHT OF DIVORCE OR OF REMARRIAGE TO PERSONS WHO ARE GUILTY OF VIOLATING THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE?

The answer to this vital question should be based upon a careful and thorough exegesis of biblical passages. Any argumentation which is not thus grounded is invalid. We shall consider several pertinent passages:

A. Deut. 22:22: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away the evil from Israel."

As this translation is correct and undisputed, it will not be necessary to enter into that aspect of the exegesis.

Now, in connection with this verse, observe the following:

(1) This passage insists upon the inviolability of the marriage-covenant.

(2) The *guilty* person, referred to in this passage, does

not have the right, nay not even the opportunity, to divorce his wife and to enter upon a second marriage. The adulterous individual is not spoken of as having any further rights with respect to marriage. The death-penalty is inflicted. This is true both with respect to the adulterous woman and her paramour. Surely, if they had been in the possession of any rights with respect to future marriage, the opportunity would also have been granted.

(3) In order to have the proper background for the study of the N. T. passages on marriage and divorce we must remember that this law, inflicting the death-penalty upon adulterers, was on the statute books of the Jews till the year 30 A. D., when the death-penalty was abolished owing to Roman jurisprudence. (Cf. *Jerusalem Talmud San. 41 a and San. 18 a, 24 b.*) — It was, therefore, binding, though not generally enforced, during Christ's ministry. This fact must be borne in mind constantly in explaining N. T. passages.

It is clear, therefore, that this passage does not support the position which accords to the *guilty* person the right to divorce his partner and, under certain conditions, to contract a second marriage. (Cf. paragraph D.: John 8:3-11.)

B. Deut. 24:1-4.

This passage requires thorough exegetical study. It is usually assumed that it institutes the right of divorce. However, careful analysis proves that this view is at least doubtful. The text should be read according to the original. If this be done, it will soon be discovered that it is hardly correct to maintain that the right of divorce is here instituted.

Deut. 24 does *not* say: You may divorce your wife; but, by not expressing itself in a direct manner it negatively and passively "suffers" or "tolerates" such a divorce-practice to continue for the time being; while at the same time, by throwing stumbling-blocks in the path of the seeker after a divorce it indirectly though very definitely discourages this evil custom. Strange as it may sound, the law of Deut. 24 simply does not make any direct statement with respect to the right of a husband to divorce his wife.

Faulty reading of the original is responsible for much of the confusion which has arisen.

Notice, for example, the following erroneous versions: American Standard: "When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." Notice the words: "he *shall* give her a bill of divorcement."

Similarly, the Authorized Version has: "then *let him* write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand and send her out of his house."

The German translation is similar: "so soll er einen Scheidebrief schreiben, und ihr in die Hand geben, und sie aus seinem Hause lassen."

These translations accord to the dissatisfied husband the moral right and duty to divorce his wife for a reason short of adultery.

A careful examination of the original, however, dispels this entire idea. It clearly establishes the fact that this law does not institute the positive moral right of divorce. The passage which we are studying does not say, and should not have been translated to say: "he shall give her a bill of divorcement," or "let him give her a bill of divorcement," as if this were right and proper, but what it does say is this: "If . . . a man divorces his wife and she marries another, then he (the first husband) may not, later on, take her back to be his wife once more"

There is not a word in the original which resembles the statements: "let him write her a bill of divorcement let him send her out of the house"

Let us, accordingly, give an exact rendering of the original. It reads as follows:

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it shall be that she does not find favor in his eyes, because he has found some indecency in her, *and* he writes her a bill of divorce, *and* puts it into her hand, *and* dismisses her from his house, *and* she leaves his house, *and* she goes *and* becomes the wife of another man, *and* that other man hates her and writes her a bill of divorce, *and* puts it into her hand *and* dismisses her from his house, or if that other husband who took her to be his wife dies, *then* her former husband who sent her away shall not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is abomination to Yahweh."

We feel the difference at once. It is one thing to say: "Let him divorce her." It is an entirely different matter

to say: "Let him think twice before he divorces her, for let him remember that once she has been divorced and has married another, he is never allowed to take her back."

A certain school of Jewish interpreters readily gave to the passage the former interpretation. It is clear from the Sermon on the Mount and from Matt. 15:1-6 that these Jewish interpretations were often beside the real point of the law: "And he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? . . . And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition."

Our conclusion, therefore, is that this passage, though passively and for the time being tolerating the evil divorce custom and at the same time besetting it with every kind of hindrance, by no means institutes on behalf of the dissatisfied husband the moral right of divorce. I may "suffer" a child to play with matches, by not taking them away from him although I point out the danger of playing with matches. This passive sufferance does not necessarily mean, however, that I have given him the positive right to be thus engaged.

Our translation of the passage is also supported by Th. Meek in *An American Translation of the Bible* (Smith-Goodspeed).

Driver, in the *I. C. C.*, translates similarly. Says he: "Hebrew law, as remarked above, does not institute divorce, but tolerates it, in view of the imperfections of human nature, and lays down regulations tending to limit it and to preclude its abuse."

Accordingly, although the existence of an evil custom is recognized here, a moral right is not instituted.

But even if one should wish to argue that this right is here implied — a proposition which one should prove and not simply take for granted — the fact still remains that even on that assumption the "right" (?) is not granted to the guilty one. The husband, let it be remembered, has found "indecent" in his wife. She is the guilty party. Says Driver, in *I. C. C.*, "The expression rendered 'indecent' . . . lit. the nakedness of a thing, signifies most probably some improper or indecent behavior."

Our question was: "Does Scripture accord any moral right of divorce or of remarriage to persons who are guilty of violating the marriage-covenant?" The answer must be: Not on the basis of Deut. 24:1-4.

c. Mal. 2:16.

What is implicit in Deuteronomy is explicit in Malachi. Deuteronomy clearly *presupposes* that divorce is displeasing to the Lord. Hence, every kind of stumbling-block must be thrown in the path of the seeker after a divorce. Malachi *expresses* this thought in very clear language.

Whether we accept the usual rendering or that proposed by J. M. P. Smith and in part also by Keil and Delitzsch, the result, in general, remains the same. In both cases the displeasure of Jehovah with those who divorce their wives becomes clearly evident.

American Standard Version: "For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

The rendering proposed by J. M. P. Smith:

"For one who hates and divorces,"

Says the Lord God of Israel,

"Covers his clothing with violence,"

Says the Lord of hosts.

C. F. Keil adds the following significant remark: "We may render these words: 'He who puts away his wife covers his garment with sin,' or 'sin covers his garment.' The meaning is the same in either case, namely, that wickedness will adhere irremovably to such a man. . . ."

The question which we are trying to answer is: "Does Scripture accord any right of divorce or of remarriage to persons guilty of violating the marriage-covenant?" Upon the basis of careful study our answer must be: In none of the Old Testament passages is such a moral right or positive privilege admitted. In some it is absolutely rejected.

Marriage is inviolable; no one has the moral right to break this sacred covenant. If a person commits adultery, he is under no circumstances permitted to divorce his wife and to marry another. He is put to death. All his rights with respect to marriage cease completely. If he has not committed adultery but wishes to sever the tie because he discovers some indecency — perhaps indecent behavior — in his wife, even then, though the fault be on *her* side, he must beware lest he send her away. Let him remember that the rejected wife who marries another can never be taken back by her former husband. Let him

consider this carefully and think twice before he dismisses her. He who hates and divorces covers his clothing with violence. Divorce is displeasing to the Lord. Our Lord, referring to Gen. 2:24, summarizes the O. T. teaching on divorce in these words: "But from the beginning of creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two but one flesh. *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" Notice that in this passage the right to break the covenant of marriage, to commit adultery, and to marry another, is emphatically *denied!*

That the man who wantonly dismisses his wife would have the moral right, under certain conditions, for example, if she first enters upon a second marriage, to marry another, is nowhere taught. The contrary is definitely expressed: The *guilty* party has lost all his matrimonial rights. Marriage must remain inviolable. Divorce is displeasing to the Lord.

With this as a background we now approach the New Testament passages. In the Gospels there are especially five passages which contain the teachings of our Lord concerning marriage, adultery, and divorce. They are Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:8; and John 8:3-11.

d. **John 8:3-11.** (Cf. with paragraph a. of the preceding in which we discussed Deut. 22:22.)

Our present study does not require an investigation into the authenticity of this much-disputed passage. Though its authenticity has been called in question, its historicity is admitted by virtually all. We read:

"And the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery, and having set her in the midst, they say unto him, 'Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now, in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her?'"

The reference is clearly to Deut. 22:23, 24: "If there be a damsel that is a virgin betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them to death with stones; the damsel because she cried not, being in the city; and the man because he

hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away the evil from the midst of thee."

Notice the difference between Deut. 22:22, which we have discussed under I, A., and verses 23, 24. For the adulterous woman "married to a husband" (verse 22) the law prescribes death, but does not state the manner in which the death-penalty must be inflicted. But with respect to the girl who is "engaged" to be married and is therefore already called the "wife" of her husband-to-be (verse 24), the law is more specific. If she commits adultery she must be put to death *by stoning*. It is clear that John 8 refers to the case of such a "virgin betrothed to a husband." This follows from the statement of the Pharisees: "Now, in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. . . ." (Cf. C. Bouma, *Het Evangelie naar Johannes*, p. 115.)

Now the point which requires our careful attention is this, that Jesus is not represented as objecting to the validity of this Old Testament law. Not even when it prescribes death as the penalty for the adulteress who is not yet "fully" married. He objected not to the implications of the law but to the character of the judges who were about to administer it. (Cf. R. H. Charles, *The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce*.) Hence, our Lord, instead of telling us that adultery is not so bad, or that the law was too severe, turns his full attention to the individuals who were condemning this woman and he said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

By implication, therefore, Jesus clearly recognizes the validity of the Old Testament law, at least with respect to its fundamental principle, namely, that the covenant of marriage is inviolable, that the adulterous husband or "wife" (Deut. 22:24) is worthy of death, and that the adulterous individual has no further *rights* with respect to marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

This passage, accordingly, supports all the other Old Testament teachings and clearly indicates the continuity of divine revelation concerning marriage and divorce. Deut. 22:22-24 clearly underlies John 8 and here Old and New Testament unite in stressing the indissolubility of the matrimonial covenant.

We may, therefore, safely conclude that Jesus never would have countenanced the position that an adulterous husband, after having broken the marriage-tie, would

have the moral right, the positive privilege, to enter upon a second marriage. For further elucidation of this point we refer again to the work by Charles.

E. **Four Parallel Passages:** Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18.

Matt. 5:32; “but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress, and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.” In a later paragraph we shall give a careful analysis and a better translation of this passage. (See under question II below.)

Matt. 19:9: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”

Mark 10:11, 12: “And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery.” (See under question II below.)

Luke 16:18: “Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery.”

Notice that the Matthew passages contain the exceptive clause (“saving for the cause of fornication,” “except for fornication”); the Mark and Luke passages do not.

Now, on the basis of the omission of the exceptive clause in Mark and Luke, it has been argued (for example, by Roman Catholic theologians) that *every* divorce for *whatever* cause, including even adultery, is illegitimate. However, this interpretation fails to reckon with the O. T. historical background. We should constantly remember that in the days of Christ’s sojourn the law of Deut. 22 which required the death-penalty for adulterers was still considered valid, though not generally enforced. Hence, the question in the consciousness of the people was never: “Is a man permitted to divorce his wife on the ground of adultery?” Adultery — let it be remembered — was punishable with death. Any man had the moral right to dismiss his wife if she were an adulteress. Our Lord clearly accepted this position. It is assumed throughout the Gospels, as Charles (*The Teaching of the*

N. T. on Divorce) proves conclusively. One cannot understand the New Testament teaching on divorce apart from this definite Old Testament background.

The real question, however, which was a burning one, arose out of a Talmudic misinterpretation of the passage which we have discussed in detail in connection with the Deut. 24 passage (cf. I, B., above).

The Jewish interpreters were guilty of attempting, whenever possible, to remove the sharp edge of the law. Thus, for example, whereas the purpose of the O. T. law: "love thy neighbor as thyself" was to show how much one should love his neighbor, the Jews by omitting the words "as thyself" and substituting the words "and hate thine enemy" changed the meaning entirely, making it much easier to observe. — They were continually "nullifying the law of God for the sake of what had been handed down to them by human interpreters." (Cf. Matt. 15:5 and the Sermon on the Mount.)

They tried to do the same thing with laws concerning marriage or divorce. Whereas the real intention of Deut. 24 — as we have proved — was to check the divorce evil, the Jewish traditionalists modified the meaning in such a manner that the real point of the law was buried out of sight under a load of human statutes. Hence, entirely contrary to its real purpose, Deut. 24 came to be regarded as a positive permission or injunction to divorce one's wife. The only question which remained was: Does a man have the right to divorce his wife *for any trivial reason whatever*, for example, when she burns her husband's food in cooking — the view of the school of Hillel — or must the reason be a weightier one, for example, the discovery of indecent behavior in the wife — Rabbi Shammai's view. (Cf. article FAMILY in *Hastings Enc. of Relig. and Ethics*.)

That was the question in the minds of the Jews at the time of Christ's sojourn. In answer to that question Christ said: "Whosoever shall divorce his wife (that is, for any reason short of actual adultery; if she were an adulteress there would have been no question at all, for the Old Testament Law was perfectly clear on that score, prescribing death) whosoever shall divorce his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her."

Hence, the omission of the exceptive clause "except for adultery" should not surprise us at all. Mark and Luke which omit the exceptive clause are in perfect harmony

with Matthew which has it. What is implicit and to be understood in view of the historical background in Mark and Luke is explicit and definitely expressed in Matthew. It may be safely assumed that this exceptive clause — which, whether genuine or not, is always to be understood in view of the historical background — is authentic in Matthew. The real argument of textual criticism does not center in the question whether or not there is in Matt. 19:9 an exceptive clause, but in the exact reading of that clause. (Cf. A. T. Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the N. T.*, p. 219.) — Moreover, even if the Lord himself should never have expressly uttered this clause because during the days of his sojourn this was probably not necessary — adultery being punishable with death, certainly with dismissal — this very clause makes his meaning all the more clear *to us*. The words “except for fornication” serve to emphasize the fact that our Lord was thinking of persons who were inclined to divorce their wives for any cause whatever.

Altogether, therefore, the four passages teach that marriage is indissoluble for all offences short of adultery.

We are now ready to discuss the very significant passage: Matthew 19:3-10.

“And there came unto him Pharisees trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for *every cause*?” — In other words, is the school of Hillel right in its opinion? — The questioners assume that Jesus is going to take sides in the issue. Our Lord, however, does not fall into this snare. Instead of saying that the Law accords to someone the moral right to divorce his wife for this or that reason short of adultery, Christ reaches back to the real meaning of the law, namely, to teach the indissolubility of marriage. Hence, his answer is: “Have ye not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

In these words we have a clear and positive commandment against divorce.

But the Pharisees are not satisfied with this answer. “They say unto him: ‘Why, then, did Moses *command* to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?’”

Here again they are trying to set aside the law of God by their tradition. Of course, Moses never *commanded* husbands to divorce their wives! Christ, accordingly, at once rejects the false implication. Moses did not *command*, did not even positively institute the right of divorce on behalf of the individual who was dissatisfied with his wife, even though the fault was on *her* side. Says Jesus: "Moses, for your hardness of hearts *suffered* you to put away your wives." The meaning of this statement should now be very clear after our study of Deut. 24. Moses *passively suffered, or tolerated*, the evil divorce custom: he did not positively forbid it. Indirectly, however, he certainly discouraged it. To this statement are added the words: "But from the beginning it has not been so." From the very beginning there had been a positive ordinance of inviolable marriage. (Cf. Gen. 2:24.) — Hence, if one wishes to know what is the positive O. T. institution concerning marriage and divorce, he must not refer to Deut. 24 but to Genesis. In the beginning there was a positive ordinance. That command was never repealed. Christ does not repeal it either, but very definitely affirms it by saying: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery."

Now, this passage gives a very clear and definite answer to the question which we are trying to answer. It definitely teaches the following:

(1) The husband by putting away his wife and marrying another is guilty of the sin of adultery.

(2) The third party in marrying the divorced wife is guilty of the sin of adultery.

(3) The wife, by remarrying, is guilty of the sin of adultery.

It deserves emphasis that according to this passage the marriage of the injured wife to another by no means gives the *guilty* husband the right to contract a second marriage. On the contrary, without any modification we are told: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery."

Jesus does not say: "The man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery . . . *except in the case where the wife has first remarried.*" Nothing of the

kind. No, without any qualification whatsoever he teaches that the guilty individual in an unbiblical divorce commits adultery when he marries another.

Hence, to maintain that, under certain conditions, the guilty party has the moral *right* to contract a second marriage is a flagrant contradiction of the very simple meaning of the passage which we have studied. Jesus says: Such a guilty individual, when he marries another, commits adultery. No other interpretation is possible.

And yet — strange to say — another interpretation has been attempted. The Majority Report to the Synod of 1934 actually maintained that according to Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 the *guilty* party (the adulterous wife) has a right to contract a second marriage after she has been dismissed by her husband. We shall discuss Matt. 5:32 (a very important passage) under our next general heading (question II below). We shall confine ourselves to Matt. 19:9 for the present.

Now to the unbiased reader this feat of exegesis will appear strange, indeed. He will say, no doubt, Matt. 19:9 merely tells me that a man who divorces his innocent wife commits adultery; that the man who marries the wrongfully divorced wife also commits adultery; and that the man who divorces his adulterous wife does not commit adultery. Moreover, he will say: If even the innocent wife who has been wrongfully divorced by her husband is not permitted to marry another, then certainly the *adulterous* wife does not have this right. — The Majority Report, however, reaches exactly the opposite conclusion. According to it the *innocent* wife has *not* the right to marry another, but the *guilty* wife *has* the right to do so! The adulterous wife becomes the privileged character!

The argument upon which this conclusion is based runs as follows: Jesus said: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." Hence, "Whosoever shall put away his wife because of fornication and shall marry another, does not commit adultery: and he that marrieth that adulterous woman does not commit adultery either. Hence, also that adulterous woman does not commit adultery when she marries another." (See Majority Report, Agenda of 1934, Part II, p. 244.)

Now, the error in this reasoning is obvious. The text

simply does not make any statement at all about the *rights* of an adulterous woman nor about the rights of anyone who marries an adulterous woman. We ask the reader to examine once more Matt. 19:9, to study it diligently, and to see whether it contains any statement about the rights of the guilty!

Again, let us look at it as a proposition of formal logic.

Here are three statements:

(1) A man may not dismiss his *innocent* wife.

(2) Another man may not marry that *dismissed* wife.

(3) The man, first mentioned, may dismiss his *adulterous* wife.

Is it true that now the conclusion must be: THEREFORE: Another man may marry *the adulterous wife*?

We feel at once that the "conclusion" which was drawn is erroneous and does not at all follow from the premises. In the premises nothing at all is said with respect to the rights of an adulterous wife, and nothing at all is said concerning the rights of another man with respect to a wife who committed adultery during her first marriage. How, then, can the "conclusion" consist of a statement concerning these so-called "rights"? Surely, from the point of view of logic, this argumentation fails completely.

We quote from the Minority Report to the Synod of 1934:

"But now does it follow that, in the case of divorce for adultery, that is, in case the condition contemplated in the exceptive clause should obtain, that then each one of the above affirmations becomes a negative? So that the conclusion would be that the husband by putting away his wife and marrying another does *not* commit adultery, and the third party by marrying the divorced adulterous wife does *not* commit adultery, and the adulterous wife herself in so remarrying does *not* commit the sin of adultery either? This is the position of the majority committee. But is not this a mistaken inference in reference to the two last-named parties? Must we not take the exceptive clause as making a negative assertion only for the sentence in which it stands? This appears to me not only the more plausible but also the only possible interpretation. . . . Says Zahn: 'Supplying the phrase 'except for fornication' in the last clause of verse 32 would moreover have the impossible consequence that the marriage with a woman divorced on any, possibly very unjust, ground

would be declared adultery, whereas on the other hand the marriage with a woman divorced because of a gross or refined form of adultery would be declared less sinful or possibly even permissible.' ” (See Min. Report, Agenda of 1934, Part II, p. 276; T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, 1922, p. 242).

The only conclusion is that Matt. 19:9 does not accord to the guilty partner the right of remarriage.

F. Conclusion.

The first question was as follows:

“Does Scripture accord the *right* of divorce or of remarriage to persons who are *guilty* of violating the covenant of marriage?” We have now nearly finished our exegetical study with respect to this first question. The passages which occur in the Epistles do not introduce any new material which could be of value here. They are clearly based upon the teachings of the Old Testament and of Christ himself. Our conclusion, accordingly, is that neither in the Old nor in the New Testament is there a single passage which accords to the guilty person the *right* to divorce and to remarry. This supposed “right” is never instituted and in some cases is positively denied. — That, clearly, is the answer to the first question.

There is one more passage upon which some base the view that the guilty individual has the moral right to remarry. It is Matt. 5:32, a very significant text in this connection. We shall give a detailed exegesis of it in our answer to the second question.

THE SECOND QUESTION

II. WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE INNOCENT PERSON IN A LEGITIMATE DIVORCE? WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE INNOCENT PERSON IN AN ILLEGITIMATE DIVORCE? HAS THAT INNOCENT INDIVIDUAL THE RIGHT TO CONTRACT ANOTHER MARRIAGE? IF SO, UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS?

A. The Innocent Party in a *Legitimate* Divorce.

This question we can briefly answer as follows:

That innocent individual in a divorce on the ground of adultery has a right to secure a divorce and to remarry. This conclusion clearly follows from the “exceptive clause” in Matthew. Says Lenski: “The claim that nothing can be determined from these words regarding the man who releases his fornicacious wife and then mar-

ries another, is unwarranted. The implication is too plain that if he marries again he is not rendered adulterous." Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel, p. 713.

B. The Innocent Party in an *Illegitimate* Divorce:

This concerns the person who has contested the proceedings for a divorce on a ground other than adultery. There are two questions in this connection:

First: has this person the right to enter upon a second marriage *before* his (her) mate remarries? — The answer must be: No. This conclusion follows from the following considerations:

(1) In this case the guilty party has not actually committed the outward act of adultery. It is only when this act has been committed that the innocent party has a right to consider his (her) marriage-tie broken, and to contract a second marriage.

(2) There is always the possibility of reunion.

(3) Jesus clearly teaches that the one who marries the rejected wife commits adultery. This implies his disapproval of such a second marriage.

Secondly: has this person the right to enter upon a second marriage *after* his (her) mate remarries? — The answer must be: Yes. Ground:

The guilty party has now added to his first sin a second one, namely, that of adultery. His marriage to another wife constitutes an act of adultery. Hence, according to the plain teachings of our Lord, the innocent party now has the right to remarry. Notice the words: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except for fornication*, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. . . ."

However, in this very connection it is necessary to make a detailed study of Matthew 5:32. We shall do this for two reasons:

First, because there are many who appeal to Matthew 5:32 in order to deny the right of remarriage even to the innocent party whose mate has remarried. (Cf. Lenski's comments on Matt. 5:32 and on Matt. 19:9.) Upon the basis of the commonly accepted translation of Matt. 5:32 they argue that the rejected wife actually "commits adultery" when she remarries even though the first husband has already committed adultery by contracting a second marriage. They insist that the passage clearly teaches that the man who puts away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, *causeth her to commit adultery* when she

marries another. According to this view even the *innocent* party has never the right to remarry.

Secondly, because there are some who upon the basis of this selfsame passage teach the exact opposite, namely, that it accords to the *guilty* party the moral right to remarry. The reasoning, then, is as follows:

Jesus said: "Every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress." It follows from this that every one that puts away his wife *because of adultery* does *not* make her an adulteress. — Hence, the very strange conclusion is reached that an *innocent* wife who is divorced by her husband has *not* the right to remarry; but a *guilty* wife, who has actually committed adultery and is therefore divorced by her husband, has the moral right to marry another!

According to this kind of reasoning the guilty mate is the privileged character. She has moral rights which she would never have had, had she remained innocent. This is the actual reasoning found in the Majority Report to the Synod of 1934, and it is offered in explanation of Matt. 5:32. We shall quote from that report:

"A man may not put away his wife, except for fornication or adultery. If he does, the marriage-tie still remains binding, and then it follows: that . . . his wife commits adultery when she marries another . . . He *may* put away his wife, however, for fornication and thus dissolve the original tie, though it be in an abnormal way. But if he does this, he destroys the former compact, so that this ceases to be binding not only for him but also for his unfaithful spouse. The natural conclusion would seem to be . . . *that his former wife can marry another without being guilty of adultery*" (italics are ours). (Maj. Report to Synod of 1934, p. 244.)

We have here two interpretations of Matt. 5:32 which reach conclusions that are the exact opposite of each other. Some teach that the innocent party, even though the mate has first committed adultery by remarrying, "committeth adultery" when she remarries, basing this explanation on the words: "he maketh her an adulteress." The Maj. Report, however, teaches that the guilty party — in this case the woman who has committed adultery — having been divorced, has now the moral right to remarry. And also this conclusion, let it be remembered, is based on the words: "every one that putteth away his wife,

saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress" — the idea being: if she remarries.

Hence, a careful exegesis of Matt. 5:32 is required. It will indicate that both of these strange views are erroneous for the simple reason that they rest upon a mistaken translation. True, according to most translations the husband *makes his wife an adulteress* by divorcing her. See the Authorized Version, American Standard, Moffatt, Goodspeed, the "Staten-Vertaling," etc. Many commentators have simply followed this translation.

Others, however, have seen the error of this rendering. According to the original the passage does not say and should never have been translated to say: "he *maketh her an adulteress*." On the contrary, it should be translated: "he causes her to *suffer* adultery." Thus Bouwman renders, correctly, "De man die zijn vrouw wegzendt, is oorzaak dat zij overspel ondergaat." (Art. "Echtscheiding" in *Chr. Enc.*) Grosheide has: "Die maakt dat zij overspel lijdt." (*Het Evangelie van Mattheus*, p. 63.) Lenski has: "brings about that she is stigmatized as adulterous." (*Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel*, p. 224.) Zahn also has the passive here: she suffers adultery. (*Das Ev. des Matthäus*, p. 240.) Thayer in *Greek-English Lexicon of the N. T.* has this under MOICHEUO: "passive of the wife, to suffer adultery, be debauched: Matt. 5:32 a." Cf. also Van Leeuwen, *Tekst en Uitleg, Mattheus*, p. 26; and W. Hendriksen, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 251-254.

Accordingly, Jesus, in the passage referred to is not speaking about this woman's adultery but about her husband's adultery. She suffers wrong by being sent away even though she has not committed adultery. He does wrong by sending her away. She is being "sinned against."

That this is very clearly the sense of the passage follows from the parallel passage which we find in Mark 10:11: "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her . . ." Whether one says: "he causes her to suffer his adultery" or "he commits adultery AGAINST HER," so that she is the one that suffers, because, though innocent, she is sent away, the meaning is entirely the same. We see, then, that on the basis of this rendering there is a beautiful harmony between Matt. 5:32 and Mark 10:11. They both teach the same thing, namely, that the innocent wife suffers the

wrong inflicted upon her; the husband who sends her away must bear the guilt of divorcing her without a proper cause. She *suffers* adultery. He commits adultery *against her*.

For those who are able to read the original we add the following reasons for accepting the passivity of the verb in question:

a. The verb is definitely passive in form. It is MOICHEUTHENAI. This is the passive aorist infinitive. We see no good reason why a passive should be translated as active.

b. The verb is not only definitely passive, but it is purposely passive. This is evident from the fact that in verses 27 and 28 Jesus has used the same verb in the active voice. In these verses Jesus referred to the man who committed adultery. The passive infinitive of verse 32 refers, however, to the woman who suffers adultery. She is adulterated, defamed, disgraced, abused, grievously wronged, etc.

c. The verb is not only definitely passive in form, and purposely passive in view of the preceding context, but it is emphatically passive because it is preceded by POIEI ("brings about that," "causes her," "makes her"); hence, "causes her to suffer adultery," or "brings about that she suffers adultery."

Accordingly, the passage should be rendered thus: "But I say unto you that everyone who puts away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, is causing her to SUFFER adultery," meaning: "he commits adultery AGAINST HER. . . ."

The great significance of this proper translation is at once apparent. It is now no longer possible to reason: "and he who puts away his wife *because of fornication* does not make her an adulteress when she remarries. . . ." The only proper inference is this: "he who puts away his wife *because of fornication* (on her part) does *not* cause her to suffer adultery. . . does not commit adultery AGAINST HER." This is clear, for in *that case she herself* has committed adultery; hence, he is now not to be charged with any error when he dismisses her.

So we see that also in this text (Matt. 5:32, cf. Mark 10:11) the person who is *guilty* of violating the marriage-covenant is not given the moral right to enter upon a second marriage.

It should also be clear that it follows, similarly, that this passage in no wise condemns the innocent woman who remarries *after* her husband has committed adultery by remarrying. The passage simply does not say: "maketh her an adulteress," but it says: "is causing her to suffer (his) adultery."

The question was: "Has the innocent person in an illegitimate divorce the right to enter upon a second marriage *after* his (her) mate remarries?" The answer is: Yes, because his (her) mate has *committed adultery* by remarrying first. And adultery releases the innocent party from his (her) marriage-obligations according to all the passages which we have quoted.

THE THIRD QUESTION

III. DOES THE FACT THAT THE INNOCENT PARTY HAS BEEN FREED FROM HIS MARRIAGE-OBLIGATIONS NECESSARILY MEAN THAT THE GUILTY PARTY HAS ALSO BEEN FREED? — IN OTHER WORDS, IS LEGAL DIVORCE A LEVELING FORCE WHICH EQUALIZES THE RIGHTS OF THE INNOCENT AND THE GUILTY?

This question is of great importance. Again and again statements are made like the following: "The legal divorce, justified by the sin of the husband, has effectually cut the tie for one party, therefore also for the other. The bond of marriage can never remain with only one of the parties to said marriage. Either both are bound by it or neither one. The legal divorce has therefore effectually freed both parties."

Now, this reasoning may seem correct, but is entirely unscriptural. Scripture, in fact, constantly teaches the very opposite, namely, that the innocent party in a divorce has certain rights which the guilty party does not possess. What is true for the one is not true for the other. The legal divorce is never represented as a leveling force which equalizes the rights of the innocent and the guilty. — Our previous study contained in this report has proved that the standpoint of Scripture is this: the *guilty* party commits adultery when he remarries. The *innocent* party, whose partner has committed adultery — whether during his first marriage or later, for example, by remarrying — does *not* commit adultery when he or she remarries. — Moreover, Scripture approaches the question of the rights of married or of divorced persons from the viewpoint not only of the abstract state of marriage but, very distinctly, from the viewpoint of the indi-

vidual and distinct responsibilities of the persons respectively involved.

Take, as an example, Matt. 5:32. In our usual translations the clause has been translated: "and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away *committeth adultery*," as if the verb were an active and as if all the emphasis were on the act as such. However, in the original the verb has the middle voice. It fixes our attention upon the man, upon this guilty party. It should be translated, therefore: "And he who shall marry her that has been put away makes himself guilty of adultery." A. T. Robertson states: "The difference between the active and the middle voices is that the middle calls special attention to the subject. In the active voice the subject is merely acting; in the middle he is acting in relation to *himself* somehow. . . ."

Our conclusion is, therefore, that Jesus approaches the subject of marriage and divorce from the viewpoint of the distinct responsibilities and obligations of the parties respectively involved. The one person involves himself in adultery. . . . The guilt is entirely his own. It does not reflect upon the other. The two are treated distinctly. The guilty and the innocent have distinct rights and responsibilities. What is true with respect to the one is not necessarily true with respect to the other. There is no leveling factor, such as legal divorce, which equalizes the right of the guilty and the innocent.

Says R. H. Charles, fully recognizing this point: "Christ by accepting the Jewish law relating to the adulterous wife and confining his own enactments to less grievous offences, allows the right of divorce on grounds of adultery as well as subsequent remarriage on the part of the *guiltless* person concerned. . . ."

This has been the traditional view of the church of all the ages. It was the view, as we have proved, of the Synods of 1890/1908. It has the support of innumerable ecclesiastical decisions and it is supported by the opinions of the leading moralists of the past and the present. (See the Minority Report to the Synod of 1934.)

THE FOURTH QUESTION

IV. IF A MARRIAGE IS BEGUN IN ADULTERY, IS IT ALSO CONTINUED IN ADULTERY?

The answer to that question would seem obvious. Our Synods of 1890/1908 did not experience any difficulty in

answering it. As we have shown (under B.) these Synods took the very definite stand that adultery does not cease with the initial act of contracting a new marriage but continues. The relationship which is sinful on the first day is also sinful on the second day. The burden of proof rests entirely on those who deny this. They will have to show why the initial act of contracting an adulterous marriage cancels the adultery.

According to Scripture a man is not permitted to live with a woman whom he did not have the right to marry. Does John the Baptist say to Herod: "It *was* not lawful for thee to take thy brother's wife, but having taken her, you now have the right to live with her?" No, quite the contrary. He says: "It *is* not lawful for thee to *have* thy brother's wife." Besides, it is generally admitted that the sin referred to was indeed not only incest but also adultery. We agree with the statement of the Minority Report to the Synod of 1934:

"That this marriage was to be condemned not merely for its incestuous but also for its adulterous character is the contention of such eminent commentators as Calvin (*Harmony of the Evangelists*, II, 220-221); Alford (*Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p. 146); Plummer (*Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, p. 202); M. F. Sadler (*Matthew*, 208-209); A. B. Bruce (*Expos. Greek Test. I*, 206); Zahn (*Matthäus*, p. 506, Note 77) and Baljon (*Mattheüs*, p. 227). It is worthy of note that Alford makes explicit mention of the fact that this marriage was adulterous by reason of the fact that both the husband of Herodias and the wife of Herod were still living." (Agenda 1924, Part II, p. 268.)

And to this we add the remark of Lenski: "Herod's crime was a public outrage. The woman had first married her own father's brother, and then ran away and lived with the half-brother of her husband, who thus was also her half-uncle, and who already had a wife. Two marriages were disrupted, and the new union was no marriage. It was plain adultery, and in the forbidden degrees of consanguinity. . . ."

The conclusion is very clear: a marriage begun in adultery is continued in adultery. Herod is not permitted to "have" her.

Moreover, if all this is not sufficient, Rom. 7:2 certainly settles the point. We read: "For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth, but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of

the husband. So then, if while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.”

The meaning is very clear. Here is a woman who has a husband. She is bound to him by law. This implies, of course, that he is a faithful husband and has not committed adultery against her, for if he had committed adultery she would be released from her obligation, Matt. 19:9.

Now, although this woman's husband is faithful, she, nevertheless, is joined to another man. She, accordingly, commits adultery by marrying another. Now, does this mean that, once she has married that other man, she is no longer bound before God to her former and real marriage-obligations? It does not. Very definitely we are told: “For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband *while he liveth . . .*” She is, therefore, living in continuous adultery. Nothing, it seems to us, could be clearer.

Hence, before being able to accept the position that a marriage begun in adultery is not continued in adultery, adequate grounds must be given to prove that the initial act of adultery cancels the adultery; that the marriage of Herod to which John refers was *not* adulterous; that Rom. 7:2 does *not* teach that a woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; that the verb “is involving himself in adultery” found in Matt. 5:32*b* has no continuative strength; and that the almost unanimous testimony of the church throughout the ages, including the testimony of our own previous Synods, is wrong!

THE FIFTH QUESTION

V. WHAT IS THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATUS OF PERSONS WHO HAVE MADE THEMSELVES GUILTY IN THE MATTER OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE? IS IT PROPER AND BIBLICAL TO READMIT THEM TO CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP UPON CONFESSION OF THEIR SIN?

Both Scripture and our Form for the Lord's Supper teach that those who are *living* in adultery must be excluded from the communion table and from the church. I Cor. 5:9-13: “I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator with such a one, no not to eat. — Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.” Although it is true that the context here refers specifically to the incestuous person (I Cor. 5:1), yet it is generally admitted that the term “fornicators” when used in con-

nection with "covetous, extortioners, idolaters" as in verse 10, has a far broader connotation as well as elsewhere in Scripture. Thus the adulterous person mentioned in Matt. 5:32 is also called a "fornicator."

When in I Cor. 10 and 11 the apostle Paul tells us who may partake of the Lord's Supper and in what spirit they should come to the communion table, he also says: "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." Moreover, he sums up the entire doctrine of admission to the Lord's Supper by saying: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup."

Our Form for the Lord's Supper states definitely: "Wherefore we also, according to the command of Christ and of the apostle Paul, admonish all who know themselves to be defiled with the following gross sins to abstain from the table of the Lord, and declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ: such as . . . all adulterers, fornicators . . . and all who lead offensive lives. All these, while they continue in such sins, shall abstain from this food, which Christ has appointed only for his believers, lest their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier."

This was also, very clearly, the position of the Synods of 1890/1908, as we have already shown.

It becomes at once evident, however, that both Scripture and our Form take this position with respect to persons who *are fully conscious of and responsible for their violation of the marriage-relation*. It does not refer to those who sin in ignorance. In I Cor. 5 Paul specifically adds: "if any man that is named *a brother* be a fornicator." Our Form is very careful and speaks of "all persons who *know themselves* to be defiled with the following gross sins. . . ." It is clear, therefore, that Scripture and our Form distinguish between those who sin in the full consciousness of the evil which they are doing and those who (whatever the circumstance or occasion) must be held to have sinned in complete or partial ignorance.

It would be manifestly unfair to accord the same treatment to both classes. The Bible, again and again, distinguishes between the two. Note the following passages: Luke 23:23, "And Jesus said: 'Father, forgive them: *for*

they know not what they do.'" Acts 3:17, "...I know that *in ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers." I Tim. 1:13, "though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, *because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*..." Luke 12:47, 48, "And that servant, who knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

Now let us return to the question with which we began. Is it proper and biblical to retain or to admit to church membership persons involved in illegitimate divorce and remarriage? And the answer must be: If they knew fully what they were doing at the time when they entered upon the adulterous second marriage and failed to heed the warnings and admonitions of the consistory on this score, they cannot but be held fully responsible for their sinful deed and its consequences and hence cannot enjoy the rights and privileges of church membership as long as the present marriage union continues or the original lawful marriage partner continues to live. For the Church to take any other stand is to take the sacredness of the marriage bond lightly.

On the other hand, those of whom it cannot be said that they were morally aware of the sin they were committing when procuring the illegitimate divorce and/or when contracting the adulterous second marriage, cannot be put in the same class with these and should be retained in or received back into the fellowship of the Church upon proper confession of the appropriate sin. This position is further formulated in the advice given at the close of this report.

D. *THE 1890/1908 POSITION CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY AND OF THEOLOGY*

We may summarize the position so far maintained and established as follows. Scripture does not accord the right of divorce or of remarriage to persons who are guilty of marital infidelity. The innocent person in a legitimate divorce has the right to secure that divorce and to remarry. The innocent person in an illegitimate divorce does not have the right to enter upon a second marriage before his (her) partner has remarried, but does have the right to enter upon a second marriage after his (her) partner has committed adultery by remarrying.

A marriage begun in adultery is also continued in adultery. Persons who are living in an adulterous second marriage and were morally fully responsible at the time of their unbiblical divorce and/or remarriage, should not be retained within, or readmitted to, the Church as long as the present marriage union continues or the original lawful spouse continues to live.

This position is confirmed by the historic stand of the Christian Church and by the testimony of outstanding writers on theological ethics.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF AUTHORITIES.

Westermarck in his three-volume work on the *History of Human Marriage* says of Christian practice in New Testament days: "A man who married the divorced adulteress was himself guilty of adultery, but there is no indication whatever that the innocent husband was prohibited from remarrying." (III, 327, in 1922 edition.)

The same author writes as follows on the position of the Reformers: "The canonical doctrines that marriage is a sacrament and that it is indissoluble save by death were rejected by the Reformers. They all agreed that divorce, with liberty for the innocent party to remarry, should be granted for adultery. . . ." (III, 334.)

In the Smalcaldic Articles, one of the early Lutheran creeds, we find the following statement: "So ist dies auch unrecht, dass, wo zwei geschieden werden, der unschuldig Theil nicht wiederum heirathen soll." (J. T. Müller, *Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 1912, p. 343.) And the Confessio Saxonica contained a more extensive deliverance to the same effect. (See G. B. Winer, *A Comparative View of the Doctrines and Confessions of the Various Communities of Christendom*, p. 325.)

The Westminster Confession, one of the outstanding creeds of the Reformed group, says: "Adultery or fornication, committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead." (Westminster Confession, Ch. XXIV, par. V.)

Martensen, a Danish Lutheran moralist, writes: "The Lutheran Church decrees the lawfulness of an actual di-

voice, and allows the innocent party to remarry.” (H. Martensen, *Christian Ethics (Social)*, p. 41.) Paulus, an American Lutheran theologian, quotes Von Oettingen’s opinion approvingly in the following statement: “Wherefore Christ himself expressly permits divorce in case of adultery. ‘But even in this case a normal marriage with some other person is conceivable only of the innocent party.’ [V. Oettingen.]” (C. F. Paulus, *The Christian Life*, p. 325.) And a more recent American Lutheran moralist puts it thus: “Since the adultery itself constitutes a breaking of the marriage covenant, the innocent party is entitled to seek a divorce. Some persons maintain that this does not justify another marriage on the part of the innocent party, but only confers a permanent legal freedom from the obligations of the first marriage. But there does not seem to be any valid reason for denying the right to another marriage to the innocent one, if without his or her fault the first marriage has been actually and legally dissolved.” (Joseph Stump, *The Christian Life*, 1930, p. 218.)

Hovey in his excellent little book on divorce declared in reference to the familiar gospel passages: “But while the passage before us teaches by implication that a Jew might put away his wife without sin, provided she was an adulteress, and marry another woman, it does not teach that a wife, thus divorced for good cause, had a right to marry again.” (Alvah Hovey, *The Scriptural Law of Divorce*, p. 14.) Another New Englander, who wrote a solid and widely quoted treatise on the divorce issue, Theodore Dwight Woolsey, a former President of Yale, likewise took this position. Dr. D. S. Schaff in a footnote to his translation of Augustin’s work on the Sermon on the Mount says: “President Woolsey unhesitatingly declares, that, by Christ’s precepts, marriage is dissolved by adultery, so that the innocent party may marry again.” (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. VI, p. 22, Note 1.) And a third New Englander states the same opinion thus: “It must be, in any event, admitted that the first gospel gives its support to those who would permit remarriage for the innocent party in a divorce for adultery.” (F. G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 153.)

Here is the testimony from an Australian Presbyterian: “But, if the marriage tie is thus in effect dissolved by the misconduct of one of the partners, quite as much as if he

or she had died, the innocent partner is no longer under obligation because of its broken bond, and may, without sin, contract a marriage with another." (D. S. Adam, *A Handbook of Christian Ethics*, p. 249.)

Also the testimony of Dr. Geesink on this point is significant. Says he, speaking of the dissolution of marriage, "Behalve door den dood kan ook tengevolge van de doorwerking der zonde bij één of beide echtgenooten het huwelijk zich ontbinden; en dan kunnen er gevallen zijn waar naar onze opvatting van de moraal de onschuldige partij erkenning dier ontbinding bij de overheid kan vragen." He then speaks of the difference on this point between the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed position, and continues: "Calvijn leerde, dat overspel een grond oplevert voor de onschuldige partij tot echtscheiding. . . . Voetius behandelt de zaak in zijn *Politica Ecclesiastica* en neemt aan als gronden overspel en *desertio*. De onrechtvaardig verlaten partij mag ontbinding van het huwelijk vragen en een nieuw sluiten." (W. Geesink, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, II, 283-285.) And, even more explicitly, the same author says: "Ook de ethische kwestie of de staat een tweede huwelijk van den schuldige mag toelaten, moet met het oog op Matt. 5:32 naar christelijke ethica ontkennend worden beantwoord." (*Op. cit.*, II, 392.)

This position is also confirmed by the fact that Reformed moralists have usually taken the stand that, in case both of the marriage partners are guilty of adultery, neither can have a divorce and neither can remarry. (See e. g., Willem Amezes, *Vijf Boeken van de Conscientie*, Editie 1896, p. 355.)

II. THE STAND OF OTHER AMERICAN CHURCHES.

The stand of other church bodies in this country, which face the identical divorce situation as do we, is also illuminating in this connection. The striking fact appears that those denominations in our country which are known for their liberalism (theological and otherwise) or who incline strongly in that direction have adopted (or, possibly, drifted into) the policy of readmitting unbiblically divorced and subsequently remarried persons upon mere confession of their past sin, though the adulterous union continues because the former marriage partner is still living. On the other hand, practically all the conservative, Bible-believing denominations in our land have

taken the stand which harmonizes with the historic position of the Christian Church of all the ages and which we have championed above. And then there are some which, owing to the fact that they have never taken a definite stand on the issue, are divided in their practice and are gradually but definitely drifting into the laxer policy.

But let the testimonies of some of these American denominations speak for themselves.

1. *The Seventh-Day Adventists.*

This body, with which we differ on the Lord's Day question, is known for its faithful adherence to the scriptural standards of the moral life. Its stand in the matter before us follows: "Now in cases where people apply for membership who have been converted after their marriage, our Church attempts to deal with each case, taking into consideration the conditions which have surrounded it. Sometimes members who have been expelled for unscriptural marriage in after years apply for membership. These are dealt with in each case according to the conditions which obtain. If the innocent party has died in the meantime, and the attitude of the married individuals has been approved by the local church or the local conference in which they reside, they may sometimes be taken into fellowship again. On the other hand, if a man and wife separate and both remain in the church, and afterward one of these remarries while the other is still living in the church, we do not feel that we can retain their old membership, nor re-admit them into membership so long as such conditions obtain." (From a letter from headquarters of Gen. Conf. of Seventh-Day Adventists, dated Nov. 8, 1933.)

2. *The Methodist Episcopal Church.*

This is the body commonly known as the Northern Methodists. As in most other large denominations of our land, the liberal policy has gradually begun to prevail. In 1888 an overture was presented to the general conference for adoption which read: "Resolved, That rule 46, p. 33, of the Discipline be so amended as to prevent persons (who have secured divorces on frivolous grounds not warranted in the Word of God or the Discipline of the Church) from holding membership in our Church." (*Journal of the General Conference, 1888, p. 231; as quoted in Lichtenberger, Divorce, p. 226.*) This overture failed of adoption. And in 1928 this body adopted the

following: "A divorced person seeking admission into membership in our Church, who manifests a proper spirit and satisfactorily answers the usual inquiries, may be received." (As quoted by Lichtenberger, *Op. cit.*, p. 230.)

3. *The Church of the Nazarene.*

This is one of the conservative bodies, marked by a spirit of loyalty to scriptural truth in ethical matters. Their position is stated as follows in their church manual: "We hold that persons who obtain divorce under the civil law where the scriptural ground for divorce, namely adultery, does not exist, and subsequently remarry, are living in adultery, and are unworthy of membership in the Church of the Nazarene; and though there may exist such other causes and conditions as may justify divorce under the civil law, yet only adultery will supply such ground as may justify the innocent party in remarrying." (As stated in letter from the General Church Secretary, dated Nov. 2, 1933.)

4. *Presbyterian and Reformed Bodies.*

Both the Northern and the Southern Presbyterian Churches claim to be guided by the rules on marriage and divorce laid down in Chapter XXIV of the Westminster Confession. As this document does not speak of the specific question before us, and seeing there is no further legislation of General Synods on this point (according to the testimony of both stated clerks), we must conclude that each Church decides as it sees fit in the matter of the admission of persons divorced on non-biblical ground and remarried. The same is true of the Reformed Church in the U. S., known as the German Reformed Church. And the Reformed Church in America (popularly known as the Dutch Reformed Church) has a 1904 decision of General Synod enjoining upon the ministers of the R. C. A. not to remarry divorced persons, excepting the innocent party in a divorce obtained for the cause of adultery. (E. T. Corwin, *A Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation of the R. C. A.*, 1906, p. 218.)

On the specific point before us, however, there seems to be no synodical ruling. Professor S. C. Nettinga, President of Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Mich., writes under date of Nov. 14, 1933: "As to the re-admission into the membership or even the admission into the membership of the Church of persons who have been di-

vorced on non-scriptural grounds and subsequently remarried, there is no official action of any kind to my knowledge, and it is therefore left entirely to the local consistory to deal with as it deems right in each particular case. And as to that there is no uniform policy either, so far as I know. Our people, even our ministry, is very much divided on the matter, some being in favor of excluding them from all membership in the church because they are, according to them, living in a continual state of sin, despite their confession of sorrow for past sins and despite their profession of conversion, while others are just as strongly of the opposite opinion and admit them to membership when there are evidences of sorrow for past sins and a desire to serve Christ henceforth." This shows that there exists the same difference of opinion on this matter in the Reformed Church in America as in our own. The need for Synod to adopt a definite policy is very apparent.

5. *The United Lutheran Church in America.*

This is the more "liberal" of the Lutheran churches in our country. It came into existence in 1918 through a fusion of various Lutheran groups, one of the most important of which was known as the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the U. S. A. This last-named body had before its General Synod in 1907 a resolution refusing church membership "to persons divorced for causes other than those recognized by the Church." (*Proceedings of the Gen. Syn., 1907, p. 64.* Quoted by J. P. Lichtenberger, *Divorce, p. 236.*) The resolution was referred to a special committee, which drew up a much milder position. This position, which was adopted by the Synod, read: "Resolved, That after the pastor and other members of the Church Council have carefully examined the person or persons applying for Church Membership, as to their present fitness to be received into the congregation, have prayerfully considered said application in its relation to their own Church and the Church in general, and have unanimously agreed that, under present circumstances, they are justified before God to grant such privilege, then 'persons who have been divorced for other reasons than those mentioned in the report of the Committee on Marriage and Divorce, and were subsequently remarried, may be admitted to membership in our Churches, but not before.'" (As quoted by Lichtenberger, *Op. cit., p. 236.*)

Apparently the latest deliverance by the United Lutheran Church on this matter is that of 1930. It reads: "The matter of retaining within, or admitting to, the membership of the Church persons who have been divorced on other than scriptural grounds and who have remarried during the lifetime of the former husband or wife falls under the rule of discipline provided for by the constitution of the congregation. In all such instances pastors and church councils are exhorted to proceed with care and true spiritual wisdom, having proper regard for the Church's purity and honor, but also mindful of her mission to minister the means of grace so that sinners may be converted, restored and saved." (*Minutes of the Seventh Biennial Convention of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1930, p. 112. Cf. p. 116.*)

6. *The American Lutheran Conference.*

This is another large group of Lutherans, more conservative than the United Lutheran Church. One of its best-known constituent bodies is the Augustana Synod. The stated clerk of this Conference writes under date of Nov. 1, 1933: "I can state that the constituent bodies, officially at least, recognize no other grounds for divorce except the Biblical, *i. e.*, adultery, and do not permit the guilty party to hold membership in the church. The Augustana Synod has also recognized 'malicious and permanent desertion' as grounds for divorce, and applies the same rules in regard to membership as in the case of adultery."

7. *Evangelical Synod of Missouri (Lutherans).*

Another large body of American Lutherans, known commonly as the Missouri Lutherans, have likewise taken a stand similar to the one proposed in this report. These Missouri Lutherans are decidedly orthodox, maintain their own parochial schools, and, like ourselves, refuse to admit lodge members to their fellowship. The stated clerk of this body writes under date of Oct. 31, 1933: "Anyone who has not procured a divorce on scriptural ground will not be married by a pastor of our church. If his remarriage has taken place elsewhere, our church does not recognize this remarriage as valid and he cannot remain a member in good standing in our church or be admitted or readmitted into membership unless he or she repents and forsakes such adulterous union."

E. *THE 1890/1908/1934 POSITION VINDICATED OVER
AGAINST SOME CURRENT OBJECTIONS
RAISED AGAINST IT*

Before we present our advice to Synod, we must make brief reply to a few of the objections urged against the principle affirmed in 1890, reaffirmed in 1908, and the stand which, in harmony with this principle, was maintained in the minority opinion of 1934 and is championed in this report.

OBJECTION I.

It is urged by some that since marriage is essentially not an ecclesiastical but a civil affair, the Church must in every case hold *that* marriage to be morally justifiable which the state at the time declares to be legal.

The fallacy of this position, which has a surface appearance of plausibility, may possibly best be brought out by listening to the testimony of some noted theologians touching this point.

Such an orthodox Lutheran moralist as Luthardt writes: "And if the State is prepared on grounds of expediency to make concessions, and to legalize relations, which ought to be called not marriages, but decent concubinages, it is still the office of the Church, as guardian of the highest moral possessions of mankind, to enforce those stricter moral principles which may prevent the moral ideal, without which life threatens to sink to its lowest level, from vanishing out of the world." (C. E. Luthardt, *Apologetic Lectures on the Moral Truths of Christianity*, 1873, p. 133. Cf. also his *Kompendium der theologischen Ethik*, 1898, p. 319.)

Charles Henderson, an American moralist, and that of a rather liberal stripe, writes: "The church is not obliged to accept the divorce pronounced by the courts of a state as final and satisfactory. For example, a divorced man who has married while the first wife lives may ask for membership in a church on the ground that he has been legally divorced from this former wife. But many things are legal which are not moral, much less on a level with the morality required for membership in a church." (*Social Duties from the Christian Point of View*, pp. 46, 47.)

Dr. Abraham Kuyper, speaking of this same issue, writes as follows: "Vooral van de zijde der echtscheiding dreigt hier gevaar. Staat de overheid toe, dat personen,

wier Huwelijk zij voor ontbonden verklaart, opnieuw huwen, dan kan en mag de Kerk dat nieuwe Huwelijk niet erkennen, indien, naar eigen oordeel, de echtscheiding niet heeft mogen, en dus feitelijk niet heeft *kunnen* plaats grijpen. Nu is het, bij dezen stand van zaken zeker het meest gewenscht, dat de Kerk, door tijdig ingediend protest, de Overheid afhoude van zulke onberaden stappen; maar baat dit niet, en wordt almeer de grondslag van het Christelijk Huwelijk losgelaten, dan wordt hieruit voor de Kerken de zeer stellige plicht geboren, om binnen den eigen kring den grondslag, die door het Evangelie voor het Huwelijk is gelegd, te handhaven. En ware het al, dat andere Protestantsche Kerken hiervan de noodzakelijkheid niet inzagen, dan zou toch de Gereformeerde Kerk hier niet stil mogen zitten. Voor haar toch is de belijdenis van het Genadeverbond een essentieel stuk van haar kerkelijk optreden, en daar het Genadeverbond ook met de kinderen der geloovigen rekt, kan het Huwelijk niet buiten den kring van hare belijdenis worden gesloten." (*Gemeene Gratie*, III, 365.)

Charles Hodge, the well-known Princeton theologian, speaks also unequivocally on this question. Writes he: "No act of any human legislature contrary to the moral law can bind any man, and no such act contrary to the law of Christ can bind any Christian. If, therefore, a human tribunal annuls a marriage for any reason other than those assigned in the Bible, the marriage is not thereby dissolved. In the judgment of Christians it remains in full force; and they are bound so to regard it. And on the other hand, if the state pronounces a marriage valid, which the Bible declares to be invalid, in the view of Christians it is invalid. There is no help for this. Christians cannot give up their convictions; nor can they renounce their allegiance to Christ." And applying this position to the question of church membership, he continues; "As the Church and its officers are under the highest obligations to obey the law of Christ, it follows that where the action of the state conflicts with that law, such action must be disregarded. If a person be divorced on other than Scriptural grounds and marries again, such person cannot consistently be received to the fellowship of the Church." (*Systematic Theology*, III, 404-5, 406.) And a former Princeton professor of Church government summarizes the issue in this sentence: "A dissolution of the contract (*i. e.*, marriage contract) by any court or

forum of civil justice cannot absolve the moral obligation from its binding force in the authority of the Church except for cause which has been specified in Holy Scripture." (Alexander T. McGill, *Church Government*, p. 538.)

These utterances speak for themselves and require no further clarification. It may not be out of order to point out in this connection how morally impossible the position is of those who raise this objection — a position which they would substitute for the stand of Synod. That position is this: The Church in its realm should simply follow the state and recognize as morally justifiable any marriage that the state has made legal by allowing it to be contracted. This means that the Church would have to surrender its standards of right and wrong in these matters as determined by the Word of God and follow the norms and standards of the state. Unbiblically divorced persons, no matter how often they have remarried, just so they were married legally before the magistrate, must be held by the Church to be living in a God-approved marriage.

This clearly means that, no matter how lax the divorce laws of a given country may be, the most recent marriage of divorced persons is the God-willed and God-approved marriage. The impossibility of harmonizing such a position with the declaration of our Lord as to the indissolubility of marriage is clear on the face of it. How this solemn statement of our Lord is actually quoted by one of the proponents of this position to make it say the very opposite of what our Lord meant, may be read in the text of a proposed overture for the 1936 Synod which a brother from California is circulating in the Church and which he promises he will submit to Synod himself. He writes in his proposed advice: "In case second marriage has been contracted the last legally contracted marriage must be considered binding to the exclusion of former marriage ties, *inasmuch as a legal divorce has effectually 'put asunder that which God had joined together'.*" (Italics ours.)

OBJECTION II.

It has been urged that our stand is inconsistent, in that it does not dare to insist that after remarriage the adulterous party ought to break with the second marriage and return to the original marriage partner. Our stand, so it

is claimed, ought to be consistent in telling illegitimately divorced and subsequently remarried persons that they must break their present marriage and return to their former marriage partner. No consistory — we are told — would dare to urge a church member to take such a step for the reason that that party is legally married to his (her) present spouse.

Now, is such a consistory inconsistent? Is telling such a person that the only marriage relation for him (her) to live in that is pleasing to God is the original one — is this inconsistent with refusing to tell such a party that it is God-pleasing to forthwith break the present marriage relation and return to the former mate (who, by the way, may also be remarried)? Is this an inconsistent position for the consistory, for the Church, to take?

The answer is: not at all. The Church's refusal to say to that party: We urge you forthwith to break your present marriage and to return to your former marriage partner — is not due to the fact that the Church does not sincerely believe and maintain that before God that party is still married to the former mate. The sole reason why no one can urge that party to break with the second marriage lies in the fact that that party has assumed some solemn obligations before the magistrate in reference to his (her) present marriage partner, and that an ignoring of this as though it simply did not exist would be an act of repudiation of civil authority which would create havoc in human society. The reason that this party can not now return to his (her) original partner is occasioned by the fact that he (she) has placed himself (herself) in an impossible position involving a conflict of duties. That as long as the present union continues he must of necessity live up to the civil law on this score and has no right to ignore his second marriage is clear. But that this in no way means that before God he should be married today to his present and not to his original spouse, is equally clear. The difficulty of his position in no way cancels his moral obligation.

This may be stated in a different way. The Church does not say to this party: Because you are married to another party now, therefore your duty to be married to your original marriage partner is cancelled. The Church simply says: Because you are at present married, legally married before the state, to a party other than your God-given wife (husband), you cannot at present return to

your original marriage partner, but your moral obligation before God on this score stands nevertheless. Entirely in harmony with this the Church insists that, as soon as the spouse of such a party by a second marriage should die, he (she) should return to the original marriage partner. As soon as that way would be open as far as the civil conditions and terms are concerned, the original and never-cancelled moral demand should be actually made and carried out. A good way of appreciating this point is to remember that, according to the position advanced by our opponents and rejected by the 1934 Synod, the party which through the death of its spouse in the adulterous, second, marriage would be in a position to be reunited to his (her) original marriage partner (assuming that that party also is unattached), would have no moral obligation before God to do so, but could enter upon an entirely new marriage with a third spouse.

OBJECTION III.

It is sometimes urged against our position that it does not hold because it maintains that the mere circumstance of the death of a former marriage partner is the determining factor for receiving or refusing to receive a brother (sister) back into the fellowship of the Church.

Now the fact which this objection states is correct. A person illegitimately divorced and subsequently remarried cannot be received into the fellowship of the Church (even if he is prepared to confess his past sin) as long as the original marriage partner lives. The objector calls this "a mere circumstance." This "mere circumstance," according to the solemn teaching of Holy Writ, makes all the difference. Let the objector read Romans 7:1-3 and cease speaking of this as "a mere circumstance." "Or are ye ignorant, brethren, that the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth? For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man." The whole difference between becoming and not-becoming an adulteress lies in "the mere circumstance" of the death of one's lawful spouse.

OBJECTION IV.

One sometimes hears Jer. 3:1 quoted as offering biblical proof against our position. This passage reads: "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, will he return unto her again? will not that land be greatly polluted?"

Since this passage teaches that the land is greatly polluted by having a dismissed wife that has married again return to become the wife of her original husband, this passage offers scriptural proof (so it is claimed) that a second marriage of an illegitimately divorced wife is in harmony with the will of God and that his disfavor must rest upon any attempt to have such a divorced remarried spouse return to his (her) original partner! Now if this were a correct interpretation of the passage, it should be noted that we would here have scriptural proof that it is wrong in the sight of God to have a divorced remarried spouse ever return to her original marriage partner. That no one believes this today is clear from the fact that everyone, even the opponents of our position, would approve if such a reunion could be effected after the death of the partner of the second marriage. Of course, the real meaning of the passage is seen in the light of Deut. 24:1-4. We have discussed this above and refer the reader to that paragraph. From that passage it is clear that the Mosaic law denied the husband who dismissed his wife the right to take her back after she had become the wife of another. The real motive of this injunction was to put a check upon the easy dismissal of one's wife, so common in that day. Instead of offering our opponents biblical ground to maintain that the second marriage annuls the obligations of the first, this passage is a solemn warning to the husband not to dismiss his wife lightly and places a penalty upon such light dismissal when a new connection has, as the result of such dismissal, been made.

OBJECTION V.

It has been repeatedly urged against the stand of 1890/1908 and that taken by this report that it nullifies the real thrust of the gospel for the parties involved. There is no gospel for a certain class of people! It keeps the Church closed to penitent sinners! It means the setting up of an unpardonable sin! It tries to keep the Church pure by keeping out the sinner, instead of by

keeping out the impenitent sinner! The gospel is: The soul that has sinned and repents should be received into the fold!

Now to begin with the last, we heartily subscribe to the statement that the sinner who comes to true repentance should be received into the bosom of the Church. The question, however, is: What is true repentance? Is it true repentance when one continues in sin? Our opponents argue that such an adulterous marriage is adulterous only in its inception, but we have proved conclusively from Scripture that this adultery is not limited to this marriage in its inception only. The gospel call stands unimpaired. The same conditions hold for this sin as for any other sin. The Word of God declares solemnly: "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; But whoso *confesseth and forsaketh them* shall obtain mercy." (Prov. 28:13.) That the Church does not here set up an unpardonable sin is clear from the fact that the Church will be only too happy to receive such erring sheep back into the fold when either the present marriage comes to a legitimate end or the earlier marriage comes to a natural termination by the death of the former marriage partner. This shows that the sin is not unpardonable. An unpardonable sin cannot be pardoned. This sin can.

In connection with this objection one can hear a good deal of sentimentality that is thoroughly unscriptural. We can never extol the grace of God to poor sinners too highly, but anyone who appeals to mercy and grace in this connection to justify what is a thoroughly unscriptural laxness is not speaking of the grace of God, or of His Christ, or of the Scriptures. The one and only question should always remain: What says God's Word? We have set forth above fully what the teaching of the Word of God is. Besides, the teaching of our Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper speaks of the duty of the office-bearers to keep from the table of the Lord those who live in sin. We have shown that the parties concerned live in sin.

In speaking of leniency in this connection, it should not be overlooked that according to our advice readmission is only refused to those who were fully conscious of and responsible for their marital infidelity when committed, and of the sin of their adulterous second marriage when they entered upon it. There is no need to arouse sympa-

thy for those who are not truly responsible for their sin, for such people do not fall under the rule. It applies to those who were aware of what they were doing and were (in most — if not all cases) warned of the seriousness of the sin they were about to commit and the consequences which it entailed.

With this in mind it must be clear that the Church cannot do anything else but take the stand we recommend, if it is not to reduce the sacredness of the marriage tie and the sacredness of the table of the Lord to a laughing-stock. Let us reflect for a moment to what an impossible moral position the Church — the consistory — is reduced if the position of our opponents (which is the only other course open) were followed and had been adopted. The attitude and relationship of the consistory toward such an erring brother would properly be described as follows.

If a church member contemplates getting a divorce on unbiblical ground, the consistory hears of it and warns him. He proceeds and gets the divorce; is declared to have sinned against the seventh commandment; and the consistory continues to admonish and warn him in love, holding up to him the solemn obligation to return to his wife, whom he sued for an unbiblical divorce. He is disciplined and may face excommunication unless he repents and returns to his marriage partner. But, now, if that person persists in his sin, ignoring the admonition of the consistory, and then adds to his sin the new sin of remarriage, then the consistory (on the basis of the standpoint which we oppose) would have to say to him: You must still confess your violation of the seventh commandment, but you need no longer meet your marriage obligations toward your original lawful marriage partner. His own sin of remarriage, added to the previous sin, has been the means (manipulated, be it noted, by him) of cancelling part of his previous obligation.

Virtually this stand of the consistory under such a ruling of the Church in reference to this sinning and erring brother may be epitomized in these words: Commit a sin, and you are not only guilty but also have some serious obligations to meet before you can be cleared. But if you commit an additional sin in this same class, then, though you are still guilty, you no longer need to make good what we formerly demanded of you. You have by your second sin cancelled your sacred marriage obligations, which we

insisted you should meet, and against the repudiation of which we solemnly warned you. Stated even more concretely it comes down to this. The consistory virtually says to him: Commit the sin of an unbiblical divorce, and you must not only confess guilt but also meet solemn obligations not cancelled before God, obligations which you are now refusing to meet (viz., return to your wife); but, if you sin some more (i. e., add an adulterous remarriage to your unbiblical divorce), and, though you must still confess guilt, you no longer need before God and in the court of your own conscience to meet the obligations of the original marriage. *By your additional sin you had in your hand, and you did actually bring about, the cancellation of that solemn obligation of yours.*

This also means that the Church would virtually put a premium on adding the second sin to the first. A man who in the sinfulness of his lustful and adulterous heart wants to get rid of his present wife and marry another is warned by the consistory when he proceeds to get the illegitimate divorce, but if that man would ask that consistory: Is it true that you will insist upon my returning to my present wife after I get the divorce, but that you will no longer insist that it is my duty before God to live with my present wife when I have proceeded to marry another? — that consistory would have to answer: That is true! The whole stand would put a premium upon sinful calculation and premeditated adulterous remarriage. The argumentation of the 1908 decision appears in this light not a bit too strong.

OBJECTION VI.

Finally, it is objected to the advice contained in the minority opinion of 1934 and that offered in the present report that it allows for exceptions. This is advanced as a charge on the alleged ground that the exceptions are in conflict with the main proposition. In fact, it is asserted that no exceptions whatever are allowable to a great moral principle.

Apparently there is a good deal of misunderstanding and confusion in this reasoning. Let us take the last claim first. It is claimed that there can be no exceptions whatever to a great moral principle. Now, this is nothing but a misleading and mistaken statement. It simply is not true. It does not hold water. A few illustrations may serve to bring this out.

It is a great moral principle that taking the life of fellowman is murder. But this in no way detracts from the truth of the following two exceptions: Taking the life of fellowman is murder, except (1) when one does so in self-defense, and except (2) when one does so as a government official in his capacity of an executioner. These two exceptions are just as true and just as important as is the main proposition. Again, it is an undisputed moral principle that the Christian must obey his government, but here again the statement in its generality requires exceptions, as follows: It is the Christian's duty to obey his government, except when that government would force him to act contrary to his deepest religious convictions. Again, Dr. Kuyper in his *Eerepositie der Vrouw* lays down the moral principle that woman belongs in the private, the "inside-sphere" of life, in the home, and not in public life. And then he proceeds at once to insist upon two very important exceptions, viz., she ought to represent her family at the ballot box in case there is no male head in the family, and she has a special function in all public activities of a hygienic, philanthropic, pedagogic, and artistic kind. And to mention the classic example of an appropriate exception to a great moral injunction, we can stay close to the subject at hand. In the oft-quoted passage on divorce in Mat. 19:9 our Lord says: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except for fornication*, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." If there were no room for an exception to a great moral principle, this statement of our Lord could not have been made.

The exceptions advanced in our case are in no sense in conflict with the main proposition. Here it may be remarked that our present advice is not cast in the form of a proposition with three exceptions, as was the case in the minority opinion of 1934. *As to form*, there are no exceptions at all in our present advice, but this is purely a matter of formulation. The content of the advice of the minority opinion of 1934 and that submitted at the close of this report is identical. For practical reasons the position is not so stated, but the exceptions are implicitly provided for. The principle of exceptions to the general rule that persons illegitimately divorced and remarried are living in adultery and hence cannot be retained as members of the Christian Reformed Church is a sound and important principle. These exceptions are not concessions to human weakness. They are the application of

an important moral principle that cannot be left out of account when one applies the great demands of the sanctity of the marriage relation to the question of the correct stand of the church toward its members who are involved in marriage and divorce troubles.

That principle is the recognition that a person can be held fully responsible for a given sin committed only when he knew he was sinning at the time the sinful act was committed. The soundness of this moral principle has been established in the preceding under main point C, sub-point V, where the question of the propriety of re-admitting divorced remarried parties upon confession of sin is discussed. It was there pointed out that Scripture teaches that the degree of responsibility varies with the degree of knowledge (or ignorance) of the sinfulness of the sinful deed. (See again: Luke 12:47, 48; Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17; I Tim. 1:13.) This in no way tones down the demands of the Word of God in the matter of divorce and adulterous remarriage upon which this report is insisting in the name of loyalty to Scripture. It simply means that only those can be held fully responsible for their deed who knew at the time the sinful act was committed what sin they were committing.

Each one of the three exceptions included in the 1934 minority advice is an instance of this principle. Also the third exception belongs here, (not as a concession to a sister-church but) because persons who were living in a church which holds a different view from ours of the sinfulness and(or) the consequences of remarriage in the case of an illegitimately divorced person, and who entered upon such marriage in the light of such knowledge, cannot be placed on a par with persons who were members of a church that warned them of the sin and the consequences of such remarriage and who nevertheless proceeded to contract such an adulterous union. The degree of guilt and innocence varies in the case of each of the three instances of exception, but the underlying principle holds for all three.

It is sometimes argued that the question of the degree of guilt and responsibility for the past sinful acts of divorce and remarriage should not enter into consideration in the solution of the problem before us. This is a serious fallacy. When a divorce and remarriage case is under consideration of a consistory, i. e., when the question of

how to proceed with the application of discipline in such a case is before the consistory, the final determination will depend upon two questions: First and foremost, what is the teaching of the Word of God as to the sin or sins committed; and, secondly, to what extent was this party responsible for the sin(s) committed? It should be noted that this is also the approach of all the gospel passages on divorce and remarriage. Not the abstract question: Is the marriage tie still binding or not? but the question: Did the man (the woman) under such and such circumstances commit adultery, yes or no?—that is the approach of our Lord in the gospel passages, and it is the true approach for any consistory to take. In seeking to answer that question, such a consistory will then have to get back to the principles of Scripture on the right and wrong of divorce and remarriage (as we all do, and as also this report has done), but when the final determination of the propriety of a given disciplinary action is up for consideration, the decision must hinge on the degree of guilt and responsibility in that sin committed and condemned by the teaching of the Word of God. That is why it is appropriate to apply the condemnation and penalty of Scripture attaching to illegitimate divorce followed by remarriage only to those who were fully aware of what they were doing and not to those who sinned wholly or partly in ignorance.

F. *ADVICE TO SYNOD.*

In the light of the foregoing study we now submit the following advice to Synod. It will be noted that this advice, though different in form, agrees at every point with the advice submitted by the Minority opinion to the Synod of 1934.

PROPOSAL FOR ADOPTION

In view of the twofold duty of the Church: on the one hand, to guard the sacredness of the marriage bond and the sanctity of the table of the Lord; and, on the other, to receive penitent sinners into its bosom;

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, after due consideration of the teaching of the Word of God on the subject, and in harmony with previous synodical decisions in the matter of the years 1890, 1908, and 1934, herewith defines its stand in the matter of retaining within, or of admitting to, the membership of the Church per-

sons who have been divorced on grounds other than scriptural and who have remarried during the lifetime of their lawful marriage partner.

- A. In the case of those who were members (whether by baptism or by profession) of the Christian Reformed Church at the time the illegitimate divorce was procured and (or) the adulterous remarriage was contracted, so that they were at the time under the admonition and discipline of a Christian Reformed consistory:
1. Such a person, if he (she) was the first to remarry, cannot be retained within, or readmitted to, the fellowship of the Church so long as the original lawful spouse is still living, or the present marriage is not terminated by the death of the other partner.
 2. Such a person, if he (she) remarried after the other partner had committed adultery by remarrying, can be retained within, or readmitted to, the fellowship of the Church, provided he (she) must, upon the best official information available, in the judgment of the consistory be declared innocent in the matter which served as ground for the legal divorce, and provided, moreover, he (she) has done what could reasonably be expected of him (her) to prevent the granting of the divorce.
- B. In the case of those who were not members (either by baptism or by profession) of the Christian Reformed Church at the time the illegitimate divorce was procured and the adulterous remarriage contracted, so that they were at the time not under the admonition and discipline of a Christian Reformed consistory:
1. Such a person, if he (she) was the first to remarry, can be admitted to the fellowship of the Church upon confession of the sin of illegitimate divorce and of adulterous remarriage, provided the consistory has reasonable assurance that at the time of the illegitimate divorce and the adulterous remarriage his (her) avowed moral standards in the matter, or the avowed moral standards on this score of the church to which he (she)

at the time belonged, were such as to be appreciably lower than the corresponding moral standards which our Church, in the light of Scripture, maintains for its own membership.

2. Such a person, if he (she) remarried after the other partner had committed adultery by remarrying, can be admitted to the fellowship of the Church upon proper confession of the sin of unbiblical divorce.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE BOUMA,
WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN.

P. S. We trust Synod will not consider it presumptuous if at this point we urge our highest judicatory to take definite and final action on this matter in 1936. For over twenty years this subject has been before the churches and now, after the 1934 Synod took such a decisive stand in rejecting the majority advice, and the minority advice presented at that Synod has been confirmed after a study of another two years, we feel there is no excuse for Synod to postpone action on this proposal. The fact that also to this Synod there are presented two reports can have no bearing upon this matter, seeing the other two members of the committee do not agree with our advice for the simple reason that they champion the position which was decisively rejected by the 1934 Synod.

May God grant your honorable body much light and wisdom and courage to come to a decision that shall harmonize with the Word of God and that shall prove to be for the upbuilding of His Church among us.

REPORT XI.

THE BAPTISM OF ADOPTED CHILDREN (Report I. on the subject)

To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHERN :

THE committee appointed by the Synod of 1932 in connection with the question of the baptism of adopted children was instructed to consider the protests lodged against the decision of the Synod of 1930 in this matter. At the same time it was given a free hand to extend the scope of its study to the whole matter. The committee availed itself of this opportunity and did the one as well as the other. It was unable to come to a unanimous conclusion, however, and therefore offers more than one report. The following is the report of the four undersigned members of the committee.

CONSIDERATION OF THE OBJECTIONS TO THE DECISION TAKEN IN 1930

In considering the objections that were raised to the decision of 1930 the committee might seek to answer each one of the protests separately, but it feels that this would involve a great deal of unnecessary repetition, since the same arguments are adduced repeatedly. For that reason it seemed more desirable to consider the objections culled from the various protests in the order in which they are presented in the report of the advisory committee which reported to the Synod of 1932. Necessary corrections of the objections as stated in that report will be made here and there. This report is found in the Acts of the Synod of 1932 on pages 104-110. To the best of our knowledge this report reproduces all the objections that are raised in the various protests and overtures. It seemed most desirable to follow the notation of that report and to reproduce the objections fully just as they are stated there.

A. FORMAL OBJECTIONS TO SAID DECISION:

1. Our Church was not ripe in 1930 to take such a weighty decision.

2. It would have been desirable for our Church to have corresponded with Reformed Churches in other lands before taking a definite decision.

Without charging the Synod of 1930 with culpable indiscretion, the committee ventures to express the opinion that it would have been better if Synod had postponed the final decision on the matter in question. The question whether the sacrament of baptism should be extended to children born outside of the covenant is a question that has doctrinal bearings, and doctrinal matters ought not to be formally settled, unless it is reasonably sure that the decision taken is the expression of an opinion that is fairly general in the churches concerned. And it has become quite evident since the decision was taken that this is not the case. Moreover, it would have been a greater recognition of the close relationship existing between our churches and the Reformed churches of the Netherlands and of South Africa, if the opinion of these churches had been sought before a final decision was reached in the matter under consideration.

B. MATERIAL OBJECTIONS TO SAID DECISION:

1. Synod's interpretation and application of Gen. 17 is erroneous.
 - a. The slaves of Abraham's household who were circumcised were believers. Witness what Scripture says concerning Eliezer and Hagar. As further proof the following texts are cited: Gen. 14:14; 18:19; 24:48; Neh. 13:23-31; Rom. 2:28, 29; Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:7; Phil. 3:3.

In connection with this point the following may be remarked: While the cases of Eliezer and Hagar favor the idea, they do not establish the fact that all the slaves belonging to the household of Abraham were believers. Gen. 14:14 is not to the point. It speaks of Abraham as leading forth "his trained men, born in his house." But the training referred to here is not religious but military training. Gen. 18:19 is an important passage, which stresses the duty of Abraham to give his children and his household a religious training, "that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Yet it fails to prove the point in question, because it does not refer to what Abraham did in the past, but to the duty that was imposed upon him, when God entered into covenant relationship with him. The following passage, namely, Gen. 24:48, simply proves that Eliezer was a believer. Nehemiah 13:23-31 speaks of

mixed marriages, the marriage of Jews with the daughters of Ammon and of Moab. Such marriages were not explicitly forbidden by the law (Deut. 7:1-4), but they were nevertheless against the spirit of the law, since they had the tendency to turn the people of Israel away from the service of God. Nehemiah, like Ezra before him, insisted on it that the marriage of Israelites with foreign women should cease. It does not appear that he followed the example of Ezra in demanding separation in such cases (Ezra 10:11, 19). This passage, of course, contains no explicit proof that the slaves circumcized by Abraham were believers; yet it may be construed as an inferential argument for that position. These foreign women were evidently not regarded as covenant members. And if even these foreign, unbelieving wives were not included in the covenant along with their husbands, then surely unbelieving slaves, not so intimately related to the head of the house, would not be so included simply because they belonged to the household. They must have received circumcision in their own right as believers. However, it may be said in answer to this argument that a specific commandment takes precedence over a general principle. The foreign slaves of Abraham were included in the covenant by a very definite commandment of the Lord, while there is no such commandment respecting foreign women. It must be said, however, that this passage certainly weakens the position that according to the principle of Gen. 17:12, all those belonging to the house or legally represented by the head of the house were, purely as such, included in the covenant. The following passages, namely, Rom. 2:28, 29; 4:11; Gal. 3:7, and Phil. 3:3, are all of a kind. They prove that only believers constitute the real seed of Abraham, but do not establish the position that there were no others in the covenant in any sense of the word, and that therefore the slaves of Abraham could be in the covenant only as believers. Paul stresses the fact that the Jews as a nation are the people of the covenant. Theirs are the covenants, though they have fallen away, Rom. 9:4. In spite of their want of faith they are the people of the circumcision, and this must be considered as an advantage, Rom. 3:1, 2. At the same time he maintains that no one can share in the spiritual realities of the covenant except by faith. If we should want to see in these passages a proof that none but believers are in the covenant, we must be ready to defend

the position that Ishmael and Esau, the wicked sons of Eli, the host of unbelieving Israelites in the days of the Old Testament, and the hostile Jews of Jesus' day, were not in the covenant. But no one among us would care to defend that position.

- b. Genesis 17:27 makes it clear that Abraham circumcized no children born of heathen parents, but only adults.

This assertion is based on the fact that the passage mentioned speaks of "all the *men*" of Abraham's house as being circumcized, which is interpreted as meaning *adults* and *not children*. This interpretation is very dubious, however, since the Hebrew word *anashim* does not serve to designate men in distinction from boys, but the male in distinction from the female members of the household. The singular of it is even used of a new-born child in Gen. 4:1. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Synod did not assert that Abraham circumcized also the children of his slaves. For that reason it does not appear that this passage can in any way serve to prove that Synod's interpretation of Gen. 17 is erroneous.

- c. Synod's exegesis does not recognize the fact that the covenant with Abraham also bore a temporal and national character. For Israel circumcision was not only a sign and a seal of a spiritual covenant, but also of a national covenant which included the whole of Israel. This national covenant is now done away with, and in its place has come a covenant which includes believers of all peoples."

This assertion is perfectly true. Synod quite ignored the fact that the covenant with Abraham was destined to be national during the Old Testament dispensation and to lose this national aspect when the new dispensation was ushered in. Anyone who belonged to the nation of Israel, or in the days of Abraham to the household, was as such entitled to circumcision. This is undoubtedly an important point, which was not given due attention. In its Old Testament form the covenant was destined to be co-extensive with the nation, and this meant that in its pre-Mosaic form it had to be co-extensive with the households of the patriarchs, and with the families and the tribes of Israel. These households, families, and tribes included not only the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also the slaves belonging to the households and the foreigners that professed the faith and joined the nation of Israel, including their physical descendants. The mere fact that one belonged to the

nation of Israel entitled one to the sign of the covenant, and even made it obligatory for one to submit to circumcision. This sacrament was among other things also a part of that system of symbols that served to mark the holiness, the separation of the people of Israel. It was the rite of admission to the fellowship of the covenant people, securing to the individual as a member of the nation a share in the promises and saving benefits granted to the nation as a whole. The whole people of Israel was symbolically a holy nation, destined to symbolize the final perfect state of the people of God. All the people belonging to the nation shared in this theocratic holiness and were therefore circumcized. Those who did not keep the theocratic ordinances were formally cut off from the nation. — All this does not mean, of course, that circumcision had no higher and more spiritual significance. It imposed ethical demands on those who received it, binding them to a life of obedience and a blameless walk before God. It was as such a symbol, a sign and seal of renewal and of purification of the heart. Hence we find Deuteronomy and the prophetic writings speaking of circumcision of the heart, Lev. 26:4; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Ezek. 44:7. It was a sign of the righteousness of faith for Abraham and for all those who shared his faith and followed in his footsteps.

- d. In New Testament times there is no compulsion to receive baptism as there was in O. T. times with regard to circumcision."

This is really part and parcel of the previous argument. It amounts to this that during the Old Testament period adult circumcision was not limited to believers, who voluntarily sought it, but was extended *nolens volens* to all Israelites. Everyone who belonged to the nation had to submit to circumcision. Those who were not circumcized were cut off from the people. Under the new dispensation, however, baptism is administered only to adults that believe in Jesus Christ and are thus spiritually qualified to receive it. This observation is perfectly correct, but does not fit in very well with the general idea that, as was asserted under (a), the slaves of Abraham were circumcized because they were believers. Synod argued that the principle laid down in Gen. 17:12 was carried right over into the New Testament, and based this on the passages which speak of the baptism of households. This argument of Synod will be discussed under (3).

- e. If Abraham circumcized men on the ground of ownership, then the ruling of Gen. 17 is not valid for the N. T. Church. In New Testament times we may not baptize unbelieving adults just because they are employed by Christian masters. Today adults may be baptized only on the ground of their confession.

This is a truth which was always recognized by the Church, and on which she has acted with great uniformity. Even the earliest Christian writings, such as the *Didache* and the *Apostolical Constitutions* testify to this fact. Lambert in his excellent work on *The Sacraments in the New Testament*, admitting the continuity of the Church under the old and new dispensations, says on page 200: "But surely it is a mistake to state it (this continuity) in a form which would imply that a man's wife and grown-up children, and even his slaves, would be baptized by the apostles on the ground of the faith of the head of the house himself. This is not only contrary to the whole teaching of the New Testament as to the necessity of a personal approach to Christ, but is contradicted by the fact that the preaching of the word and the appeal for faith were addressed to *all* the members of the house, and also by the use of such expressions as 'he feared God with all his house,' 'he believed in the Lord with all his house'."

2. Synod's interpretation of Ex. 12:43-45 is erroneous. Here we are merely taught that previous circumcision was a condition for a non-Israelite to partake of the Passover. According to Synod employees of a believer have to partake of the Lord's Supper after being baptized."

Synod certainly does not explicitly teach this, and it may be doubted whether anyone would maintain that it does, though someone might regard this as a natural inference from its interpretation of the passage under consideration. Synod finds in this passage a recognition of the fact that God includes in His covenant, not only the head of the family, but through him his *whole* house, the whole family, and that therefore the question of ownership determines the right to baptism. It holds that this passage implicitly reaffirms the principle laid down in Gen. 17:12. This is a position, however, which is not entirely self-evident and which Synod does not prove to be correct. It speaks as if verse 44 read as follows: But every man's servant that is bought for money, and as such circumcized, shall eat thereof. As a matter of fact, however it reads: "But every man's servant that is bought

for money, when thou hast circumcized him, then shall he eat thereof." It does not say nor necessarily imply that the purchased servant was *at once circumcized*, and as such entitled to eat the Passover; but merely that he had no right to partake of the Passover until he had first been circumcized. The one law that would apply in the case of both the slaves and the sojourners was: first circumcision, then the Passover. The passage does not exclude the possibility that the slaves first received religious instruction and were circumcized only after they were thus prepared. E. W. Edersheim says: "In Israel, moreover, heathen slaves were admitted to many religious rites, which would bestow on them special privileges. They were to be circumcized, but, as afterwards explained by the Rabbis, this, in the case of adults, must be a voluntary act, which not consented to, would oblige the owner to sell his slave again, after he had patiently waited for a year, in the hope of his bondman then desiring the rite."—*The Laws and Polity of the Jews*, p. 94.

3. Synod's interpretation of Acts 10:48; 16:15 and 33 is erroneous. The household members here mentioned were baptized because they themselves had become believers. In the light of Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38, 39, it appears that these passages teach something altogether different than Synod claims."

The report of the advisory committee, adopted by Synod, admits that the passages in question do not necessarily imply the presence and baptism of slaves in connection with the households mentioned. It goes on to say, however: "The principle is here at least established or reaffirmed that the whole house receives the sacrament when the head of the house becomes a believer." The import of this statement seems to be that these passages re-affirm and therefore render binding on the New Testament Church that, when the head of a household becomes a believer, all those belonging to the household, including the servants, if there are any, must be baptized on the ground of the faith professed by the head of the house. That would be the New Testament form of the principle said to be contained in Gen. 17:12. But it is, to say the least, very doubtful that this principle is really reaffirmed here and made binding on the New Testament Church. (1) The principle stated in Gen. 17:12 refers only to slaves belonging to the household, and it is quite possible, as Synod itself admits, that there were no slaves in the households that were baptized by the apostles.

(2) There are reasons to think that the adults belonging to these households were baptized, because they themselves all believed. This was certainly the case with those who were baptized at the home of Cornelius, Acts 10:45-48 (comp. 11:14). Of the jailor at Philippi we read that he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (Auth. Version, and also Moffatt.) The statement in Acts 18:8 is perfectly clear: "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." And, finally, it may be inferred from I Cor. 16:15 that this was also the case with the household of Stephanas, of which it is said that "it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they (note the plural) have set themselves to minister to the saints." (3) Such rich fruits need cause no surprise, if we only bear in mind that in the apostolic age the labours of the apostles were richly blessed. Think of the pentecostal harvest and of such later conversions on a large scale as are mentioned in Acts 5:14; 6:7; 10:44-48; 11:21 ff. (4) Such a principle as that said to be re-affirmed here would be contrary to the teaching and spirit of the New Testament. Personal faith is always the presupposition of the baptism of adults. In so far as we have records of the baptism of adults these always follow a profession of faith on the part of the candidate. And this is the principle on which the historic Churches have always acted. (5) The Didache speaks of baptism in chapter VIII. It has in mind only the baptism of adults, and clearly indicates that this should follow only after catechetical instruction. It says: "Having first taught all these things, baptize ye into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Schaff, speaking of this passage, correctly remarks: "In the apostolic and the whole ante-Nicean age to the time of Constantine baptism of believing converts was the rule, and is to this day on every missionary field." *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.* (6) The great weight of exegetical authority certainly favors the interpretation that all the adults of the household mentioned in the passages under consideration were baptized in their own right as believers. We have not found a single one which favored the idea that they were baptized simply on the ground that the head of the household became a believer.

4. Scripture draws another line than Synod in re covenant membership. According to Scripture fleshly descent of believers is a

matter of high importance. When Scripture speaks of the seed of believers, it always means fleshly descendants of believers. They are the only children that are members of the covenant of grace (Gen. 3:15; Acts 2:39; Joel 2:16; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; I John 2:13; II Tim. 3:15). The covenant of grace is continued historically and organically in the generations. The bond between an adopted child and its foster parents is mechanical. The covenant of grace follows the line of blood, the line of fleshly descent. Scripture nowhere implies that seed includes those who are children by dint of human adoption. The Reformed fathers, when they speak of children of believers, always mean children **born** of believers. The blood-relationship is not the ground for baptism but only the promise of God; yet it is also true that the promise comes, though not exclusively, to those who are biologically the seed of Abraham and of the believers. The covenant is established with believers and with their seed in the line of continued generations (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; Rom. 4:16; 9:8; 11:16; Gal. 3:7). God excludes from the covenant, from the covenant promises, and from the covenant benefits the children of unbelievers and terms them unholy (Acts 2:39; Rom. 11:16; I Cor. 7:14; Eph. 2).

The statement that, when Scripture speaks of the seed of believers, it always means fleshly descendants of believers, when put in this general form, is debatable. It is true, however, with the exception of those passages in which the term "seed of Abraham" is used spiritually, Rom. 4:16; Gal. 2:29 to designate believers. The term is sometimes used to denote those fleshly descendants of Abraham who also share his faith and are therefore true Israelites. It may be doubted, however, whether they who oppose the decision of Synod actually maintain that, when Scripture speaks of the seed of believers, it always means their fleshly descendants. They admit that the term "seed" is not always used in the same sense. The main thrust of the whole paragraph here quoted seems to be that, according to Scripture no other children are included in the covenant than those who are fleshly descendants of believers. If by this it is meant that Scripture does not include any children in the covenant except those born of parents who belong to the chosen nation in the old dispensation or profess the true faith in the new, then the assertion would seem to be correct. Several passages are quoted to prove that these are the only children that are members of the covenant of grace. In Gen. 3:15 the expression "her seed" certainly refers to children born of Eve, though the term "seed" may here have, in addition to its natural meaning, also a spiritual signification. Peter says in Acts 2:39 to the Jews and the proselites that were gathered at Jerusalem, "For to you is the promise and to your children." Irrespective of the question,

whether he refers to their *immediate* offspring (so most commentators), or to their descendants in general (Hackett, Lambert), he certainly has in mind their fleshly descendants. He is following the common usage of the Old Testament, which knows of no other children than children by birth. Similarly, Joel 2:16, which speaks of "the children and those that suck the breasts," undoubtedly refers to the fleshly offspring of the people belonging to the nation of Israel. We have no reason to think that any other kind of children are meant in Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; I John 2:13. And of Timothy we know that he was the child of a believing mother, II Tim. 3:15; Acts 16:1; II Tim. 1:5. These passages, however, do not prove the point in question. Other passages are quoted to prove that the covenant is established with believers and with their seed in the line of continued generations. According to the connection this must mean that the covenant follows the line of fleshly descent. Gen. 17:7 is undoubtedly a clear indication of this fact. The same may be said of Acts 2:39. The other four passages mentioned rather serve to indicate that something more than mere fleshly descent is needed for the continuation of the reality of the covenant. Finally, the assertion is made that Scripture excludes children of unbelievers and terms them unholy. Of the passages indicated as substantiating this assertion only I Cor. 7:14 serves the purpose. It is the only one of them which explicitly excludes children of unbelievers.

5. Adoption does not involve covenant relationship. It changes the legal and external status of a child but not the fact that it is born of unbelievers. The relationship existing between an unbelieving wife and her believing husband is still more intimate than the relationship existing between an adopted child and its foster-parents. Yet the unbelieving wife is not brought into covenant relationship by marriage with a believer.

As far as we can see Scripture does not warrant the idea that children can become members of the covenant by natural adoption. Such an adoption affects only the natural and not the spiritual status of children. It does not of itself change a child that is outside of the covenant into a covenant child. The proof that is adduced for this position, however, is not quite to the point, since it speaks of adults and not of children. In the New Testament dispensation no adult can enter the covenant, except by a personal profession of faith, while a child can.

6. Adoption is an act of man, not of God. God alone incorporates into the covenant when He in His sovereign grace endows man with the gift of faith.

It is perfectly true that adoption, as it comes into consideration here, is an act of man, and that God only incorporates one into the covenant. It cannot be maintained, however, that God does this only by endowing man with faith. He introduces children into the covenant by causing them to be born of Christian parents. The question is, whether He could not also do this by causing them to be adopted by Christian parents. In both cases it would be the work of God, and in both cases He would be working through human agencies, though in the case of adoption He would be leaving more to the voluntary choice of man than in the case of birth. The great question is simply, what is the divine method revealed to us in the Word of God. And then it would seem to admit of no doubt that God introduces children into the covenant by causing them to be born of parents who are themselves in covenant relationship with God.

7. Baptism does not bestow the benefits of regeneration and the forgiveness of sins. These benefits are the possession previous to baptism of those who receive baptism properly. Baptism is not a ceremony whereby a child is consecrated to God but a sealing of the promise of God. Baptism is not a means to conversion. Objection is made to the expression of Synod, "with respect to the sacrament to be administered to those that entered God's covenant," and over against this it is said that baptism is administered to children because they are heirs of the covenant, not that they may become heirs of the covenant.

This paragraph takes issue with the position that children are baptized, in order to become members of the covenant, and asserts that they receive the sacrament, because they are members of the covenant. In connection with this point it may be said that Synod did not take the position that children are baptized, in order to enter the covenant; and that it is not clear that the objectors really ascribe this view to Synod. Synod simply maintained the position that children may enter the covenant by means of adoption. The contention that the benefits of regeneration and the forgiveness of sins are the possession previous to baptism of those who receive baptism properly, if actually made by the objectors, certainly needs elucidation and is highly debatable.

8. The decision of Synod is incomplete and doubtful because of the use of **may** instead of **must**. It apparently leaves the final decision to the local consistory. This weak **may** tends to promote diversity rather than unity in our public worship.

What is said here is perfectly true. If Synod was convinced that children adopted by Christian parents are in virtue of that adoption in the covenant of grace, it should have taken the position that they must be baptized. Baptism may not be withheld from children who are in the covenant and who are presented for baptism by professing parents, who are willing to assume the responsible task of giving them a Christian education. The decision, as it now stands, is really apt to promote disorder and to create disturbance in the churches.

9. - 13.

These items may well be taken together. It is asserted that the decision of Synod is at variance with Question 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism, with Art. 34 of the Belgic Confession, with Art. 4 of Chapter 28 of the Westminster Confession, with Art. 56 of our Church Order, and with our Form for Infant Baptism, "especially with the thanksgiving prayer and passages which speak of children of believers as heirs of the Kingdom of God and of the covenant, and as members of Christ's Church." The last is said to be applicable only to children whose regeneration we may presume. The main point here seems to be that these writings make a distinction between the children of unbelievers and those of the faithful or of Christian parents, and insist on it that the latter should receive the sacrament of baptism. They regard the children of believers therefore as the only ones that are entitled to the sacrament. It might be said, of course, by those who favor the decision of Synod that the statements used in these official writings do not necessarily exclude, but may very well include, children adopted by believing parents, since these are also children of believers, though it be in virtue of adoption. Now it is perfectly true that these writings do not explicitly state that the children intended are exclusively children *born* of believers to the exclusion of children *adopted* by them. Yet it would seem to be only natural to proceed on the assumption that, when these official documents speak of the children of believers, they have in mind children by birth only, so that there is no warrant for saying that they who appeal to their language are begging the question. The following considerations may be urged in favor of this opinion: (a) Evidently the writings in question are simply using Scripture language in many instances. And when the Bible speaks of the children of believers in general, it refers only to chil-

dren born of believers. This is the usual sense of the term, and there is no indication whatever that the term is used in a more inclusive sense in our confessional standards. (b) Certain expressions in these writings clearly point in the same direction. Notice the underscored words in the following statements: "And indeed Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ hath done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death, *shortly after they were born,*" etc. Belgic Confession, Art. XXXIV. "The covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by baptism, *as soon as the administration thereof is feasible,* in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached." Church Order, Art. 56. In the light of the Article as formulated by the Synod of Dort in 1574 it is clear that the underscored words were inserted, because some showed a tendency to wait until the mothers were well enough to present the children for baptism. "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants *of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.* The underscored words, based on I Cor. 7:14, certainly do not refer foster parents. (c) If the confessional writings of the Reformed Churches spoke of the children of believers in a more inclusive sense and meant, not only children born of believers, but also children adopted by them, then the problem could hardly arise in these Churches, whether such adopted children might be baptized; then it remains unexplained why none of those who advised the baptism of such children at the Synod of Dort appealed to the standards of the Church; and then the Synod of Dort took a stand that was contrary to its own Confession. Evidently, however, no one ever felt that it really took an inconsistent position.

14. The decision of Synod is at variance with the decision in re the baptism of adopted children taken by the Synod of Dort in 1618-19. An official decision of churches met in Synod is binding rather than the opinions of individuals. The decision of the majority is binding rather than the opinion of a large minority.

This is simply a statement of facts which cannot very well be denied. Comment seems to be quite unnecessary here.

15. The decision of Synod is at variance with the teachings of the best Reformed theologians.

At the Synod of Dort and from that time on there has always been a difference of opinion on the question under consideration, and it is not always easy to determine, whether the theologians that were opposed to the baptism of adopted children or those that favored it were the best Reformed theologians of their day. Neither is this necessary, for this is not really the form in which the objection was put. It reads as follows: "The decision of Synod means a departure on this point from the teaching of many eminent Reformed theologians." And then the objector goes on to mention A. Kuyper, Sr., H. Bavinck, H. H. Kuyper, G. Vos, and H. Bouwman of the more recent theologians, and Calvin and Voetius of the older ones. To these names others might be added, such as Paraeus, Strong, Brakel, and Gravemeier. But over against these others might be mentioned as favoring the baptism of adopted children, such as The professors of Leyden, Vitranga, a Marck, De Moor, and Hodge.

16. The decision of Synod is at variance with the practice of the Reformed churches.

The objector says: "With the practice, in general, of our Reformed fathers." It certainly may be said that it is the general practice of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands not to baptize children of which there is no reasonable assurance that they are born within the pale of the covenant. On the other hand the Presbyterian Church in our country is of the opinion that such children should be baptized.

17. The decision of Synod has created a great deal of dissatisfaction in our churches.

It is undoubtedly true that many of our churches are dissatisfied with the position which Synod has taken in the matter of the baptism of adopted children. But there probably would be some dissatisfaction no matter what stand Synod should take in the matter.

18. The decision of Synod is pregnant with a host of practical evils. The consciousness of the holiness of the covenant will be lost. It will prove detrimental for proper covenant training. The line of demarcation between the holy and the unholy will fade away. The Church will become subject to the wrath of God. The Holy Spirit will withdraw Himself and His gracious operations will become less and less frequent.

It would seem rather fruitless to discuss the possible evil effects of the decision of Synod. There is room for much difference of opinion here. Moreover, such considerations

cannot be the deciding factor in this matter. If the position is biblical, we need not fear the effects.

On the whole the objections raised would seem to be sufficiently serious to prompt a reconsideration of the decision of Synod, and to urge upon Synod the necessity of basing whatever decision it may take more clearly on a solid biblical ground.

CONSTRUCTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE MATTER

The question submitted to the committee for consideration is, whether children whose covenant status cannot be ascertained, adopted by Christian parents and thus incorporated in Christian families, are entitled to the sacrament of baptism. It is perfectly evident that a question of this kind can only be settled on Scriptural grounds. While it is of great importance to take notice of the opinions of great theologians and of the decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies, such opinions and decisions have only historical significance and are devoid of normative value, except in so far as they are clearly based on Scripture. And their value naturally decreases in the measure in which they are at variance, as in the case in connection with the matter under consideration. A *communis opinio* would at least have a strong presumption in its favor, but no such opinion exists with respect to the baptism of adopted children.

Are children adopted by Christian parents entitled to baptism? The first question that comes into consideration here is, What is it that entitles a child to the sacrament of baptism? What is it that gives a child the right to baptism? To ward off misunderstanding, it should be said at once that the child, according to the confessional standards of the various churches, is baptized either on the basis of a relationship in which it stands to God and His Church, or in order to introduce it to such a relationship. The ground of the baptism is not found in the promise of the parents to give it a Christian education. This promise already presupposes the relationship on which the right to baptism is based. Therefore it is not valid to argue that a child adopted by Christian parents is entitled to baptism in view of the fact that these parents promise to give it a Christian education.

Those who believe in baptismal regeneration do not baptize children on the ground of an existing relationship in which these children stand to God and His Church, but

simply on the general ground that they need the saving grace which is wrought in baptism. The sacrament is instrumental in introducing them into a saving relationship to God and the Church. The Methodist position is expressed in the following words: "We hold that all children, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the kingdom of God, and therefore graciously entitled to baptism." *Methodist Discipline* (1892), par. 43. The right of infants to baptism is based on their membership in the kingdom of God. Nothing is said or implied as to their actual spiritual state. This is the position taken by Merrill in his work on *Christian Baptism*, though he adds that "infants are in a state of gracious acceptance before God," pp. 19, 22. Hibbard in his treatise on Baptism represents the position of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Says he: "In the following treatise I have assumed that infants are in a regenerated state." Somewhat more in detail he says: "All infants are, by nature, in the same state, as it respects moral condition; all are under condemnation. 'We are by nature children of wrath.' But at the moment when the period of personal existence commences — at the moment when the identity of the human being is established, so that it is capable of moral happiness or misery — at that moment we consider the soul to come within the gracious provisions of the atonement, which secures unconditional salvation to all such as die in infancy. All children, we consider, are alike in this respect. All are on a perfect parity of standing; and, in so far, all are equally eligible to baptism, the seal of that covenant of grace by which they are saved. *And this we regard as the proper, primary ground of eligibility to this ordinance,* pp. 5, 293.

The common view among churches of Reformed persuasion is that children derive their right to the sacrament of baptism from the fact that they are in the covenant of grace, of which baptism is a sacrament. Alongside of this presumptive regeneration has often been mentioned as a ground for infant baptism. But this can hardly serve as its legal ground. Belief in the presumptive regeneration of children is itself based on the fact that they are in covenant relationship with God. In the discussion of this matter some twenty-five years ago the advocates of presumptive regeneration as a ground for infant baptism admitted that the covenant relationship is

really its legal ground, and that presumptive regeneration is only its spiritual ground. To us it seems preferable to avoid the use of the term ground with respect to it altogether. In answer to the question, "Are infants also to be baptized?" the Heidelberg Catechism answers: "Yes; for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and Church of God, and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian Church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant." Wilson in his splendid work on *Infant Baptism* bases the right of infants to the sacrament of baptism altogether on their federal standing. He points out, however, that while this gave them their legal right to baptism, a proper spiritual condition of the heart was indispensable to the right and profitable enjoyment of the privileges secured by that title. White in his little treatise on *Why Infants Are Baptized* speaks of three conditions in the recipient as prerequisite to its administration, namely, (1) Membership in the visible Church (the same as their covenant relationship). (2) Presumptive regeneration, of which he also speaks as a ground. (3) Capability of receiving spiritual grace. On the supposition of presumptive regeneration the last can no more be in question. We shall proceed on the assumption that children of believers are baptized on the ground of their federal relationship or standing.

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If the position taken in the preceding is correct, the question arises as to the extent of the covenant of grace. Which children are included in the covenant? In order to give an answer to this question it will be necessary to take a very important distinction into account. The covenant may be regarded as an end in itself, realized only in a communion of life, a life of friendship with God. Looked at from this point of view the covenant includes only the elect in Christ, and only they who are renewed by the Spirit of God can be said to share in the life of the covenant. The covenant of redemption, which is the foundation and prototype of the covenant of grace, includes only the elect. According to Romans 5 only those who are in Christ share in the spiritual blessings of the covenant. In

Gal. 3 Paul argues that the seed of Abraham includes only Christ and those who are of Christ. "And if ye are of Christ, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." And the poet sings: "The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." Ps. 25:14. Naturally covenant membership in this sense is determined by spiritual qualifications only, and never by purely physical descent. Many physical descendants of Abraham were never in the covenant, regarded in its spiritual essence, and many who could not claim such descent inherited its spiritual blessings.

But the covenant can also be regarded as a means to an end, as a purely legal relationship or arrangement, putting man under certain obligations, and pointing to that which ought to be realized in his life. This is but another aspect of the same covenant, an aspect which necessarily followed from the fact that God wanted to realize his covenant in an organic and historical way, and in the way of faith and obedience on the part of man. In the question respecting the extent of the covenant, in so far as we are interested in it here, it is especially this aspect of the covenant that comes into consideration. The question is, Who are included in the covenant as a purely legal relationship? It is perfectly evident that all those who are in the covenant in that sense are also entitled to the sacrament. In the light of Scripture it cannot be doubtful that the covenant of grace was destined to move along the organic lines of family relationship. It is along those lines that the covenant of works would have come to fruition, if Adam had stood the test. Obedience on his part would have carried with it the blessings of eternal life for all his descendants. And the covenant of grace operates along the same lines, because God does not merely want to save certain individuals, but the organism of humanity, the human race, which does not mean every individual belonging to that race. Consequently in the different manifestations of the covenant of grace and related covenants the party of the second part is never a single individual, but always includes his seed. It is the woman and her seed, Noah and his seed, Abraham and his seed, David and his seed. For the Old Testament this also meant Jacob and his seed, the Israelites and their seed, and for the New Testament, believers and their seed. Now the question is, whether the term "seed," when used

in a natural, as distinguished from a spiritual, sense refers exclusively to offspring or physical descendants, or in some cases includes others, who cannot claim such descent. In order to determine what the word "seed" means when used as a designation of the extent of the covenant, it is perhaps best to consider the use of the term in the relevant passages that speak of covenant transactions.

The first manifestation of the covenant of grace is found in Gen. 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Some ascribe to the term "seed" a spiritual sense in this passage. Those who take the side of God are then the seed of the woman, and those who arrange themselves on the side of Satan, the seed of the serpent. The support of John 8:44 was claimed for this interpretation. It must be said, however, that this is not the most natural interpretation of the passage. In fact, it carries into the text an idea that was not only quite unintelligible, but that could hardly be expected at this stage of God's revelation. It is more natural to interpret the prediction to mean that God will set enmity (a) between the physical descendants of Eve, the human race, and the brood of serpents; and (b) especially between the human race and that collective kingdom of evil of which Satan is the recognized head. This prophecy then means that the organism of humanity is drawn within the sphere of redemption and will in the end be victorious over the power of evil. This, of course, does not mean that every individual of the human race will be saved, but only that the human race will escape and be triumphant. In this interpretation the word "seed" is understood in its natural and most obvious sense, namely, as a designation of the physical descendants of Eve. At the same time it does not exclude the idea that the seed of the woman in which humanity will become victorious is pre-eminently Jesus Christ. We understand this in the light of God's later revelation. The seed of the serpent is first of all the whole brood of serpents, but further especially the whole world of evil spirits which pits itself against the Kingdom of God. Though these evil spirits are not the physical descendants of the serpent, that is, Satan, they are called the seed of the serpent to bring the expression in harmony with the preceding. The kingdom of evil represents the opposite of the Kingdom of God at this stage of the divine revelation. By adopting

this interpretation we escape the difficulty, which we encounter when we conceive of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent as two classes of men, the one pious and the other wicked, that the seed of the serpent is also at the same time the seed of the woman. And on either interpretation the seed of the woman consists of her physical descendants. The interpretation which we have adopted, is also that of Calvin, Keil, Kuyper, Bavinck, Vos, Van Andel, e. a. In this original manifestation of the covenant then we find as yet no limitations. The seed of the woman is mankind collectively as over against the world of the evil spirits collectively.

The next following record of a covenant transaction is found in Gen. 9:9: "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." There can be no doubt about it that in this passage the term "seed" is a designation of the physical descendants of Noah. Noah appears here in a representative character, and he represents all his natural descendants, that is, the whole human race. The covenant includes the promise that "all flesh" shall not "be cut off any more by the waters of the flood." The question, whether this covenant is also an aspect of the covenant of grace or not need not be discussed here, since we are only seeking to determine, whether the term seed refers exclusively to physical descendants or not. The covenant in this case certainly includes the whole human race.

Next we come to the covenant transaction with Abraham, and particularly the statement found in Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." In connection with this covenant transaction the term "seed" clearly has two different meanings, the one natural and the other spiritual. We are primarily concerned with the former, for this largely determines the extent of the covenant as a legal transaction and in so far also the extent to which the sacrament now instituted was to be administered. Now it would scarcely seem to admit of any doubt that the term "seed" in its natural signification in the case now under consideration, as well as in the previous ones, refers to physical descendants only. The following considerations may be urged in favor of this position: (1) This is the natural meaning of the term *zera*.' As used of men this term

denotes *semen virile*, offspring, progeny, descendants. It does not necessarily refer to immediate offspring, but may serve to designate a family or a race of men. But it is always indicative (except when it is used of an individual) of a group of men that has a common progenitor. This is the only sense in which the word has been used in the Bible up to this stage. (2) That Abraham so understands the term is quite evident from Gen. 15:2-4: "And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abraham said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Clearly, then, Eliezer, though born in the house of Abraham, did not belong to his seed. The seed would be born of the patriarch. (3) According to Gen. 17:12 the sacrament of circumcision was to be administered, not only to the physical descendants of Abraham, but also to those not of his seed, who were born in the house or bought with money of foreigners. The term "seed" is clearly restricted and denotes only the physical descendants of Abraham. (4) This is in all probability also the distinction intended in Gen. 18:19, where the Lord says: "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his *children* and his *household* after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." The children constitute the seed of Abraham. (5) That the seed of Abraham in the natural sense is limited to his physical descendants is also evident from Gen. 21:10-13. Abraham is grieved by the attitude of Sarah, when she insists on casting out Ishmael. But Jehovah did not want him to grieve, since the casting out of Ishmael was in harmony with the divine plan. "And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy handmaid; in all that Sarah said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."—In the transaction with Abraham we see the beginning of particularism in the administration of the covenant. It was restricted almost exclusively to the descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob. Later on at Mount Sinai the covenant made with Abra-

ham took on national proportions. Though essentially the same covenant, it now became national in scope, assumed a more legal aspect, and included a detailed ceremonial service. The nation, with which the covenant is established, is repeatedly said to consist of the seed of Abraham, Jacob, or of Israel. Deut. 4:37, cf. verse 40; Ps. 22:23; 102:28; 105:6; Isa. 45:19; 65:9; Acts 2:39. From the fact that in several of these passages the word "seed" is used as synonymous with "children" it is evident that the term refers to physical descendants.

Another covenant transaction of which we read is that with David. This is recorded in II Sam. 7:12-16. God Himself makes mention of this through the psalmist, when He says: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant; Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." Ps. 89:3, 4. He refers to this once more in the verses 28, 29: "My lovingkindness will I keep him forevermore; and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven." When in the 30th verse He substitutes "children" for "seed," He clearly shows that He has in mind the physical descendants of David. Here again the term is used in its ordinary sense and denotes only the natural offspring of David.

On the basis of the passages which speak of the various covenant transactions of Jehovah, in which the party of the second part always includes his (her) seed, and in which the word "seed" evidently always refers to physical descendants, we conclude that God in the administration of His covenant clearly intends to move along the line of physical descent. This is due to the fact that in saving the human race He cannot work atomistically or individualistically. Such a method of working would have resulted in the salvation of a large number of separate individuals, but not in the salvation of the organism of mankind. Just as the covenant of works would have moved along the line of Adam's physical descendants, if Adam had met the requirements, so the covenant of grace operates along the line of the physical descent of those who are in covenant relationship with God, that is, of those who are in Christ, the second or last Adam. The covenant embraces such persons and their descendants, that is, those who are born of them. It represents the way in which God historically and organically saves the hu-

man race. This remains the fundamental idea throughout the Bible. The fact that God made some special arrangement, in connection with the condition of the time and the theocratic, symbolical and typical significance of Israel, with reference to those who shared the life of the ancient people of God, does not affect that fundamental principle. It simply means that for dispensational reasons and by a special arrangement others than the seed of Abraham were included in the Old Testament form of the covenant.

It has been remarked that the word "seed" is sometimes evidently used in a broader sense, namely, as a designation of the whole people of Israel, while it is a known fact that many foreign elements were included in the nation. But the passages referred to fail to carry conviction. In some of them the term is clearly used in a spiritual sense. And if in others it is actually used as a designation of the nation of Israel, the designation may be regarded as a synecdoche. The most important constituent part of the nation is named for the whole.

Now it may be said, and truly, that the term "seed," when applied to the heirs of the covenant, sometimes has a spiritual meaning. This becomes perfectly clear in the New Testament, but is already intimated in the Old. It is evident from the start that not all the physical descendants of Abraham are true sons of the patriarch, conceived as the father of believers, and as such destined to inherit the spiritual realities of the covenant. The covenant blessings were not fully realized in all his physical descendants. The real seed of Abraham was ethically conditioned from the start. Paul finds this indicated in the singular *zera*, which was used, when God gave the promise to Abraham and his seed. According to him the seed is Christ, and then further all those who accept Christ by faith and are thus identified with Him. The seed finds its real unity, not in Abraham, but in Christ. Only they who share the faith of Abraham belong to the true seed, Rom. 2:28, 29; 4:12, 16; Gal. 3:6, 14, 29. This ethical and spiritual meaning of the term "seed" is already indicated in the Old Testament. It is revealed to Abraham that the covenant will not be continued along the line of Ismael, but along that of Isaac, Gen. 17:19. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," Gen. 21:12. Isaac was the son of promise, the product of a supernatural operation of God, and in so far a type of the children of God,

of all the real heirs of the covenant. The principle that would apply in the continuation of the covenant in its spiritual aspect is indicated in Gen. 18:19: "For I have known him (Abraham), to the end that he may command his children, and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." The covenant blessings would be fully realized only in the line of those who shared the faith of Abraham and followed him in the path of obedience. Ishmael dropped out and the covenant was continued in Isaac. Later on Esau was rejected, and the blessing of Abraham passed on to Jacob, Gen. 28:3, 4. After the days of the patriarchs, when the covenant had taken on national proportions, we no more read of such exclusion of individuals, but this does not mean that the underlying principle did not continue to apply. The people are reminded time and again that mere circumcision of the flesh, in which many gloried, did not guarantee them any real spiritual blessings, and that only circumcision of the heart counted before God, Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25, 26; Rom. 2:25-29; 4:12. Only they were regarded as true children of the covenant who had new hearts and who manifested their love to God by walking in the way of His commandments. Moreover, there were many sins for which persons had to be put to death, in order to put away evil from Israel. This measure also served to guard the holiness of the covenant people by exclusion. Finally, God dealt with the nation primarily as a whole. His judgments upon the nation on account of its sins served the same purpose, as, for instance, during the wilderness journey, in the days of the Judges, in the period of the kingdom, and at the time of the exile. It is quite evident therefore even from the Old Testament that something more than mere physical descent from Abraham was required in the true children of the covenant. We are thus prepared by the Old Testament itself for the New Testament position that the covenant of grace will be continued along the line of those who share the faith of Abraham. Only they are true children of Abraham who are children in virtue of a promise rather than by virtue of fleshly descent, Rom. 9:8; Gal. 4:28-31.

Our study of the meaning of the term "seed" in Scripture leads us to the conclusion that, as applied to men in connection with covenant transactions, it always denotes

physical descendants, either immediate or more remote, except in a few specific instances. The term "seed of Abraham" may designate merely the physical descendants of the patriarch, particularly in the line of Isaac and Jacob, or those physical descendants of Abraham who also shared his faith, or believers of the Gentiles, on the principle that those who are of Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham's seed, Gal. 3:29. The term "seed" is also used spiritually, where Scripture speaks of the seed of Christ, as, for instance in Ps. 22:30; Isa. 53:10. Moreover, it is possible that the term "seed" has, in addition to its natural signification, also a spiritual meaning in some of the passages that speak of the seed of Jacob; Ps. 22:23 may be an instance of this kind. But in the case of all others the word is always used exclusively in a physical sense. And this indicates the line along which God desires to continue his covenant historically. This means that in the administration of the covenant God moves along the line of the physical descendants of Abraham and Jacob or Israel, and in the days of the New Testament along the line of the physical descendants of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

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But now the question arises, whether in the covenant transaction with Abraham God did not include others besides his seed in the covenant, *and that simply on the basis of Abraham's faith*. Did not the faith of Abraham bring all those who belonged to his household within the confines of the covenant, so that they were all heirs of the promise, even though the covenant was not fully realized in the lives of every one of them. Now it is perfectly clear that the covenant with Abraham did include others, namely, the slaves born in his house or bought of foreigners, Gen. 17:12. On what principle were they drawn within the circle of the covenant and did they receive the sacrament of circumcision? They could not, of course, be circumcized as the natural seed of Abraham, because they did not belong to his physical descendants.

It may be said and has been said that the slaves of Abraham were circumcized in their own right as believers. This is a possible position to take in view of the following considerations: (1) It is but natural to think that believing Abraham took special pains to instruct his servants in the true religion, especially in view of what is said in Gen. 18:19. (2) Eliezer of Damascus evidently

shared the faith of Abraham, Gen. 24:12, 13, 42, 48. (3) According to the rabbis the submission of servants to circumcision had to be voluntary on the part of adults. If they did not consent to it, the owner, after waiting a reasonable time, would have to sell them again. Ederheim, *The Laws and Polity of the Jews*, p. 94. (4) This would be most in harmony with the practice of the New Testament. If they were circumcized as believers, then, naturally, their children, if there were any, would be circumcized along with them. We cannot be absolutely sure, however, that this interpretation is correct, since we have no positive information respecting the spiritual condition of the slaves in question. Moreover, it would seem to break up the unity of the covenant transaction. The covenant is then established, not merely with Abraham and those whom he represents, but also with the slaves and those whom they represent. This may not be a formidable objection; yet it is one that should be considered.

Another possible interpretation is that the servants of Abraham were circumcized simply because they belonged to the family of the patriarch. Such slaves were the perpetual property of their owners, and passed on to the children of the latter by inheritance. They were reckoned as a part of the family and were therefore also included in the covenant. The Synod of 1930 apparently adopted the view that the slaves of Abraham were circumcized, because they belonged to Abraham, and deduced from this the general principle that God continues the covenant of grace along the line of physical descent and of ownership right up to the present time. It looks upon this as a principle of permanent validity, and bases on it the right to baptize children which are adopted by Christian parents. We shall consider and test this theory at a later stage of our discussion. At this point we desire to say that it is possible to proceed on the assumption that the slaves of Abraham were circumcized, not in their own right as believers, but as belonging to the household of Abraham, and that for a time the external administration of the covenant was destined to proceed, not only along the line of physical descent, but along the line of ownership as well, the head of the house being regarded as the legal representative of his slaves as well as of his children;—and yet to maintain that this was but a temporary arrangement. True, it has been said that the unity of the covenant in both the old and the new dispensation guar-

antees the permanence of the arrangement, but this is not necessarily so. The covenant is one throughout the history of revelation only in its essential elements, and not in the form of its administration. The covenant promise is the same throughout, the Mediator is the same, and the way of salvation revealed in the covenant is always the same. But the sacraments were not the same; neither was the extent of its administration. At first it included the whole of humanity, then it was limited to a single nation, and finally it became universal in the sense that it included people of all nations, believers and their seed. Since the point under consideration is connected with the extent of the administration of the covenant, it would seem not only possible but even probable that this too was changed. The New Testament certainly favors the idea that it has changed, and the Church of the new dispensation has always acted on the principle that it does not apply now.

It seems altogether reasonable to think that the circumcision of slaves such as those of the household of Abraham, was connected with the characteristic dispensation of the covenant among Israel. In the covenant with Abraham we have a preparation for the national covenant with Israel. In the national covenant at Mount Sinai a nation was selected to constitute in its entirety the people of God, a priestly people and a holy nation. The nation of Israel was the Church of the Old Testament; it constituted a Church-State. This does not mean that all the people were truly holy, but it does mean that they had the promises of God and represented the sphere in which God would operate by the Holy Spirit and through the means of grace for the realization of the covenant. Moreover, the nation as a whole was destined to symbolize and typify the final condition of things in the perfected kingdom of God, in which all the people are consecrated to God. Hence the tremendous emphasis on separation or holiness to the Lord, which appears in all its institutions. For this reason also all they that belonged to the nation, the descendants of Abraham, along the line of Isaac and Jacob, the bond-servants, and the foreigners that were incorporated in the nation, had to receive the outward sign of an inward separation in circumcision. This sign naturally could not be limited to the Israelites proper, but had to be extended to the slaves which formed an essential part of the nation, just as they did of every other nation

in those days. It was but natural therefore that in the Abrahamic covenant, which in its external administration was a preformation of the national covenant with Israel, the slaves of the household should be circumcized. The uncircumcized could not form a part of the chosen race, but had to be cut off from the people, Gen. 17:14. Proselytes could be incorporated into the nation only by submitting to circumcision. This also accounts for the fact that circumcision was administered among Israel irrespective of the question, whether he who presented the child for circumcision was a believer or not. Every one who belonged to the nation was also a member of the Church. If he had a proper theocratic standing, he was entitled to the privilege of circumcision for his children, and was in duty bound to seek the sacrament for them. Dr. Kuyper expresses himself as follows on this point: "Ook moet in de tweede plaats toegestemd, en mag nimmer uit het oog verloren, dat ze (de besnijdenis) voor Israel tevens een *nationale* beteekenis had. Wel was niet elk besnedene een zoon Israels, overmits ook onder tal van andere volken de besnijdenis bestond, maar toch gold voor Israel de regel dat een onbesnedene geen zoon Israels kon zijn. Daarom was de besnijdenis onder Israel algemeen, en strekte zich uit: (1) tot het volk in alle rangen en standen, tot rijk en arm, tot den aanzienlijke en den vergetene, tot priester en leek, en was niet, gelijk in Egypte, bepaald tot een enkele kaste of klasse; (2) strekte ze zich uit tot allen leeftijd, tot jong en oud, zoodat zelfs het kleinste kind besneden werd, en ook de volwassene, die proseliet werd, zich aan de besnijdenis moest onderwerpen; en (3) gold ze ook voor de ingeborenen des huizes en voor een iegelijk die met Israel zou gerekend worden. Als zoodanig wierd de besnijdenis bij Israel dus een *nationaal* symbool. In Israel was Kerk en Staat één; de Staat was een Kerkstaat en de Kerk een Staatskerk. De volkskerk gold er in vollen, rijken, volstrekten zin, juist om na de uitbreiding van het Evangelie tot alle natien voorgoed in de *wereldkerk* onder te gaan, en nergens meer als volkskerk te kunnen opkomen." E Voto III, p. 31. Dr. Vos argues that the case of Abraham furnishes no parallel for the baptism of adopted children. Says he: "Met Abraham en de ingeborenen of gekochten zijns huizes was het eenigszins anders. Schoon het metterdaad hetzelfde genadeverbond was hetwelk daar bediend werd, dat wij nu nog hebben, moet men toch niet vergeten, dat

daar tevens de basis gelegd werd voor het nationale bestaan van Israel. En hier was een direct goddelijk bevel om al de dienstknechten in het verbond op te nemen. Daarmee was niet bedoeld, dat Abraham een onbepaald getal Heiden-kinderen onder zijn toezicht nemen en besnijden kon. Door het Oud-Testamentisch particularisme was zulks bepaald uitgesloten." Geref. Dogmatiek V, p. 127.

With all this we do not deny in any way the spiritual significance of circumcision. This is closely connected with the national symbolism of the sacrament. It was for Abraham and for all those who shared his faith a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith and of the circumcision of the heart, that is of justification and regeneration and sanctification. Moreover, it obliged the recipient to a life of obedience in the fear of the Lord. The spiritual significance of the sacrament was not at once stated explicitly. The ritual was, as Dr. Vos says, at first left to teach its own lesson. But already in Lev. 26:41, and especially in Deut. 10:16, the concept is transferred to the spiritual sphere. This is more emphatically the case in some of the prophets, Jer. 4:4; 10:16; 9:25, 26. The people are given to understand that the only circumcision which really counts before God is circumcision of the heart. We can safely let this point rest here, because it contributes nothing to the solution of our problem.

The question that is of far greater importance for us is, whether we are warranted in carrying the practice prescribed in Gen. 17:12 over into the new dispensation. It seems to us that we must give a negative answer to this question. With the coming of the dispensation of the Spirit the Church-State of Israel ceased to exist, and with it went the national administration of the covenant and all that was incidental to it. The essence of the covenant was not altered. It remained a covenant between the covenant-making God on the one hand, and believers and their seed on the other. The great central promise remained: I will be thy God and the God of thy seed, and this includes even now the promise of justification and regeneration, of sanctification and final glory. But it ceased to be a covenant including all those belonging to any one nation, and became a covenant including the believers of all nations and their seed. Moreover, the spiritual character of the covenant received greater prominence. Though it is already taught in the Old

Testament, it is revealed far more clearly in the New, that the national descendants of Abraham do not constitute the real seed. The real seed of Abraham is now clearly seen to consist only in those natural descendants of the patriarch who share his faith, and in those out of the Gentile world who accept Christ by faith. The administration of the covenant now includes them and their seed, that is, their physical descendants. Since the national form of the covenant ceased, and the necessity of faith is stressed as a prerequisite for adult covenant membership, there is no warrant any more for including the slaves of the family along with the head. The New Testament Church does not continue to apply the Old Testament principle in this respect, but stresses a spiritual qualification for the reception of the sacrament by adults, Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 37 (?), 9:18; 10:44-48; 16:14, 15, 31-33; 18:8. In view of all these passages no Church that takes the Word of God seriously would think of baptizing adults simply on the basis of their belonging to the family of a believer.

The only New Testament data which might seem to favor the continuation of the Old Testament practice in the new dispensation are found in the repeated accounts of the baptism of whole households. We find mention of such baptisms in Acts 10:44-48 (though this includes more than a household); 16:14, 15, 31-33; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16. The argument is that the households mentioned in all probability also included slaves, and that these were therefore baptized, when the head of the house became a believer, simply because they belonged to the family. The proof is, of course, not very conclusive. There is no absolute certainty that there were slaves in the households mentioned, though it is possible that there were. But even if there were, we have no assurance, that they were baptized simply on the ground of their connection with the household. If they were, then we must assume that the apostles in the baptism of such slaves departed widely from the New Testament principle, which makes the baptism of adults contingent on faith in the recipient. This is a position which we may not assume without having very good grounds for it. And if we must assume that they actually did this, then we shall have to regard this as a practice which, by force of long continued usage, was carried right over into the new dispensation, just as the administration of circumcision and the keeping of the

sabbath, but which was destined to disappear as soon as the altered conditions introduced by the new dispensation were more clearly understood.

It is not necessary to assume this, however, because there are clear indications at least in the case of some of the households mentioned, that their adult members were baptized, not because they belonged to the household, but because they shared the faith of the head of the house. We are explicitly taught that all those who were baptized with Cornelius were entitled to the sacrament, because they had received the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:44-48. The question of Peter is very significant: "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" This implies that the water might justly have been forbidden, if they had not received the Holy Spirit. Of Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, we read plainly that he "believed in the Lord with all his house," Acts 18:8. The same thing is also suggested, if not clearly stated in the case of the jailor at Philippi, Acts 16:30-34. Paul and Silas spoke the word of the gospel to the jailor *and to all those that were in his house, urging them to believe in Jesus Christ and promising them salvation in Him*. The result was that he and all his were baptized. Did only the jailor believe, and were the other adult members of the household baptized simply because they belonged to the family? We have no reason to think so; on the contrary, the 34th verse decidedly favors the opinion that they all believed. In the American Revised Version this verse reads as follows: "And he brought them into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God." He rejoiced with intense exulting joy (*egalliasato*) with all his house. This fulness of joy was caused by the faith that became manifest. Was this faith present only in the jailor? If so, would this exultant joy have filled the hearts of all that belonged to his house? This does not seem very likely. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that it is very well possible to construe the Word *panoiki* (with all his house) with the words "having believed." It is so construed in the Dutch Bible, in the Authorized Version, and even in Moffatt's translation; and this construction is preferred by several commentators. Of the household of Stephanas mentioned in I Cor. 1:16 we read again in I Cor. 16:15: "Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Ste-

phanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, *and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints*), that ye also be in subjection unto such, and to every one that helpeth in the work and laboreth." On the strength of this passage we may confidently assert that all the adults who constituted the house had been converted. We are virtually assured therefore by Scripture itself that in four out of the five cases mentioned the whole household was converted and professed faith in Christ before it was baptized. Hence the presumption is that it was so in the remaining case (that of Lydia) as well. This need not surprise us as being very unusual. Such group conversions are quite in harmony with the fruitfulness of the apostolic preaching in general. Moreover, if there were actually slaves in these households, this is the only interpretation that does not conflict with the general teaching of the New Testament as to the spiritual qualifications for baptism, and with the practice generally followed in the Christian Church. We find ourselves in full agreement with Lambert on this point.' He quotes this word of Alford: "Baptism as known to the Jews included, just as it does in the Acts (16:15, 33), whole households — wives and children." This gives him occasion to say in a passage already quoted in the preceding, but which will bear repetition: "This argument is based upon the covenant made with Abraham, and the continuity of the Church under the old and new dispensations. The continuity is a great truth, without doubt, a truth to which we shall presently refer. But surely it is a mistake to state it in a form which would imply that a man's wife and grown-up children, and even his slaves, would be baptized by the apostles on the ground of the faith of the head of the house himself. This is not only contrary to the whole teaching of the New Testament as to the necessity of a personal approach to Christ, but is contradicted by the fact that the preaching of the word and the appeal for faith were addressed to *all* the members of the house, and also by the use of such expressions as, 'he feared God with all his house,' 'he believed in the Lord with all his house'." *The Sacraments of the New Testament*, p. 200.

It has been said that, howsoever we may explain the baptism of these households, we should not lose sight of the fact that a principle is expressed in the words of Paul in answer to the question of the jailor. The jailor said: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And Paul and Silas

answered: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, *thou and thy house.*" But, surely, this is not equivalent to saying: If thou believest, thou mayest be baptized and all those that are in thy house with thee. They speak of the *salvation* of the household, and certainly did not mean to say either that they would all receive this, if only the head of the house believed.

It has evidently also been the understanding of the Church from the earliest times that faith and profession are the prerequisites for adult baptism. The Didache, probably the earliest of all the writings of the apostolic fathers, contains the following on baptism: "Now concerning baptism, baptize thus: Having taught all these things, baptize ye into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in living water." The point to be noticed here is that catechetical instruction, with a view to confession, precedes baptism. The whole system of catechetical schools was based on this position. It recognized a spiritual requirement for baptism. A person was not baptized simply as included in the head of the house. In the apostolic age catechizing and baptism evidently accompanied each other. This was due to the infant state of the Church, and to the special fruitfulness of the apostolic period. This evidently changed later on. Says Bingham: "But in after ages the Church found it necessary to lengthen this term of probation, lest an over-hasty admission of persons to baptism should either fill the Church with vicious men, or make greater numbers or renegadoes and apostates in time of persecution. For this reason the council of Eliberis appointed two years trial for new converts, that if in that time they appeared to be men of a good conversation, they might then be allowed the favour of baptism." According to him this period of trial was later on lengthened in some cases and shortened in others. Christian Antiquities III, p. 6 f. Another early writing, the *Apostolical Constitutions* gives directions for the baptism of slaves belonging to Christian masters. Bingham speaks of this in the following words: "If the master were a Christian, then the testimony of the master was first to be required concerning the life and conversation of his slave, before he could be admitted to the privilege of baptism. If he gave a laudable account of him, he was received: if otherwise, he was rejected, till he approved himself to his master." Ibid. p. 184. The conclusion to be drawn from all this is, that the principle

embodied in Gen. 17:12 on the assumption that the slaves of Abraham were circumcized simply as belonging to the household, without any question as to their spiritual qualifications, was not intended to be carried over into the New Testament and was not, as a matter of fact, so conceived. Churches do not act on that principle today. And therefore it is not valid to draw a conclusion from Gen. 17:12 in favor of the baptism of adopted children. As far as we can see, this is the only passage in Scripture to which one can appeal with any show of reason as a Scriptural foundation for such baptism. But since the committee that reported to Synod in 1930 also pointed to some other passages in the New Testament as favoring the baptism of adopted children, these will also have to be considered. We shall discuss these in the order in which they are found in the report.

The first passage mentioned is Acts 2:38, 39. In this passage Peter is addressing the multitude that came together on the day of Pentecost, consisting of Jews and Proselytes. He says: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise and to your children and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." In connection with this passage the report of 1930 says: "Dit is niet anders dan voortzetting van het verbond en de uitbreiding daarvan tot alle volkeren. En die erfenis sluit in alle voorschriften, niet als vanzelf, of door speciale bekendmaking tot het vleeschelijk Israel beperkte, verbondsbepalingen." We find ourselves in agreement with the first sentence. The second sentence is not clear. It may perhaps be taken to mean that the covenant, as it would be continued, would include all the relevant regulations of the Old Testament, which were not from the nature of the case or by some explicit statement limited to Israel according to the flesh. To this we can also agree, but only with the distinct understanding that, as such, it does not include the continuation of the regulation found in Gen. 17:12, as this is interpreted in said report. Since the covenant ceased to be national in the dispensation of the Spirit, the purely national regulation of Gen. 17:12 also ceased to apply. This very passage contains clear indications of the change that is taking place. The apostle is addressing a multitude of people who have been circumcized and urges upon them the New

Testament sacrament. But he does not urge this upon them in virtue of the fact that they all belonged to the nation of Israel, or to households that professed the religion of Israel, but only in connection with a spiritual requirement, namely, faith in Jesus Christ. He does not say that they should be baptized, because they are of the seed of Abraham, or belong to the households of Israelites, but requires of them that they repent and believe, and thus seek the New Testament sign of the remission of sins. They are urged to be baptized *epi toi onomati*, that is, on the ground of the name of Jesus. They can only receive the sacrament on condition that the name of Jesus as the Messiah be the contents of their faith and profession. The promise, says Peter, is to you, Jews and proselytes, to all of you who belong to Israel, and to your children (it makes little difference, whether this be taken to mean *posterity in general* or *immediate descendants* (present children), and to all that afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him. In the last clause he does not say, as many as shall join Israel, but again stresses a spiritual qualification. It has been said that this passage rather favors the stand taken by Synod, since (1) the *tekna* (children) spoken of may include adopted children; (2) it would be strange, if Peter denied the incorporation of children of unbelievers at a time, when the grace of God was about to flow beyond its previous bounds; and (3) children of proselytes were undoubtedly included, even if they were born when their parents were still heathen. In connection with this it may be remarked that, according to Cremer-Koegel, *Biblich-Theologisches Lexicon*, the term *tekon* always expresses the idea of physical descent, and never, any more than *pais*, expresses a relation of adoption, as *huiothesia* does. Anyone who assumes that in the usage of Peter it includes the adoptive relation, will have to prove his point. The burden of proof rests on him who makes the assertion, especially in view of the fact that the meaning given by Cremer-Koegel is in perfect harmony with the derivation of the word. — In the second place it should be said that the transition from the Old Testament to the New, while universalizing, naturally included certain limitations that did not apply in the Old Testament. The blessings of the gospel began to flow out unto the nations, but this does not mean that every one belonging to the nations of the world would now also be included in the covenant,

just as all those belonging to the nation of Israel were in the Old Testament. Only believers and their seed would belong to it according to the New Testament. This limitation was involved in the very nature of the transition. — Children of proselytes were undoubtedly included at the time, but this proves nothing to the point. When they joined Israel by submitting to circumcision and accepting the religion of Israel, their minor children were undoubtedly included along with them.

Another passage which has been quoted as bearing on the subject is Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16. Jesus here reproves the disciples, because they rebuked the mothers for bringing their children to Jesus. He says: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for to such belongeth the Kingdom of Heaven." Then He lays His hands upon them and blesses them. This we are told reveals the merciful and magnanimous spirit of Jesus, a spirit that would forbid the exclusion of adopted children from the blessings of the covenant. Moreover, we are told in connection with the discussion of this passage, that the exclusion of children adopted by pious foster-parents would make the present dispensation less gracious than the preceding. It is quite evident, however, that the passage in question does not bear on the subject under consideration at all. The children that were brought unto Jesus were children belonging to the nation of Israel. There may have been children of slaves among them, though we cannot be sure of this. And if there were, it simply means that Jesus at a time when the new dispensation was still future honored existing relations. Then he recognized the fact that all the children belonging to the households of Israel were also in some sense heirs of the promises and as members of the covenant had a special claim on the blessings of the Kingdom. There is no proof that some of these children were children of heathen parents who were not themselves incorporated in Israel. And it may be charitable to suppose that Jesus would have recognized such children in a similar way, if they had been there, but this is a pure assumption devoid of all proof. — The argument that we make the present dispensation less gracious than the previous one, if we exclude from baptism children adopted by pious foster-parents proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. Consistently applied, it would prove that all the children of Christian nations ought to be baptized. But no one

cares to draw that conclusion. The present dispensation is far more gracious than the previous one, because the gracious operations of God are now extended to all the nations of the world.

Still another passage which has been pressed into service, is I Cor. 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother; else were your children unclean, but now they are holy." The argument runs as follows: An unbelieving man or woman is by marriage to a believer brought into an objective state in which he (she) receives special assurance of God that he (she) can obtain salvation in the way of faith and conversion. He (she) is in a sense taken into covenant relationship, in which he (she) enjoys special administrations and receives special assurances, though he (she) does not receive quite as much as the slaves of Abraham. The covenant relationship into which he enters does not yet entitle him (her) to the sacrament of initiation into the covenant. And if God is so gracious to a believer's unbelieving partner in wedlock, is it reasonable to think that He would be less gracious to little children adopted by believing parents and thus brought under Christian influences? To the contrary, it may be assumed that God will do for the child what He does not do for the unbelieving partner in wedlock, unless the latter answers to certain requirements, namely, that He will adopt the child as His child and heir in Christ Jesus.

In general it may be said that this looks once more like an argument in which the generous wish of a Christian heart is father to the thought. It contains the explicit admission that the unbeliever does not receive as much in virtue of his marital relation as the slaves of Abraham did in virtue of their servant relation. This means, of course, that the former regulation did not apply any more, for the relation between husband and wife is certainly a much closer relation than that between a servant and his master. But if this is the implication, then it also means that the argument based on Gen. 17:12 has lost its validity. Moreover, the argument distilled from I Cor. 7:14 proceeds on the assumption that one can be incorporated in the covenant without being entitled to the initiatory sign and seal of the covenant. However, Scripture knows absolutely nothing of any such incorporation. These remarks are based on the argument as it is stated

in the report of 1930. But it is well to study I Cor. 7:14, in order to determine, whether the apostle really means to say that the unbelieving partner in a marriage is in some sense of the word brought into the covenant by marrying a believer.

Paul is dealing with the question of marriage in the seventh chapter of First Corinthians, and answers certain questions which were submitted to him. He advises the unmarried, in view of the adverse circumstances of the time, to remain unmarried, unless they are devoid of the gift of continency. Upon the married he enjoins the duty of staying together. If a wife for some reason or other feels constrained to leave her husband, she should remain unmarried, or otherwise be reconciled to her husband. After he has given this advice to believing couples, he turns to "the rest," by which he evidently means those who have unbelieving partners, cases in which only the husband or only the wife was converted to Christ. The question submitted to Paul with reference to this matter was evidently, as one writer puts it, "Will not the saints be defiled and the 'limbs of Christ' (4:15) be desecrated by intercourse with a heathen?" The Jews absolutely forbade such marriages, and consequently the question could easily arise, whether the principles of Christianity would not forbid them and even demand that they should be declared null and void. The apostle is clearly of the opinion that a Christian should not marry an unbeliever (cf. II Cor. 6:14-18), but does not deal with that particular question here. He is at this time only concerned with the question, whether a believer should or should not separate from an unbelieving partner in marriage. His position is that the believer should not send away the unbelieving partner, if the latter is willing to continue the marriage relation. Separation is not necessary in such cases. The apostle bases his opinion on the consideration that the unbelieving is sanctified in the believing partner. This means that in some sense or other the believer communicates something of his (her) holiness to the unbeliever. This holds even when the woman is the believing party. "The closeness of the marriage tie," says Lambert, "causes the Christian partner to communicate to the heathen something of his or her own 'holiness' or consecration to God." *Op. cit.*, p. 218. In support of this position he points to an undoubted fact, a fact generally recognized, namely, that the children

even of such marriages were regarded as holy. This could hardly be the case, if the marriage itself were unholy. The believer is not polluted in the unbeliever, but the unbeliever is sanctified in the believer, and consequently the union is not unholy but holy. The character of the union is therefore determined by and should be adjudged according to the higher element in it. "To sanctify" (*hagiazesthai*) cannot mean in this connection to impart ethical purity, to make holy in a subjective sense. Sanctification in that sense presupposes faith in Jesus Christ, the very thing that is wanting in the unbeliever. No one can be thus sanctified in any human person, but only in Jesus Christ. Neither does it mean to endow with external federal holiness, as has been maintained by some, for if this means anything, it must mean that in virtue of his (her) marital relation the unbelieving partner has some standing in the Church, shares in the external administrations of the covenant, is in some sense heir of its promises, and also has some degree of covenant responsibilities. And this can hardly be maintained with respect to the unbeliever. It was the conviction that the children of believers are holy with such an external covenant holiness, which led to this interpretation. It may be doubted, whether the word *hagiazerein* is ever used in that sense in the New Testament. Moreover, it does not appear from the context here that Paul has in mind any covenant relationship, though of course children of believers are holy in virtue of the covenant relationship. — Thayer says: "In I Cor. 7:14 *hagiazesthai* is used in a peculiar sense of those who, although not Christians themselves, are yet, by marriage with a Christian, withdrawn from the contamination of heathen impiety and brought under the saving influence of the Holy Spirit displaying itself among Christians." This is also the view adopted by Meyer, Weiss, and Bachman. Weiss says that the unbelieving husband becomes *hagios* through his fellowship with the believing wife, and the unhaptized child through its fellowship with its Christian parents." *Bib. Theol. of the N. T. I.*, p. 464. This interpretation, however, does not take sufficient account of the fact that the apostle used the perfect rather than the present tense here. He does not say that the unbelieving partner is being sanctified in the believing partner, but that the one has been sanctified in the other, and is therefore now in a holy state. The sanctity finds its explanation in some past

action, and not in some future influence. If we adopt this interpretation, we shall also have to assume that the children are regarded as holy on the basis of a Christian education and training, which they must still receive. Such an interpretation is not commendable. — Others interpret this word of the apostle to mean that in such cases the marriage tie is sanctified through the believing partner. This is the interpretation adopted by Calvin. Says he: "It might seem (judging from appearance) as if a believing wife contracted infection from an unbelieving husband, so as to make the connection unlawful; but it is otherwise, for the piety of the one has more effect in sanctifying marriage than the impiety of the other in polluting it. Hence a believer may, with a pure conscience, live with an unbeliever, for in respect of the use and intercourse of the marriage bed, and of life generally, he is sanctified, so as not to infect the believing party with his impurity. Meanwhile this *sanctification* is of no benefit to the unbelieving party; it only serves thus far, that the believing party is not contaminated by intercourse with him, and marriage itself is not profaned." Comm. in loco. This is also the opinion of Bierman, Bengel, Harless, Hofmann, Heinrici, Edwards, and Bavinck, though he modifies it slightly and, as it seems to us, correctly. Properly understood, this view yields excellent sense. The question was, whether a believer could continue to live in wedlock with an unbeliever, whether such a marriage was not impure and would therefore contaminate the believer. And the apostle takes the position that in such cases the believer is perfectly justified to continue the relation, since the unbelieving partner by consenting to continue to live in marital relations with the believing partner is sanctified by his connection with the latter, so that the marriage is not impure but pure. The physical connection has basic significance here. And it is exactly because such a marriage is sanctified, as a marriage that is in harmony with the will of God, that the children born of it are not unclean but holy. Says Edwards: "Indeed, it is the individual faith of one member of the family that confers sanctity upon the family and, as touching their relation to the family, on all its other members. For this reason also the sanctity of the family is not a figment nor a mere idea, but a practical power. For the believing member may be trusted to bring into a family that is Christian in idea the Christian influence also of prayer, example, and

teaching. These, however, do not create its sanctity; they flow from it.”

In view of the preceding we come to the conclusion that there is absolutely no proof in this passage that the special regulation respecting the slaves in the days of Abraham continues right into the New Testament; and that, consequently, we have no right to conclude from it that we are perfectly warranted in extending baptism to adopted children. The covenant is and was from the beginning essentially a covenant with believers and their seed, that is, their physical descendants. During the old dispensation of the covenant its administration assumed a national form, which was intended to typify the ultimate and perfect condition of things in the final Kingdom of God. Hence the covenant temporarily included along with the chosen race also the slaves of the Israelites and the proselytes that were incorporated in Israel. In that respect the particularism of the Old Testament still retained something of a universal outlook. When the new dispensation was ushered in, the national and typical administration of the covenant with all its necessary adjuncts ceased, and the administration of the covenant included only believers and those who are born of them. The question of adherence to a nation is now replaced by that of professed allegiance to Jesus Christ. It is clear that the Church of the New Testament, considered as an external organization with its offices and its administration of the word and the sacraments, consists of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, and includes with these also their children, that is, their immediate physical descendants, Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; II Tim. 3:15; Heb. 8:11; I John 2:13. The children of believers are holy, while those of unbelievers are unclean, I Cor. 7:14.

Those who favor the decision of Synod maintain that God can induct a child into the covenant, not only by means of its birth of pious parents, but also by means of its adoption in a Christian family; and that a child so adopted is entitled to baptism, if the foster-parents are in a position to give it a Christian education and promise to do this. They point out that in both cases it is God who brings the child into the covenant. Now we are not inclined to deny this possibility in the abstract. Undoubtedly God could do this, and it is conceivable that He could do it in other ways. He might induct a large number of children into the covenant by bringing them provi-

dentially into a Christian orphanage or a Christian home for deserted children, where they are sure of a Christian training. But we have no Scriptural proof that this is what He actually does. And this is exactly what is needed, in order to justify a synodical decision stating that it is permissible for the Church to baptize such adopted children. A decision that is not clearly founded on the Word of God does not bind the conscience. Occasionally people speak as if the really important question is only, whether such adopted children are reasonably sure of receiving a Christian education. But, surely, the ground for the baptism of such children can only be found in some existing condition, and not in something that is still future. They can only be baptized on the ground that they are in the covenant, and not on the ground of a promised, but always somewhat uncertain education. Moreover, speaking from a purely psychological point of view, there is by no means the same assurance in the case of children of unbelievers as in the case of children of believers, that they will accept their covenant obligations. While the environment in which they are brought up may be the same, their inherited traits are apt to be quite different. "We are all from birth," says Steven, "enswathed in the long results of the world's education, and in the Christian family enswathed with the rich inheritance of all the saints of Christ." *The Psychology of the Christian Soul*, p. 222. It may still be disputed, whether heredity or environment is the most effective factor in the making of man, but it is certain that both factors contribute to the general result and both should be taken into consideration. In the case of children born of Christian parents and receiving a Christian education both factors work in the same direction, while in the case of children born of unbelievers but receiving a Christian training, the two work in opposite directions. Does it not seem most reasonable that God reckons with this difference in the continuation of the covenant? All this, of course, does not mean that physical descent from believers as such *naturally*, that is, *in virtue of some inherent power*, carries with it covenant membership. As a matter of fact it does not. It carries this with it only *in virtue of the divine arrangement* for the continuation of the covenant. God has been pleased to continue the covenant along the line of physical descent. Naturally He has chosen this method of continuing His covenant with wis-

dom, and has undoubtedly also taken account of the important factor of heredity.

God's promise is to believers and their seed, that is, their physical descendants. The latter stand in covenant relationship with God in virtue of the fact that they are born of Christian parents. In so far then they are entitled to the sacrament of baptism. It should be borne in mind, however, that the mere fact that they are included in the administration of the covenant, in the covenant as a legal relationship, is not sufficient to entitle them to the sacrament. To this must be added the fact that God has promised to bring the covenant life to full realization in the line of the physical descendants of believers. This does not mean that every one of them will actually accept Christ by faith and thus share in the spiritual blessings of the covenant; but it does mean that, where the covenant is faithfully administered, there are strong reasons for proceeding on the assumption that God has wrought or will work in them the work of regeneration. Baptism is not merely a sign of an external relationship, which carries with it certain external privileges and involves a certain responsibility. It is a sign and seal of the promise of God in all its bearings, and this includes the promise of regeneration and justification and of an eternal inheritance. This promise is given to the seed (the physical descendants) of believers only, and is not extended to the physical descendants of unbelievers. And there is no indication in Scripture that their adoption by believers, who are willing to give them a Christian education, alters this fact in any way.

Some seem to be inclined to find a measure of justification for the baptism of adopted children in the fact that believers all owe their spiritual sonship to an act of adoption. They are all children of God by adoption. But it is hard to see how the fact that Paul borrows a figure from the Roman practice of adoption to express the idea that in justification God by a divine sentence of acquittal translates the guilty sinner forensically from under the curse and wrath of God into the divine favor, and thus gives him the legal standing of a child, can in any way serve to prove that human adoption may serve to translate a child into the covenant of grace. The adoption of which Paul speaks with reference to believers is a spiritual act and therefore results in a new spiritual state; but the adoption with which we are concerned in this discus-

sion is a human act in the sphere of the natural life, and therefore merely results in a new legal relationship which is purely natural, a new relationship between the foster-parents and the child, and not between the child and God. Moreover, we should not forget that according to Scripture believers are children of God not merely by adoption, but also by regeneration. They are children of God, because they are born of God and have been made partakers of the divine nature. No one who has not received the new life born of the Spirit of God is ever called a child of God in the spiritual sense of the word. The believer is not a child of God by either birth or adoption, but by both in conjunction with each other. In the natural sphere these two cannot possibly go together. Parents cannot adopt the children which are born of them. In view of this fact it would seem to be out of place to appeal to the analogy in question.

Finally, we wish to state that in our discussion we have intentionally omitted practically all historical considerations, not because they are unimportant, but because they cannot serve to validate the baptism of adopted children. Their baptism, in order to be valid, must rest on biblical grounds, and these grounds are wanting. Neither did we consider it of great importance to discuss the practical, and sometimes sentimental, considerations which are frequently urged in favor of the baptism of such children. These may in a way be evidences of a generous and magnanimous spirit, but cannot serve as a foundation for a doctrinal decision. The decision to which Synod may come in this matter, in order to have doctrinal authority and to be binding on the consciences, must rest on a solid Scriptural foundation.

DOGOMATIC CONSTRUCTION

Since the previous exegetical discussion is apt to give rise to several dogmatic questions, which are not answered in what was said up to this point, it may be well to give a brief dogmatic construction of our conception of the covenant and of baptism as the seal of the covenant.

The covenant of grace is rooted in eternity, in what is usually called the covenant of redemption or the counsel of peace. This is a compact between God the Father, representing the Triune God, and God the Son, as the representative of His people. In this agreement the Son becomes the Surety of those whom the Father has given

Him. He undertakes to pay the penalty for their sins and to meet for them the conditions of the original covenant of works; and the Father, in turn, promises Him all that is necessary for the performance of His task and, as the result of His work, a redeemed humanity and a kingdom that will never end. Some identify this covenant and the historical covenant of grace, and then speak of this as an *eternal* covenant, eternal in origin as well as in destiny. They naturally take the position that the covenant of grace is made with Christ and with the elect in Him.

It seems better to us to distinguish between the covenant of redemption, which is eternal and the covenant of grace, which is temporal in origin. At the same time we feel that the two cannot be separated. The former is not only the prototype, but also the basis for the latter. Moreover, Christ is Surety in both, and both have the same end in view, namely, the salvation of those whom the Father has given unto the Son. There are important differences, however. In the covenant of redemption Christ is one of the contracting parties, while in the covenant of grace He is Mediator. The former is of the nature of a covenant of works: Christ merits what He receives and bestows upon us; the latter is a covenant of promise, in which God, for the sake of the merits of Christ, freely gives and man receives all the blessings of salvation without any merit on his part. Again, the former includes only the elect, and the latter in its broadcast aspect also includes others.

From the preceding statement it follows that the question, who are included in the covenant of grace? must be answered with discrimination. It is a well-known fact that it is quite common among Reformed theologians to define the covenant of grace as an agreement between God and the elect in Christ, or between God and believers. They who distinguish between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace would certainly prefer to say "between God and believers." This representation finds abundant support in Scripture. When God formally establishes the covenant with Abraham, He establishes it with him as a believer and thus constitutes him the father of believers, Rom. 4; Gal. 3. While the covenant was made not only with Abraham, but with Abraham and his seed, and all the natural descendants of the patriarch were in some sense of the word in the covenant, it is perfectly evident that they constituted the real seed of the

covenant and the true heirs of the covenant only in so far as they shared the faith of Abraham and walked in his footsteps. This follows from the following considerations: (1) From Gen. 18:19 it can be inferred that the covenant will be realized only in the lives of those who share the faith of Abraham and follow his example: "For I have known him (chosen him), to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." (2) Gen. 21:12 explicitly states that not all the natural descendants of Abraham will be included in the seed: "for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Here Ishmael and his descendants are excluded. The apostle Paul draws from this statement an important principle when he says in Rom. 9:7, 8: "Neither because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children; but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed." The term "children of the promise" is applied to believers here and also in Gal. 4:28. Like Isaac they are born in virtue of the promise of God, the promise of a supernatural or spiritual birth and are also heirs of the promise made to the father of the faithful, John 1:13; Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:18; 4:28, 29. The birth of Isaac was typical in that respect. (3) Again, the covenant is continued, not in Esau who was destitute of the fear of Jehovah and is called an unholy person who despised his spiritual prerogatives, Heb. 12:16, 17, but in Jacob, the object of God's special love and of his elective grace, Mal. 1:2, 3; Rom. 9:11-13. Not to the elder but to the younger of these two sons of Isaac was given the blessing of Abraham, Gen. 28:4. Hence we find that the covenant God is frequently called later on the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, Ex. 3:6; Acts 3:13; 7:32. This once more involves a limitation of the seed of Abraham. (4) At Sinai the covenant of grace assumed a national form. God established His covenant with the people of Israel as a nation. Every Israelite was in the covenant in virtue of the fact that he belonged to the nation, and outsiders could enter it by incorporation into the nation. Yet even during the period of the law it becomes evident that only those who are spiritually qualified share in the spiritual realities of the covenant and

inherit the promised blessings. The whole wicked generation that grew up in the wilderness perished there and could not enter the promised land. Moreover, the law demanded that they who gave clear evidence of their unbelief by leading sinful lives should be put to death. Ideally there was no place for them in the holy nation. As a matter of fact, however, the great majority of the people did not fear the Lord and did not share in the life of the covenant. For them circumcision was little more than a badge of nationality and a pledge of certain external privileges, and not at all a seal of the righteousness of faith, as in the case of Abraham. Moses and the prophets frequently take them to task because of the hollow and deceptive nature of their circumcision. The sign was not accompanied with the thing signified, the circumcision of the flesh was utterly divorced from the circumcision of the heart. Jeremiah puts the Jews on a level with the Gentiles in that their circumcision is virtually uncircumcision, since they are not circumcized in heart, Jer. 9:25, 26. The fact that even among Israel the covenant was in its essence limited to those that feared the Lord is indicated in such passages as Deut. 7:9; II Chron. 6:14; Ps. 25:10; 103:17, 18; Isa. 59:21; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 9:4. In the prophets we find intimations of an Israel within Israel, consisting of the pious, the true Israel, and repeated mention of a remnant that will be saved and in which the covenant will therefore be realized. All this is in line with the teachings of Paul that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, that they are not real Jews who are so outwardly, and that only they who are of Christ constitute the true seed of Abraham. In the case of all the others circumcision has become uncircumcision, Rom. 2:25-29; 4:12, 16, 17; Gal. 3:7, 8, 16, 29. (5) Naturally, the spiritual nature of the covenant stands out more clearly in the New Testament dispensation, after the Old Testament scaffolding has fallen away. What the Bible calls the "new covenant" is clearly a covenant with believers, Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-12; 10:15-17. It is founded in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ by which believers are cleansed from sin, Matt. 26:28; Rom. 11:27; Heb. 12:24. On the basis of these Scripture data it may be said that the covenant of grace is essentially a covenant with believers. It will be necessary, however, to qualify this statement, since it is only one side of the truth. The covenant as a communion of life, of mutual and permanent friendship, includes only

believers. They are the only ones to whom all the promises of the covenant apply, the only ones for whom the promises of final bliss are absolute, the only ones for whom the covenant is an eternal covenant, the only ones in whom the covenant is fully realized.

But this is only a partial representation of the truth. There is a broader aspect of the covenant. And this must necessarily be taken into consideration in the present discussion. There is an external aspect of the covenant as it appears in history and as it is continued organically in the generations. As such it includes all those who constitute the visible Church, that is, professing believers and their seed or natural offspring. By a special arrangement, however, due to the national form of the covenant in the Church-State of Israel, the bond-servants were also included during the old dispensation. The covenant in this more comprehensive sense of the word is a legal agreement between Jehovah, the covenant God on the one hand, and believers and their seed on the other hand, in which the former promises to be the God of His people and of their children with all this implies, and particularly to enrich them with all the spiritual blessings of the new life and of eternal salvation; and the latter are placed under covenant obligations and responsibilities, especially the obligation to embrace the promises by faith and to walk in the way of God's commandments. The promises may be called conditional, provided the word "condition" be understood in the right sense. In this connection it does not denote a consideration or work of man to which merit can be ascribed, nor a work which man can perform in his own strength. The fulfilment of the condition is dependent on the operation of the grace of God in the heart. There is no certainty that the condition will be met by all those who are in the covenant considered merely as a legal agreement, though the promise of God gives us good reasons to expect that, under a normal administration of the covenant, the children of the covenant will actually enter the covenant as a communion of life, so that in the vast majority of cases the covenant will actually be fully realized.

The covenant in this more comprehensive sense of the word is a means to an end. It is the external side, the historical administration of this gracious arrangement of God, which aims at the full realization of the covenant. While it may include unregenerate persons or unbeliev-

ers, of whom Dr. Bavinck says that they are in the covenant but not of the covenant, it aims at the introduction of its participants into the full and rich life of the covenant. Naturally this is effected only in the lives of the elect. In connection with this historical aspect of the covenant the question naturally arises, How does one enter it? In answering this question we can well leave out of consideration the special arrangement made in the days of Abraham, whereby not only his seed but also his adult bond-servants were in some sense included in the covenant along with the head of the house, irrespective of their personal faith, though not of a voluntary external participation in the service of Jehovah; and the later transactions at Sinai whereby God entered into covenant relations with the people of Israel *as a nation* and thus laid the basis for dealing with the nation as a whole rather than with individuals which constitute it, though the latter is not altogether excluded. These have been fully discussed in the exegetical part of the report. In virtue of this covenant every Israelite was in the covenant simply as belonging to the nation and quite irrespective of the possession of any personal saving faith, and outsiders could enter the covenant by joining the people of Israel in the service of Jehovah. We can leave all this out of consideration because it does not apply to-day and because we are living under a new and more spiritual dispensation of the covenant of grace.

How does one now enter the covenant? That is the question in which we are particularly interested. And in answering it we shall have to distinguish between adults and children.

1. Adults can enter the covenant only by the profession of a living faith in Jesus Christ. It is only when they confess their faith that the Church can, in consonance with their confession, regard them as members of the covenant. Through faith they at once enter the covenant, not as an external and legal agreement, but also as an inner and spiritual reality and thus become members of the covenant in the fullest sense of the word. Of course this does not hold if their confession is a mere sham. Such a confession would lead to an abnormal condition. But if they are really endowed with the faith which they profess, they thereby not merely become participants in certain external privileges and undertake the performance of certain external duties, but share the covenant life, enjoy the

spiritual blessings of the covenant, and engage in a life of obedient and consecrated service which springs from the heart.

2. Children of believers enter the covenant as a legal relationship by birth, but this does not mean that they are also at once in the covenant as a spiritual communion of life. It does not even mean that the covenant will surely be fully realized in their lives. At the same time there is a reasonable assurance that the covenant will be or become in course of time a living reality in their experience. This is based on the promise of God that He will work in the hearts of covenant children with his saving grace and transform them into living members of the covenant, Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:33, 34; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:39. As long as they do not manifest the contrary, we shall have to proceed on the assumption that they possess the covenant life vouchsafed to the children of the covenant in general in the promise, though we can have no absolute assurance that they are actually regenerated. And even when they show themselves wayward, we are warranted by the promise to hope that God will in time glorify His grace in their hearts and lives. When the children grow up, it is their duty to accept their covenant responsibilities voluntarily by a true confession of faith. Failure to do this is tantamount to breaking the covenant.

Now the sacrament of baptism is inseparably connected with the covenant: not only with the covenant as a legal relationship, but also with the covenant as a communion of life or of friendship. It would be a mistake to regard it merely as the sign of an external relationship to God, as the solemn symbol of admission into the visible Church. It is also a sign and seal of spiritual realities. This does not mean that the external sign and the spiritual reality signified are absolutely inseparable and always go together, so that they who receive the one receive the other as well. On this point we differ with Rome and with all those who teach baptismal regeneration in the strict sense of the word. Some receive the external sign while they are and remain strangers to the spiritual realities signified, but this can hardly be regarded as the normal condition of things. In such cases the sacrament does not have its full import. Circumcision that is not accompanied with circumcision of the heart is represented in Scripture as equivalent to uncircumcision, Rom. 2:25-29, and baptism is linked up with regeneration and the for-

giveness of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:11, 12; Tit. 3:5. Abraham, we are told, received circumcision as a sign of the righteousness of faith. Hence baptism may be called and is frequently called a sign and seal of regeneration and of the forgiveness of sins.

It is evident, however, that we must have some objective ground for the administration of baptism, and we cannot find that in these subjective graces, of the possession of which by others we can never have absolute assurance. This objective ground can be found only in the covenant or, as the Bible sometimes calls it, in the promise, Acts 2:39; Rom. 4:13-21; Gal. 3:15-29. We often speak of baptism as a seal of the promise of God, that is, of the promise of the covenant. And when we do this, we do not merely mean that it is the stamp of God vouching for the objective truth of the promises, but also that it is a divine guarantee of the promises as realized in regeneration and in the forgiveness of sins in the hearts and lives of the recipients. We do not baptize children indiscriminately, but only those of whom we may expect in virtue of the promise of God, that God has regenerated them or will renew their lives at some future date. And we can reasonably expect this only in the case of those to whom the promise is given, that is, in the case of believers and their natural descendants. They and they only have the promise.

From the preceding it follows that baptism is a seal and a means of grace in the full sense of the word only for those who are spiritually qualified by the operation of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, of course, that baptism has no meaning for children who are still devoid of spiritual graces. It is for them the sign and seal of a divine donation. It assures them that God has given to covenant children collectively certain precious promises, promises of spiritual blessings for the present and for the future, looking to the full realization of the covenant life, which is a life in communion with God. God regards and claims them as His own, and places them under the administration of the Word and of the Sacraments, makes them the objects of Christian nurture and surrounds them with religious influences,—all of which is favorable to the attainment of spiritual ends and ministers to the full realization of the covenant promises. While the promise does not carry with it the assurance that God will work His saving grace in the life of every individual covenant

child, it does make it reasonably certain that He will do this wherever the covenant is faithfully administered and the means of grace are not neglected. The presumption is that He renews all those children who die in infancy and who do not reach that period in life in which they can, and in some cases do, consciously spurn the covenant promises and refuse covenant obedience.

But while the covenant relationship assures the covenant children of certain privileges, it also imposes upon them solemn responsibilities. God justly demands obedience of all men, but has an additional claim on the obedience of covenant children. These should become increasingly conscious of the fact that they have entered into a solemn compact and are in duty bound to meet its requirements. Their parents accepted the beneficent covenant arrangement for them when they presented them for baptism. But when they themselves come to years of discretion, they must endorse it for themselves by believing in Jesus Christ, confessing their faith, and assuming their covenant obligations. They must consciously and voluntarily enter upon a consecrated life, a life of obedience to God and to Jesus Christ their King. If they fail to do this, they are thereby guilty of ignoring a sacred pledge, of breaking a solemn pact, and of base ingratitude. They become covenant breakers, and this is a terrible responsibility to assume. But all this, be it said once more, applies only to such children as are the natural seed of believers. It is to them and to them only that the promise extends; and it is only in their case that we have reason to expect the spiritual realities which are sealed in baptism. If we extend the promise of the covenant and the administration of the sacrament of baptism to children of unbelievers adopted into families of believers, we do it without any clear scriptural warrant. While such an adoption naturally changes the relationship of adopted children to the parents who adopt them and carries with it certain natural privileges, we have no ground for saying that it also changes their relationship to God and His Church.

Our exegetical study of this matter led us to the conclusion that the Synod of 1930 had no sufficient scriptural warrant for its position that children of unbelievers, when adopted by believing parents, may be baptized. Therefore we would advise Synod to rescind the decision of 1930, however with the distinct understanding that the

rescinding of this decision, while canceling a synodical pronouncement, does not carry with it the implication that such children may not be baptized. It simply removes a premature and somewhat ambiguous decision and brings the whole matter back to the indeterminate state in which it was before 1930. We do not believe that Synod ought to go any further than that in view of the following practical considerations: (1) that the Synodical Committee, in spite of its sincere and prolonged efforts, has not been able to come to a unanimous conclusion in the matter; (2) that representative Reformed theologians may be cited on both sides, some decidedly favoring, and others as decidedly opposing the practice approved by the Synod of 1930; and (3) that there is already a great difference of opinion and practice in our churches at the present time.

The question may be raised whether self-respect ought not to keep Synod from rescinding the decision of a former Synod. In answer to this it may be said that, while a Synod should never light-heartedly rescind the decision of a previous Synod, there may be cases in which this is the more honorable procedure. And if a Synod has passed a doctrinal decision on insufficient scriptural data, it would seem to be the part of wisdom to rescind it. We certainly cannot maintain the position that self-respect should always keep a Synod from rescinding the decision of a former Synod, since our Synods are not infallible. Such a general principle might be used to justify a Synod's refusal to admit and correct even most flagrant mistakes. Surely, no one would want to apply it in such a general sense. Such self-respect would be of the wrong kind. Moreover, there have been cases among us in which one Synod did not hesitate to rescind the action of a previous Synod. We find ourselves in agreement with McGill, former professor at Princeton, who says in his treatise on *Church Government*, p. 521: "The old method of appealing from an erring council to the next one which is better informed is the right way of redress for discontented parties who remonstrate against the unprecedented in proceedings of the General Assembly. Subsequent Assemblies are free to change and reverse any measure, outside of the Constitution, that has been ill-advised, mistaken, or disproved by the logic of events. The reproach of inconsistency, often cast upon the records of our highest judicatory, is unwarrantable, in view of the supreme

discretion reposed in its nature. . . . It is her glory instead of her defect, therefore, to stand corrected from year to year, although inconsistency in her transactions through all the contingencies of the past is exceptional and rare indeed." Of late the argument of inconsistency has been used to keep the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church from reversing decisions which were evidently unjust.

Respectfully submitted,

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REPORT XII.

THE BAPTISM OF ADOPTED CHILDREN (Report II. on the subject)

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

PART I. ANSWER TO THE CHIEF FORMAL OBJECTIONS.

PART II. ANSWERS TO THE CHIEF MATERIAL OBJECTIONS.

SECTION I.

A. ("SEED")

- (1) The terms "seed," "children," etc., are not used exclusively to denote a parent's own offspring.

—It is true that the O. T. writers did not have adopted children in mind because adoption was unknown in Israel.

—The terms "seed of Abraham," "children of Israel," etc., are not rigidly used to denote physical descendants.

—The nation as a nation is called "seed of Abraham," "children of Israel," in spite of foreign elements.

: Israel a mixed people — yet the "seed of Abraham."

: The returned exiles — yet the "children of Israel."

: The Galileans — yet the "house of Israel."

- (2) Examination of the Scripture passages adduced by the protesting brethren.

(a) Gen. 3:15 — Seed of the woman.

(b) Joel 2:16 — Gather the children.

(c) Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20 — Children, obey your parents.

(d) I John 2:13 — I have written unto you, little children.

(e) II Tim. 2:15 — From a babe thou hast known.

(f) Acts 2:39 — To you is the promise and to your children.

(g) Ezra 9:2 — Holy seed.

(h) Is. 6:13 — Holy seed.

- (3) A twofold mistake made by the brethren.

(a) Formal: What writers did not or may not have had in mind when they used certain words or terms does not argue against a broader application of these words or terms. It must be shown that the words "seed" and "children" as used in Scripture are meant to exclude those who are not the parents' own offspring.

(b) Material: It is clear that the words "seed" and "children" are frequently used to include others beside physical descendants.

(It is not a justifiable procedure to select certain passages to the exclusion of others.)

—not only "zera" and "tekno" but almost every word used to designate children has a primary meaning that points to the child's physical origin.

—adoption of children was very common in the N. T. times, but no special name appears that is to designate an adopted child in distinction from other children in the home.

B. THE THREE DORDT PASSAGES.

(i) Eph. 2:12 — Gentiles in the flesh—without Christ—aliens and strangers.
—This passage does not allude to physical descent.

(j) Rom. 11:16 — First fruit and lump, root and branches.
—This passage does not allude to physical ties.

(k) I Cor. 7:14 — The unbelieving spouse is sanctified in the believing one, else were the children unholy.

—The traditional misuse of this passage requires that we give it consideration somewhat more at length.

1. A threefold mistake with respect to the interpretation favored by the protesting brethren.
 - (1) In his passage Paul was not addressing himself particularly to Christians who had unbelieving mates, nor was he referring particularly to their children. He was speaking about them and about their case to a wider group, that is, to the Church at Corinth.
 - He speaks about them in the third person.
 - He states their case appositively.
 - But he uses the second person when he refers to the children: "your children."
 - (2) The two clauses in this passage do not express cause and effect. They point to two concurrent facts governed by one and the same principle.
 - Proof that the exegesis favored by the brethren is not logically tenable.
 - : The inanity of Paul's remark if he is saying what the brethren assume he is saying.
 - : Applying the viewpoint of the brethren, the passage can be made to say only this: Your children are holy, and this proves that the unbelieving parent is sanctified in the believing one.
 - Which means:
 - a) concluding backwards from a conditioned minor premise.
 - b) or surrendering the major premise.
 - (3) Finally the idea that the physical aspect of the marital union and the physical tie between the parents and their offspring are of importance here, is an idea that is totally impossible.
 - a) It succeeds only in producing a circular argument.
 - b) It destroys the problem that gave rise to the argument.(A simple question inspired by the interpretation of the brethren.)
2. The simple meaning of I Cor. 7:14.
 - The question was this, whether Christian faith permits the possession of a spouse who does not belong to Christ.
 - Paul answered: The unbelieving spouse is sanctified in the believing one.
 - : Things are sanctified in Christians through their possession of them.
 - : Persons are sanctified in Christians through their possession of them.
 - Paul clinches his argument as to the holiness of unbelieving mates by pointing to the fact that the children of believing parents are holy, because the same principle applies there.
 - Why children possessed by believing parents are included in the Covenant, and the unbelieving mates of Christians are not.
 - The flesh and blood-theory put to a simple test.

SECTION 2. (Protests relating to the use of Gen. 17.)

A. A FEW MISCONCEPTIONS. The brethren argue:

- (1) The Old Covenant is marked by nationalistic features, and therefore Synod's use of Gen. 17 is unwarranted.
 - Ans.—The brethren make an arbitrary distinction when they claim that the circumcision of Abraham's own offspring followed from the essential nature of the Covenant of Grace, while the slaves were circumcised because of the nationalistic feature attaching to the Old Covenant.
 - (a) The patriarchal and national element was not a spiritually indifferent element.
 - (b) Not merely a part of the Old Covenant dispensation bears the stamp of patriarchal and national organization, but all of it, so that it is impossible to break up the Covenant ordinance into two parts, one exhibiting the real nature of the Covenant and the other displaying the incidental dispensational features.
- (2) Synod's conclusion is unfounded because no mention is made that the slaves had children, and because the slaves themselves were presumably believers.
 - Ans.—The question whether the slaves had children is irrelevant.
 - So also whether the slaves were believers.
 - The slaves regarded as slaves, and therefore as minors.
- (3) If Synod bases its decision upon Gen. 17, consistency demands that also the serving personnel in a Christian home be baptized, even though these people are not believers.
 - Ans.—This argument fails to take into account a simple homiletical principle.

B. TWO QUESTIONS.

- (1) **Is there anything in the record that might lead one to suspect that the inclusion of Abraham's slaves was an incidental feature?**
—This idea is completely counterindicated by the record.
: verse 7 (the announcement) does not in itself establish the inclusion of minors in the Covenant.
: verses 10-12 (the explication) includes all males without distinction. God's ordinance is emphatic about this inclusiveness.
- (2) **Does not Gen. 15:4 make specific mention of Abraham's physical offspring as heir of the Covenant? God assures Abraham: Not Eliezer, but a son of thine own shall be thine heir.**
—The question in this passage is one of lineal direction, not of scope.
—If in connection with this distinction in mind we go back to Gen. 17 and view vs. 7 in the light of :10, it appears that also the expression, "and thy seed after thee in their generations" is not to be taken as an expression limiting the scope of the Covenant, but is one that points to the representative lineage in which the Covenant people were to be named.

Conclusion of this section.

- The whole record militates against the flesh and blood theory.
—Slavery was indeed an abnormal thing, producing a situation in which grown-up people were accounted minors. But God dealt with the situation in accord with the inner principle of the Covenant, and the slaves were dealt with as were the other minors under parental authority.
—This principle found new confirmation and further application in Ex. 12:44.

SECTION 3. THE OLD PRINCIPLE IN THE NEW DISPENSATION.

- (1) **Acts 2:39 cannot serve the purpose of the brethren to bar the door against the application of the old principle in the New Dispensation.**
—This passage does not differentiate between children born in a home and children adopted into a home.
—From Acts 2:39 nothing can be concluded as to the inclusion of minors in the Covenant.
- (2) **The only sufficient ground for our belief in the scripturalness of infant baptism is Gen. 17:10-11, and the subject of this passage is "all males" without distinction.**
- (a) **"All males" included the offspring of Abraham.**
—The old principle, as it applied to the offspring of believers, was never disannulled.
—Hence we hold this passage to be the sufficient ground for our faith in the inclusion of the offspring of believers in the Covenant also in the N. T.
- (b) **"All males" equally included those who were not the natural offspring of Abraham, but stood under his paternal authority.**
—also the principle embodied in this greater inclusiveness was never nullified.
—Therefore this same passage serves as the sufficient ground for our faith that the Covenant includes also those minors who are not the natural offspring of parents, but who do stand under their parental authority.
- (3) **The New Testament record itself goes to prove that this conclusion is correct. The material is not abundant, but it points in one direction, and two things are made clear:**
- A. **That all who stand under paternal authority are included with the head of the house in the Covenant.**
- (a) **Gal. 4:1-2. The slave was reckoned as a minor on a par with a son in nonage.**
- (b) **The "and his house" passages.**
: These do not contain proof positive of the baptism of minors, whether of the parent's own offspring or not.
: But they do show that the household was still considered as a spiritual unit, as in the time of Abraham; and they do make clear that with the head of the house all those who stood under his parental authority entered into the Covenant with him.
(This is especially true of Acts 16:31.)
: Also in the N. T. this principle applied as a matter of course to those who were minors of the household because of servitude.
: This explains why the matter never became a question for debate or discussion in the early Church, as did the observance of the Sabbath and other feast days, the practice of Circumcision, etc.

(c) Answer to Arguments.

- (1) Answer to the argument that, if slaves were included, the wife of the master should also have been included.
: This objection fails to take into account the difference of status.
- (2) Answer to the objection that, if slaves were included because they were the property of their masters, this would mean their inclusion even against their own will.
: God's ordinance with respect to a recalcitrant son,
: Applicable also in cases of unwillingness and resistance on the part of a slave.

—The main conclusion of this paragraph is that also in the N. T. the principle persisted that minors, irrespective of blood relationship, were included in the household, and so were included in the Covenant in the Covenant-principal under whose paternal authority they were placed.

B. That an adopted child is truly a child of its adoptive parents.

- (a) The argument that the reception of a person into the Covenant is an act of God, while adoption is an act of man.
: Lacks point.
- (b) Paul's use of the term, "Adoption as sons" as an analogue to God's work of grace whereby man is instated in the status of sonship, indicated that God recognizes an adopted child as truly a child of its adoptive parents.
: Gal. 4:4-5. Adoption makes men sons and heirs, and they receive the Spirit of God's Son by which they cry, Abba, Father.
: Eph. 1:5; 2:12; 2:19. Before adoption the gentiles were separate from Christ, aliens and strangers. By adoption they have become members of the household of God.
: Rom. 8:15-16. When men receive adoption as sons, the Spirit testifies with their spirit that they are "tekna" of God.
—The difference between "huios" and "teknon." The brethren are making too much of this difference.
: both words used quite interchangeably.
: not only "teknon" but also "huios" goes back to a root meaning, to beget, to bear.

—Conclusion drawn from the use which the Apostle makes of the practice of adoption to illustrate the instatement of man as child of God:

- 1) That the adoption of a child is an act that has divine sanction.
- 2) That in the sight of God an adopted child is truly a child of its adoptive parents.

—It is true that "adoption as sons" refers to the forensic act whereby God bestows the status of a son. But it is precisely this status of the child in which we are interested when we ask the question whether a child is included in the Covenant.

* * * * *

—A final remark: The line of argument followed by the brethren in their opposition to the baptism of adopted children definitely endangers the tenability of our stand as to the scripturateness of infant baptism.

PART III. INDEX TO PROTESTS AS LISTED IN ACTA 1932, pa. 104 ff.

The protests which could not conveniently be dealt with in the main argument, are answered in Part II.

ADVICE TO SYNOD

Pa. 231

REPORT OF THAT PART OF THE COMMITTEE ON
THE BAPTISM OF ADOPTED CHILDREN WHICH
IS IN ACCORD WITH THE DECISION OF
SYNOD, 1930

To the Synod of 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE committee appointed by Synod 1932 to consider the protests that have been lodged against the decision of Synod 1930 re baptism of children born of non-Christian parents but adopted into Christian homes. (Acts 1932, Pa. 188), has met upon several occasions and had devoted considerable time to the discussion of the entire problem involved. This committee was designedly composed in such a way that both sides might be about equally represented.

Even though the decision of 1930 was practically a unanimous, one half of the Committee was chosen from the ranks of the protesting brethren and from those who were regarded as sympathizing with their views, while the other half was considered as representing the convictions of Synod. This was done that the protests might receive due and full consideration, and that the following Synod might be served with a well-considered report.

At one of the first meetings of the Committee a report of one of the sub-committees, which had scanned the protests, was adopted to the effect that the summary given in the Acts of 1932, p. 107-108 was correct. Accordingly this summary was made the basis of further discussions.

To our sorrow one of the members of the Committee did not continue the work entrusted to us. On Sept. 15, 1934, Prof. H. Schultze sent in his resignation to the chairman of our committee. We did our best to persuade him to change his mind and to favor us with his coöperation, but all to no effect. Prof. Schultze wrote as follows:

1240 Benjamin Ave., S. E.,
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Sept. 15, 1934.

Dr. Y. P. De Jong,
Pres. of Com. in re Baptism of Adopted Children,
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear brother:

It is with some hesitation that I feel constrained at this time to submit this my resignation as member of the committee of which you have the honor of being the president. The press of my work,

greatly augmented by membership in the Com. for The Mission Training School, make it wellnigh impossible for me to find sufficient time so as to enable me to contribute anything at all to the work assigned to your Com.

With respect to the special exegetical work assigned to me, I may report that I have, as time allowed, gathered extensive notes on the matter but have not yet collated and organized them. In their present form they are of no value to anyone. It would take some time to whip them into shape so that they are usable to others. Furthermore this work is hardly necessary since the exegetical aspects of the problem has been ably and extensively covered in the paper by Rev. Hylkema and will certainly underlie the paper to be submitted by Prof. Berkhof.

Since I have spent some time in facing the specific problem assigned to me, namely, to determine exegetically whether adopted children who are born of unbelieving parents may be regarded as covenant members or not, you may be interested in my reaction. The conviction has grown upon me that this question cannot, on purely exegetical grounds, be answered either with a positive affirmative nor with a positive negative. It is, of course, just this situation that creates the problem in our circles. The question must be settled on inferential grounds, in my estimation. And inferences based on scriptural passages have developed within me a strong conviction that biological descent is not an indispensable requisite for a child's membership in the Cov. The references to Abraham and His seed as being objects of divine covenant favors, to the slaves (property) of Abraham as recipients of the rite of circumcision, to the baptism of believers and their households, and to the sanctification (in the sense that Paul speaks of it in I Cor. 7) of a member of a family upon the condition of the faith of another, — all point strongly in the direction of the idea that the thing that God is interested in for a covenant child is a social and domestic situation where the child will be guaranteed what I choose to call "a covenantal atmosphere."

Respectfully yours,

Henry Schultze.

P. S. I am sending my resignation in by mail at this time, because I have been informed that the call for the next committee meeting awaits the receipt of my work. If that be the case longer delay is both unnecessary and unwise.

H. S.

Though much time and effort was spent in the attempt to convince one another, we were unable to arrive at an answer upon which all were agreed. Till the very end there were three groups in the committee, each of which will send in a report. At the last meeting of the committee held on Nov. 7, 1935, the following resolution was adopted.

"Seeing that after repeated attempts the committee cannot agree on the main points at issue, nor on any unanimous advice to present to Synod, we resolve to separate."

While we are indeed sorry to report that the Commit-

tee is still divided as it was in 1932, we do trust not only that the discussions have been mutually beneficial, but also that our churches may profit from a renewed study of the question which, while sufficiently important in itself, is the more significant in that it again brings to our attention the true meaning and vital importance of the Covenant of Grace.

The undersigned members of the committee, H. Kuiper, H. Bel and G. W. Hylkema, unite in advising Synod to answer the protests lodged against the decision of 1930.

I. in answer to the chief Formal objections, pp. 158-159.

II. in answer to the chief Material objections, pp. 159-220.

III. in answer to remaining objections as listed in Acts 1932, pp. 221-230.

PART I.
ANSWER TO FORMAL OBJECTIONS

1. OUR CHURCH WAS NOT RIPE IN 1930 TO TAKE SO WEIGHTY A DECISION.

Answer: This certainly cannot mean that the Church was hasty, since the question was dealt with by Synod a quarter of a century ago. Since that time the matter was virtually left to the judgment of consistories. Six years ago the matter was again brought to Synod by a brother who objected to the practice of baptizing children born of non-believing parents. After two years of study by a committee and of much public debate on the matter, Synod by an overwhelming majority made a decision. This decision left the matter practically where it had been for twenty-five years. Synod said, the baptism of such children is permissible, but it did not force the issue.

If on the other hand being "ripe" for a decision means that the church should have assurance that a majority of the people are in favor of a decision, then synod would have to inform itself by a referendum or something of that nature, before proceeding to vote on matters of some dogmatic import or practical importance. But this is neither practical nor in accordance with the principles of Reformed church-government. The matter was well known. It had been before the public for years. It appeared duly in the Agenda. It was discussed in papers. Synod made decision with virtually unanimous vote.

While it is held that our churches were not ripe for the decision which Synod did take in 1930, the material of the protests lodged against it imply that the Church ought to be ripe, to take the opposite stand on the question, and to abolish the practice of the last quarter of a century!

2. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DESIRABLE FOR OUR CHURCH TO HAVE CORRESPONDED WITH REFORMED CHURCHES IN OTHER LANDS BEFORE TAKING A DEFINITE DECISION.

Answer: Consultation with the Reformed churches of the Netherlands and Africa on matters that touch fundamentally upon our common creed or church order is certainly proper and profitable. But this commendable amity has never been construed to mean that in matters of a more secondary nature the churches felt themselves held to consult the other groups before coming to a decision for themselves. The churches in the Netherlands

and in Africa as well as our own churches have always had the courage to act independently in matters which, while at variance with past usage, were clearly felt not to be in conflict with our confessional standards or church order.

The very fact that twenty-five years ago Synod left the question unsettled and a generation was allowed to pass without any ruling of Synod in this matter, does not seem to indicate that during this period the matter was held to be very momentous and very vital with respect to the close relationship existing between us and our sister churches.

PART II.

ANSWER TO MATERIAL OBJECTIONS

SECTION 1.

A. "SEED."

(1) THE TERM NOT USED EXCLUSIVELY TO DENOTE OWN OFFSPRING.

Synod is accused of drawing another line with respect to covenant membership than does Scripture, because *when Scripture speaks of the seed of believers, it always means the fleshly descendants of these believers. Consequently the line of the Covenant follows the line of blood, and children of unbelievers are for that reason excluded from the covenant as unclean and unholy.*

This point is strongly insisted upon in the various protests, and naturally so, since the whole argument hinges upon this very point. If it is true that Scripture teaches that, as far as the inclusion of children in the Covenant is concerned, physical descent is an essential and decisive factor, the entire question is settled. Then Synod has made a grievous mistake in declaring that also adopted children are included in the Covenant by reason of their adoption by believing parents. As we read Scripture, however, there is no ground for this position of the protesting brethren.

It is said, "Scripture nowhere implies that seed includes those who are children by dint of human adoption." It is true that Scripture nowhere explicitly states this. And more than that, Scripture does not anywhere mention a case of adoption into a covenant family, and nowhere in the Law is provision made for such a case. The simple

fact is that adoption, as far as is known, was not practiced among the people of Israel. In childless homes the husband had recourse to the taking of a concubine or the contracting of second marriage. For widows left without children the provision of Levirate marriage was made. When the law does make provision for the fatherless, it is for the orphans of Israel who were already included in the covenant. This absence of Scriptural instances of adoption therefore cannot very well serve as an argument in the matter.

It is claimed — that the word "*seed*" when used in Scripture always means the fleshly descendants of believers, and that for this reason children born in a Christian home are the only children who can upon Scriptural grounds be looked upon as members of the Covenant of Grace. However, we find also this qualified statement in one of the protests: "The promise comes — though not exclusively — to those who are biologically the seed of Abraham and of the believers." Since we are not sure just what exceptions the brethren had in mind, when they wrote, "though not exclusively," it is difficult to be sure what is meant here, but even outside of that, there is sufficient evidence to show, that the word "*seed*" is by no means always used with that exclusively biological connotation which the protesting brethren seem to attach to it.

That the words "his seed" and "his children" usually refers to a person's own offspring, goes without saying. But the word "*seed*" and "*children*" especially in the terms: "*seed of Abraham*" and "*children of Israel*" in almost every case have a meaning that is broader and more exclusive. They embrace more than the direct offspring of the patriarchs. It is clear that Israel in its long history had from time to time absorbed persons and groups of persons who were not of Hebrew stock. The number of foreign servants naturalized into Abraham's household — and also the "*mixed*" multitude that shared in the Exodus, make it clear that, even as early as Sinai, Israel could be regarded no longer as comprising only the descendants of the ancient Patriarchs. The institution of slavery provided a further influx of foreigners into the country, and through the operation of the Mosaic Law, which made it possible for slaves to become naturalized freemen, this foreign slave stock went to swell the ranks of the free but unlanded wage earners of the Israelite

nation. In later years we discover numbers of men of foreign extraction among the most noted men of the Kingdom. Thus we find, for instance, a large number of foreigners in David's army, in which one of his captains was a Hittite. But in spite of these accretions of foreign blood, the nation as a whole, was considered as an integer with an unviolated national and spiritual solidarity. The whole of the people were regularly called, "the Seed of Abraham" and "the Children of Jacob." This is regularly done without any idea of excluding the considerable numbers who were not the seed of Abraham in a physical sense. I Chron. 16:13; II Chron. 20:7.

Upon return from the exile, as we read in Ezr. 2:59-63, a considerable group was discovered of whom it could not be ascertained by means of any records whether they were Jews or not. Because of this uncertainty, those who claimed to be of priestly origin were, until their case could be properly decided, barred from the office of Priesthood, but the group as such was not excluded from the community. Their number also was added to the total of the congregation. And when the building of the temple was finished, Ezra writes about all the people gathered upon that memorable occasion as one unit: "And the children of Israel, the priests, and Levites and the rest of the children of the captivity kept the dedication of this house of God with Joy." Ezra 6:16.

Going to the New Testament we know that the people of Galilee were notoriously of mixed origin. About a century before Christ the entire population consisting of Israelites, Canaanites, Arameans, Itureans, and Greeks were compelled by Aristobulus to accept the Jewish faith. Jesus spent most of his time working among these people. And in spite of the fact that most of them were of heathen origin, Jesus says to the Synophoenician mother: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, it is not meet to take the childrens' bread, and cast it to the dogs." Matt. 15:24, 26.

In view of all this it appears that the use of the terms "seed" and "children" in Scripture is not as uniformly rigid as has been represented, and that it is in many instances made to take in a wider sweep of relationships than that of mere flesh and blood descendants.

The counter argument has been employed, that it may be expected that in time these foreign elements did most

probably intermarry with those of Hebrew stock, so that there was at least some Abrahamic blood in their veins. This is surely more than probable. But the question is, whether their sharing in the national and covenant appellation hinged upon this contingency. There is nothing that can lead us to suppose that foreign elements incorporated into Israel did not share in the national name as long as they intermarried with the naturalized citizens of their own kin, but that they were included in the title "children of Abraham" as soon as they possessed a percentage of Hebrew blood. The "children of Israel" included all who had been duly incorporated into nation and thus shared in the national and religious life of God's people.

(2) EXAMINATION OF SCRIPTURE PASSAGES ADDUCED.

It is true of course that in the main, the idea conveyed by the terms "his seed" and "his children," is that of children born to a person in his house. The question, however, is this, whether in Scripture these terms convey this idea so exclusively that any extension of the meaning of these terms to cover those not related by ties of blood, is barred.

By those who believe that the meaning of the terms "*seed*" and "*children*" is rigidly confined to physical offspring, a number of Scripture passages are cited in which these terms occur. But we cannot feel that this array of passages is very convincing. It is felt, of course, that even if a hundred Scriptures could be cited in which "*seed*" and "*children*" most evidently refer to children born to parents in their own home, this in itself would be no proof that in other instances these same words might not be used in a more extended sense.

However, even the passages cited in the protests do not seem to be very happily chosen with a view to the point which they are supposed to illustrate. Let us briefly look at these passages.

(a) Gen. 3:15, speaking of the seed of the woman in one breath with the seed of the serpent, seems to convey something more than merely the idea of physical progeny.

(b) Joel 2:16. "Gather the people, sanctify the assembly, assemble the old men, gather the children, and those that suck breasts." This also is a passage in which it does not seem to be the purpose of the writer to convey the idea of biological relationship, but rather the fact that

all ages were to be present at the great demonstration of repentance before God. Would an Israelitish woman, mothering the infant of a dead sister, have felt that this little one was not wanted in the assembly because it was not born by her?

(c) Also the choice of Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20 seems to be a less fortunate one. There the Apostle writes: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," which, if it proves what it is supposed to prove, would mean that adopted children were exempt from this injunction.

(d) Also I John 2:12. "I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father." — does not seem to contribute much force to the argument. John is here enumerating the stages of age and of development represented in the churches to which he has directed his epistle. He addresses a separate word to the fathers and to the young men and to the children. But any one, preaching about this passage, would be certain to introduce a false note, if he were to try to bring out, that only children which stand in flesh and blood relation to these fathers can be meant here.

(e) II Tim. 2:15 is also cited, where Paul writes to Tim. "From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings," which passage certainly proves nothing more than that Timothy was brought up by a godly mother and grandmother and that he was made acquainted with the Scripture in his early youth. It is hard to see how this passage, and indeed any passage cited, can be used to prove the contention or to strengthen the argument that the words "*seed*" and "*children*" pertain exclusively to the believers' fleshly progeny, and that the Covenant of Grace — as far as its minor members is concerned, follows strictly the line of flesh and blood.

We have failed to find, even in the O. T. Scriptures, a passage that so exalts the factor of biological descent and that so lifts up flesh and blood relationship as a *sine quo non* in the Covenant, as do some of the brethren who are protesting the decision of Synod. Reference is made to one more passage.

(f) Acts 2:39. "*And to you is the promise and to your children.*" To use this passage as a proof that the line of the Covenant is confined to children actually born to believing parents, is, of course, begging the question. That is the very question that has to be settled, whether this

N. T. passage is intended to convey the idea that the promise is only to children actually born of believing parents. The brethren may be wholly convinced that this is so, but the passage itself contains nothing that compels this interpretation.

From the clause that immediately follows, "and to all that are far off" it would appear that in Peter's mind the idea of biological ties was not at that moment paramount.

(g) We can discern but two places where the term "*holy seed*" is used. In Ezra 9:2 we read that "the holy seed mingled themselves with the people of those lands." The term, "*holy seed*," in this passage, therefore does not refer to children but to the Jewish people of the colony in general. The meaning of the passage is not at all that these Jews were polluting an ancestral strain. The name "*holy seed*" is here given to the returned Jews, led back by God to their own land to be a people separate unto Him. And the complaint is that, instead of fulfilling this function, they joined the heathen people in practicing their abominations. There is no reason here at all to conclude that the idea of racial purity enters in at all in this complaint of the princes. The Jewish race was already a very mixed race.

(h) We meet the term again in Is. 6:13, "The holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Isaiah is speaking here of a remnant of the people that shall be left and that shall return. However, even this remnant will be threatened by destruction, so that the returned people would come to nought, were it not that in this numerical remnant there was concealed a spiritual remnant, a "*holy seed*," in which lay the pledge of Israel's survival and which was the hope for her future. Also in this passage there is evidently nothing in the term "*holy seed*" that could be made to apply to children of believers in contrast with children born of unbelieving parents.

Not one of the passages cited, as far as we can see, goes to prove the claim, that it is a Scriptural principle, that the course of the Covenant of Grace is made to follow only the line of natural descent.

(3) A TWOFOLD MISTAKE MADE BY THE BRETHREN.

As further comment upon this section of the protests, which we have attempted to answer thus far, we would point to a *twofold mistake*, which, we believe, is being made in connection with the argument based upon the

meaning of the term "seed," "children," etc. — the first *formal*, and the second *material*.

(a) With respect to the *formal* side, we would say that it is not correct to argue that when a certain thing is not directly mentioned or contemplated in Scripture, it may be considered thereby to be ruled out.

Thus it is said in the Protests: "*Scripture nowhere implies that "seed" includes those who are children by dint of adoption.*" In the same strain it is argued, that *when the confessional writings speak of the children of believers, they had in mind children by birth only.* And further, it is pointed out that *most likely our fathers did not have adopted children in mind whenever they used the expression: "children of believers."*

Arguments of this type however are not valid when it is desired to establish a principle. This argument would be to the point only if it could be shown that both concepts: "*children as one's own offspring*" and "*adopted children*" were had in mind in the passages under consideration, and then that the words "zera," "ben," "children," etc., were used with some consistency to indicate the one to the exclusion of the other. But as is well known, this is not at all the case. As it stands this argument is virtually an argument *e silentio*. And as to its entire value, it is most decidedly a begging of the question. It must be shown that in Scripture either by explicit statement, or by a clear indication of the principles involved, children adopted into a home are ruled out with respect to inclusion in the covenant, before a conclusion can legitimately be drawn that the words "seed" and "children" can include only one's own offspring. The argument that those who used these words did not have adopted children in mind can bring us to no conclusion.

(b) The second mistake which we believe is being made by the protesting brethren is the *material* one, that the word "*seed*" in Scripture is uniformly confined to strict biological limits. We have shown that this is by no means the case. Cases of a spiritual or ideological use of the word, of course are not at all considered here. We refer to those cases in which "*seed*" is used in a forthright fashion to denote a body of people with reference to the founders of a race or nation. But when this is understood it should also be understood that the selection of

certain passages to the exclusion of others has nothing to justify it.

The protesting brethren adduced a considerable number of passages claiming that each one of them proves that the word "seed" clearly referred to one's natural offspring. The investigation of these passages, and others has shown, we believe, that in many instances the term "*seed of Abraham*" includes a wider range than the natural descendants of the patriarch. The device that then suggested itself, of narrowing down the discussion to those passages in which the word "*seed*" is used *in immediate connection with covenant and covenant making*, is not a defensible one. In the first place, because there is nothing to show that the word "*seed*," when used in the story of the establishment of the covenant, should be accorded greater weight than when that same word is used in later years with respect to the covenant people. Moreover, our present question is not one of covenant making. The question is who, some four thousand years after God made his covenant with Abraham, are now to be considered as included in the covenant. And then surely the use of the word "seed of Abraham," *wherever it is used in Holy Writ* to designate God's covenant people, has as good a right to be considered as the particularly selected passages which, because of their special historical setting, either are or might seem to be used explicitly to refer to the covenant party's own offspring. However, even in Gen. 17, as we hope to show, it is not so certain that the term "*thy seed after thee*" is used with an entirely rigid biological denotation. And it is most certain, as has been shown, that where in later history the nation of Israel is designated as the "*seed of Abraham*," or the "*children of Israel*," these terms are not at all restricted to their literal meaning.

A point is made also of several passages in which the word "*seed*" is used synonymously with "*children*" as in Ps. 22:23. "Ye seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye seed of Israel." It is claimed that from passages such as these it is evident that the word "*seed*" refers only to physical descendants.

This claim merely shifts the argument from the word "seed" to the word "children," since the word "children" is now used to prove that "seed" can mean nothing but physical offspring.

But shifting the burden of the proof upon the words "ben" and "tekna" is also of little avail. The appeal is again one that is made to etymology, and it appears that in the protests the brethren have placed too great a confidence in the primary meaning of words to prove their argument. Etymology is always a most precarious and fickle support when seeking to determine the force of a word or term in actual usage. It is not at all questioned that "zera" (seed) and "teknon" (child) are words that in their primary sense point to the physical features involved in the relation of parents to children. The same is to be said of "yeled" (child). As "zera" refers to the share of the father, so "yeled" refers to the part performed by the mother in bringing children into being.

The word "ben" itself, used wherever we meet with the expression "children of Abraham," "children of Jacob," etc., belongs in this class. Although a primitive word, it has most clearly (as we know from Gen. 6:2) a meaning that refers pointedly to the physical process involved in the begetting of children.

What we are seeking to show is this, that not only "zera" and "tekna" but every word used to designate children carries, and most naturally so, a primary meaning that points to its biological origin. But in common usage these words are always more inclusive than their etymological derivation might seem to warrant. Not only is "ben" used over and over again in a more inclusive sense (as has been shown), but its feminine "bath" is used in Esther 2:7 with reference to an *adopted daughter*.

Our own word "children" has a derivation which, like "yeled," refers to the bearing of a child by the mother. But in usage it is not felt to be necessary to invent another name for children adopted into the home. Parents who have children of their own and have also an adopted son or daughter, will speak of any or all of them as "my child" or "my children."

Especial refuge, however, has been sought in the word "tekna," and it is claimed that this word never expresses the relation of adoption. It is claimed that only "huiosthesia" (adoption as sons) expresses specifically the idea of adoption. There is evidently a confusion here. "Huiosthesia" is the name of an act. It is the name of that specific act by which a child is legally incorporated into a home. But now the question is this, what is that

child called after he has been thus legally incorporated. Is a name given to it which distinguishes it from the other children? Although adoption was a common practice in the Greek and Roman world, there is not a word in the lexicon that designates an adopted child in distinction from a parent's own children. The adjective has to be resorted to if it is desired specifically to note the fact of his adoption. That the word "tekna" was actually used with respect to adopted children as well as to the children born in the home will be more clearly shown in Section 3.

Another group of Scriptures that are adduced are those in which "zera" or "ben" are used to designate the children in distinction from the bond servants in the household. Especially two passages are noted, Gen. 15:3-4: "This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir," and Gen. 18:19: "For I know that he will command his children and his household after him." It is true that a distinction is made in these passages. But it is a distinction which is not to the point with respect to the question under consideration. Children are here distinguished from servants. But the point is that no instance can be found in which the term "seed" or "children" is used to make distinction between a parent's own offspring and other children accepted by them as their own.

In Gen. 15:3-4 God speaks of a son to be born to Abraham in distinction from Eliezer, the steward of his household, and God reveals to Abraham that not this servant but a child of his own shall be his heir. There is certainly nothing in this passage that even remotely touches on the question before us.

We believe that it has been conclusively shown that the terms "seed," "children," etc., as found in Scripture are not used with that exclusive biological denotation which the protesting brethren claimed for them, and that upon them no argument can be built for the position that minors who are not the natural offspring of covenant parents are for that reason barred from being included with them in the covenant.

B. THE THREE DORDT PASSAGES.

None of the passages adduced so far justify the position that the expressions "seed of Abraham," "children of Israel," "believers and their children," etc., can in accordance with the data of Scripture apply only to children in natural lineage, and that therefore such children of a home, who are not the parent's own physical offspring, are not included with their parents in the covenant.

The same is true, in our judgment, of the three Dordt passages that are cited against the decision of Synod. We believe that the attitude of the Synod of Dordt was influenced, at least to an appreciable extent, by the grave dangers that would be sure to arise in a situation like that in the East Indies, if permission were given to baptize the slave children adopted or quasi-adopted into the homes of the colonists. But without stressing this point—we believe that the Scripture passages cited by Dordt do not at all prove what they were intended to prove.

Eph. 2:12

(i) Reference is made first of all to Eph. 2:12. "Wherefore remember: that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcised by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise."

Here Paul admonishes the Ephesian Christians of Gentile origin to remember their former state, so that they might be in a properly humble and thoughtful attitude for the grace that has become theirs.

Paul says: that before their conversion they were uncircumcised gentiles, and their sad plight consisted in this, that they were *without Christ*, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the Covenant of promise. This passage is supposed to support the contention that physical descent is of decisive importance in covenant participation. It is difficult to see how this text has anything to do with the question in hand. Paul in this passage is not in any way contemplating the fact of physical descent. He does not say: Remember that at that time ye were without Christ, not tracing your genealogy back to Abraham or to other Covenant ancestry. Paul is not thinking of ancestry. He simply says: "At

that time ye were without Christ." Dead through trespasses and sins and without Christ. It is this that Paul mentions first as the whole root of their former sorry plight. All the four other things which Paul mentions follow from this: separation from the commonwealth of Israel, being strangers to the Covenant of Promise, being without hope, and being without God in the world.

The whole point of Paul's argument therefore is this, that formerly they were without Christ. For this reason they lacked the rights and privileges of God's people, and for this reason they were helplessly lost in misery. Now, however, God has quickened them and made them alive in fellowship with Christ. The result is that the former aliens are made citizens, and the former strangers are made nigh in the blood of Christ. In this entire passage Paul is dealing with the power that flows from a restored spiritual relationship to Christ. It is the same veins that Paul writes to the Jews in the Galatian Churches, "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise." Gal. 3:29. The idea of geneological descent does not enter into the picture.

Rom. 11:16

(j) Rom. 11:16 is then cited. "For if the first fruits be holy — the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy, so are the branches." Is there anything in this passage to support the idea that minors are included in the Covenant of Grace only when they are the natural offspring of parents who are in the Covenant?

Let us for a moment assume that, when Paul speaks of the first fruit and the lump, and also of the root and branches, he has in mind parents and the children born to them. Then the meaning would be this: If the parents are holy so are their physical offspring. But then it is indeed hard to see how the words that follow make sense. For there Paul speaks of branches "broken off." Which in that case would mean that physical relationship was ended. He speaks also of new branches "grafted in." Which, in order to be consistent, would have to mean that gentiles had been made holy by being made to share in physical descent from Abraham. And finally, that the branches once broken off will be grafted in again. Which would then have to be interpreted to mean that descendants of Abraham according to the flesh had ceased to be descendants, but after a certain period are again made

holy by being made Abraham's physical offspring. We turn at once from these impossible ideas and search for the real meaning of Paul's words.

The idea which Paul expresses here is perfectly clear. He has asserted the rejection of the Jews and the reception of the Gentiles as a people of God. Does this mean that God has cast his people away and that God's promise to Abraham had come to nought? Paul answers in the negative. First of all he points to the fact that there is even at the present time a remnant. But, is this the only comfort that can be given to the believing Israelite, that a small and scattered remnant is saved? By no means. Paul lets it be known that he does not consider this remnant to be a final fact. To the contrary, he looks upon it as a promise of the complete restoration of Israel. This remnant as proof that God has not flung his people aside. He is still at work. This remnant is but the first fruit.

To Paul this remnant betokens the heartening fact that God has not given up his unfaithful people, but that His grace is still at work in their midst. His promise to Abraham still holds. It is at this point that Paul speaks of the leaven and the lump, the root and the branches.

Paul has in mind here, not the ties that bound Israel to the Patriarch by physical descent, but the tie of covenant unity. He is thinking of Israel, God's chosen covenant people, as a chosen spiritual body, who were already (in God's purpose and according to his promise) contained in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As God called Abraham, and separated Abraham unto himself, He in Abraham separated Israel unto Himself as his own covenant people.

Paul brings out two great facts which lie at the foundation of his expectation that Israel will be received again, and that it will in God's own time seek and find entrance into the Christian Church. In the first place, this Israel was already included by God and set aside by God in the fathers. In God's mind and counsel that consecrated Israel was a fact when He consecrated unto Himself the fathers of old. God doesn't become untrue to his own plan and promise. The warrant for believing that the Israel of God shall be saved, is exactly this fact that this Israel was by God foreknown and included in the Patriarchs.

But the second great truth is this, that the only way in which the restoration of this Israel into the great covenant

body can and will be accomplished, is *by faith*. When Israel as a people became unbelieving, they were severed from the covenant body. What was left was only a remnant. When gentiles believed, they were ingrafted into the covenant body. When Israel shall forsake its unbelief and learn to believe, it shall be grafted again into that covenant body to which from the beginning it belonged. For his assurance that this spiritual transformation of Israel will take place, Paul gives a twofold reason. In the first place God is able to bring this miracle about. In the second place this Israel which God included in the fathers is to Him still beloved for the father's sake.

This is Paul's expectation and the reason for the hope that is in him.

It is very clear, therefore, that Paul is not speaking here of a people that are holy, that were incorporated and are later to be reincorporated into the covenant because of physical descent. They will be grafted in again by faith. The text speaks not of physical but of spiritual ties that bind the chosen Israel to the patriarchs of old. And Paul is admonishing the gentiles not to base their judgment upon numbers. God's covenant with Israel is not influenced by the number of individuals who may at any period be found to be believing or unbelieving. That covenant rests in the fact that when God sanctified to himself the patriarchs, He sanctified unto himself an Israel for his own possession.

I Cor. 7:14

(k) The third passage is found in I Cor. 7:14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." Also this passage is appealed to, in order to prove that the inclusion of minors in the covenant is limited to children who are the physical offspring of believing parents. We believe that a fair scrutiny of these words will show that they give not the least support to any such idea, but rather that they point in *exactly the opposite direction*. There was a problem which was brought about by instances in which only one of the parents of a home had become a Christian believer. The difficulty encountered in this case was not that the unbeliever was causing trouble, but lay in this, that the church, or certain members of the church, entertained scruples about believers living with unhe-

believing husbands or wives. This scruple the Apostle meets with the remarkable statement which he makes in the fourteenth verse. There need be no fear that the believing spouse will defile himself or herself by living in marital relation with an unbeliever, Paul assures them, because the unbeliever is sanctified in the believer. And he adds: "*Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.*"

This passage is interpreted to mean that, because one of the wedded partners is a believer, the marriage bed is sanctified, and hence the children physically descended from a believing parent are holy. It is claimed that the physical connection involved in the marriage relation has basic significance here. It is because this physical union is sanctified that the children born of it are not unclean but holy.

The context and content of the passage clearly show that this explanation is an impossible one. It becomes clear also that, even in the hands of the protesting brethren the passage does not at all support their position.

1. WE BELIEVE THAT IN THIS INTERPRETATION OF THE PASSAGE THERE IS INVOLVED A THREEFOLD MISTAKE:

(1) *When Paul says: "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy," he is not referring exclusively or especially to the children of these religiously disparate homes, but to the children of the Church in general.*

It is assumed by the protesting brethren that Paul in I Cor. 7 is specifically addressing the parents of the religiously divided homes, and that he is therefore referring specifically to their children.

In order to show that the passage will not bear this interpretation we briefly call to mind Paul's discussion as a whole. Two questions had been put to the apostle, both of them relating to marriage in the light of Christian faith.

a) The first question was this, whether it was not more befitting for a Christian to live a life of celibacy. The question was not merely this, whether it was not better for unmarried Christians to remain single, but whether the nature of Christian faith and spirit did not require a life of celibacy also of those who were married.

This question evidently came from people who were being disturbed by ascetic and rigoristic opinions, and

Paul is able to point to definite divine ordinances with respect to marriage, with which to set this group of people right on this subject.

b) Another group was concerned about a different question. These people were not disturbed so much by ascetic notions, but they were exercised about the fact that there were homes in the Church in which either the wife or the husband had remained a pagan or at least an unbeliever. Paul now turns to this group. "But to the rest I say, not the Lord"

For this second group there were no direct ordinances of God. Nevertheless there was a general and underlying principle, and Paul gave them the answer which he had deduced from this principle. And so he answers, "If any brother hath an unbelieving wife"

It should be clear from these introductory words that Paul is not addressing himself particularly to the believing parties involved in these mixed marriages. He is speaking *about* cases of this kind to a wider group, viz., the Church at Corinth. Not only does he speak of the parties concerned in the third person, but also the suppositive manner in which he states their case forbids the idea that he is addressing himself specifically to them.

Paul continues to speak about the parties in these homes in the third person as he states, "*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother.*" As the Apostle admits, he has no direct warrant from the Lord to say this, but nevertheless, he holds forth a strong argument based upon an undoubted principle. Paul says: "*Else were your children unclean, but now are holy.*" In this last clause Paul exhibits the principle upon which he bases the correctness of his pronouncement concerning the unbelieving mates of Christian believers. It will be noticed that in this clause he is not using the third person but the second. He refers here not merely to the children of these mixed marriages, but to the children of the wider group which he is addressing. To these uneasy Christians Paul says: In holding your own children to be holy children you are already acknowledging a truth which should convince you that an unbelieving husband of a believing wife is sanctified in her.

(2) The exegesis of the protesting brethren is at fault also in that the two clauses joined by "*epei ara*" (else: if

the matter stood differently) are conceived by them to express a causal relation.

The first thing that should be clear is this, that Paul is not saying what has been commonly attributed to him, viz., that these children were holy because one of the parents is a believer. This may be very true, but even though we should take the two clauses to stand in causal relation, this passage would be teaching something quite different. What Paul would in that case be saying is this, that the children of these religiously divided homes are holy because the unbelieving parent is sanctified in the believing one. From which it immediately follows that if this were not the case, the child would not be a holy child, even though one of its parents were a believer!

And more than that, if Paul is specifically addressing the believing parents whose partners do not share their faith, he is indeed telling them that their children are holy. But then, if we make Paul say in this passage that the children are holy *because* they are children of at least one believing parent, we are making the Apostle speak quite at random. For then he is merely saying that the holiness of the child proves the fact that at least one of the parents is a believer (a fact that was never in doubt from the start). And since the existence of one believing parent is thus made an *adequate explanation* for the holiness of the child, the implication would be that nothing need be said and nothing can be concluded about the other parent. Yet the fact is, that it is precisely these unbelieving mates about whom the Corinthians were in a quandary, and about whom Paul started to write. It was about them that he was setting out to prove something from the fact that the children were holy. It is most evident that the Apostle is saying something quite different than the brethren conceive him to be saying.

The words of the text at least should be adhered to, and this should be clear (if, as the brethren assume, Paul is speaking here to Christians with unbelieving consorts, and if we are to take the two statements to express cause and effect) that Paul is made to say to these perplexed people, that from the fact that their children are holy, they may be assured that the unbelieving wife or husband is sanctified in the believing one.

This is the exact and the only thing which, in that case, he is saying, and the passage cannot be made to say any-

thing else. But it is not difficult to see that this is something quite different from what the brethren make him say. And also that this interpretation puts Paul into an impossible position and makes him say things that lack good sense.

We will assume that Paul is speaking as stated, and that he tells these Christians who are married to unbelieving mates, that their unbelieving partners are sanctified in them. He argues: "It ought to become clear to you that this is so, because, if they were not, your children would be unclean, but, as you very well know, they are not unclean but holy."

a) *Concluding backwards from a conditioned minor premise.*

In this case Paul is arguing back from effect to cause, from the fact that the child is a holy child to the fact that the unbelieving parent is sanctified in the believing one. And Paul is at the same time implying that this argument ought to be convincing and reassuring to the worried Christian parent.

However, an argument from effect to cause is possible only if the effect can be independently ascertained and judged, but not if the judgment of the effect is in its very nature dependent upon the judgment of the cause.

We may be permitted to illustrate. If we hold an apple in our hand, we may conclude that the object which we hold grew on an apple tree. This argument from effect to cause is possible because in our mind is the major premise, that apples grow only on apple trees, and because it can be independently ascertained that the object which we hold is an apple.

But the matter gets to stand quite differently if the effect cannot be judged independently. If one tries to conclude from the reliability of stock which he holds, back to the reliability of the firm that issued it, there must be in his mind first of all the major premise that only a reliable firm can issue reliable stock. But if it is exactly the reliability of the firm that is in question, an appeal to the well known reliability of the stock would not bring great comfort to the hearts of the anxious stockholders.

We find precisely this situation in I Cor. 7:14. (We are still supposing that it is true that Paul is seeking to convince the believing wife that her unbelieving husband is

sanctified in her, by an appeal to the holiness of her children.) The holiness of the children is not a matter that is established independently, and so Paul's argument would have turned out to lack any real sense. If the argument from the holiness of these children to the sanctified state of the unbelieving parent in the believing one is to mean anything, it must rest upon the major premise that these children can be holy children only when the state of the parents is such as has been mentioned. But in that case the minor premise inevitably drops out. Since it is exactly their proper relation to their unbelieving husband or wives about which the believing spouses were in doubt, they could not in that case be convinced of the holiness of their children.

b) *Or surrendering the major premise.*

It is equally futile to start the argument from the other end. It is claimed that these parents who were perplexed about their husbands or wives, were sure at least of one thing, and that was this, that their children were holy children. However, if this is true, their conception of the holiness of their children differed radically from that of Paul. Paul in his argument with them would be presupposing that the holiness of their children is definitely conditioned by the sanctification of the unbelieving parent in the believing one. But their conception of the holiness of their children would be such, that this holiness was quite independent of the sanctification of the unbelieving parent in the believing one. Thus in the minds of these Christian folk the major premise would have been lacking, and Paul would have stood just as helpless, as far as getting anywhere with his argument is concerned, as if these people had been completely without convictions about their children. In fact, Paul would have known before he said a word, that his conclusion would be an utter *non sequitur* to the minds of his readers.

(3) This entire approach to the text leads into an impasse, and the situation becomes still more confusing when it is insisted that it is the physical tie between parent and child that is of basic import here.

Let us see what this assumption does to the passage. We are still taking the position that Paul is speaking to the believing spouses in the religiously divided homes. We are also still assuming that he has in mind to say that the children of these marriages are holy because the

unbelieving partners are sanctified in the believing one. And now in addition to all this we are also assuming a third element, viz., the idea that it is the physical descent of these holy children from the parents aforementioned which is of basic importance in this passage.

And so, the passage is explained to mean that the unbelieving partner is sanctified by his connection in wedlock with the believing mate, so that the physical cohabitation of the believer and unbeliever is sanctified (i. e. according to the will of God), and that the children are holy since they are the physical offspring of this union.

We find therefore, that a sanctified marriage-bed is introduced into the argument as an intermediary element that is to explain both the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse and the holiness of the children. But instead of helping the argument, the introduction of this element makes everything still more complicated and confusing. It takes but a moment's thought to see this.

a) *A circular argument.*

With respect to the parent we get the circular argument that it is specifically the wedlock of the unbeliever and believer that is sanctified, because the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by his connection with the believing spouse specifically in wedlock.

b) *Destruction of the problem.*

And in seeking to deduce the holiness of the wedlock from the holiness of the offspring we find again the barrier which we always encounter when we try to argue back from a conditioned minor premise. Unless the parents felt that the holiness of their children was due to the holiness of their marriage relations, they could never argue back from the holiness of the children to the proposition that their marriage was a sanctified one. And in that case viz. if they were convinced that the marriage relation was a holy one, the problems which Paul seeks to solve for them would not have existed.

We have tried to show that the simple logical requirements of the argument which Paul is making do not permit of the interpretation favored by the protesting brethren. And if we have been somewhat lengthy on this one point, it is because this passage especially has traditionally been held to support the idea that children, in order to be included in the covenant, must have been born of parents at least one of whom is a believer.

As to the material side of the interpretation which has been discussed, we wish to ask only one question. If the holiness of the child is a holiness that is definitely conditioned by the fact that it owes its physical origin to a wedlock that is sanctified and in accordance with the will of God, would we not have to conclude that a child, born indeed of Christian parents, but outside of wedlock and therefore not of a sanctified marriage bed, belongs not to the holy but to the unclean children of which the Apostle speaks in this passage?

2. THE SIMPLE MEANING OF 1 COR. 7:14.

1 Cor. 7:14 brings a clear and simple message. The Apostle, as we have seen, is not speaking specifically to the believing parents of the religiously divided homes, nor does he have exclusively their children in mind. He is addressing himself to that wider group of people who are perplexed about this kind of marriage. And when he says: "your children," he is referring to the children of these people, and so to the children of the Church in general.

Neither is Paul speaking here of the sanctification of the marriage bed, but of the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse. There is considerable difference between the two. Married life extends beyond the marriage bed. The question was not: Can these mixed marriages be tolerated specifically in view of the physical union of husband and wife and in view of the kind of children that will be the result of such a union. The question was this, whether it is compatible with the Christian faith of the believing husband or wife to have and to hold as a spouse one who is an unbeliever and therefore an unholy person, not set apart by Christ and for him. It was deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the early Christians that Christian faith called for a life of separation from the world. Christ could have no concord with the world of pagan gods and of unbelief. Was it consistent then, for a Christian to possess and to be possessed by someone who was not possessed by Christ? Could a Christian in loyalty to Christ love and live for a wedded partner who did not love and live for Him? That was the question that troubled this group of Christians in the Corinthian church and that is the question to which Paul gives answer.

We see therefore that there are three questions which are answered by Paul in this chapter, each one of which pertains to problems that arise out of Christian faith in its bearing upon marriage.

The first is: Is it compatible with Christian faith to marry? The second: Is it compatible with Christian faith to break marriage? And the third: Is it compatible with Christian faith to remain married to an unbeliever?

The answer of Paul to this last question is one that brings home a great central truth of Christian faith and life. It is especially interesting because the Apostle himself declares that he is not speaking by direct mandate. Instead of a direct command he places before his readers the principle from which they may deduce the validity of his statement, that the unbelieving partner in marriage is sanctified in the believing one. This principle which the Apostle holds before them is the well known principle embodied in the fact that the children of believing parents are holy children. Paul says to the Christians of Corinth: If you will only apply this principle as it pertains to your own children, to the situation found in the religiously divided homes, you must come to the conclusion that I am correct when I say, that the unbelieving partner is sanctified in the believing one.

If we ask the question in what sense the unbelieving spouse is sanctified in the believing one, Paul himself helps us in more than one passage in his letters to find the answer. The fact is that what he states in this striking passage is but part and parcel of his entire conception of Christian Covenant-life. In Rom. 14:14 and 20 and also I Tim. 4:3-4, Paul enunciates the principle that the holiness or unholiness of things depends not upon the things as such, but upon the individual who receives and uses them. Things are good and pure and holy, if received from God in faith and used with thanksgiving. In other words: whatever a Christian acquires and uses in faith, is thereby drawn into the Covenant, because it is converted into Covenant substance and Covenant assets, serving, as far as the attitude and activity of the believer is concerned, the great Covenant purpose of God.

This same controlling principle Paul recommends to the consideration of Christians who were perplexed about these mixed marriages. Paul says about a Christian who finds himself in this situation: Whatever the spiritual

state of the husband or wife may be, and his or her personal attitude toward God, in as far as that husband or wife is the husband or wife of a Christian, received and possessed in faith, he or she is by that very fact drawn into the Kingdom-sphere, and is made to serve the purpose of God through that Christian. In as far as a Christian can say of anything: "It is mine, entrusted to me by God, as my Covenant God," just to that extent and in that sense is the thing or person holy.

This is a truth that lies at the center of all Covenant-life and Covenant-service. Since the heart of the Covenant life lies in this, that God has in Christ associated us with Himself in the realization of His great Kingdom purpose, all things which in the way of God's ordinance come into our possession, are held by us under divine investiture, and so are converted into holy covenant possession.

In order to lead these troubled Christians to see the entire reasonableness of his position, he clinches his argument by pointing to the children of Christian believers. "Else" (that is, if this principle with respect to husbands and wives being sanctified in their believing spouses were not true) you would also have no ground for considering your children as being sanctified. "But now," (for the very reason that this principle holds,) "are your children holy." Therefore the two clauses manifestly do not express cause and effect, but point to concurrent facts. That is, both truths set forth in them stand and fall together, because both come up out of the same principle. If it's not true that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the believing one, then neither can it be true that the children of believing parents are sanctified, because it is one and the same great principle that underlies both. Therefore, Paul intimates, if you cannot believe that the unbelieving husband or wife is held a sacred possession by the believing partner in wedlock, you are thereby denying a principle, which will make it impossible for you any longer to believe in the holiness of your children. The Apostle intimates that both the holiness of the unbelieving husband or wife and the holiness of the children of believing parents is of an identical nature, and that it rests upon the same grounds, viz. this, that they are sanctified (not in themselves owing to a personal faith in Christ), but in the Covenant member or members whose they are, and who hold them as Covenant possession. Thus the argument of Paul is entirely clear and cogent. He

makes use of a fundamental principle recognized by all when applied to the *familiar* sphere of the relationship of believing parents to their children, in order to point the way in the more *unusual* and *unfamiliar* situation found in homes where only one of the wedded partners is a Christian believer.

This passage therefore is most illuminating with respect to the question, why and how the children of believers are sanctified in Christ. At the same time it also sets in a revealing light the question, why these children are included in the Covenant and in the Church, while the unbelieving husbands or wives are not.

It is immediately felt that the parallel which is drawn in this passage between the holiness of an unbelieving spouse, and the holiness of a believer's children, brings home at the same time a *great contrast*, and so calls to mind a *sharp distinction* that must be made here. The child is a minor. The unbelieving husband or wife is a mature person who stands in his own right. Therefore also the *mode of possession* differs. To a believing woman both husband and child are gifts of God, and for this reason both are sanctified in her. But the difference lies in this, that the husband is possessed in the restricted and specialized sense as a marital partner. But as an individual he continues to stand in his own authority and upon his own responsibility. It is precisely this situation that circumscribes and qualifies the holiness of the unbelieving spouse. On the other hand, God's gift of a child is accompanied with that divine disposition which places the child completely as a minor and a ward in the keeping and under the authority of its parents. It is because of this difference that the unbelieving husband, although held as a sacred possession by the believing wife, still stands outside of the Covenant and of the Church of Christ as far as his personal participation is concerned, while the child of believing parents is with its parents included in the Covenant and hence in the Christian Church.

At the end of this paragraph we wish to show that the position taken by the protesting brethren, in which they insist that a child must be born of believing parents in order to be included with them into the covenant, a position for which they believe support is found in I Cor. 7:14,

leads to conclusions quite at variance with Reformed doctrine and practice. We take as example the protest of Grandville Ave.

We read in this protest:

"Children born of parents both of whom are unbelievers are unholy." The reason clearly expressed is that they are born of unbelievers. They are not born into the Covenant. "It follows inevitably (we are again quoting Grandville Ave.) that a child born of unbelieving parents is not holy but 'unclean.' It cannot be baptized before it appears by its own act of faith that it is incorporated into Christ. By nature it is a branch of the wild olive tree."

We are certain that the Consistory will wholeheartedly reject its position as soon as it sees the inevitable implication. For, if the position of the Consistory is the correct one, then the child that is born of heathen parents, is not included but is still excluded from the Covenant, even when its parents at some period after its birth become Christian believers. It will not help the argument of the Consistory to step in at this point and to say, that Scripture teaches that, when parents enter into the Covenant, their children enter into the Covenant with them. For it is exactly this great truth that destroys their entire argument.

In its protest Grandville Ave. opposes the position that children, who are adopted by believing parents, are included in the Covenant by virtue of the fact that by adoption they are brought under the authority and control of Covenant members. The Consistory argues: *"Even if heathen father should give his child to Christian parents to bring it up, it would not change the state of the child. Adoption does change the external circumstances by which the child is surrounded, but it does not take away the fact that it is born of heathen or unbelieving parents. By virtue of this birth it remains a child of a heathen and unbeliever, and by virtue of that state it is a "stranger to the Covenant of promise."*

It is therefore but fair that we put this argument back upon the doorstep of the Consistory when it claims that the immature children of unbelievers enter into the Covenant with their parents, when these parents accept Christ by faith. Exactly in the vein of the argument of the Con-

sistory we point to this evident fact, that even if in later years these unbelieving parents become Christians, this does indeed change the circumstances and influences by which the child is henceforth surrounded, but it does not change the fact that it is born of heathen and unbelieving parents. By virtue of physical descent it is born outside of the Covenant. And therefore also in a case of this kind Grandville Ave. would have to apply its own rule: *"It cannot be baptized before by its own act of faith it gives evidence that it is incorporated into Christ. By nature it is a branch of the wild olive tree."*

Of course the Consistory of Grandville Ave. does not believe this and neither does any one of us. It is perfectly true that, when parents are converted to Christianity, also the minor children, born to them while they were still in unbelief, are included with them into the Covenant. But this very truth goes to show that the position of the Consistory of Grandville Ave. cannot possibly be maintained. It clearly points to the fact that it is not the circumstance of physical birth that is decisive, but that there is a deeper and higher principle that determines the inclusion of our children in the Covenant of God.

To make this higher principle stand out still more clearly this question may be asked: What would a Consistory do in case unbelieving parents, who had children of their own and also an adopted child, were converted to Christ and were accepted as members of the Church. All their children have been born outside of the Covenant. So has the adopted child. Would in that case a Consistory take the position that only the parents' own children entered with them in to the Covenant, and refuse to accept the adopted child because it is not of the flesh and blood of these parents? We cannot conceive that any Consistory would see any grounds for such a position.

The great question is this, whether children are identified with Covenant-parents as their possession and as wards committed to their authority and their care. It is precisely this deeper and higher principle to which Paul alludes when he points to the children of believing parents and says in I Cor. 7:14, "else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

SECTION 2.

Genesis Seventeen

When Gen. 17 is viewed in the light of I Cor. 7, we clearly see that it is the same great covenant principle that underlies both passages, and we see that Synod was correct in basing its decision upon the Covenant ordinance which God enjoined upon Abraham.

A. A FEW MISCONCEPTIONS.

If we are to do justice to the message found in this chapter, however, certain misunderstandings with respect to the nature and value of these O. T. Scriptures should first be cleared up. In our opinion there are a few misconceptions that appear in the protests and that have prevented the protesting brethren from doing justice to the Covenant revelation given in this chapter.

(1) THE COVENANT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT HAD ALSO NATIONALISTIC FEATURES.

In the first place it is claimed that the conclusions drawn by Synod from Genesis 17 are not valid because Synod failed to give due consideration to the fact that the Covenant in the O. T. dispensation bore not only a spiritual but also a temporary and national character, and therefore contained features that were of a temporary and provisional nature, not applicable to the N. T. Some of the protests distinguish between these two features so sharply that they speak of a spiritual Covenant of grace and a national Covenant. And then it is explained that it is part of the account which deals with Abraham and his seed, that is spiritual and permanent. Thus it is said: "*We have no objection to the proposition that it follows from the unity of the Covenant of the and N. T. that the ordinance for initiation into this Covenant of grace, as revealed to Abraham, has permanent significance also for us. It is always the promise of God, already given to Abraham in the Covenant of Grace, which is confirmed for our children, which is the ground for infant baptism, and which therefore also determines to which children baptism may be administered.*"

On the other hand (it is argued), the Covenant has also a temporary and national side. Synod, in appealing to God's command to Abraham to circumcise his servants, as a proof for its position, has failed to take this into

account. The implication here is plainly that that part of the divine injunction that pertains to Abraham's servants, is an expression of this temporary and nationalistic side of the Covenant.

It should be clear that these statements rest upon a misconception. There is in the record not the least ground for the assumption that the circumcision of Abraham and of the children begotten by him was especially the sign and seal of the spiritual Covenant of grace, while the servants of Abraham were circumcised by virtue of the fact that the Covenant was also a national Covenant.

It is assuredly true that God's Covenant with Israel had also a national aspect. And in no instance was this lost sight of. What we merely wish to point out is that deduction which the brethren have made from this simple truth is not warranted.

(a) In the first place let it be said, that the national element represented in the Covenant was by no means a *spiritually indifferent* element. To the contrary. The very fact that God from the patriarchal era on, chose one nation out of all the world for a Covenant people, had great spiritual significance. Nation and Church were united, and every mature member of the nation was required to be and was supposed to be a believer in Jehovah God. And if an Israelite proved not to be such, God had provided rules for disciplining and ultimately removing all those who refused to acknowledge him as God and King. Public profession of this faith took place especially at each celebration of the Passover.

The spiritual nature of the Covenant in its entirety, and therefore also in its national aspect, is expressed in the words: "Ye shall be a people *unto me*." And for this very reason, what Israel was as a people of God, served as a clear and pointed revelation of the character of the people of God in the N. T. dispensation. The Apostle describes the N. T. people of God as "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." That much unbelief and much externality was found, is true of the O. T. Church as well as of the N. T. Church, but in both the Old and the New Testament it is true that the Church ideally consists, as far as its responsible members are concerned, of believers. Any attempt to minimize this fact can do little but serve the purposes of a mistaken dispensationalism.

(b) That certain features of the Covenant transaction can be selected as belonging to the essential and enduring character of the Covenant while others are clearly dispensational, is also a position that finds no support in the account itself. The entire transaction of God with Abraham carries the impress of the nationalistic character of the Old Covenant. Not the circumcision of the servants alone. Nor yet the circumcision of the servants in the first place. The Old Covenant is nationalistic in its entire visible organization, because God chose Abraham and his seed to be a peculiar people unto Him in order to reveal and to realize progressively, through all of the organization of the patriarchal family, and later through all the political and religious organization of a theocratic nation, the essential meaning of his covenant and the dominant character of that relationship which God had established between Himself and his chosen people.

(2) NO MENTION MADE OF CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM'S SERVANTS.

ABRAHAM'S SERVANTS PRESUMABLY BELIEVERS.

We find two other contentions upon which some stress has been laid, which we believe not to be to the point. The first is that Gen. 17 shows that only adult men were received into the Covenant, but not a word is said about any children that the slaves of Abraham may have had.

The word used in Gen. 17:27 is "males," i. e. men without respect to age. Furthermore, this subject need not detain us, because it does not concern the question before us in the least. The question is not what we might conclude from the circumcision of the slave children, if any, but what we are bound to conclude from the fact that these slaves themselves were made to share in the Covenant established with Abraham.

The same is true with respect to the question whether or not Abraham's servants were believers. It is of course perfectly possible that they were. A number of Scripture passages are cited in the protests to prove that at least some of them believed in their master's God. Whether all of them, both the slaves born in his house and those purchased with money, were actually believers when they received the token of the Covenant, is a question which no one can answer. The record contains nothing as to the personal and spiritual condition of these slaves. Evi-

dently this matter was not considered germane to the transaction between God and Abraham.

It must be admitted that it is difficult for us, living as we do in a later day, to enter into the social and religious situation of the Patriarchal period. For this reason we are always prone to read our later ideas into the Bible record. In our present-day order a man who is *actually* of age and responsible is also *legally* of age and responsible. We easily assume that this was naturally always the case. Thus the protest argues: *The exegesis upon which the conclusion of Synod is based proceeds evidently from the assumption that the servants of Abraham, at least a large number of them, were still heathen, and that while in this condition, they were circumcised by virtue of the fact that they belonged to Abraham. Upon this assumption the whole argument of Synod rests. But a mature person can be baptized only on the ground of his confession, and we must therefore conclude that either these servants were circumcised because they had learned to serve the Lord, or, if they are circumcised because they belonged to Abraham's household, this rule is no longer applicable.*

We may answer here that Synod considered these men neither as heathen nor as believers, but merely as slaves of Abraham, and therefore as *minors*, which, as we hope to make clear, is the right view of the matter.

(3) THE REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM.

There is another misconception as to the significance of the O. T. for the N. T. Church that also should first be cleared out of the way. This is contained in the assertion that, *"Even if it should be true that Abraham's servants were circumcised because of the fact that they belonged to Abraham, this ordinance cannot be valid in the N. T. because, if it were, the logical conclusion would be that the Christian Church also would have to baptize mature persons, even though they disregarded the Christian religion, for the simple reason that they were in service of a Christian master.* This reductio ad absurdum is intended to show how futile it is to appeal to Gen. 17, since it is clear that only believers and their seed are to be baptized, and that an adult can enter into the Covenant only on the ground of his personal faith and confession.

It is rather hard to believe that the brethren were quite serious when they incorporated this argument into their

protests. If so, they failed to take note of a simple hermeneutical principle, which tells us of an important and necessary distinction, that should always be made whenever and for whatever reason the New Testament Church goes to the O. T. Scriptures for light and guidance. It is one thing to claim that O. T. ordinances should be bodily transplanted into the N. T. Church (as e. g. did the Judaizing sects in early Christianity). It is quite another thing to ask whether in these O. T. ordinances God has not embodied and revealed a principle which is of abiding value for the Church in the N. T. dispensation. The baptism of infants is a case in point. Baptism is come in the place of circumcision. Appeal is made to Gen. 17 to justify infant baptism. Does consistency in this case demand that the ordinance is to be carried bodily from the O. T. into the N. T. Church? Naturally not.

When the N. T. Church goes to the O. T. for light on the question of infant Baptism, it does not expect to find an ordinance that is to be taken over without discrimination. But it does go with this question: Do we find in Gen. 17 and other O. T. utterances a revelation of abiding principles, which are valid also for the practice of the N. T. Church? The answer to this question is in the affirmative. Why? Because the Covenant of Grace is in essence the same in both dispensations, and therefore the great principles underlying it must be the same in both dispensations. This is the reasoning of Synod, which, as far as we can see, is simple enough entirely logical. If therefore, the divine mandate to Abraham, with reference to the circumcision of all the males of his household is held to contain a guiding principle for the faith and practice of the N. T. Church with respect to the baptism of its children, it is certainly in order to ask, whether the fact that "all males" included the servants of the household as well as the children, does not embody a truth, which also is needed by the N. T. Church for a full understanding and appreciation of the nature and the functions of the Covenant. The statement therefore, that, if Gen. 17 is used to support the position that adopted children have a right to receive baptism, consistency demands the baptism also of the serving personnel in Christian households, is not a carefully considered statement. It does not take into consideration the fact that the status of a modern servant is one totally different from that of a slave in the patriarchal household. The first is a major, the second was a minor.

B. TWO QUESTIONS.

We now turn to Gen. 17 with these two questions, which the protests lead us to ask.

(1) Is it true that the record gives ground for the belief that the inclusion of the slaves points to a rather incidental and provisional feature of the Covenant in the O. T. dispensation, so that this inclusion is not to be regarded as containing a principle of permanent value?

(2) Does not Gen. 15:4 speak specifically of Abraham's physical offspring as heirs of the Covenant?

(1) WAS THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE SLAVES BUT AN INCIDENTAL FEATURE?

The position taken in the protests is this, that the essence of the Covenant of Grace lies in God's ordinance concerning Abraham and his seed, and in His command that they be circumcised. It is this that has permanent significance. God spoke "*You and your seed,*" and it is only this utterance that is regarded as decisive for the New dispensation. It is specifically this utterance that determines which children are to be regarded as included in the Covenant. That part of God's mandate, however, that pertains to Abraham's slaves, was of transient significance, and contributes no essential and abiding element to God's revelation concerning the Covenant.

A careful reading of Gen. 17 will show that this conception is quite unfounded. There is no ground at all for the assumption that there is something about the covenant transaction that makes its application to the offspring of Abraham stand out, as in any essential way distinct from its application to the slaves of Abraham. That the first has spiritual and permanent value, and therefore has normative significance for the N. T. Church, while on the other hand its application to Abraham's servants is of an incidental and transient character, containing no essential and abiding element, is most decidedly counter-indicated by the narrative itself.

Let us look at the record. We have first the *announcement* in vs. 6. "And I will establish my covenant—" Then follows the explanation in vs. 10, "This is my covenant—"

God first announces to Abraham (vs. 2) "*I will make my covenant between me and thee.*" Then He makes clear that this covenant will not be limited to Abraham

and his day, but that the covenant is a covenant also with his seed in their generations. "*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.*" (Vs. 7.)

This is the announcement. And it is to this announcement that the brethren make appeal when they claim that the inclusion of the offspring of Abraham reveals the essential character of the covenant, while the inclusion of the slaves marks a passing dispensational feature. A careful consideration of vs. 7 will make clear, however, that this passage is being misunderstood. Suppose that God's communication had stopped with this announcement, there would indeed have been the assurance that the Covenant with Abraham was to extend into the generations, but there would be nothing to indicate the way in which God planned to continue the covenant from generation to generation.

This declaration reveals that God's covenant is fontal in its character. That is, the establishment of the covenant with the generations to come does not consist in a series of repetitions, but is a continuance of the establishment of the covenant with Abraham. This fact is brought out by the words "For an everlasting covenant."

But this announcement in itself does not at all warrant the conclusion that therefore the children while they are yet children are already included in that covenant. God says: "*I will establish my covenant between me and between thee and between thy seed after thee in their generations.*" What is brought to the forefront in these words is this, that in each generation of the seed of Abraham, as it takes its place, God's covenant will receive unbroken realization and confirmation. "Ledorotham" calls attention to each generation in its age, in its own cycle of life and interest, and God says: In each of these and by my act this relationship between me and my people will be found to be perpetuated. But also, that is all that this passage warrants us to deduce.

Therefore, if the account has stopped with the words of this announcement, the record of Gen. 17 would contain nothing from which we might conclude that also the children of believers, while they are still minors, are already participants in the covenant. There would have been no argument against the position (supposing there had been

Anabaptists in the O. T. times) that the covenant established by God with Abraham is perpetuated and realized in each succeeding generation only as men learn to believe in God, and that individuals are included in this covenant only when they show their faith as did Abraham.

The brethren are therefore mistaken when they feel that, since Gen. 17:7 speaks specifically of the seed of Abraham, this passage is already specifying the inclusion of Abraham's children in the Covenant, leaving the inclusion of the slaves to be noted in a later passage. The fact is that the passage yields no hint at all that the inclusion of minors was the method by which God designed to continue and to expand the covenant from age to age.

But now we proceed to the 10th verse. It is in this verse that God reveals both the significance of the covenant, and the method by which from generation to generation He purposed to bring into realization the covenant tie. *And this is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee.* And now what follows? *Every man child among you shall be circumcised.*

This explanation points first of all to the meaning of the covenant, the nature of the covenant tie. The meaning of circumcision was fundamentally the same in Egypt and among the various Mediterranean peoples where it was practiced. It was the mark signifying that the person and tribe belonged to their god, that they belonged to his family, and that they were set apart and devoted to him.

When God established his covenant with Abraham he employed this well known rite with its well understood meaning. God did not devise a new rite. Nor did He inject into the old rite a fundamentally new meaning. In the covenant which He established with Abraham circumcision meant exactly this, that God claimed his chosen people as his own, that He set them apart and sanctified them for Himself as his own peculiar possession.

But the new and startling thing revealed in this passage was the *inclusiveness* of the covenant which God established with Abraham. The characteristic of Hebrew circumcision, as distinguished from circumcision practiced in other countries, lay in this, that it was administered to every male belonging to the household, regardless of all blood ties, and that this sign and seal was to be administered in early infancy.

“Every man child among you,” that is the inclusive and unifying expression found here. No separate mention is made of the circumcision of Abraham’s seed in distinction from that of the other males of the household. “Every male” includes all without distinction. And then God goes on in the twelfth verse to specify the time at which this token of the covenant shall henceforth be administered, namely on the eighth day. But God also guards against a possible misconception. It might be thought that only the males who were born within the confines of the Patriarchy were to be included in this Covenant relationship to Jehovah. The slave born within the clan was felt to belong to the master’s household much more than the servant purchased with money. God here gives Abraham to understand that this circumstance is to make no difference whatsoever as to the administration of the token of the Covenant. In fact God deems it necessary emphatically to repeat this feature of the Covenant in the 13th verse, and to impress upon Abraham that the circumcision of all males in the household shall be permanently observed. “My Covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting Covenant.”

(2) DOES NOT GEN. 15:4 SPEAK SPECIFICALLY OF ABRAHAM’S OWN OFFSPRING AS THE HEIRS OF THE COVENANT?

In Gen. 15:4 God certainly does speak to Abraham about his own offspring in distinction from those not of his blood. There God says, “*This man, (Eliezer) shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*”

The answer is not difficult to find. In Gen. 15 God does use the term “thy seed” in the restricted sense, as referring to Abraham’s own offspring. But the question in Gen. 15 was not at all who were to be *included* in the covenant, but what was to be the *direction* in which the covenant was to progress. In Gen. 15 the question with respect to Abraham’s seed was: “to be or not to be.” It was this: Will the covenant, as far as Abraham’s blood is concerned cease with Abraham himself, and then proceed to follow a line completely outside of him, whom God had called first of all? God answers: No. And He promises that, in distinction from his trusted servant, a son of his own would be his heir and would continue the covenant line.

The question in Gen. 15, therefore, was that of *direction*. It pertained to the *representative lineage* along which, according to God's design and promise, the Covenant was to proceed, and with the name of which it was to be named. God declares that this lineage would be the lineage of Abraham. And later He declares, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." It is in no way disputed that the offspring of Abraham, running over Isaac and Jacob, constituted the basic and supporting lineage of God's ancient covenant people. But the question of direction does not yet settle the question of *scope*. Eliezer was in the Covenant as well as Isaac.

The question is, whether the line of blood also marked the limits of the number of those who would be called after the name of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. With this question in mind we discover two things. Not only do we learn that individuals, families and groups who in the course of history were absorbed into the covenant people, shared in the name "seed of Abraham" and "children of Israel." But we also learn that deliberately and from the very beginning, when God established his covenant with Abraham, God included in that covenant-group, in which Abraham stood as representative, a large number of individuals who were not of his blood.

It is this remarkable provision at the very outset of the history of the chosen race that leads us to look again at Gen. 17 and to ask the question whether, when we view the 7th verse in the light of the 10th, we are justified in assuming that even the words of this announcement "*and with thy seed after thee in their generations*" were really intended to bear an exclusively biological construction.

As has been said, later history revealed that the appellation, "seed of Abraham" and "children of Israel" included also a considerable proportion of people who were not in the biological sense Abraham's seed, but who did belong to the chosen people and, in common with all the others, bore the name of "children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." But what the 10th verse of Gen. 17 clearly shows us is this, that this was not at all an accidental feature in the O. T. Church. It was decidedly the result of God's own ordinance in the day that He established his Covenant with Abraham, when He made it an everlasting ordinance that every male was included in the covenant, and was to receive the token of the covenant. God further opened the

way for these people in servitude to become freemen, and so to become members of the nation in their own right.

When God therefore speaks to Abraham in the 7th verse, "*I will establish my covenant between me and between thee and between thy seed after thee,*" and God beholds these future generations and sees them as including many of non-Abrahamic stock, because of the very ordinance which at that very moment He is making, it cannot very well be that God intended the word "thy seed" to mean "your own offspring and none other." Viewing vs. 7 in the light of vs. 10, we are led to conclude that also the words "thy seed after thee" envisions the wider covenant group, of which Abraham's offspring was to be the representative lineage, and that they are not at all intended to designate only Abraham's natural descendants.

It is in connection with this thought that the use of the plural "you" and "your" in the Gen. 17:10-12 is felt to be significant. God speaks in the 10th verse. "This is my covenant which ye (plural) shall keep between me and between you (plural) and between thy seed after thee." It is apparent from this 10th verse that the "you" does not refer to Abraham and his seed, but to Abraham and his dependents as forming one household group. And the passage continues: "And ye (plural) shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you (plural). And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you (plural) every male throughout your (plural) generations."

This use of the plural is striking, because it immediately identifies the whole group with Abraham, under whose authority they stand, and in whom they possess their representative and head. And in this passage God tells Abraham as the head of this household group: "My Covenant is a covenant "betwixt me and you — throughout your generation."

It should be more than clear that any idea that God's covenant was essentially a covenant with Abraham and his physical offspring, and that the inclusion and circumcision of the slaves must be regarded as a sort of addendum to this covenant, finds no support in the record. To the contrary, in the entire narrative pains are taken to emphasize the inclusion of the servants as an *essential* feature of the covenant, so that without this inclusion the revelation of God's covenant of grace would not have been

complete. It is exactly this inclusiveness which the narrative emphasizes as the characteristic feature of God's covenant with Abraham. God guards against the danger of making flesh and blood the determining factor with respect to inclusion in the covenant.

In the world out of which Abraham was called religion was a matter of clan and tribe and blood-kinship, whether natural or artificial. Kings and their sons were conceived to be offspring of the gods, and alliance with the gods followed the line of blood. In Egypt circumcision was the totem of aristocratic and exclusive priestly classes. There was indeed a real danger that Abraham and his seed might come to the conclusion that only those who were of the blood and lineage of Abraham were included in the household of God, and were entitled to be regarded as allies of God. It is this entirely mistaken conception, the natural result of the racial pride, that in later centuries so completely blinded the people of Israel, which God at the very start seeks to correct. Without making any distinction whatsoever between Abraham's own offspring and those not of his blood who belonged to his household, God gives the command that all males shall be circumcised, and God gives Abraham definitely to understand that this meant the slave purchased with money as well as the one born in his camp. Every one of them entered into the Covenant relation with God the moment that he came to belong to Abraham's estate.

In order to feel the revelatory significance of this ordinance of God, it should always be kept in mind that God was here legislating with respect to an abnormal situation. This abnormality lay in the institution of slavery itself. Slavery, so deeply ingrained in the social structure of those and later centuries, brought about a situation in which human beings were bound by the ties of servitude to masters who owned them and had control over them. These slaves were deprived of their liberty and of their right of self-determination. Legally they were minors. Ordinarily they were regarded as chattels.

God in his usual pedagogical way does not at once eradicate the institution of slavery out of the midst of his people. God simply recognizes its existence as a feature of the social organization of the time. But at the same time He administers a corrective. He applies to it the spiritual principles and demands that inhere in the very Covenant which he is making with Abraham. Abraham

owns these slaves. His is the authority and control over them as his possession and as part of his patriarchal domain. But these slaves are not to be regarded, as they are regarded by the peoples surrounding Abraham, as mere chattels. They are human beings. They also are image-bearers of God. Let it be that legally they are minors. Since they are human beings, they may be possessed only as human beings are possessed, and not as corn or cattle are possessed. The rule that applies to the other human beings under the control of a believing parent (his children) must therefore also be applied to these other minors under his authority (his slaves). In Abraham, their master, these servants also are drawn in to the covenant, not in the same way as are his camels and his oxen and his sheep, but as human beings, as image bearers of God, so created and so recognized by Him.

It is indeed an utterly abnormal thing that mature men should be legally minors. The natural course ordained by God is this, that children as long as they are in nonage are possessed by parents who have authority and control over their persons. But slavery brings about this completely unnatural situation that grown up people, who should be in a position to be self-determining agents, are deprived of the right to choose for themselves. However, since this situation did exist also in Abraham's household, God reveals to him that the nature of the Covenant demands that these slaves be incorporated into the Covenant, and that in this respect they shall enjoy the same privileges as do the minor children. And God takes particular pains to emphasize just what He means. God says to Abraham, as it were: Lest after all you should imagine that the question whether a slave was born inside or outside of your household, has anything to do with his inclusion in the Covenant, and lest you should think that those born in your own house have a sanctity and a standing superior to others, I say to you, that the slaves bought with money from foreigners are included on precisely the same footing with those born in your house. The question is not where they came from, nor how they came in to your possession. The sole question is this, whether they are yours, whether you, as master of your house, have authority over them and are responsible for them.

It is clear that God, in the establishment of his Covenant with Abraham reveals a principle and injects an

ordinance that must ultimately prove fatal to the entire institution of slavery. But while the leaven of Divine truth is at work, and until the time comes in future ages when its power shall put an end to slavery, God makes clear these two things: In the first place that He recognizes the slave as in the fullest sense a human creature, who by the very nature of the Covenant law becomes a Covenant member, even though in it he occupies only the place of a minor. And in the second place, that this inclusion into the Covenant as minors is not at all a matter determined by circumstances of birth. The native born have no advantage over those who are purchased from an outside source. The master's own children are in this respect not more favored than the meanest slave. All are under God, and all are incorporated into God's household, owned by a Covenant principal and standing under his legitimate paternal authority and control.

That this is exactly the Covenant principle which God reveals to Abraham, and that it is this principle which He wants his Covenant people to keep perpetually in mind, is evident by the restriction which God made several centuries later. Israel was about to possess the promised land. God's people were about to enter into a new stage of their history. In the promised land they would encounter social conditions and situations not found in the patriarchal and nomadic periods. In the occupations and undertakings of settled life the people of Israel would find occasion to employ the foreign laborer and artificer. Considerable numbers of this class of free laborers would find an occupation and a home in their midst. What was to be the status of these workingmen as far as religion is concerned? Suppose one of these men working for hire remained in the service of one master for months and years, side by side with the master's bond-servants. Could this free laborer be allowed to share in the religious privileges with his master's slaves? God gives answer in Ex. 12:44. We know that with the Exodus another sacrament had been added. The slaves shared in this feast of the Passover as they shared in the sacrament of circumcision. But with respect to the man who is of foreign birth, and not owned as a slave by a Hebrew master, God states definitely: *This is the ordinance of the Passover: there shall no foreigner eat thereof: but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.*" It is not quite doing

justice to this passage to dismiss it from the present argument with the remark, that it means nothing else than that no uncircumcised person may eat the Passover. This passage says something more than that. It deals especially with the problem of the workingman and the resident coming from the outside. May these join in the Paschal feast? In answer God emphasized the distinction between the servant bought with money and the hired servant. The relation of the hired servant to his master, although he may serve him for years and constantly mingle with the bondservants of the house, is not such that it includes him in the Covenant. But the man purchased as a slave does enter into the Covenant, because his person, and not his labor merely, belongs to his master.

Let us say, that upon the same day when the Hebrew master hired a freeman, he also purchased a slave. This slave, for the reason that he is the purchased possession of the master does become participant of the Covenant, and, after receiving circumcision as the token of his inclusion in the Covenant, he is also a participant at the Paschal meal. But the hired man is not entitled to this privilege. The distinction which God very obviously is making here is the radical distinction between the sojourner and hired servant (men who are free and can in no way be said to be the property of their masters) and the servants purchased with money (men who have become part of their master's possession, who are under his authority and control, and for whom that master stands responsible). And so we discover that the great principle which God enunciates here, as the people of Israel are about to enter into the promised land, is exactly the same as that which God made clear when he established the Covenant with Abraham four hundred and fifty years before.

SECTION 3. NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATION.

The Covenant Principle revealed in Gen. 17 applied to the question in hand.

The question which we ask now is this: What light does the greater inclusiveness of the Covenant, as it was established with Abraham, throw upon the particular question with which we are concerned, viz. the covenant status of children of unknown or unbelieving parentage, adopted

into a Christian home? We agree perfectly with the brethren that sentiment should have nothing to do with our decision in this matter. Scripture is our only sure and sufficient ground. And, as is the case with infant Baptism in general, the only indisputable ground is found in the revelation given to us in the record of God's establishment of the Covenant with Abraham.

It is true that the O. T. Church is marked by the patriarchal and later by the national features that attach to all of its outward organization and to all of the outward administration of the Covenant. This, however, does not prevent the N. T. church from going to Gen. 17 for support with respect to infant baptism. Hence it is completely in order to ask, whether the fact that the Covenant, as God established it with Abraham, included a number of people who were not in the biological sense the seed of Abraham, also embodies a truth which is needed by the N. T. Church for a full understanding and appreciation of the nature and the scope of the covenant.

Synod appealed to Gen. 17 to establish the greater inclusiveness of the Covenant also in the N. T. dispensation. The protesting brethren have attempted to show the absurd position to which an appeal such as this must lead, as for instance the baptizing of the servants of a Christian master today, and even the baptizing of all the children of a Christian nation, etc.

There is no need, however, of falling into any absurdities or into anything repugnant to N. T. faith and practice, if with respect to the scope of the covenant we approach Gen. 17 in the same spirit and with the same question in mind, with which we come when we seek support for infant baptism. That question is simply this: Is there a truth of abiding value to be discovered in the greater inclusiveness of God's Covenant established with Abraham? If so, what is it, and how is it to be applied in the N. T. Church?

When we approach the question as to the scope of the Covenant in this spirit, we will find that, over against the flesh and blood theory of the brethren, the greater inclusiveness that marked the covenant as it was established with Abraham, also marks the Covenant in the thought and practice of the N. T. Church. Two things become clear as we study the N. T. records.

A. *That with the head of the house all minors who stand under his paternal authority enter into the covenant.*

B. *That by adoption a child becomes, also in God's sight, truly and fully a child of its adoptive parents.*

At the very threshold of this section, however, the brethren meet us with a passage which is supposed to close the door definitely against any attempt to carry the greater inclusiveness of Gen. 17 into the practice of the N. T. Church. This passage is Acts 2:39, "Unto you is the promise and to your children —" It is claimed that this passage does speak for a continuation of the inclusion of the actual offspring of believing parents. And to the brethren it is equally clear that this passage excludes those who are not the natural offspring of these parents.

Before proceeding, we wish to meet this argument. We wish to point out in the first place that there is nothing in Acts 2:39 that can lead us to conclude that the expression "your children" was meant by Peter to convey to the parents that heard him the idea that he was referring exclusively to their own flesh and blood to exclusion of children which had been adopted. There was not a Jewish father or mother in that audience who entertained the idea: The man means my little son and daughter who were born to us, but not our little Jacob, because we adopted him. To appeal to Acts 2:39 to prove that it is a N. T. principle that only the natural offspring of believers are included with them into the covenant, rests purely on a previous assumption. It is a clear case of begging the question.

In the second place, it should be realized that Acts 2:39 gives no proof at all, anymore than Gen. 17:7, that children are already in the Covenant. In the argument of the brethren it is simply taken for granted that the N. T. has some very plain teachings on this subject, and that from this passage and from others it can be clearly established that children are included with their parents in the covenant, and therefore ought to be baptized. But this is far from being the case.

The only thing that is definitely stated and that is above all reach of controversy in the N. T. Scriptures is this, that those who believe are to receive the sacrament of Baptism. There is not a single passage in all the range of the N. T. writings which in itself, or even associated with

other N. T. utterances, compels anyone to conclude that children or other minors are included in the Covenant, and are therefore to be baptized. The only firm foundation for infant baptism is Gen. 17:10, and all the N. T. passages that are brought to bear upon this subject are only of a corroborative nature.

And now we notice that it is precisely this one passage, to which we needs must go for the proof of the scripturalness of infant baptism, which does not in the least differentiate between Abraham's offspring and those who are in servitude in his house. It is the passage that speaks indiscriminately of "*all males*" of the household as included in the covenant, and as obliged to receive the token of the covenant on the eighth day. Let us firmly keep in mind, that this passage furnishes the N. T. Church with the only definite ground for infant baptism.

But in spite of this fact our churches take the position, and rightly so, that in this passage Scripture gives us sufficient ground for believing that also in the N. T. our children are included in the covenant of God. But then, it should also be understood that, if we want to keep this passage as ground for infant baptism, we must let it stand in its integrity. "All males" certainly includes the offspring of believers, and we rightly hold that in this respect the divine mandate must be held to stand, unless we find that in some way it is countermanded in the N. T. Scripture. And no such countermand is found anywhere. But "all males" includes also those who are not the flesh and blood offspring of believers. It includes also those who are incorporated into the household and who stand under paternal authority, as do the children of the household.

Maybe it is true then, that somewhere in the N. T. God does abrogate this inclusive feature of the Abrahamic covenant, so that in the N. T. the administration of Baptism is restricted to the believers' own offspring? That must be so if we are to have any ground for taking the position that in the N. T. only those children of a home, who are the actual offspring of the parents, are included in the Covenant, and that those who are not the natural offspring, are excluded from the Covenant and hence from Baptism.

But the fact is that, as we find nothing that repeals the administration of the sacrament to the children of believing homes, so do we find nothing at all that nullifies the greater inclusiveness of the Covenant. We can dis-

cover nothing that destroys the old principle of the integrity of the household and that makes flesh and blood the determining factor. In all the N. T. passages that have been quoted by the protesting brethren, those passages that make mention of the children of believers, there is not one that even remotely makes this question an issue, or that would have to read differently in order to include those who are children by adoption.

Matt. 19:14, "Suffer little children to come unto me"; Acts 2:39, "For the promise is unto you and your children"; I Cor. 7:14, "Else were your children unclean but now are they holy," and whatever other passages make mention of the children of believers, make no point at all of distinguishing between children born into the house and other children who are incorporated into the home, but are not of the parents' own flesh and blood. Pointing to the primary meaning of "tekna" does not advance the case of the brethren. What is needed is to show that God does not consider adopted children as occupying the position of "tekna" in the home. In other words, that God does not consider adoption of legitimate act. As we hope to show, God does most emphatically consider the adopted child in the complete sense a child of its adoptive home.

The opinion of the brethren, that Acts 2:39 and other passages show clearly the N. T. principle that only believers and their own offspring are included in the Covenant, and that therefore, whatever the ground may be upon which The Old covenant was made more inclusive, this can have no possible application in the New Testament dispensation, rests entirely upon a mistaken assumption.

We may proceed with our questions. What evidence we do find in the N. T. that the principle, laid down by God in the establishment of the covenant with Abraham, is still in force?

A. ALSO THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT WITH THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE ALL WHO STAND UNDER HIS PATERNAL AUTHORITY ENTER INTO THE COVENANT.

It has already been pointed out that God in establishing his covenant with Israel, recognized the social relationships which obtained in the Patriarchal era and which were sanctioned by the customs and laws of that time. As we study the records of the early Christian Church we perceive that God followed the same rule when at length

His Church entered into the era of the New Testament dispensation. Paul made frequent mention of slavery and of the relation that should obtain between masters and slaves in Christian households. From the Epistles it is clear that early Christianity did not seek to abolish or to oppose slavery, but accepted it simply as an unavoidable constituent of the social structure of its day.

(a) *Gal. 4:1-2. The Slave a Minor.*

We perceive also that early Christianity viewed the slave in the same way and accorded him the same place in the household as did the Church of the old dispensation. This is clear from the passage (already referred to) in Gal. 4:1-2. "Now I say, that the heir as long as he is child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." This text shows us that the Apostle viewed the slave as occupying the same place in the household which he occupied in the centuries gone by. He was still counted as a minor member of the household. The words "differeth nothing" indicate that Paul is making an exact comparison between the bondservant and the son in nonage as far as their status in the household is concerned.

(b) *The "And His House" Passages.*

The question which now presents itself is this, whether there is any indication that the slave, occupying the same status in the household as a son in nonage under the pater familias, was also with the master and his children received into the Church. In other words do the N. T. Scriptures indicate that the rule which God laid down when he established his covenant with Abraham, continued to be applied in the Christian Church? Or are there indications that the Church of the New Testament brought about a change in this respect? It is true, we do not anywhere in the N. T. find a specific repetition of instructions with respect to the administration of the covenant sign and seal to the slaves of a household, anymore than we do with respect to the children. But what we do find in the record of the missionary activity of the Apostles, is a frequent repetition of the formula "with his house." Thus we read that the nobleman believed and his house (Jno. 4:53), Cornelius feared God with all his house (Acts 10:2). Lydia was baptized and her house-

hold (Acts 16:15). Paul assured the Jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31), and we read, he was baptized and all his immediately (Acts 16:34). Paul baptized the household of Stephanus (I Cor. 1:11) and he speaks of the household of Stephanas as the first fruits of Achaia.

It is true that these words taken by themselves contain no proof for the baptism of slaves or of adopted children anymore than they do for infant baptism, for the simple reason that we are not told about the age and condition of the people that constituted these particular households. But when we have caught the spirit of the Covenant as it was instituted with Abraham, and when we take the position that the Covenant in the New Dispensation is in its essence the Covenant of the Old dispensation which "is still in force, and is essentially identical with the 'New Covenant' of the present dispensation" (Berkhof, *Ref. Dogm. II*, p. 241), the repeated formula "and his house" becomes a most significant one. It signifies that the household was still considered as an integer, and that with the master all who were his and who stood under his paternal authority entered into the Church.

However, in seeking to maintain their point that only the very offspring of believing parents were included with them in the early church, the brethren make an effort to break the force of these passages by speculations about the spiritual state of the grown up people of the households which are mentioned. It is pointed out that in the household of Cornelius all inmates had evidently become believers. The family of the jailer rejoiced greatly. The people of the household of Stephanas set themselves to minister unto the saints. It would seem most likely that also the adults composing the household of Lydia had become believers when they were baptized.

The trouble with this attack, however, is this, that it suffers shipwreck especially upon one rock, and that rock is Acts 16:31. Here we do not have the narrative of an instance, but the enunciation of a principle. Paul speaks to the jailer: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thine house."

We know that the Anabaptistic interpretation adds the clause which is supposed to be implied: "if and when they also believe." But none of us would care to accept this exegesis. The statement of Paul is the enunciation of a principle. It is a statement in line with Jesus' words

in the home of Zacheus: "This day is salvation come unto this house" (Luke 19:9), and with the words of the angel to Cornelius, "Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." The great principle taught in these words of Paul is this, that (as in the O. T. dispensation, so in the New) in the head of the house are included all who are his, who are his possession, and who stand under his paternal authority. Dr. Bavinck citing this passage states this principle simply and succinctly, "With the head of the family all the family is saved." (*Dogm. IV*, p. 578.)

Naturally, this does not mean that a guarantee is given that every individual member of the household is or will be born again and will inherit eternal life. It means that the family as a family has in its head become a family belonging to God and that it is inducted into the covenant of God. And in this family, by all the laws of oriental thought and by the express teaching of Paul, the slave was included as a junior member.

It is this situation that explains why upon the N. T. page we do not find any regulations respecting the slave contingent of households. It remained true that slavery is an abnormality. But it was a feature that had to be taken into account. And it was dealt with in the early Church in the same way in which God had dealt with it in ancient times, a way which was completely logical and in entire accord with the meaning and purpose of the Covenant which He established. There were indeed other matters that did call for special regulation in the early Church, but among them we find no question relating to slaves. This may serve as an answer to the suggestion that, "if slaves were admitted into the Church with their masters, it must be regarded as a practice which by force of ancient usage, was carried over into the New Dispensation, just as was the administration and the keeping of the Sabbath, but which were destined to disappear as Christian truth came to be more clearly understood."

The fact is that there were matters of this nature that did call for exhortation and regulation in that period of transition. Paul called attention to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Jewish ideas ranging around it in Col. 2:16 and in Gal. 4:9-11, and he declared that a return to these observances was a return to the "weak and beggarly elements." The problem of circumcision became an acute problem that caused a great deal of heated discussion,

and finally had to be settled by a convention in Jerusalem. And why did these matters come up for ecclesiastical regulation? For the reason that they were typical in their character, and therefore were characteristic of the O. T. as such. It was the force of mental and emotional habit, rooted in ancient tradition, that tended to lead Judeo-Christians to retain them, but from their very nature they did not belong in the N. T. because they were superceded by new institutions.

The Sabbath of the Old Testament was followed by the Lord's Day of the New. The circumcision of the Old Dispensation made way for the sacrament of Baptism. But the inclusion of the bondservant in the household of his master, and hence in the covenant with his master, was not superceded by something else. It was not something typically O. Testamentic. It was the expression of an abiding covenant principle applied to the problem arising out of the institution of involuntary servitude. The original regulation with respect to the bond-servant, which contemplated him as a junior member of the household, on a par, as far as his status was concerned, with the son who was still under steward- and tutorship, evidently continued unbroken and unchanged in the life and practice of the early Church. Had it been thought necessary to bring about changes in this respect, no longer to recognize the bond servant as a minor in the household, and no longer to apply the ancient ordinances with respect to him, it most assuredly would have proved to be a topic for heavy dispute. But nothing of this kind is indicated. Not only that that we do not hear of anything like it brought up at a council, but we find nothing in all the writings of the Apostle that touches on the matter in any way. The N. T. Scriptures are as silent about the inclusion of the bond-servants as they are about the inclusion of the minor children. The only explanation is that in the mind of the early Christians neither of these two matters presented a problem.

(c) *Answer to Further Objections.*

At this place we wish to meet two further objections that have been voiced and that purport to show the impossibility of applying the principle of the inclusiveness of the Covenant to the life of the N. T. Church. The first is that *the wife also stands under the authority of the husband*, and would thus have to be considered as in-

cluded in the covenant irrespective of her personal attitude toward Christ. This objection is readily answered, because it fails to take into account that the position of a woman in the house (in spite of the fact that the husband is the head of the house) is not that of a minor but of a major. Her position in the household differs fundamentally from that of a bond servant or a minor son. In both the Old and New Testaments she is recognized as a free agent, and her position in the New Testament as one of religious independence, is apparent from the cases of religious division in the family such as are mentioned in I Cor. 7.

The second objection to the inclusion of slaves with their master is this, that in that case we might get a situation in which *slaves would be forced to receive baptism in spite of unbelief and enmity against Christianity.* Also this difficulty is merely an apparent one. The forcing of slaves to participate in religious rites would have been as repugnant to the Old Testament dispensation as it would have been to the New. It is true that in slavery the Church in both dispensations had to deal with a completely abnormal situation, in that men and women, who were really of age, were considered to be in nonage. However, that does not necessarily mean that in the O. T. grown up slaves were considered on a par with babes in arms who were circumcised on the eight day and had completely no will in the matter. Scripture indicates that their status was comparable to that of a pubescent youth, a son under tutors.

Thus Ishmael was circumcised at the age of thirteen and Abraham's servants were dealt with as was the adolescent son of the Patriarch. We notice that this same comparison existed in Paul's mind when he wrote the words of Gal. 4:1-2. Paul does not place the bond servant on a level with a little child, but with a youth under guardians and tutors, a son in pupilage, until the time appointed by the father.

This age was by no means the age of independence, it was still the age of submission, but the youth was being held responsible for disobedience. He was still a minor, and yet, no longer a little child, and with respect to him the Mosaic law applied the law which is recorded in Deut. 21:18-21. This statute called for the stoning of a stubborn and rebellious son who will not listen to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother.

In the same way God's law prescribed in cases of resistance against circumcision. The law provided for instances in which, for one reason or another, circumcision had not been received in infancy, as happened during the years of wandering in the wilderness, so that the whole nation had to be circumcised at Gilgal. Thus the law proclaimed "and the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people." (Gen. 17:14.) The rule contemplated a case of resistance and refusal, not necessarily of a mature person, but also of a youth under authority and it proclaimed that such a one could not be tolerated among the covenant people.

It is a safe inference that, the slave being regarded as occupying the same status as an adolescent son, obedience was required of the slave as it was of the son. In case the slave proved refractory, he would have to be dealt with in as effective a fashion as a rebellious son. The rebellious son would, according to the law, have to be cut off from the people. And rabbinical tradition tells us that the slave, unwilling to submit to his master's religion, would have to be sold at the end of a year. (Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 111.)

It is not necessary, therefore, to entertain the dreadful thought of a slave (any more than of an adolescent youth in the time of Joshua) dragged to the place of circumcision or to the Passover against his will. As in the case of the son, so in the case of the slave, obedience and acquiescence was required. The brethren have been pleased to call this submission the "irreducible minimum of a confession of faith." This is a very apt name for it. There is no doubt but that in a goodly percentage of cases there was much more than this irreducible minimum, and that slaves were entirely willing and glad to adopt their master's religion. But this does not at all mean, as the brethren seem to think it does, that the slaves therefore entered into the covenant upon this profession of faith, and that they were looked upon as majors and principals acting in their own right. That was not the case with Ishmael, and neither was it the case with the servants. Abraham entered into the covenant, and with him entered Ishmael and all the males who with Ishmael came under the paternal ownership and authority of the Patriarch. They all entered as minors, and completely without distinction as to physical lineage.

According to the divine mandate also the children of these slaves were to receive the token of the covenant. But again it would be a mistake to assume, as has been done, that these children were circumcised because the parents were believers, and thus were included in the covenant with them. Even if these parents had been fully believers, this would not have been the case. God made his covenant with the Patriarch and in him with all who stood under his paternal rule. And if for instance among Abraham's servants there had been found a little lad — a captive child, as was the little maid in Naaman's household — without a father or a mother in that household — it would have been received, according to God's own ordinance into the covenant, and it would have received the token of the covenant with all the others.

This status of the bond-servant, as on a par with the son under tutelage, persisted, as we know from Paul's words, in the New Testament dispensation, and also with respect to the New Testament situation there is no need to torture ourselves with visions of full grown men dragged to the river against their will to be baptized. Whatever may have been the case under Clovis, we may be sure that no scenes like that were enacted in the early Church. Also in the New Testament the principle held that the rebellious son would not, if he persisted in his rebellion, be regarded as a member of the covenant household. But this did not at all mean that submission to his father's will made him a major covenant member. No other rule applied to the slave who occupied the same status in the household. He was regarded as a minor who entered into the church as a minor with his master. Christianity did require submission and obedience. There certainly was no place in the covenant household for a bond servant who was hostile to the faith. But even if he accepted his master's faith, he was a bondservant still and reckoned with the master's household. Irrespective of physical descent he was included in the covenant family as were also the minor children.

The material found in the N. T. upon which to build any conclusions is indeed scanty, and first century testimony is completely silent with respect to any other baptism than believers-baptism. But we do not feel this silence with respect to the baptism of slaves to be a disadvantage, any more than we do the complete silence with respect to the baptism of children. We do not mourn

the absence of those definite Scripture passages enjoining the baptism of infants, which Anabaptists are always demanding of us, because we are convinced that God's ancient demand, that children receive the sign and seal of the Covenant, is not merely a dispensational ordinance, but proceeds necessarily from the fundamental principle that underlies the Covenant itself.

The same is true with respect to the absence of any specific reference as to the inclusion of the slaves in a covenant-household. No matter how abnormal slavery is in itself, God deals with it also in the N. T. according to the genius and demands of the covenant, which includes with the head of the house not only those of his own flesh and blood, but every one over whom he exercises paternal authority. Therefore, when we read in the record of the missionary work of the Apostle that masters and mistresses who believed were baptized and their households, these words have an entirely familiar ring. Paul's enunciation of the great covenant principle in Acts 15:31 is but the window through which we look down the centuries to the time when God first established his covenant with the father of believers. "This baptism of households is not mentioned as something extraordinary, but rather as a matter of course." (Berkhof, *Dogm. II*, p. 243.)

It may be remarked here that the Apostle frequently addresses slaves as members in full, as fully partakers of the grace of Christ and fully members of his Church. Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; Titus 2:9-14; I Pet. 2:18-21.

This is true. There was, no doubt, a considerable number of slaves both in Christian households and from pagan households who embraced the Christian religion and professed Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. When they did this, they were without question looked upon and dealt with exactly as any other professing believer. While socially still a minor, the believing and professing slave occupies his place in the N. T. Church as spiritually a man and freeman of Christ.

But that does not invalidate the point which we have been seeking to make clear. The question was not: What place does a slave occupy in the Church when he professes Christ, but: in what manner did such a slave, if he is the slave of a Christian household, become identified with and incorporated into the Covenant?

The answer according to Scripture is clearly this, that, as in the Old Testament, so in the New, the slave of a godly master entered with him as member of his household into the Covenant relationship.

To sum up: we were able to point especially to two scriptures which in a clear way bear upon the question relating to the inclusion of slaves in the covenant. The first is Gal. 4:1-2 which implies the inclusion of the bond-servant in the household as a minor. This was the case also in the household of Abraham. The second passage is Acts 16:31 which teaches the integrity of the household as a unit under the head of the house, so that with the head of the household all minors belonging to him, irrespective of blood relationship, are included in the Covenant. Also this is exactly as God ordained, when He established his covenant with Abraham.

Both of these utterances when taken together, and when viewed in their complete harmony with God's ordinances from the beginning, are definitely antagonistic to the idea which the brethren are seeking to defend, that God has made physical relationship the determining factor with respect to the inclusion of minors in the Covenant. There is not a single passage from which this idea can be drawn except by shift of most patent presupposition. Whatever the course of later history, in which the flesh and blood theory has found its origin, the idea is foreign to the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and is subversive of the essential significance of the Covenant itself.

B. SCRIPTURE MOST EMPHATICALLY CONSIDERS AN ADOPTED CHILD AS A CHILD OF THE HOME IN THE MOST COMPLETE SENSE OF THE WORD.

All that has been said in the previous paragraph is intended to show that also in the New Testament the covenant is marked by that inclusiveness which does not make blood relationship a boundary line, but which embraces all who are under the paternal authority of the head of the household. But this does not yet entirely prove our contention, that therefore also adopted children are included in the covenant with their adoptive parents. If it can be proved that in the sight of God adoption is an illegitimate process, that it is contrary to His will, and that God does not consider adopted children to be truly children of the home, then all the previous proofs have

availed little with respect to the specific question under consideration.

More than one expression, used by those who take issue with Synod, seem to intimate that adoption of children is something more or less unnatural, that it often proceeds from reprehensible motives, that it is an arbitrary act of man, and has no validity before God. And most emphatically the position of those who oppose the synodical decision is this, that an adopted child, although according to human laws it stands on a level with the other children of the home, is not recognized by God as truly a child of the adoptive parents.

(a) *Act only of Man?*

The brethren discount adoption as a means whereby a child is brought within the Covenant. Incorporation into the covenant is an act of God and not of man. Adoption on the other hand, is an act of man and not of God. This argument shows, however, that the brethren are evidently failing to make proper distinctions. It is most true that incorporation into the covenant is an act of God. This is not disputed by anyone. But the question is: What are the means employed to induct children into the covenant. It would be scarcely correct to say that the birth of a child is the result of a direct act of God, while the adoption of a child is an act of man. In both it is God who employs man and the act of man. Nor is there any discoverable point to the contention that in the generation of a child we find at least "more of an act of God, while in the adoption of a child more is left to the choice of man." (See John 1:13.)

(b) *Paul's Use of the Term: Adoption of Sons.*

The sole question that should concern us here is the question whether God recognizes the act of adoption as valid, and whether He recognizes an adopted child as truly a child of its adoptive parents. To this question we find in Scripture an unmistakable answer.

As is well known, the expression "adoption of sons" is used by Paul to express that divine act of grace whereby God translates the sinner from the state in which he is not a child of God, into the state in which he is a child of God. We point to the three familiar passages in which Paul speaks of this "huiiothesia" (adoption of sons).

In *Galatians 4:5-6* he uses the well known practice of

adoption of children into a home to illustrate the passage from bondage under the law to the full privileges of sonship. Paul writes: Christ came "that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father." The illustration used here is that of a bondservant who is lifted out of his position of servitude and is adopted by the master as his own son. The point that is of significance here is this, that this adoption is shown to make the person truly a son, and being a son, the Spirit of God's Son is sent into his heart. And the Apostle continues to point out how radical is the change brought about by this adoption, and how truly the adopted son has become a son. He writes, "So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son, and if a son, than an heir through God."

Whatever difficulties may be encountered in the exposition of the first section of Gal. 4, this is clear and enough for our purpose. Paul uses the practice of adoption to illustrate the passage from bondage to sonship. It is the adoption of which he speaks, that brings about this sonship. All other blessings that God bestows are the result of this sonship.

In Ephesians also the Apostle speaks of adoption. We read in *Eph. 1:5*, "having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself." This is his great theme in the first two chapters of this letter. These two chapters are divided into three parts. In the first part he tells the Ephesians that the ground of all of their spiritual blessings lies in the fact that God foreordained them unto adoption of sons. His supreme purpose in it all is the restoration of the integrity of all his creation in the Christ. It is this plan that is seen at work especially in this that they were made the heritage of God, and that they received the inheritance from God, of which the Holy Spirit is an earnest.

Then comes the second part (1:15-2:11) Paul prays that the Ephesian Christians may have a vision of this marvelous purpose of God, and that they may see what is the ideal of the Christian career to which they are called. What is the glorious inheritance that awaits them, and how abounding is the power of God at work to realize his ideal in them and through them? It is none other than

the power which God wrought in Christ in his resurrection and exaltation. It is the same power with which He had made them alive from the dead and exalted them in heavenly places in Christ. In it all God is accomplishing His glory in them, saved by his grace and wrought for his service.

After telling the Ephesians what it is that he is praying for them, Paul in the third part comes back again definitely to the idea of adoption, with which he started out. The Apostle wants them to realize how great the change is that has been brought about by their divine adoption. Therefore he begs them to remember their former estate, that at that time they were "separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (2:12.) But through their adoption all this has been changed. They are "made nigh through the blood of Christ." (2:13.) They are "no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (2:19.)

This passage shows that by the adoption as sons those who were once strangers, are made members of God's household. In Rom. 8:15-16 we meet with the same thought. In Rom. 8 Paul is speaking of the process of moral justification which is the blessed and heartening fruit of the jural justification of which he has treated in previous chapters. This moral justification is the work of the indwelling Spirit. When a man is led by the Spirit it marks him as a son of God. It is in this connection that the Apostle brings in the idea of adoption and makes a comparison similar to the one which he makes in Gal. 4:5-6. In Romans 8, however, Paul does not speak about the act of adoption, but about the spirit that animates those who by adoption have become God's sons. It is not the old spirit of servile fear that marked their former state in which they shrank from God, but the spirit proper to those who have been adopted as sons of God, in which they cry: "Abba, Father." Then Paul proceeds: The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children (tekna) of God, and if children, then heirs."

The force of this passage for the purpose of our discussion lies in this, that it teaches that by their adoption as sons, Christians have become "tekna" of God. This expression is of value against the argument of the protesting

brethren who do not believe that in God's sight adoption makes a child in any true sense a child of the home. It is argued that the Scripture passages that speak of "adoption as sons" do not prove anything because a Christian is made a child of God not only by adoption but first of all by regeneration. It is by regeneration that man becomes a "teknon" of God, that is, he is born of God. "Adoption as sons" is but a figurative expression that pictures the act of God whereby forensically He not only acquits the guilty sinner, but also makes him the object of his favor and bestows upon him the status of a son.

We are of course wholly agreed with the theology of our brethren but not with the use to which they seek to put it. To us it seems that there are two things wrong with their argument. In the first place in Rom. 8:14 the "huiioi" (sons) of God receive the testimony that they are "tekna" (children of God [:16]), not at all because the idea of regeneration has in the mean time been introduced and added to that of adoption. Paul is speaking of adoption and what adoption makes of us. He says the spirit of adoption testifies within the Christian: "I am a 'teknon' of God." And the Holy Spirit adds His testimony: "You are right." And that Paul is still thinking, not in terms of regeneration, but in terms of the status and of the dignity and the privileges which these "tekna" by adoption possess, is clearly shown in the words that follow: "And if 'tekna' then heirs —." The idea of the Christian being an heir is in Scripture never directly associated with the idea of regeneration as the initial work of the Spirit in the heart, but is everywhere made to follow from the restored relationship by which man possesses the right to be called a son of God.

(Note: In spite of appearances, this is true also in I Pet. 1:3-4. The words "beget us again" do not refer to the initial work of God's Spirit whereby He implants a new life into the heart. The clause "who beget us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" evidently does not speak of regeneration in the specialized sense of the term, but of the entrance upon a new life and a new future which God brought about for the followers of Christ by his resurrection from the dead. The idea is the same as that in Rom. 6:4-11." We are buried therefore with him through baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead through the

glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." We find therefore, that the thought in I Pet. 3-4 runs in a channel similar to that of Paul in Rom. 8.)

In the second place we believe that the brethren, in seeking to defend their position, are relying too much upon the difference in connotation of the words "huios" (son) and "teknon" (child). It is true that the word for child in general is "teknon" and that "huios" (when not denoting specifically male tekna) is usually more expressive of the dignity, the rights and obligations of one who occupies position of sonship in the home. But this difference cannot be urged in any case. The words are often used interchangeably. We recall that the brethren quite strongly insist upon the biological implication of the word "children" when in the O. T. mention is made of the "children of Abraham, Israel," etc. But in the N. T. the term "children of Abraham," etc. is quite uniformly translated by "huios" of Abraham, etc. In John 12:36 Jesus calls his followers "huios" of the light. Paul tells them in Eph. 5:8 to walk as "tekna" of the light. Paul calls those who are estranged from God "huios" of disobedience, and a moment later, "tekna" of wrath (Eph. 2:2-3.) Jesus says, "If ye were Abraham's 'tekna,' ye would do the works of Abraham" (Jno. 8:39), and He tells those that reject Him that God is still "able to raise up 'tekna' unto Abraham" (Luke 3:8). On the other hand Paul says that "they which are of the faith are 'huios' of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). Jesus admonished his followers to love their enemies that they may be called "huios" of their heavenly Father (Matt. 5:45), while Paul urges believers to be followers of God as dear "tekna" (Eph. 5:1). Looking into the glorious future Paul speaks of the revelation of the "huios" of God, and of the liberty of the glory of the "tekna" of God. (Rom. 8:19, 21.)

Whatever may be the difference in shades of meaning conveyed by the two words, it is a mistake to build a case upon it, and to insist that it is the word "tekna" that drives home the notion that a child is a child by birth. the word "huios" could put in the same claim. It also goes back to a verb meaning "to beget," "to be born," exactly as does "teknon."

Conclusion.

From these and other passages, in which the adoption of children into a home is used as an analogy to the way

in which God in grace instates men as his sons and children of his household, we may safely infer two things.

1. In the first place, that God does not regard the adoption of children as something illegitimate or reprehensible. If it were not an act bearing divine sanction, it would not be used in Scripture to illustrate God's own work of grace.

2. In the second place, that in God's sight an adopted child is a child of its adoptive home in the full sense of the word. If this were not true it could not have been used to illustrate the complete way in which men are made children and heirs of God.

In this use which the N. T. makes of the adoption of children, we see once more that the New Testament conception of the nature and of the integrity of the home is in line with that which God held forth from the beginning, when He established His Covenant with His people. We find in it again the great covenant-principle, already revealed in Gen. 17, that the thing that is decisive is not at all flesh and blood, but membership in the Covenant household.

This membership in its full and effective sense is brought about by birth into a home. Being born into a Christian family brings the child by God's own ordinance under the authority and control of parents, who received from God the great office of Covenant-parenthood. This is the ordinary way in which God increases the home.

Adoption into a home does exactly the same thing. Being adopted by Covenant-parents brings the child by that same ordinance under the same Covenant-authority and the same covenant-rule. The adopted child, also in God's eyes, is fully a child of that home. Toward him the parents have the same covenant-responsibility which they have toward the children received by birth, and the adopted child has toward them the same covenant-duty which the other children of the home have toward their parents.

It is certainly true that, when Paul uses the expression, "adoption as sons," he refers specifically to that act of divine grace by which forensically God bestows upon man the status of a son. It is also true that all that can be deduced from this use of the expression, is that "the status of an adopted child has been changed, and that adoption can never bring about the ties of flesh and

blood." It changes nothing but the status. But—it is exactly *the status of the child* that interests us. Participation in the covenant is first of all a matter of status. The entire Covenant is first and foremost a forensic matter. The decisive question in it all is this: How does God consider? What is the relationship which He establishes?

The adopting of a child into a home is a usable analogue for the instatement of man into the status of a son of God, for the very reason that, *when God considers a thing so, it is so*, and that by God's own ordinance an adopted child fully occupies the position of a child in the home. In God's sight he is not something like a "huios," he is a "huios" of his adoptive parents. He is made, not something approaching a "teknon," but he is actually a "teknon" in the home of which he has been made a household member. He occupies his position not by virtue of a legal fiction, but is a son by divine ordinance.

When therefore, parents enter into the covenant with their children, there is in God's sight absolutely no difference between the children who are members of the household by birth and those who are members of the household by adoption.

* * * * *

Among the protests against the decision of Synod in re the baptism of adopted children, there is one that sounds an earnest warning. It is feared that, if Synod does not retrace its steps, the consciousness of the holiness of the Covenant will be lost in our churches, proper covenant-training will suffer, the line of demarcation between that which is holy and that which is unholy will fade away: the church will become subject to the wrath of God and the Holy Spirit will withdraw himself, and his gracious operation will become less and less frequent.

There can and may be nothing but admiration and deep respect for all who rise to the defense of the holiness of the covenant and who go forth to do battle against the spirit of error that would wipe out the line that separates God's people from the world. However, we are quite convinced that the brethren are mistaken in their opinion that it is the flesh and blood theory that is needed to stand guard over the sanctity of the Covenant. In fact, we would from our side sound forth a kindly warning to the brethren. The warning is this, that in their zealous opposition to the decision of Synod they are unmistakably

jeopardizing the very foundations upon which rests our faith in the scripturalness of infant Baptism. This is not a word lightly spoken, even though we do not expatiate on this subject.

In appealing to the announcement found in Gen. 17:7 for the claim that only the physical offspring of believers are to be baptized (a passage that in itself gives no ground for infant baptism at all): and in minimizing the import of the expression "every male" which is the subject of the only passage (:10-12) upon which our faith in the inclusion of minors in the covenant can be firmly founded, the brethren are, contrary to whatever of earnest protestations they may make, most certainly weakening our defenses against the pressure of Anabaptistic thought and sentiment around us.

The arbitrary method of assigning abiding value to a certain element of O. T. revelation that seems to favor our position, while stamping another element, contained in the same passage, as Old Testamentic and nationalistic and void of any principle that can apply to the New Testament Church, closely imitates the method habitually used by Anabaptism in ridding itself of whatever elements in the O. T. it finds to be unwelcome.

And when it is attempted to compensate for the banishment of the principle of inclusiveness, found in Gen. 17, from the field of New Testament faith and practice, by suggesting that the form of administration of the covenant found in the Old Dispensation, while not applying to the N. T. dispensation, was intended "to typify the ultimate and perfect condition of things in the final Kingdom of God," we discover in this position a close second to the type of dispensationalism that is making the period of the N. T. Church an interlude.

It would of course be ludicrous to suggest that our brethren have Anabaptistic leanings. The opposite is true. Together we stand for the central place which Scripture assigns to the Covenant, for the inclusion in that covenant of the Christian family, and for the antithesis which Scripture reveals to exist between the children of God and the children of the world. But in the line of argument followed by the brethren we do find again an illustration of the fact that extremes frequently meet, and also of the truth that in our zeal to attack an unwelcome idea, we sometimes betray ourselves into the use of weapons that automatically endanger the very treasures that we would guard.

PART III.

INDEX OF THE PROTESTS AS LISTED IN ACTA 1932,
pa. 104 ff.

MATERIAL OBJECTIONS.

1. SYNOD'S INTERPRETATION OF GEN. 17 IS ERRONEOUS.

a) *The slaves of Abraham's household who were circumcised were believers. Witness what Scripture says about Eliezer and Hagar. As further proof the following texts are cited: Gen. 14:14; 18:19; 24:48; Neh. 13:23-31; Rom. 2:28, 29; 4:11; Gal. 3:7; Phil. 3:3.*

Scripture does show us Abraham's steward (Gen. 24:48), and Sarah's handmaid as believers in their master's God, but no mention is made of the personal faith of the other slaves. Gen. 14:14 refers not to religious but to military training. Gen. 18:19 speaks of the command to educate and train his children and his household, which command was given to Abraham after he and his house had entered into the covenant.

Neh. 13:23-31 speaks of Nehemiah's labors further to prevent the marriage of Jews with foreign women, and it is argued that *these foreign women, the wives of Jews, were evidently not considered as included in the covenant. Since a wife is much more intimately associated with the household than a slave, Nehemiah's stand in the matter goes to show that Abraham's slaves could not have been included in the covenant unless they were believers.*

The legitimate inference that can be made from this passage is that God frowns upon all alliances that are certain to prove to be a menace to purity of faith and godliness of life. From this it may also be inferred that slaves who proved to be a menace in the same way could not properly be allowed to remain in a believing household.

This, however, has nothing to do with the question under consideration. Even if it could be proven, which it cannot; that all of Abraham's slaves personally believed in God as did Abraham himself, the question would still remain, whether God made his covenant with the slaves as believers, and therefore as principles in the covenant side by side with Abraham, or whether they were included in the covenant with Abraham. The account proves that the latter is the case.

It is argued that the position that the slaves were included as belonging to Abraham their owner and representative, is weakened by the fact that the foreign women in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah were not included in the covenant with their Jewish husbands, although they stood under these husbands as the legal representative of the household. This argument fails to take into account the racial difference in status between these women and Abraham's slaves. These men did not own their wives in the same sense in which Abraham owned his slaves.

a) Only Believers in the Covenant.

Rom. 2:28, 29; 4:11, Gal. 3:7 and Phil. 3:3 are also quoted by the protesting brethren to prove that only believers are included in the covenant. These passages do teach that claiming fleshly descent from Abraham and having received the rite of circumcision are of no avail unless one has the faith of Abraham and the true renewal of the heart. These passages therefore hold before us the spiritual essence of the covenant, but they do not tell us who are included in the covenant.

Using these passages as the protesting brethren do, we would have to conclude that only those who are truly changed within, are included in the covenant. A position which is neither Scriptural nor Reformed, and which none of us would care to take.

b) No children circumcised in Abraham's household, only adults.

Gen. 17:27 is cited to prove that the slaves circumcised by Abraham were all adults.

This impression which is gathered from the translation is not correct. The word translated "men" means "males" and does not imply anything as to age.

c) Synod's exegesis does not recognize the fact that the covenant with Abraham bore also a temporal and natural character.

See page 185 ff.

d) In the N. T. times there is no compulsion to receive baptism as there was in O. T. times with regard to circumcision. This argument is intended further to prove the spiritual character of the N. T. in contrast with the outwardness of the administration of the covenant in the old dispensation. Voluntary choice in the N. T. is contrasted with compulsion in the O. T. This contrast as pictured

by the protesting brethren is non-existent. Israelites were under obligation, but not under compulsion, to be circumcised. Those who refused the sign and seal of the covenant incurred God's displeasure and the penalty of being banished out of the land. (See "karath" in Zech. 14:2.) But nowhere does Scripture imply that circumcision was forced *nolens volens* upon any one. What was true of the Old Testament is true of the New. In the N. T. there is no compulsion to receive baptism. Nevertheless, those who neglect or refuse it can have no place in the midst of the Church of Christ. The service of God in the O. T. was a matter of voluntary choice as well as in the New. (Joh. 24:15; Judges 5:8.)

e) If Abraham circumcised on the ground of ownership, then the ruling of Gen. 17 is not valid for the N. T. Church.
See page 188.

2. SYNOD'S INTERPRETATION OF EX. 12:43-45 IS ERRONEOUS.
See page 198 f.

3. SYNOD'S INTERPRETATION OF "AND HIS HOUSE" PASSAGES IS ERRONEOUS.

See page 204 ff.

Household members were baptized because they were believers.

Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38-39 clearly teach that adults may be baptized only after they have professed their faith.

See page 222, 201 ff.

Outside of adult slaves households frequently included children serving as pages, etc., to their masters or mistresses. In not a single instance is the personnel of any of the households mentioned in the N. T. enumerated, and it cannot be proved that in any one of them were either children or slaves. But this is certain that, if beside their own children the household included also children acquired by purchase or adoption, these children would be most definitely included in the formula "and his house."

4. SCRIPTURE DRAWS ANOTHER LINE THAN SYNOD IN RE COVENANT MEMBERSHIP, SINCE COVENANT MEMBERSHIP FOLLOWS THE LINE OF FLESH AND BLOOD.

—*Texts containing the words, "seed," "children," "babe," etc.*

See page 159 ff.

—*Fleshly descent is a matter of high importance.*

This is a great truth concerning which no one of us entertain any doubt.

See page 159 ff. 224.

The Bond between adopted child and its foster parents is mechanical.

We are sure that something else is meant here. What is evidently meant is that, the tie that unites parents and their own offspring, has the natural support and background of immediate fleshly kinship, while the tie which binds foster parents to their adopted children exists in spite of the lack of this immediate physical relationship.

—*The Covenant of Grace is continued historically and organically in the generations.*

We are all agreed that God's saving work does not consist in the mere rescuing of individuals but in the salvation of the universe and of the human race. But it surely betrays a mistaken interpretation of this truth if we felt that the inclusion into the covenant of only the physical offspring of believers is necessary in order to uphold it. That which constitutes the body of Christ, the new humanity, is not the tie of immediate physical kinship. The nature of the unity of the saved human organism is such that the isolated convert is included in it as well as the scion of a score of Christian generations.

It must surely be admitted that, if we compare the company of the saved with the mass of the unsaved, we will stand perplexed if in our minds we are making genealogical ties the element upon which the organic progress of the covenant and the organic unity of saved humanity is made to depend. Viewing the historical pattern of the Covenant-people from a biological point of view, we surely find it to be a most scanty, disjointed and scattered pattern in comparison with that offered by the world. The pattern shows us innumerable short sections of genealogical chain, appearing and disappearing in history, and countless isolated links, while the genealogical pattern of the world is one of incomparably greater solidity and continuity. And yet, it is the organism of the human race that is being saved. They that are lost are lost as individuals, as twigs separated from the tree.

The people of God constitute the restored organism of humanity (complete in God's council and being completed

in the history of the Church through the centuries) because they are organically united in and under one Head, the Incarnate Word. It is an undoubted truth that in the historic progress of the covenant the ties of blood are of paramount significance. The objects of divine grace are all members of the human race, created of one blood, partakers of one human nature and as such, united in Him, they constitute the plenary image of God.

Also the ties of immediate kinship are of inestimable value. The birth of children into a Christian home is the ordinary method which God employs, whereby minors are placed in the wardship and under the authority of covenant-parents and so included in the covenant itself. However, the historic and organic progress of the covenant is not confined to the inclusion of minors. When a lone convert in a mission field is included in God's company, the covenant has not made a leap outside of the channels of organic progress. The covenant progresses organically all the time and in all cases. The organizing principle does not lie in ties of physical kinship, but in Christ Himself, in His position as Head of his people, and in his Office as Mediator of the Covenant. It is this fact that sheds light also upon the inclusion of minors into the Covenant. The determining factor also here is not the physical tie between parent and child, but the spiritual relationship established by the Mediator that makes Christian parents high office-bearers under Him. It is through the office of Covenant-parenthood that children committed to Christians are included in the Covenant.

—Scripture nowhere implies that "seed" includes adopted children.

See page 165.

—Our Reformed fathers when speaking of the children of believers had in mind only the children born to believers.

See page 165.

—The Promise is to the biological seed of Abraham, though not exclusively, and so the covenant is established with the believers and their seed in the line of continued generation.

—Acts 2:39. "And the promise is to you and to your children—".

The protesting brethren take for granted that, the term

“tekna” is strictly limited to a parents’ own offspring and cannot be applied to a child in the home who is not of the parents’ own flesh and blood.

See page 201.

—*Gen. 17:7*. See page 185 ff.

—*Rom. 4:14*.

It is very clear that the word “seed” in this passage is not used in its straight-forward but in a figurative sense. “The seed which is of the law” is not the same thing as “Seed which is after the flesh.” It includes the circumcised proselyte as well as those of Abraham’s stock. In this passage “all the seed” refers to the spiritual seed of Abraham. Some of this “seed” are of Jewish origin (The seed which is of the law”) and the rest of the “seed” consists of gentile believers. This passage therefore speaks of circumcised and uncircumcised believers as the seed of Abraham.

—*Rom. 9:8*

is in a class with *Rom. 2:28*, *Rom. 4:11*, *Gal. 3:7*, and *Phil. 3:3*.

See page 221.

This passage speaks of the children of the flesh in contrast with the children of promise. The brethren are applying this passage as if it read: Not all the children of the flesh are children of God, but only that part of them which are children of the promise. The passage does not say this. It says that flesh and blood relationship is not the thing that determines whether one is the seed of Abraham. No one, even though he claims physical descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is of the seed of Abraham, unless he be, like Isaac, a son of promise. And sons of promise are all they that believe. (See *Gal. 4:28*.)

—*Rom. 11:16*. First fruit and lump, root and branches.

See page 170.

Gal. 3:7. Know therefore that they that are of the faith, the same are sons of Abraham.

—Also this text is of the class that show that the essence of the covenant is spiritual.

See page 222.

—*God excludes from the covenant and the covenant promises and benefits the children of unbelievers and term them unholy.*

Acts 2:39. See page 201 f.

I Cor. 7:14. See page 172 ff.

Eph. 2:11-12. See page 169 ff.

5. ADOPTION DOES NOT INVOLVE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP.

—*It changes only the external and legal status of a child but not the fact that it is born of unbelievers.*

These and similar expressions fail to do justice to the spiritual nature of covenant, to covenant-ownership in general, and specifically to covenant-ownership of and parental wardship over children. This ownership is not at all something cold and external and mechanical, but intensely spiritual. It is not in the biological process and tie as such, but in this spiritual compliment that humanizes it all, that we discover the jural relation that includes the child in the covenant, as well as the moral forces that are at work to prepare it for the covenant-life.

See further. Page 183.

—*The relation between the believing spouse to the unbelieving one is more intimate than that of an adopted child to its foster-parents, but the unbelieving spouse is not for that reason made a member of the covenant.*

—The question is not one of the nearness or the remoteness of the relationship, which may to a large extent be judged by subjective standards. The question why children and foster children enter into the covenant with their parent or parents, and why the unbelieving man or woman is not included in the covenant by marrying a believing partner, has to do with something quite objective. The thing that matters is the status of the individual. The unbelieving husband or the wife are majors, standing in their own individual responsibility, no matter how close is the marriage tie. The child enters the covenant as a minor.

See further page 207.

6. ADOPTION IS AN ACT OF MAN, NOT OF GOD. GOD ALONE INCORPORATES INTO THE COVENANT WHEN IN HIS SOVEREIGN GRACE HE ENDOWS MAN WITH THE GIFT OF FAITH.

See page 213 ff.

7. BAPTISM DOES NOT BESTOW THE BENEFITS OF REGENERATION OR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. ETC.

These objections arise from a quite complete misunderstanding of Synod's position. Synod's stand on the permissibility of baptism of adopted children has nothing to do with a belief that Baptism bestows the benefits of re-

generation of forgiveness of sins, or that the baptized children may become heirs of the Covenant. Neither did Synod conceive baptism to be a consecration ceremony on the one hand, nor a means to conversion on the other hand. There is no expression in Synod's decision that justifies these statements.

Whether or not baptism presupposes the possession of the gifts of regeneration and pardon is a question that need not concern us here.

8. THE DECISION OF SYNOD IS INCOMPLETE BECAUSE OF THE USE OF "MAY" INSTEAD OF "MUST."

We believe that Synod's choice of the word "may" instead of "must" was a wise choice. For many years the baptism of adopted children had been left to the judgment and conscience of consistories. In many churches such children were baptized, while other churches had scruples. Synod was overtured to rule that such children may not be baptised. After studying the matter Synod decided that they may. Synod's decision "they may" therefore, was a simple answer to the position of the opposing brethren that "they may not." It is true that from the grounds adopted by Synod the conclusion follows logically: "they should." But since our churches have been allowed for many years to follow their conscience in this matter. Synod was wise not to make the baptism of adopted children obligatory, but to allow time for the leaven of the truth to do its work.

The criticism that the decision as it stands tends to promote diversity rather than unity, cannot be very seriously meant, since there was the greatest diversity of practice before Synod was asked to make a ruling. The decision of Synod does not promote diversity, but it does seek to promote a brotherly spirit of tolerance in a matter with which some of the brethren have difficulties of conviction and conscience. In the meantime the decision of Synod does tend toward greater unity. Some have already been helped by grounds adduced to see that their scruples had no real scriptural warrant. Others, it may be expected, will be aided in a similar way.

9. THE DECISION OF SYNOD IS AT VARIANCE:

—WITH HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, Q. 74.

10. —WITH BELGIC CONFESSION, ART. 34.

11. —WITH WESTMINSTER CATECHISM, CH. 28.

12. —WITH CHURCH ORDER, ART. 56.

13. —WITH OUR FORM OF BAPTISM.

In each of these citations mention is made of the children of believers, and it is simply assumed by the protesting brethren that the word "children" of necessity refers exclusively to children born of believers and excludes children adopted by them. A completely gratuitous assumption, in the background of which is the idea that the adoption of children is not a valid act, and not recognized by God.

To say that it is only natural to proceed on the assumption that, when these official documents speak of the children of believers, they have in mind children by birth only, does not shed any light.

The question is not whether the writers of these documents were or were not thinking of adopted children, but whether they were thinking of children born to believers in distinction from children adopted by them. There is not the least indication that this was the case, and hence the appeal to these passages found in the official standards rests upon a mistaken assumption.

14. SYNOD IS AT VARIANCE WITH THE DECISION OF DORDT. AN OFFICIAL DECISION OF CHURCHES MET IN SYNOD IS BINDING RATHER THAN THE OPINIONS OF INDIVIDUALS. THE OPINION OF THE MAJORITY IS BINDING RATHER THAN A LARGE MINORITY.

If the purport of this objection is that the decision of Synod is not legal because it runs counter to the decision taken by Dordt, it rests, of course, upon a mistaken idea. The decision of the Synod of Dordt is not binding for our churches.

See also page 169 ff.

15. THE DECISION OF SYNOD IS AT VARIANCE WITH THE BEST REFORMED THEOLOGIANS.

There is no need to answer this question at great length. The history of Reformed Theology presents considerable divergence of opinion on this subject as well as on other features of covenant doctrine. In which of the various camps the best theologians are found is not a question that could be easily decided to the satisfaction of all. Eminent leaders of Reformed thought can be found on both sides of our particular question.

16. THE DECISION OF SYNOD IS AT VARIANCE WITH THE GENERAL PRACTICE OF REFORMED CHURCHES.

The position of the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches in America has already for many years been one that differs from the practice of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Where churches strive to solve their own particular problems arising out of their own particular situation, differences of view and practice will arise, even though these churches remain true to the same fundamentals.

17. THE DECISION OF SYNOD HAS CREATED A GREAT DEAL OF DISSATISFACTION IN OUR CHURCHES.

The decision of Synod has not materially altered the practice of our churches. Ever since 1910 when Synod decided to make no ruling in the matter, the baptism of adopted children has been left to the discretion of churches. No dissatisfaction or unrest was observable throughout these years. In 1928 it was a single individual who petitioned Synod to forbid the practice. In 1930 Synod ruled that it was permissible to baptize such children, thus again leaving the matter to the conviction of the churches. Since the practice went on unprotested for many years without a pronouncement from Synod, it is difficult to conceive that a great deal of disturbance has been created by the fact that the practice now continues with the approbation of Synod. We are quite certain that real disturbance would be the result if Synod should reverse its decision.

18. The Decision of Synod is pregnant with a host of practical evils.

See page 219.

ADVICE TO SYNOD

In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, members of the Committee, advise Synod to answer as follows:

1. That there is no ground for rescinding the decision of 1931, since no proof of the unscripturalness of the baptism of children of non-believing parents when adopted by believers, has been offered.

2. That, however, this confirmation of the decision of 1930 — a decision which permitted the baptism of adopted children born outside of the Covenant — is not to be taken as justifying the molestation of those who have conscientious scruples against the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism to such children.

Most respectfully,

H. KUIPER,

H. BEL,

G. W. HYLKEMA.

REPORT XIII.

BAPTISM OF ADOPTED CHILDREN Report Bouma-Kromminga (Report III. on the subject)

To the Synod of 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE 1932 Synod, in response to numerous overtures regarding the decision of the 1930 Synod on the matter of the baptism of adopted children born outside of the covenant, appointed a large committee to make a thorough study of this matter and to report to the 1934 Synod (Acts 1932, p. 109). At the time of the meeting of the 1934 Synod this committee had not finished its labors and was continued by this body (Acts 1934, p. 77). The undersigned, members of this committee, submit the following report to your honorable body.

After extensive discussions it became apparent that there were three different positions reflected in the opinions of the members of the committee. One group, consisting of four members, was in favor of rescinding the decision of the 1930 Synod and drew up an extensive report seeking to substantiate this position. Another group, consisting of three members, argued in an even more extensive report in favor of the 1930 decision and against its rescinding. Although the undersigned, constituting the third group, agree with the last-named position insofar as it advises against the rescinding of the decision of 1930, they do so on wholly different grounds, and have hence found it necessary to present an independent report to your honorable body.

As will appear from the nature of our advice, there is no need on our part to devote any space in this report to the arguments, pro and con, advanced by the other two groups of the committee. We hence proceed forthwith to the statement of our advice as follows.

A. The Undersigned, members of the Committee appointed by the 1932 Synod for the consideration of the problem of the Baptism of Adopted Children born outside of the Covenant,

Having duly considered the protests lodged against the decision of the 1930 Synod as presented at the Synod of 1932; and

Having carefully weighed both sides of the question, more especially in the light of the two extensive reports prepared for, and discussed, in the entire Committee;

Propose that,

In view of the fact that in these two reports a respectable case has been made for both sides of the question; and

In view of the fact that the argument from Scripture on both sides is of such a nature that it cannot be said to be compelling, or to enjoin clearly either the one or the other practice upon the Church; and

In view of the fact that the authority of representative Reformed theologians may be cited on both sides of this question, some as favoring and others as opposing the practice approved by the Synod of 1930; and

In view of the fact that from the discussion in the entire Committee, as well as from the two extensive arguments submitted, it is clear that both those members of the Committee who favor and those who oppose the decision of 1930 are determined to maintain the significance and the prominence which the covenant doctrine and the covenant practice hold in Reformed theology and in our Christian Reformed Church life; and, finally,

In view of the fact that no synodical decision on any matter of major importance ought as a matter of policy to be rescinded unless it has clearly been proved to conflict with the teaching of the Word of God, of our Confessional Standards, or the rules of our Church Order.

Synod declare,

That there is not sufficient ground to reverse the decision of the Synod of 1930 upholding the permissibility of the baptism of children born outside of the covenant circle and adopted by believing parents.

B. And, moreover, the Undersigned propose that,

In view of the advice under A, together with its grounds; and

In view of the difference in opinion and practice in this matter already existent in our churches today; and

In view of the fact that the 1930 Synod did not decide that such children *must*, but only that they *may*, be baptized;

Synod hereby pass a supplementary resolution as follows:

That this 1930 decision in no way justifies the molestation of anyone who, whether as church member or in the specific capacity of office bearer, may have conscientious scruples against the administration of the sacrament of baptism to such children.

Wishing your honorable body God's choicest blessing in deliberating upon this matter and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in arriving at a decision, we are

Respectfully submitted,
CLARENCE BOUMA,
D. H. KROMMINGA.

REPORT XIV.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON REPORT

ESTEEMED BRETHREN OF SYNOD:

THE last Synod authorized "the writers of the Sunday-School lessons in the Church papers, the editor of the "Instructor," and the Rev. W. P. Van Wyk, to serve as a committee of Synod with power to change topics and lesson materials in the International Lesson System, according to its discretion." (Acts 1934, p. 130.) This committee presents the following information as to the work it has done:

Shortly after the last Synod had adjourned, your committee revised the lesson list for the last quarter of 1934. First of all, it changed a number of the topics. For instance, "The Christian and His Bible" was replaced by "Searching the Scriptures"; "The Christian's Standard of Life" was made to read, "A Godly Walk;" for the topic "Christian Growth," used in connection with Luke 2:42-52, the committee substituted "Christ's Example in Obedience." Moreover, it went so far as to introduce new material for some of the lessons. Instead of a study on "The Christian Citizen" (Gal. 5:13-20) for November 11, it offered a lesson on "The Whole Armor of God" (Matt. 26:31-53; Eph. 6:11-18); for the lesson on "The Christian as Witness" (I Thess. 1:1-10), it substituted a study on "The Christian as Missionary" (Acts 1:8; 8:4-8; 11:19-21; Rom. 15:18-19). And in view of the fact that there was a lesson in this course on "Observing the Lord's Supper," your committee deemed it best to omit the lesson on "The Christian as Teacher" and to offer instead a study on "Receiving Holy Baptism." (Acts 16:13-15, 27-34; Gal. 3:27-29).

Your committee, expecting to continue in this way, ventured to change the lessons for an entire quarter of 1935. It did this, after noticing that the studies for April, May, and June, designed to form a course on "Some Great Christian Teachings," covered much of the same field that had already been covered in the fall of 1934, and that many of these lessons were difficult for the lower classes. Your committee substituted a course on "Wrestlers with God in Prayer," containing lessons on Abraham Pleading for Five Cities, Jacob at Pniel, and Moses Interceding for Israel.

Shortly after an announcement of this change had appeared in print, many voiced their dissatisfaction. The leader of the Sunday School lesson class of the Teachers' Training School at Grand Rapids informed the committee that the changes the committee had already made, had led to much confusion, for only one-half of the members of his large class used the lessons appearing in the church papers and in the publications of the Instructor Company, while the other half continued to hold to the International Lesson scheme. In view of this situation, it was deemed best to desist from carrying out the proposed change. Notice to this effect was given to the Sunday Schools.

It appears afterwards, however, that many of the Sunday School workers were not satisfied with the lessons of 1935. The reason for this is obvious, when one goes over the list and finds not only a number of doctrinal lessons, but also a great number of Old Testament studies. One may ask why the International Lesson Committee makes such selections. It may be said in reply that this body prepares two sets of lessons — a graded series, designed largely for the primary and junior department, and a uniform series, drawn up largely for the senior and adult groups. For this uniform series the Southern Baptist Church and the Church of Christ have given adaptations so that they may be used in every department. But here is where the difficulty arises. It is well-nigh impossible to select lessons which meet equally well the needs of children of five, youths of fifteen, and men of forty.

Your committee has faced this difficulty and has taken steps to overcome it as much as possible in 1936. While doing this, it kept two things in mind — (1) that as much as possible of the assigned material had to be retained, so as to avoid the confusion of -1934; and (2) that some historical material had to be added to certain lessons to make them interesting for the younger classes, but in such a way that the two parts would form a unified whole. Two examples may suffice to bring out what was done.

For the 16th of August the International Lesson List gives a study on "Sowing and Reaping," based on Galatians 6:1-10. At this point there is a break in the studies in the Acts. The previous Sunday (August 7) the Sunday Schools will have a lesson on "Saul Converted and Commissioned;" the next Sunday (August 23) they will study "The Conversion of Cornelius." Your committee has taken the section that was omitted — "The Raising of Dorcas" (Acts 9:38-43)

and added this to Gal. 6:1-10, making the topic for this lesson, "Helping Others." For the 1st of November there is a lesson on "Law, Love, and Temperance," with Rom. 13:1-14 as the scripture text. It will follow a study on Paul's work among the Corinthians (Acts 18:1-17; I Cor. 13). Once more a section of the Acts will be passed over in silence — the section which speaks about the help Aquilla and Priscilla gave to Appolos. Now your committee added this section of the Acts to the lesson and changed the title to "Love Taught and Exemplified."

In addition to making these changes in the lesson material, your committee has adopted a number of new topics. The title, "Jesus Helps a Doubter" (Luke 7:19-28), was changed to "Jesus Answers John"; the one on "People Before Property" was made to read, "Jesus' Miracle in Gaddara"; the one on "Vision and Service" (Luke 9) was dropped and "Jesus on the Mount and in the Vale" was substituted in its place. Fifteen changes of this kind were made. Your committee hopes that through its efforts the International Lessons for 1936 may prove more acceptable, especially since it is evident that our larger Sunday Schools do not want to break with them.

While your Committee has not at this time adopted changes for the years 1937 and 1938, attention is called to the facts that the International Lessons for 1937 devote three months to the Gospel of John, three months to Genesis, three to "God in the making of a Nation" (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy), and three months to "Studies in the Christian Life." The lessons for 1938 deal with "The Gospel of Mark," "Modern Messages from Israel's Early Leaders," and "The Teachings of Jesus and the Ten Commandments." It appears to your Committee that most of this material is well adapted to the needs of our Sunday Schools. An occasional change may well be left to the discretion of the Synodical Committee for this purpose.

Your Committee advises Synod to recommend the use of the International Lessons for 1936-1938 as amended by said Committee, and the comments on these lessons by our own men.

THE COMMITTEE,

K. BERGSMAN,
L. LAMBERTS, *Sec.*,
J. K. VAN BAALEN,
W. P. VAN WYK.

REPORT XV.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOME MISSION METHODS

To the Synod of 1936.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE appointment of your committee by the Synod of 1934 was occasioned in part by a suggestion of the Emergency Committee, whose report is found on pages 210-219 of the Acts.

In its report the Emergency Committee expressed as its opinion that "present methods have in past years often been ineffective," "our methods have been wasteful both in money and energy," and calls attention to the "apathy toward Home Mission work that is growing in our Church" (Acts 1934, p. 218). In its advice to Synod (p. 219) it proposes "that Synod give serious consideration to the advisability of appointing a committee whose duty it shall be to make a study of the question how the gains and improvements that may have accrued from the emergency type of activity may be utilized and permanently conserved for the good of the Home Mission methods of our Church." Then it presents a suggestion: "If Synod should feel favorably disposed toward this second proposal, we would suggest that not only the experience of the Emergency Committee, but also the best experience of individuals or committee members versed in Home Mission matters be utilized for such a study."

Pursuant to this proposal Synod decided to appoint a committee "whose duty it shall be to make a study of the question how the gains and improvements that may have accrued from the emergency type of activity may be utilized and permanently conserved for the good of the Home Mission methods of our Church" (Acts 1934, p. 24, Art. 45).

In compliance with its mandate your committee reviewed the history of our present Home Mission Order, gathered data from all of our Classes relative to the subsidies and Home Mission activities in the several fields, took note of the weaknesses in our present methods, considered the desirability of a re-arrangement of our Home Mission work.

and on the basis of this study presents recommendations which, in its opinion, will make for more efficiency in the field of Home Mission activity.

I. HISTORY OF THE HOME MISSION ORDER.

In reviewing the history of our present Home Mission Order we gratefully made use of the material presented to the Synod of 1930 by a similar committee appointed in 1928. (Agenda 1930, Part I, pages 4-20.)

It appears from the report of the committee of 1928 that it owed its appointment to a rather general dissatisfaction with the District Committee Plan. This plan had been proposed to and adopted by the Synod of 1926 because of the need for more unity and coöperation. The re-organization into District Committees was considered highly necessary. We quote from the Acts of 1926, page 80: "The experience of the last few years has undoubtedly clearly shown that this work can not be carried on in the manner it has been carried on, without causing increased confusion and without working harm to the cause."

In 1928 "Rules and Regulations for Home Mission Work under the District Committee Plan" were presented to Synod for adoption. (Agenda 1928, Part II, p. 143.) Classis Illinois, however, raised serious objections to the adoption of the proposed Rules and Regulations and overtured Synod "to reject the proposed Rules and Regulations for Home Missions," (Acts 1928, pp. 101-105). Although the pre-advisory committee did not consider the objections of Classis Illinois weighty enough to warrant the discarding of the District Committee Plan and advised the adoption of the proposed Rules and Regulations, Synod passed the following resolution: "De Synode legt de Home Missions zaak met de instructie van Classis Illinois en de voorgestelde 'Rules and Regulations' in handen van eene commissie om deze zaak in te denken en de Synode van 1930 met een wel-omschreven rapport te dienen," (Acts 1928, p. 105).

The Committee appointed in 1928 reported at the Synod of 1930, (Agenda, 1930, Part I, pp. 4-20). This committee concurred in many of the objections raised by the overture of Classis Illinois. It, however, did not agree with the sentiment expressed in the overture of Classis Illinois which reads as follows: "Finally, we wish to make a general remark regarding the ideal that some enthusiasts for the new plan quite plainly have in mind. They want a General

Home Mission Committee similar to the Foreign Mission Board. We believe this is a fundamentally wrong plan from the viewpoint of Reformed Church polity, etc.," (Acts 1928, p. 103). In reply to this opinion of Classis Illinois the committee insisted that it is necessary that cognizance be taken of changed conditions (it being very well possible that certain fields should be under the direct authority of the General Committee) and declared itself in favor of granting the General Committee for Home Missions "een recht van supervisie en controle, voorzover de belangen van dit werk het eischen." It called the attention of Synod to the fact that the District Committee Plan was born of a conviction that an urgent need for more unity and coöperation in Home Mission work existed. And considering it imperative that there be more unity and coöperation than existed prior to the adoption of the District Committee Plan, the Committee proposed that the General Committee for Home Missions be given the right and power of supervision and control over the work of the Classical Committees, (Agenda 1930, Part I, p. 9).

In passing we call the attention of Synod to the statement in the above passage which speaks of supervision and control "*over the work of the Classical Committees.*" It is noteworthy that no mention is made of this in the proposed Rules and Regulations.

In the years succeeding 1908 the General Committee did not have the power to supervise and control. Whereas in 1898 the General Committee was charged to direct all Home Mission activity, in 1908 a radical change was made, whereby the General Committee was shorn of its powers. Unity and coöperation in the work of Home Missions became practically impossible.

Having in mind to correct this evil the Committee of 1928 proposed that the General Committee be given the power to control and supervise the work of Home Missions in our Church. It submitted the Rules and Regulations which, with a few changes, were adopted by the Synod of 1930. Since that time our Home Mission work is carried on in accordance with these rules. (Text of these Rules: Acts 1930, pp. 122-125; English translation: pp. 361-364.)

II. WEAKNESSES IN OUR PRESENT SYSTEM.

Your committee feels the need of bringing to the attention of Synod certain salient weaknesses in our present set-up of Home Mission work. These are, in our opinion, the following:

1. LACK OF UNITY.

To all who are acquainted with our Home Mission activity this lack is apparent. The objection which was raised against the Order of 1908 and which occasioned the adoption of the District Committee Plan in 1926 holds against our present order. The Committee of 1928 stated emphatically that the glaring fault of the Mission Order of 1908 was the practical impossibility of obtaining unity and co-operation under it.

The committee ardently pleaded for granting the General Committee the power to supervise and control the work of Home Missions. In presenting its draft of a New Mission Order it defines the task of the General Committee to be "to do what is necessary in the interest of unity and coöperation" (Art. 1, b). In Article 6, b, the committee proposed that the work of the General Committee shall be "the supervision of the entire work of Home Missions, in order to assist efficiently in such a manner that this work be carried on harmoniously in the whole territory, that there be neither neglect nor overlapping, and to see to it that the synodical decisions be faithfully carried out by all parties concerned." It is sufficiently clear that the Committee of 1928 was convinced that there should be unity and co-operation.

The committee speaks of power to supervise, but it does not specify how this power is to be exercised. That is a weakness in the present Mission Order. The question, how must this power be used, remains unanswered. It is also significant that, whereas in the report mention is made of "power to control," in the Rules and Regulations no mention is made of it. We sincerely believe that the committee, sensing the need of more unity, endeavored to incorporate something into the "Rules" to that effect; but, failing to state how this power is to be exercised, it virtually left the General Committee powerless.

It may be argued that the General Committee can use that power when entertaining requests for aid from the General Fund. It is true that at that time the General Com-

mittee can withhold or grant its recommendation for aid, but it is also true that in the two years which lie between our synodical meetings much can happen to change the complexion of our Mission territory, so that it becomes impossible for the General Committee to prevent "neglect and overlapping."

Under the present arrangement the Home Mission work of our Church is entirely in the hands of the several Classes, and hence our Classes and Classical Committees would resent the interference on the part of the General Committee in the regulation and direction of the home missionaries. We read in Article 3, a, that "the regulation of the labors of the missionaries in the service of the Classis" is committed to the Classical Home Mission committees, and seeing the "supervision" assigned to the General Home Mission Committee (Art. 6, b), is not specified, the actual regulation of the work is entirely in the hands of the Classical Home Mission Committees. It is apparent that the General Committee can act only in an advisory capacity. It can offer suggestions to the various Classes, but beyond that its power does not extend. The Classical Committees have the power to direct the labors of the missionaries in the service of the Classes; and seeing that there are no missionaries other than those in the service of the Classes, the General Committee has no power to prevent neglect or overlapping. The words, "to assist efficiently in such a manner that this work be carried on harmoniously in the whole territory, that there be neither neglect nor overlapping," give no power to the General Committee beyond that of suggestion and advice.

It is true that the Rules and Regulations in Article 6, a, charge the General Committee with the regulation and direction of all Home Mission work *outside* of the territories of the Classes, but the fact is that there is no such field at present.

All our missionaries are now in the service of the Classes and under the supervision and control of these Classes. Hence we have thirteen mission fields (Classes Grand Rapids East and West, as also Hackensack and Hudson, perform mission work jointly) and as many Classical Home Mission committees. Each Classical committee is sovereign in its own domain. The power of the General Committee, with respect to the fields and the labors of these missionaries, is only that of giving advice. Many of the missionaries are supported wholly or largely by the Synodical Home

Mission Fund, yet the committee of Synod has no power to regulate and direct their labors, nor to make use of them so that there be neither neglect nor overlapping. This apparently is not as it should be.

The unity in the Home Mission work of our Church is one in name only. Instead of having one great mission field we have thirteen. The unity we have exists mainly in that the General Committee is composed of one delegate from each Classis and that it administers the General Fund. Unification so strongly desired in 1926 and the declared aim of the Committee appointed by the Synod of 1928 was not attained in the Rules and Regulations of 1930. This is in our opinion regrettable.

2. LACK OF COÖPERATION.

In our present Order no provision is made for coöperation between Classes in the work of Home Missions. This, of course, does not necessarily preclude such coöperation, and no doubt it was the desire of the Committee of 1928 that there should be. We read in Article 1, b, that the General Committee is charged "to do what is necessary in the interest of unity and coöperation."

The facts are that there is very little coöperation between Classes. In several instances it is impracticable, and where there is coöperation, due to unavoidable circumstances, it is unsatisfactory.

Attempts have been made from time to time on the part of our Classes to enlist the coöperation of adjacent Classes in home mission work, only to fail in obtaining it. Often a Classis approached does not consider the proposed field to be its responsibility or must decline to coöperate because of a lack of funds required for the successful prosecution of the work. The Classis which sought the coöperation of another, being unable to call a missionary of its own, must leave the work undone. Promising fields have been lost to our Church because of the inability of two or more Classes to coöperate.

It is common knowledge that where two or more Classes coöperate in a certain field, this arrangement is far from satisfactory. The Classes involved are naturally not disposed to grant their Classical Home Mission Committees power to act independently of Classis, and these committees must therefore wait for the approval of their respective Classes. These Classes do not meet in joint session, and it is quite probable that they will not always agree. The one

may strongly favor a certain proposal while the other is not able to see its wisdom and hence must refuse to grant approval. We can safely say that experience has taught us that coöperation between Classes in the work of Home Missions is, to say the least, not satisfactory.

Under the District Committee Plan, in which Classes were grouped together, there was a greater measure of coöperation. Since the discarding of that Plan there has been very little coöperation on the part of the Classes. We are not pleading for a return to that repudiated arrangement, yet we feel we have lost that feature in the Plan which made for greater coöperation and which at that time commended it as highly desirable to those who knew that no coöperation was possible under the old order of 1908. In seeking to correct the evils of the District Committee Plan by adopting our present Mission Order, we have lost its commendable feature. The experience of the last five years under the Mission Order of 1930 has certainly demonstrated that in the matter of coöperation we are back to where we were prior to the adoption of the District Committee Plan. Coöperation has not been effected and is well-nigh impossible.

3. UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF MAN-POWER.

Some of the territories in our Church are over-manned. Our investigation has shown that fields which at one time gave promise of being fertile territories, have proved to offer little prospect with respect to Church Extension. There is consequently in such fields a surplus of man-power.

We realize that no one can be blamed for this. We must bow before the dispensations of God's Providence which led to such situations. Yet it is that same Providence of God which gives us new fields that call for workers. Because of our present arrangement these remain unmanned. The Classes which interest themselves in these new openings, lacking the funds needed for the work, must wait for an appropriation from Synod. They must wait in spite of the fact that some of our missionaries, whose services could be dispensed with in their present stations, (cf. the situation in Classis California) could have been used advantageously in those new fields. Changed conditions would seem to have made their transfer mandatory.

The General Committee, however, has no authority to transfer missionaries from barren to more fertile fields. The missionaries are in the service of their Classes and subject to the wishes of these Classes. A number of them are sup-

ported wholly or largely by the Synodical Home Mission Fund, yet the committee of Synod has neither authority nor power to make use of their services in more needy fields.

Concentration of activity in fields to meet changed conditions is not possible under our present arrangement because no provisions are made for such emergencies. In one field a missionary may for the time being have little to do, whereas other fields could to advantage make use of his surplus time and energy. The result is that one field has an abundance while another more needy field suffers because of a dearth of man-power. We believe this can and should be rectified.

4. IMPROPER EXPENDITURE OF HOME MISSION FUNDS.

Our investigation has further shown that certain congregations have men stationed in them who, although called as missionaries, actually serve as ministers of the churches in which they are stationed. They receive in some cases all of their salary from the General Fund. Their labors are largely, if not entirely, limited to their local congregations. Such instances do not satisfy one that the moneys expended for Home Missions are actually used only for that purpose.

Ministers whose labors are confined almost entirely to the local congregations to which they belong should not be supported by Home Mission funds as home missionaries. The congregations which they serve should apply, as is customary and proper in such cases, for subsidy. This would not necessarily mean that a part of the time of these men could not be utilized in the interest of certain fields which offer prospects for church expansion. At the discretion of the Classical Home Mission Committees and the General Committee their services could be employed in such fields.

5. LACK OF HOME MISSION STRATEGY.

Our present system does not make provision for real Home Mission strategy.

Planned and aggressive Mission work in the entire field is no doubt the need of the hour. Our growth as a denomination depends largely on our Home Mission activity.

In the years prior to the placing of rigid restrictions on immigration by our government, a steady growth of our Church through addition of members of the Reformed faith from across the seas could be anticipated. The influx of members from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands has diminished considerably, and no longer can we expect

that we shall gain much increase in membership from that source. Yet expansion should be our aim and the best means to that end should be employed. The retarding of growth would not only be undesirable: it would be disastrous.

Under the present arrangement we are not in a position to carry on effective, aggressive Home Mission work. At present the expansion of our Church is entrusted to the several Classes and their Home Mission Committees. These committees usually work independently of each other. Very little concerted action is taken on the part of our Classes, and unless there be coöperation no real progress can be expected.

When a prospective field is brought to the attention of a Classis, there is need of sending a man of experience who can make a thorough investigation and begin intensive work. A cursory investigation by a committee is unsatisfactory. Often a missionary is not available. A Classical Home Mission Committee and Classis will naturally hesitate to call a missionary, unless there is reasonable certainty that the calling of a missionary is warranted. And we can not expect a Classis to call a missionary for one particular field when there are no other prospects of expansion within the bounds of that Classis. No missionary being available, the prospective territory is neglected and lost to our Church. Many valuable opportunities have been lost because a Classis did not have a missionary at its disposal to inspect and work the field.

Occasionally a Classical Committee, sensing the need of a thorough investigation in a certain place, will appeal to a neighboring Classis for a loan of a missionary. In procuring his services delay is occasioned by the fact that the Classical Committee must not only wait for the approval of its Classis, but also for that of the Classis in whose service the missionary is employed. This delay is not conducive to success in Mission work. We should enter a field as soon as possible. Men should be at the disposal of the whole Church when a thorough investigation should be made and intensive work toward church expansion should be done. Our Rules and Regulations make no provision for such service.

Effective Home Mission strategy requires that the Church have one or more missionaries who may be sent out anywhere to seek out and inspect prospective fields. It is a

matter of common knowledge that certain Classes, which considered the calling of a missionary for their territories doubtful ventures, were happily surprised by the many opportunities for expansion which presented themselves when a missionary was placed in the field. There have also been instances where Classes considered the services of a missionary highly necessary, only to find, after he had labored for a brief period, that they could easily dispense with his services. It would appear from the former that a Classis should have the opportunity to enjoy the labors of a missionary whenever they are needed; from the latter, that no Classis can be expected to engage a missionary permanently unless it is clearly proven that his service is indispensable. Lest, however, an opportunity escape us, it should be made possible for a Classis to call upon a missionary when an occasion would seem to require his services.

III. PROPOSED RE-ARRANGEMENT OF OUR HOME MISSION ACTIVITY.

In the light of the foregoing presentation of the weaknesses in our present system under the Rules and Regulations of 1930 it is apparent that a re-arrangement is highly desirable.

Your committee is convinced that in order to strengthen the Home Mission cause of our church and to make its service more effective it is necessary to re-arrange our system.

We present the following as our conviction:

1. THE WHOLE FIELD OF HOME MISSIONS SHOULD BE PLACED UNDER THE CONTROL AND SUPERVISION OF SYNOD, AND OF THE GENERAL HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE AS (AND WHEN) ACTING FOR SYNOD.

We believe this is in the interest of unity and coöperation. Entrusting the work to the several classes, as now is done, does not make for unity and has not encouraged coöperation.

Real coöperation between classes is hardly possible under our present Rules and cannot be expected. The history of Home Missions in our Church since 1908 has demonstrated this clearly.

The cause of Home Missions is the common cause of all our churches and in it all should unite. The eloquent plea of the Committee of 1928 for unity and coöperation should be heeded. The general dissatisfaction which

existed prior to 1928, and was not removed by the adoption of the Rules and Regulations of 1930, should not be perpetuated. The fault in the arrangement of 1908 was that the field of Home Missions was divided into as many fields as there were classes. Although the Committee of 1928 attempted to bring about unity by delegating powers to the General Committee, it failed to do so. We have pointed out that the wording of the Rules is very indefinite and in reality gives the General Committee only the power to act in an advisory capacity. As long as each Classical Committee has unlimited control in its own field, unity is impossible.

We have learned from past experience that unity cannot be attained, except there be unification. Placing all Home Mission work under the control of Synod and its General Home Missions Committee would mean that, instead of having many fields, we shall have only one. Each missionary will then serve the Church as a whole, though his labors will normally be confined to the territory to which he is assigned. Then no field need be neglected because classes lack the funds necessary to carry on independently of each other. Whenever in the Providence of God an opening is found it can be filled. We shall then also be able to deal more effectively with the irregular condition of having an abundance of man-power in one territory and a dearth thereof in another.

Unification of our Home Mission work will make real Home Mission strategy possible. We shall be able to send men to such places as may furnish prospects of fruitful labor. The perennial question of determining to which classis a certain territory belongs will not then arise. Each and every field becomes the responsibility of the Church as a whole.

Lack of coöperation has been an evil for at least two decades. Shall we hesitate to move in a direction that will make it possible for the whole Church to coöperate?

2. ALL HOME MISSIONARIES SHOULD BE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF SYNOD, AND OF THE GENERAL HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE AS (AND WHEN) ACTING FOR SYNOD.

As has been stated above, our missionaries are now all under the direction of their respective Classes and their Home Mission Committees. As long as this arrangement continues we shall have the anomaly of unfair distribution of man-power. We have once and again referred to

this irregularity. It must be obvious to all that, when there is a surplus in one field and a crying need of missionary service in another, no classis should be privileged or, through circumstances, compelled to retain that surplus. This argument becomes even more weighty in cases where these men are wholly or largely supported from the general fund.

Our missionaries should be at the disposal of the Church at large when their services are not required in their present fields. Due to the division of the whole field into thirteen separate fields under the control of their respective Classical Committees, it is exceedingly difficult to prevent neglect and overlapping. Our present system does not provide for the transfer of men to more promising fields outside of the local classis; nor is it possible to do so with success as long as the regulation of their labors rests solely with the several classes.

Under the arrangement to be presented in the proposed Mission Order it will be possible to use the services of our missionaries in whatever territories their labors can be used to the best advantage. Should a field prove to be barren, a missionary can be stationed in a territory which presents opportunities for expansion. No field would be neglected as now because of lack of unity and coöperation.

3. THERE SHOULD BE ONE GENERAL FUND FOR CHURCH EXTENSION.

In harmony with the proposed unification of our Home Mission work there should be a unification of our Home Mission funds. Our present Order prescribes that every classis shall have a treasury of its own, and under its separate management. We propose that there shall henceforth be only one (General) Fund, and that we thus return to the system which obtained in our Church prior to 1908.

Our investigation has shown that the contributions to the Home Mission cause are disproportionate. Some of our classes are burdened with a heavy budget for Home Missions while others, having no territories that especially lend themselves to Home Mission activity, have a light budget. Certain classes which are favored (or shall we say, burdened?) with many opportunities for expansion find themselves in a position financially wherein they cannot make use of them. Other classes, which are quite capable of lending financial support, being far re-

moved from the fields of opportunity, do not feel themselves responsible for the care of such fields. The result has been that, due to the financial inability of some and the apathy of others, our Mission work has suffered. We believe the time has come that all congregations should feel that the work of Home Missions is the task of the Church as a whole in which all should have equal interest and of which all should share the burdens equally.

Our present Order, which provides for a General Treasury to which all are expected to contribute a proportionate amount, seeks to equalize the burdens, but fails to do so adequately.

When Synod places all missionaries under its control, all Classical Home Mission Funds will, from the nature of the case, be eliminated and one (General) Fund for all Church Extension work will be established.

4. THERE SHOULD BE A SEPARATE FUND FOR CHURCH SUBSIDY.

We realize that historically there exists a close relation between the work of Church Extension and the subsidizing of weak churches. Yet they are quite distinct. In our present arrangement they are combined.

Our investigation has shown that 50 percent of the money contributed to Home Missions is used to subsidize weak churches. In certain classes all of the Classical Home Mission fund is used for that purpose. We are not finding fault with our classes for doing so, since our present Order does not call for two distinct funds. We however wish to ask: Is there a good reason for combining the two? Should not these two phases of Home Mission work be clearly distinguished? They are distinctly different in their functions and the confusion that exists in the minds of our people should be removed and henceforth prevented.

Having separate funds will, we believe, encourage giving to either and both. There can hardly be good reason for continuing the present arrangement. The separation of the two funds is also in harmony with the action taken by several of our classes, which, recognizing that their functions are definitely different, now have a Church Extension Fund and a Subsidy Fund.

5. THERE SHOULD BE ONE GENERAL FUND FOR CHURCH SUBSIDY AND NO CLASSICAL FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

It is apparent that in the interest of unity and equality this is necessary. Certain Classes have a large number of subsidized churches, while others have very few. There are instances where practically all of the contributions to the Classical Home Mission Fund are expended in the support of needy congregations. A large part of the assistance given our classes from the General Fund is used for the purpose of subsidizing weak churches.

It would seem proper that, when the Church Extension Fund becomes synodical, the Subsidy Fund should likewise be. When all our congregations are required to contribute the same quota to the Church Extension Fund, this same arrangement should apply to the Subsidy Fund. Otherwise a number of our classes would be unduly burdened. When all are placed on an equal basis with respect to the Church Extension Fund, this equality should not be disrupted by the retention of Classical Subsidy Funds. Their retention would place too heavy a burden upon the classes which have many churches dependent on help from others.

6. THE IDENTITY OF THE EMERGENCY FUND SHOULD BE RETAINED AND CONTINUED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE HOME MISSIONS SET-UP.

This fund is now under the care of a special committee which functions from Synod to Synod. Its service has met a real need. Many of our candidates, who otherwise would still be without a field of labor, have been stationed through aid from this fund. Mission stations and small congregations have been strengthened through the ministry of these candidates. With gratitude to God we make mention of the laudable work performed by them. Their intensive work has led to the organization of congregations, and churches through their labors have in many cases grown to such an extent that they are now able to enjoy the services of an ordained minister of the Gospel.

The work of the present Emergency Committee will, under the proposed arrangement, be merged in the Church's regular Home Mission activity. Whether it is the part of wisdom to effect this merger at once, we do not know, and we gladly leave this point to the wisdom of Synod. Some might be inclined to think that, as long as the emergency which called this Committee into exist-

ence has not entirely passed, it might be advisable to continue the Emergency set-up till 1938 or, possibly better still, to effect a transition arrangement for the next two years.

Through the incorporation, either immediately or ultimately, of the Emergency Work and its fund as an integral element into the Home Mission set-up, Synod's desire that the "gains and improvements that have accrued from the Emergency type of activity be utilized and permanently conserved," can be largely realized. Moreover, in this manner the Emergency work, which has met with such favor on the part of our people, will be continued in practically the same fashion, though under different auspices. Even in more prosperous years and under more favorable circumstances there will be room for this type of service. In years past mission stations and small congregations would have benefitted greatly from such service as the Emergency Committee has since the 1932 Synod been charged to perform. And we foresee that there will always be fields that cannot be said to belong to either the Church Extension or the Church Subsidy stage.

In the proposed Order the Emergency Fund is placed under the control of Synod's Home Mission Committee and will constitute a separate fund in the General Home Mission Treasury, the other two being the Church Extension Fund and the Church Subsidy Fund.

7. THREE KINDS OF HOME MISSION FIELDS SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT — UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES — EVERY FIELD WILL PASS SUCCESSIVELY THROUGH THREE CORRESPONDING STAGES.

Included in the Home Mission work there will be three kinds of fields: (a) Fields in the Church Extension stage; (b) Fields in the Emergency Support stage; and (c) Fields in the Church Subsidy stage. Under normal circumstances a field will successively pass through each one of these three stages.

A field shall be considered to belong to the Church Extension stage as long as — in the judgment of Synod or its Home Mission Committee — it is in need of the care of a home missionary. A field shall be considered to belong to the Emergency Support stage when it enjoys the services of a candidate as stated supply, whether it be already an organized church or still a mission station. A field

shall be considered to belong to the Church Subsidy stage when it has an ordained minister of its own, but is not yet able to support him without outside assistance.

There is, of course, no inherent necessity for a field to pass through everyone of these three stages. It is possible that a field may pass at once from the first to the third stage by being organized promptly and proceeding to call a pastor at once after the completion of the preliminary labors of the home missionary. But this will be exceptional. Normally a field will pass through these three stages. The time which a field may continue in the first or in the second stage will vary with circumstances. The first stage ought not to last any longer than is strictly necessary. A home missionary should remain a home missionary, and since he can spend only part of his time in such a field, it is desirable that a candidate be placed there as soon as possible.

It should be the aim and task of the Home Mission Committee and the workers supported from its funds to encourage any given field to progress from the Church Extension stage to the Emergency Support stage, and from the Emergency Support stage to the Church Subsidy stage, in order that ultimately it may pass into the self sustaining stage, when it shall no longer be in need of the support of any Home Mission funds of the Church.

8. THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST ONE HOME MISSIONARY-AT-LARGE.

Mention has been made above of the fact that classes have often felt the need of having a missionary at their disposal who could make a thorough investigation of new fields when these were brought to their attention. Not having a missionary at hand, they were greatly handicapped in such a situation. Delay in occupying a prospective territory often proved to be costly. Should Synod be disposed to conduct our Home Mission work along the lines indicated in our report, it is apparent that there should be at least one Home Missionary-at-large, who should, when requested, make thorough investigation, and, when warranted, open and prepare new fields for more intensive work.

In the interest of unity and coöperation, the General Committee should have all possible information concerning the needs of the whole territory of Home Missions. This information should be obtained through personal

observation and personal contact with the several classes and their Home Mission committees. It is practically impossible for the General Committee to be properly acquainted with the entire field except there be someone who shall confer with the several missionaries and classes relative to the conditions in, and the needs of, the respective territories.

Moreover, it is a matter of common knowledge that the cause of Home Missions does not enjoy that interest which it deserves. This is, no doubt, due to the fact that it has not been adequately presented to and pleaded in our churches. To give it a more prominent place in the thought and hearts of our people, it must be propagated. No one could do this better than a missionary of experience, versed in its problems and needs.

Also the contacts we have at present with the Churches and Emigration Bureaus in the Netherlands should be maintained, and this task ought to be delegated to one who can represent our Church in the work of Home Missions.

Considerations such as these point to the desirability of having a Home Missionary-at-large.

IV. AS TO THE BASIC SOUNDNESS OF THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT.

It is apparent from the foregoing that the proposed re-arrangement of our Home Mission activity looks in the direction of a higher degree of synodical control. In the interest of unity, co-operation, and efficiency in this branch of the Lord's work it is urged that Synod be given more, and classes proportionately less, control over Home Mission work. It implies a higher degree of centralization than we have today.

The question might arise whether this is a movement in the right direction. Is this a sound set-up viewed from the angle of Reformed Church Polity? Granted that the objectives of a higher degree of unity, coöperation, integration, and efficiency may be attained by these proposed improvements, are there possibly not some serious considerations of principle that militate against this set-up and that would therefore neutralize whatever good arguments on the score of practical improvement might be urged?

In taking up this phase of the discussion we propose, first, to consider two possible objections, and, secondly, to advance some considerations on this score in favor of the stand taken in this report.

A. CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS.

First Objection.

Does not this new arrangement expose us to the danger of the General Home Missions Committee usurping powers which belong properly only to ecclesiastical assemblies?

The evil of boards becoming powerful bodies in the Church, so that they gradually wield a power which the ecclesiastical assemblies have not delegated to them, is not an imaginary one, especially in our American environment. Boards have but a delegated authority, which they exercise when the ecclesiastical assemblies that appointed them are not in session. These Boards must report their doings to the church assemblies and are their servants, their agencies, not *v. v.* In our Reformed system of Church government this is a basic element.

Now the question might be raised whether the proposed arrangement does not expose us to the danger of usurpation of powers on the part of the General Home Missions Board which are not delegated to it.

It must be recognized that in many of the large denominations round about us this is a real evil. However, our own Church is hardly exposed to this danger. The reason (or one of the reasons) why this evil has crept into such a Church as the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. is found in the fact that its General Assembly is such an unwieldy body, and also in the circumstance that these boards are highly organized employing a large number of permanent paid secretaries. There has sprung up a big ecclesiastical machine in this Church which can easily manipulate such an unwieldy body as the General Assembly. Discussion on reports must of necessity be reduced to a minimum. The church machine, focussed in the Boards, is the real power behind the scene, and the evil of such Boards acting as though they had unlimited and independently derived power grows apace.

However, this evil will have very little chance to develop in our denomination. Our Boards (in this case, the General Home Missions Committee) are constantly under the scrutinizing control of Synod and the principle is

maintained that their authority is a derived authority. We have no church machine. Our Synods not only are small enough to allow for extensive discussion, but we believe in such discussion and are allowing it in such a measure that not one delegate who may have a serious objection to make would ever be deprived of the opportunity to have his say. The reports of our Boards go into the hands of Committees consisting of synodical delegates, and if something should escape the scrutinizing eye of these Committees, the discussion on the floor of Synod is there to give full scope to the maintenance of Synod's authority and the curbing, if necessary, of any undue arrogation of power on the part of any of our Boards.

It should, moreover, be remembered that the membership of the General Home Mission Committee is subject to constant synodical appointment; that such appointment is made from the membership of the respective classical Home Mission Committees and upon nomination (virtual appointment) by these committees; and that the opportunity for synodical rebuke of a Board that may have arrogated to itself power not properly delegated to it by Synod is always open and can, under our system, be readily administered if this should ever prove necessary.

In view of these considerations the danger of undue usurpation of power on the part of the General Home Missions Committee is very remote indeed, and we may herewith dismiss the first objection.

Second Objection.

A second objection to the proposed improvement might be urged by those who insist that all mission work should be carried on and hence controlled by the local church through its consistory.

This idea is quite commonly propagated and, at least partly, practised in the Netherlands and voices are still heard from time to time in our own group pleading for this idea. We can hence not afford to pass it unnoticed, the less so because some of its proponents actually claim that this position is a basic, if not the most basic, principle of all missionary activity. (For an exposition of this position we may refer to the original Report together with the proposed draft of a Foreign Mission Order submitted to the 1896 General Synod of "de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland," as found in the Acts of that year, pp. 65-79. For the text of the present Foreign Mission Order

of this Church we refer the reader to Renkema-DeMoor, *Kerkenordening*, 3Ed: 1916, pp. 91-139. See also the following articles in *Christelijke Encyclopaedie*: "Kerkelijke Zending"; "Zending van de Gereformeerde Kerken"; and "Zendingsorde.")

Now someone might dismiss this objection by pointing to the undisputed fact that in "de Gereformeerde Kerken" in the Netherlands they have no activity comparable to our Home Mission activity. But this would not meet the objection, seeing the proponents of this view hold that every form of mission activity, (whether heathen, home, or Hebrew) is, according to the divine intent and hence according to sacred principle, not the business of the major assemblies (Classes and Synod) but that of the local church. The only power assigned to the major assemblies is that of making such regulations of a general kind which can, from the nature of the case, not very well be made by the local church. This means that not only the calling and sending forth of missionaries, but also the actual direction and management of their labors, is all to be in the hands of the local consistories. This is the implication of the alleged principle of the "autonomy of the local churches" of which Dr. Abraham Kuyper was the great proponent and which "de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland" attempt to apply in their (foreign) missionary endeavor.

Now we have no quarrel with the Dutch Churches on the matter of the best method of carrying on *their* mission activity. We gladly leave the determination of such method to them. We believe that conditions in our land and in the Netherlands are so widely different that each must find its own most effective method of carrying on the Lord's work. If these Dutch Churches find it most effective to carry on their mission activity in the way in which they do, well and good. But when men (whether in the Netherlands or in our own Church) insist that the method pursued in the Netherlands is the only sound one, that it is a basic principle of Reformed Church polity to organize all mission work on such a basis, the matter stands differently. We believe that this is a mistaken position.

Here we must guard against misunderstanding. What we repudiate as unsound is the claim that the real power to carry on missions lies not with classis and Synod but

solely with the local church, to be exercised through its consistory. The issue is often confused by linking up this spurious claim with other contentions which are perfectly sound and represent fundamentals of Reformed church polity. The question is not whether all authority which the major assemblies have is not derived authority, viz., derived from local churches whose delegates constitute these major assemblies. There can be no doubt about that. Neither is the question whether missions ought to be carried on by the Church, its office bearers (and not, say, by societies or boards). To that any Reformed man will agree. Nor should the issue be confused with the question as to the desirability of keeping the cause of missions as close to the heart of our people and to the local churches as possible. Upon that there is no room for dispute. But the question is, whether it is true that sound biblical and Reformed mission practice demands that all mission activity (and hence also Home Mission activity) must be in the hands of and controlled by the consistories and the local churches.

It may be remarked in this connection that if this "principle" were sound, not only our new proposal but also the present Home Mission Order proceeds upon entirely erroneous lines. In other words, if this alleged principle were taken seriously, we should not only reject the present proposals, but we should subject the existing Home Mission Order and our entire method of carrying on this work to a radical revision, a revision in which not only synodical but also classical control should be reduced to a minimum. How impossible and impractical such a set-up would be, especially in the matter of Home Missions, one hardly needs to set forth.

We do not believe that Synod will ever take this alleged principle seriously as a basis on which to organize the Home Mission set-up. The closest we have come to such an attempt was in 1910, and ever since that time the impossibility and impracticability of its really distinctive feature (which was held by some to be the one distinctively Reformed principle on this score) has become apparent. Synod will not wish to set the clock of our ecclesiastical life back 25 years. Surely, we have learnt a few things on this score in the last two decades. The alleged principle of the autonomy of the local church, though associated with many elements in themselves good and

advantageous, has in its real thrust worked much damage in our Church.

If your Committee should take this matter up thoroughly, we would be compelled to advance a rather extensive argument. This would be interesting, but we trust it will not be necessary. If the argument of those who still maintain that in imitation of the Netherlands Churches we should reorganize Home Missions on lines determined by this alleged principle of the autonomy of the local church should ever come up again for serious consideration, there would be some interesting and valuable material for our Churches to consider, material which has never yet been written up. We do not wish to call up the ghosts of past controversies, but some of them offer a good deal of splendid material to expose the folly of this alleged principle of the autonomy of the local churches, and if it should prove necessary the Church will do well to let the recent history, both of our own and of the "Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Kerken," speak on this point.

In its bearing upon the Home Mission enterprise we will, for the present, limit our criticism of this alleged principle to a brief consideration of that passage of Scripture which is most commonly advanced by the proponents of this view as biblical warrant for their claim. That passage is Acts 13:1-3. It is claimed that this passage teaches that it is the will of God that not classis or synod, but the local church should have charge of mission work, whether foreign missions or home missions. Now the passage tells us that by designation of the Holy Spirit Barnabas and Paul were set aside by the Antioch church and sent out by that church to be missionaries. It is usually added that according to Acts 14:27 these missionaries returned to report on their activities to this same local church of Antioch. On these facts we are all agreed. But is this proof for the contention that only local churches may and should carry on mission work, and that it is wrong for classes or Synod to do so? A little reflection will show how baseless this claim is.

That it was the local church of Antioch which sent out these missionaries proves nothing for the position of our opponents, because there was no other way in which missionaries could be sent forth at the time. Classical and synodical organization of churches did not exist. Even the first Jerusalem Council had not yet been held. The issue before us did not so much as exist. The church was

found at such centers as Jerusalem and Antioch, and Antioch being a great center ("the third city, after Rome and Alexandria, of the Roman world," ISBE, I, 157B) and the only established church in these gentile parts, it was a matter of course that this local church should undertake upon divine direction the missionary enterprise to the heathen, so that it became "the cradle of gentile Christianity and of Christian missionary enterprise." (*Ibidim*, p. 158A.) All this offers not a scintilla of evidence that today our Home Mission work should be controlled not by classis or Synod but by the local church.

Possibly a parallel might be used to clarify this point. Suppose that in the early days of our denominational history there had been only one large congregation, or possibly two, but these two so far apart in our land that joint meetings in classis were as yet impossible or impracticable. Suppose that such a large church had become interested in Home Mission work, such work would from the nature of the case have been entirely in the hands of the local church and its consistory. Would this prove anything as to the right or wrong of having the control of such Home Mission work in the hands of classis and Synod when at a later time this single church or these two churches had grown into a well-established denomination?

It is surprising with what ease Scripture is often quoted to prove what Scripture never intended to teach, also in this sphere of mission principles and methods. To prove from Acts 13:1-3 that not classis and Synod but only the local church should direct and control all missionary activity is just about as forceful as to prove from II Tim. 2:2 that not theological professors in a regularly established seminary but only pastors in active service and missionaries on the field are the God-designated agencies for the training of our future ministers. And again, one could with just as much force argue that the fact that there is not one instance on record in Scripture of the baptism of an infant, whereas we do have numberless explicit instances of the baptism of adults recorded in the New Testament, establishes the claim of the Baptists that it is the will of God that only adults should be baptized!

From all this it appears that those who hold that Acts 13:1-3 is biblical warrant for the position that not classes and Synod, but only the local church is the real agency to carry on Home Mission work are in error. To be sure, all authority of major assemblies is a cumulative authority

which does not come from the top down but truly from the bottom up. It is perfectly sound to hold that all classical and synodical authority is in its ultimate constituent elements of the nature of the authority which resides in the local church. That is sound Reformed and biblical church polity, as over against collegialistic and episcopal forms of church government. But from this it does not follow that only the local church is the God-designed agency to carry on the missionary enterprise. When the welfare of the cause and the effectiveness of the enterprise demand that the control and direction of a certain form of Kingdom work should be in the hands of a larger group of churches, such as the classis is made up of, or in the hands of all our churches, met in Synod, there is no scriptural argument or any argument from the principles of Reformed Church polity against pursuing such a course.

When a certain task is the responsibility of the Church as a whole (or, "de kerken in het gemeen," as some prefer to say), it is but proper and reasonable that the Church through its Synod should discharge this task. It is likewise but reasonable that, just as consistories between their meetings function through committees with a definite mandate and power, and classical bodies between their meetings function through classical committees with a definite mandate and a definite power of action, so also Synod between its meetings should function in the matter of Home Missions through its General Home Mission Committee with a definite mandate and with definite power. We have not only a common interest in, but also a common duty with respect to Church Extension (Home Missions). To do mission work in Des Moines is not only the task of some local church or of, say, Classis Ostfriesland or Classis Pella; to try to establish a church among the scattered in a city like Minneapolis is not the task only of some local church or of Classis Wisconsin or Classis Ostfriesland; but it should be considered the responsibility of our entire denomination. Our Church is virtually interested in having work done in whatever place opportunities for church extension exist. The work in such fields should not be delayed or hampered because a certain classis is unable to call a missionary, or because the coöperation of two neighboring classes cannot be practically effected. Neither should it be necessary to wait for an appropriation of Synod before a thorough in-

vestigation can be made and intensive work begun. Lack of unity and efficiency has cost our denomination the loss of many fields. May this evil not continue to hamper the Lord's work.

B. CONSIDERATIONS FAVORING THE SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS.

It will be clear that what we aim to offer here is not arguments to prove that these improvements are sorely needed to overcome the weaknesses of our present Home Mission set-up. This has been done above under II and III, where the weaknesses in our present system have been taken up and definite elements of improvement have been proposed. What we do intend to do in this connection is to continue to exhibit the basic soundness of the proposed improvement by considerations of principle and practice which favor the position that classes and Synod have the power to carry on and control Home Mission activity — as opposed to the contention that only the local church has such power.

As such considerations we submit the following:

1. *This is in harmony with an explicit statement of Voetius, the outstanding authority on Reformed church polity, as quoted by Dr. Rutgers.*

This statement is found in Voetius, *Politica Ecclesiastica*, Vol. IV, p. 235, and is quoted by Dr. F. L. Rutgers in the latter's work entitled, *Kerkelijke Adviezen*, pp. 324, 325. We quote:

“Eindelijk, in de verhandeling over de zending, wordt, na de aanwijzing dat de zending natuurlijk van de kerk moet uitgaan, maar dat de kerken, die Classikaal of Synodaal verbonden zijn, ook wel gezamenlijk mogen zenden, onder andere vragen ook nog deze gesteld (Deel IV, blz. 325): ‘Of het enkel de Nationale Synoden of hare bijzondere deputaten zijn, onder wier directie alle zendingen geschieden moeten (b. v. de Nederlandsche in en uit Nederland)?’ *Antwoord*. Dat sommigen dit wel willen voorstaan, heeft men soms kunnen merken. Wij voor ons zijn van oordeel, dat het niet ongeoorloofd is, het te laten geschieden door de Nationale Nederlandsche Synode, of door de Provinciale Synoden en hare deputaten, wanneer zulks geschiktelijk kan, tot meerdere zekerheid.”

From this it is clearly Voetius' position:

(a) That classis or Synod have the right to send (notice: “zenden,” not merely to control) missionaries as

well as have local consistories. So much for the question of right and wrong. And then,

(b) That the question whether in a given missionary enterprise such authority ought to be assigned to a given consistory or to classes or to provincial synods or to the national synod would depend entirely upon the question what in view of circumstances and conditions is the most practical and advantageous.

2. *This is in harmony with the position of Prof. Heyns, who has for years been the professor of Church Government at our Seminary, and it is likewise the position of his successor, Professor Volbeda.*

The position of Prof. Heyns bearing upon the question is stated clearly in an appendix to the report on "Rules and Regulations for Home Missions" submitted to the Synod of 1930. This report embodied the new Home Mission Order as then adopted and as in force today. Professor Heyns was secretary of this Committee, and in an appendix ("Naschrift") from him and the brethren G. Hofmeyer and J. K. Van Baalen, he states his position as follows. (See Agenda 1930, Part I, pp. 17-19):

"Gedrongen door de overtuiging dat de zaak van Art. 1 van het oude Reglement, de vraag n.l. of roeping en uitzending van missionaire Leeraars behoort te geschieden door een plaatselijke Kerk, welke zaak in voorgaand Rapport onbesproken is gelaten, in verband met de vaststelling van een nieuwe Orde voor de Inwendige Zending onder de oogen dient gezien te worden, verzoeken de ondergeteekende leden der Commissie de Synode vriendelijk en dringend hen te willen hooren, als zij de volgende dingen voor haar aandacht wenschen te brengen.

Onze bezwaren tegen genoemde bepaling van dat artikel zijn: dat zij in strijd is met het Gereformeerd Kerkbegrip; dat zij geenerlei steun vindt in de aloude Kerkerde, maar veeleer door haar weersproken wordt (Art. 4, D. K. O., laatste clause); dat door haar het karakter en de rechten der Meerdere Vergaderingen miskend worden; dat door haar in het kerkelijke leven de onwaarachtigheid wordt ingedragen van een handeling die slechts een schijnvertooning is; dat zij in de praktijk schadelijk werkt door bekwamen spoed te belemmeren.

Daartegenover meenen wij dat als gezonde, als voor zichzelf getuigende beginselen die hier heerschen moeten, te noemen zijn:

vooreerst, *dat Zending kan uitgaan van de plaatselijke Kerk door haar Kerkeraad, doch ook kan uitgaan van Classicale en Synodale Kerkengroepen door haar Classicale en Synodale Vergaderingen;* en ten tweede, *dat aan elke Zending het recht toekomt om voor haar eigen Zendingswerk zelve de noodige arbeiders te roepen en uit te zenden, en dus die roeping enz. geschieden moet door Kerkeraad, Classis, of Synode, al naar de Zending een Zending is uitgaande van de plaatselijke Kerk, van de Classis, of van de Synode.*

Dat Zending kan gedreven worden, niet alleen door de plaatselijke Kerk, maar ook door Classes en Synoden, is van ouds geleerd en erkend (Rutgers, Kerk. Adviezen, I, 324v.). Zelfs is dat beginsel in ons kerkelijk leven metterdaad aanvaard, want onze Inwendige Zending is zooveel mogelijk classicaal, en onze Heidenzending gaat uit van de Synode.

En dat Classes en Synoden het recht hebben om elk voor een eigen Zending arbeiders te roepen en uit te zenden, volgt:

Vooreerst uit het feit dat roeping en uitzending van Dienaren *wezenlijk tot het drijven van Zending behooren*, evenals de beroeping van een Predikant wezenlijk behoort tot de verzorging van den Dienst des Woords in de plaatselijke Kerk. Een recht van Zending zonder een recht van roeping en uitzending van arbeiders voor die Zending, zou iets ongerijms zijn. Door de Synode van 1920 (Acta, blz. 83) werden twee Zendeling-Leeraars voor de Zending in China verkozen en benoemd. Deze Synode oordeelde dus terecht dat zij daartoe bevoegd was. Maar waarom zou dan een Classis dat voor een Zending die haar eigene is, niet mogen doen? En indien Synoden en Classes mogen verkiezen en benoemen, waarom zouden zij dan niet mogen beroepen en uitzenden?

Ten tweede uit *het karakter der Meerdere Vergaderingen*. Dat zij "niets anders zijn dan samenvoegingen van Kerkeraden" (Rutgers, a. w., blz. 207) en dat haar macht een cumulatieve is, niet een macht van hooger orde maar wel een "meerdere," wordt door ons allen erkend. En gelijk Voetius met het oog daarop vroeg: "Indien de sleutel der tucht gegeven is aan één plaatselijke Kerk, waarom zou hij dan ook niet gegeven zijn aan een eenheid van Kerken, die met elkaar in kerkverband leven?" zoo kan men insgelijks met het oog daarop vragen: Indien de macht tot roeping en uitzending gegeven is aan één plaatselijke Kerk, waarom zou zij dan ook niet gegeven zijn aan een eenheid van Kerken, die met elkaar in kerkverband leven?

Hier komt nog bij dat wij in dezen *een les der historie* voor ons hebben liggen, en dat wij wel zullen doen daarop acht te nemen, de les n.l. dat de idee alsof Zending moet uitgaan van en gedreven worden door een plaatselijke Kerk consequent doorgevoerd onbruikbaar is en de Zending in den grond boort. Wij hebben er de proef van genomen, en de uitslag is een mislukking geweest. Een consequente doorvoering van deze idee was die van Art. I van de "Regeling der Inwendige Zending" van 1910 (Acta 1910, blz. 17). Daarmee werd vastgesteld dat niet alleen roeping en bevestiging, maar ook *regeling van den arbeid der Zendeling-Leeraars* (beide terecht in één adem genoemd) zou geschieden door een plaatselijke Kerk. De Kerk die riep en bevestigde zou dus ook het geheele bestuur hebben van den zendingsarbeid, en al de andere Kerken zouden daarvan uitgesloten zijn. Deze regeling echter kon niet langer standhouden dan tot de eerstvolgende Synode. Natuurlijkerwijze had zij ten gevolge dat die andere Kerken die nu met de Zending niets anders te doen hadden dan dat zij er voor bijdragen mochten — iets dat denken doet aan het tyrannieke "taxatie zonder representatie" — voor dit bijdragen al minder en minder gingen gevoelen.

Door de Synode van 1912 werd dan ook "op éénstemmig advies van de vereenigde Commissies voor Inwendige-, Heiden-, en Joden-zending" de regeling zoo gewijzigd dat de roeping en uitzending ook door een groep van Kerken gezamenlijk zou kunnen geschieden

(Acta 1912, blz. 12), terwijl de praktijk er voor zorgde dat de regeling van den arbeid der Zendingen, in plaats van die der roepende Kerk, weer de zaak werd der Classes door haar Classicale Commissies. *Hiermee was de idee van 1910 losgelaten*, en had het doen plaats hebben van roeping en uitzending door een plaatselijke Kerk zijn principiëelen grond verloren. Wel werd vastgehouden dat dit regel zou blijven, en dat kon dienen om den aftocht te dekken, maar de beteekenis er van kon voortaan slechts zijn die van een overgebleven formaliteit zonder wezen, van een restant van een verongelukte theorie, van een reliëf van iets dat in vroeger dagen voor een wijze als wat groots was vereerd. En zoo zitten we er nog mee. Hoe eer dat gebruik uit ons kerkelijk leven verwijderd, hoe beter. Het mag de vraag zijn of van de plaatselijke Kerken gevegd mag worden, dat zij zich voor een zoodanige handeling zullen laten gebruiken. Te meer omdat wat men door haar laat doen het stempel draagt van onwaarachtigheid. Als de plaatselijke Kerk beroept doet zij dat niet als een eigen daad met vrijheid om te handelen naar eigen oordeel en keuze, maar doet zij het volgens den op de eene of andere wijze haar te verstaan gegeven wil der Classis, vanwege de Classis en in dienst van de Classis. En uitzenden, voor zoover dit insluit "in een bepaalde plaats stellen," Art. 7, K. O., doet zij in het geheel niet, want daarover beschikt de Classis zelve." (*Italics not ours, but in the original.*)

3. *This is in harmony with the principle on this score adopted by our Synod.*

The 1930 Synod adopted a principle basic for our Home Mission activity. This is the same Synod at which the present Home Mission Order was adopted, and also the same Synod at which the report and the appendix ("Naschrift A") referred to under IV, B, 2, of this report was presented.

On the table of that Synod there was an overture of Classis Pella, reading as follows:

"Classis Pella stelt aan de Synode voor dat de Synode herzie Art. I van de Regeling van de Inwendige Zending, vastgesteld in 1910 (Acta Synodi 1910, p. 17), en ge-amendeerd in 1912 (Acta 1912, p. 12); en een artikel worde geplaatst in de vast te stellen Nieuwe Orde voor de Inwendige Zending, waarin het recht van roeping en uitzending en regeling der arbeid van Missionaire Leeraars wordt toegekend aan Kerkeraad, Classis of Synode, waarvan de betrokken zending uitgaat en waardoor zij gedreven wordt. Gronden:

- 1) In beginsel is dit reeds zoo aangenomen (Acta 1912, p. 12; Acta 1920, China Zending, p. 83);
- 2) Een onzer Classes volgt reeds deze methode (Muskegon);
- 3) Dit is vanouds kerkrechtelijk erkend (Rutgers, Kerkelijke Adviezen, I, p. 324);

- 4) De oude methode is meer schijn of vorm dan werkelijkheid;
- 5) Deze regeling is veiliger voor Classis, Gemeenten, en zendelingen." (Acta 1930, p. 121.)

The Pre-Advisory Committee proposed to Synod: "Dat de Synode een dankbaar gebruik make van den wenk gegeven in de instructie van Classis Pella," whereupon Synod decided in the affirmative. (*Ibidem.*) At a later session of this same Synod this matter was carried forward and a definite principle adopted. This same Committee of Pre-Advice reported on the matter of the calling and sending of missionaries. (Acts, 1930, pp. 143, 144.) Alluding to the overture of Classis Pella just cited and the "Naschrift" to the report of Prof. Heyns referred to above, this committee then presented the following advice to Synod:

"De Synode herzie Art. I van de *Regeling van de Inwendige Zending*, vastgesteld in 1910 (Acta Synodi 1910, p. 17), en ge-amendeerd in 1912 (Acta 1912, p. 12); en een artikel worde geplaatst in de vast te stellen Nieuwe Orde voor de Inwendige Zending, waarin het recht van roeping en uitzending en regeling van den arbeid van Missionaire Leeraars wordt toegekend aan Kerkeraad, Classis, of Synode, waarvan de betrokken Zending uitgaat, en waardoor zij gedreven wordt. *Grond:*

"In beginsel is dit reeds aangenomen (Acta 1912, p. 12), 'De roeping en uitzending van Missionaire Leeraren zal geschieden door een plaatselijke kerk, doch indien de omstandigheden het eischen, dan geschiede de roeping door de gecombineerde kerken op een wijze door deze kerken zelve te bepalen, en in gebondenheid aan de Synodale en Classicale bepalingen.'"

This advice was adopted by Synod. By this decision the idea that only the local church should call, send out, and regulate the labors of home missionaries is repudiated and this right as given to Synod and Classis as well. From this it is clear that our proposals are in harmony with the principle laid down by Synod in this matter.

We could go on to show that the standpoint maintained in this report is corroborated by other policies and practices in our Church life, as, for instance, in reference to China Missions and our work in South America. (Cf. Acta, 1930, pp. 149-152.) We might also show how our

proposals avoid the dangers of both extremes in the matter of missionary organization. But we feel the matter has been argued sufficiently.

V. ADVICE TO SYNOD.

From the foregoing it must have become evident that what we propose is to maintain the underlying principle and the fundamental features of the Home Mission Order as adopted by the Synod of 1930, but to make it more effective by the elimination of serious weaknesses that have gradually become apparent, and by the incorporation of such elements as our recent experience as a Church has exhibited to be of value.

Hence we submit a revised Order for Home Missions to Synod and would formulate our advice in the following two motions:

A. Synod declare itself in favor of such readjustment of our Home Mission activities as is mapped out in the report herewith submitted, more especially as specified in points 1-8 under III.

B. Synod pass in order upon each one of the articles of the revised Home Mission Order, as herewith presented for adoption.

* * * * *

HOME MISSION ORDER

PREAMBLE

Whereas it is in the interest of unity and coöperation that all Home Mission activity be considered the task of the Church as a whole, this Home Mission Order proceeds upon the assumption that Synod shall through its agencies conduct and supervise the work.

The scope of Home Missions includes the following: the bringing of the Gospel to the dispersed brethren of the faith, as well as to the unchurched, by missionaries of the Church with a view to Church Extension; the strengthening of fields which may be said to be in an Emergency stage through the stationing of candidates for the ministry in them; and the subsidizing of needy congregations, which without such aid would not be able to maintain the Gospel Ministry in their midst.

ARTICLE 1.

The organization and the administration of the Home Mission work of the Church require:

(a) Classical Committees, which in the service of their respective Classes shall promote the interests of Home Missions within their territories, as specified in Article 3 of this Order.

(b) A General Committee, which in the name of Synod shall direct the Home Mission work of the Church, as specified in Article 5 of this Order.

ARTICLE 2.

Classical Home Missions Committees

Each Classical Home Missions Committee shall consist of three (3) members, with their alternates, to be chosen by Classis for the term of four (4) years. The members shall be elected at the spring meeting of Classis in synodical years. Two members and one member shall retire in rotation biennially, but shall be eligible for re-election.

ARTICLE 3.

The work of the Classical Committees shall be:

a. To keep Classis and the General Committee informed with respect to possible new fields within the bounds of their respective Classes.

b. To furnish advice to the General Committee in matters pertaining to the work of the missionaries in the fields of their respective Classes.

c. To co-operate with the General Committee in the promoting of such work as may lead to the opening of new fields or tend to the strengthening of the fields within the bounds of their several Classes.

d. To advise Classis on requests from needy fields for aid from the Emergency Fund and to send such requests together with the advice of Classis to the General Committee.

e. To advise Classis on requests from needy churches which seek support from the Subsidy Fund and to send these requests together with the advice of Classis to the General Committee.

ARTICLE 4.

The General Home Missions Committee

The General Home Missions Committee shall be composed of one delegate from each Classis to be elected by

Synod. Every Classis shall propose the name of one member of its Classical Home Mission Committee to serve in this capacity and of another to function as alternate. In the election of these members it should be borne in mind that permanence; in as far as this is possible, is in the interest of the cause which the General Committee serves. In addition to the members so elected there shall be three (3) non-ministerial members (who are or have been elders), serving as delegates-at-large, to be elected by Synod from a nomination of six (6) presented by the General Committee.

ARTICLE 5.

The work of the General Committee shall be:

a. To supervise and control all Home Mission activity of the Church: (it being understood that Home Evangelization Work conducted by a consistory or Classis is excluded, provided this is carried on without aid from the Church at large.)

b. To obtain advice from the Classical Home Mission Committees relative to existing fields, as well as to possible new fields for Home Mission activity.

c. To direct the labors of the home missionary or missionaries at large and all other home missionaries in the service of the Church.

d. To submit to Synod a complete report of its activities and to present its recommendations for the ensuing two years.

e. To arrange, in conformity with prevailing rules, for the calling of missionaries for definite fields when Synod so authorizes; it being understood that the Committee has power to make arrangements for the stationing of missionaries in other fields when a change in conditions makes such a transfer desirable.

f. To place candidates for the ministry as stated supplies in fields which request such services, provided that the request is supported by the Classis to which the fields belong.

g. To pass upon all applications for support from the Subsidy Fund and to submit its recommendations to Synod for approval. It shall in these recommendations give due consideration to an equitable distribution of the Subsidy Fund. (It is understood that the Committee has the right to make such adjustments between Synods as circumstances may render imperative.)

h. To administrate, subject to the approval of Synod and in harmony with its mandate, the Church Extension Fund, the Emergency Fund, and the Subsidy Fund.

ARTICLE 6.

The General Committee shall meet in synodical years at such time as may be considered proper in the judgment of the Executive Committee in view of the ensuing synodical meeting.

ARTICLE 7.

Executive Committee

The members of the General Committee of the Michigan and Illinois Classes together with the delegates-at-large shall constitute an Executive Committee for the execution of the decisions of Synod and the discharge of the duties of the General Committee when the latter is not in session. It is understood that in matters of importance the Executive Committee shall obtain through correspondence the approval of the majority of the members of the General Committee. The Executive Committee shall send a complete report of all its transactions to all members of the General Committee.

ARTICLE 8.

Every member of the General Committee shall keep his Classis and Classical Home Mission Committee informed as to the transactions of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE 9.

The Executive Committee shall meet every month or every two months as need may require. For the sake of efficiency it may appoint sub-committees, each of which shall make it a point to specialize in and to be well informed on, one of the three respective phases of the work.

ARTICLE 10.

The Treasury

There shall be three (3) distinct funds in charge of the General Committee to-wit — The Church Extension Fund, The Emergency Fund, and The Subsidy Fund.

ARTICLE 11.

The Church Extension Fund

This Fund shall serve in financing all work of Church Extension. (This includes Home Evangelization, provided this is performed by a home missionary who is under the control and supervision of the General Committee.)

ARTICLE 12.

The Emergency Fund

This Fund shall assist in financing such fields as engage a candidate for the ministry as a stated supply.

ARTICLE 13.

Church Subsidy Fund

This Fund shall serve in assisting churches financially unable to fully support an ordained minister of the Gospel. The General Committee shall determine on an equitable basis when and to what extent a congregation is entitled to support from the Subsidy Fund.

ARTICLE 14.

To encourage mission fields and congregations to pass from one stage into another, it shall be the duty of the General Committee to impress upon the churches this need and to aid the different fields in progressing from the Church Extension to the Emergency stage, from the Emergency to the Subsidy stage, and from the Subsidy to the self-sustaining stage. (This is not intended to imply that every field must necessarily pass through each one of these three stages.)

ARTICLE 15.

The administration of the Church Extension Fund shall rest with the General Committee subject to the control of Synod and, in the interim, with the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE 16.

Applications for support from the Emergency and from the Subsidy Funds must be sent to the General Committee before the first day of May in each synodical year. Applications for support from these Funds in the interim shall be passed upon by the Executive Committee according to the rules that govern all such applications.

ARTICLE 17.

The General Committee shall present budgets for each of these Funds to Synod for approbation. In each budget a stated sum shall be included which in the judgment of the General Committee should be allowed to take care of unforeseen needs of the Church Extension work and of the possible applications for support from the Emergency and the Subsidy Funds. It is understood that no field shall draw from more than one fund at a time.

ARTICLE 18.

Synod shall determine the quota per family that is expected from the churches for the Church Extension Fund and the Subsidy Fund and all congregations shall strive to pay the established quotas.

The Emergency Fund will, as in the past, be maintained through collections and free will offerings.

ARTICLE 19.

The General Committee shall appoint a treasurer who functions under the control and direction of the General Committee.

ARTICLE 20.

All expenses connected with the General Committee and the Executive Committee shall be borne equally by the Church Extension and the Subsidy Funds.

ARTICLE 21.

Home Missionary-at-Large

The task of the missionary-at-large shall be:

- a. To open and prepare new fields.
- b. To acquaint himself and the General Committee through personal investigation with the entire Home Mission territory of the Church, and keep statistics of all the work in the several classes.
- c. To confer with the several home missionaries and Classes relative to the needs of their respective fields.
- d. To serve as a contact man between the General Committee and other home missionaries.
- e. To plead the cause of Home Missions before the Church at large.
- f. To establish and maintain contact with the Churches and Emigration Bureaus in the Netherlands in regard to those who emigrate from the Netherlands to the United States and Canada.
- g. To serve the General Committee and the Executive Committee in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 22.

Calling and Ordination (or, Installation)

The home missionary-at-large and all home missionaries in the service of the Church shall be called to their respective tasks and fields by Synod. The General Committee shall present nominations, from which Synod shall

proceed to elect. If circumstances demand that a call be extended when Synod is not in session, a Classis or a Consistory thereto designated by Synod or the General Committee, shall be privileged to call a missionary in the name of Synod from a nomination officially proposed by the General Committee. The General Committee is charged to arrange for the installation (or, ordination) in the midst of one of our churches of any home missionary properly called when he has accepted such call, and with this church he will be officially connected as a minister of the gospel.

Humbly submitted,

H. J. KUIPER,
CLARENCE BOUMA,
WILLIAM STUART,
HENRY BAKER,
J. B. HULST,
J. R. BRINK.

REPORT XVI.

MISSION ORDER REPORT

ESTEEMED BRETHREN :

I. The task of your committee as given in the Acts of Synod of 1934, Art. 145, p. 140, is the following:

"To adapt our Mission Order to the present-day mission conditions on the basis of the already accepted principle."

It is evident from this brief mandate that our task does not include a revision of our Mission Order in the matter of the underlying principles, but rather a revision which would bring about a closer adherence to the principles in actual practice. The implication is clear that there are conditions and practices which vitiate the principles.

That this is the proper interpretation of our task will become evident from a brief résumé of the history of this matter.

A. In 1912 Synod adopted a Mission Order based among others, on the following principles:

(1) Mission work is ministry of the Word and must be carried on by Ministers and their helpers. (See Art. 2.)

(2) Ministers receive their mandate from the individual churches since they are, in Christ's name, authorized to call and send out ministers. (See Art. 4 Mission Order and Art. 4 Church Order.)

(3) This responsibility of the individual churches includes not only the calling of the missionaries, but also the regulation of their work and that of their helpers, the supervision of the confession and conduct of the personnel on the field as also the converts, the payment of the salaries, etc. (Arts. 6, 7, and 8.)

(4) Since Mission work concerns not only the individual church but the denomination as a whole, in matters of importance Classical and Synodical delegates serve the individual churches with advice and supervision. (Arts. 10, 11, 13-18.)

(5) In matters pertaining to the church as a whole such as the selection of a field and the establishment of a Mission Order, and in work not having the official character of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacra-

ments, such as the work of the schools and hospitals, authority and direction shall be in the hands of Synod or its delegates.

B. In 1914 Synod appointed a Board consisting of one representative of each Classis of the Christian Reformed Church and three delegates at large who shall be elected by the Synod. Their mandate was to administer the affairs of Heathen Missions. (See Acts 1914, Art. 52.)

C. In 1918 Synod decided:

“Separation of the official and the membership relation in special circumstances, as in the case of our missionaries, can not be considered contrary to Reformed Church polity” (Acts of Synod 1918, Art. 52).

D. In 1920 Synod appointed a Secretary of Missions especially connected with the Board of Foreign Missions but also charged to plead for and promote the interests of the Home and Jewish Missions. (Acts 1920, Art. 3, 4, 8.)

E. In 1922 Synod desired to change the Rules and Regulations for the Secretary of Missions to bring them in accord with Art. 22 of the Mission Order which regulates the work of the Board of Missions. No change was made, however, since it was reported that the Board intended to draft a new Mission Order in view of our new Mission in China. (Acts 1922, p. 40.)

F. In 1924 no draft of the new Mission Order was presented. There appeared, however, from Classis Grand Rapids West a request that new contracts be made between the Board and the sending churches in accord with the principles of our Mission Order, desiring that the sending churches should determine the salaries of the missionaries and their helpers and also regulate their work as far as circumstances would allow. Synod then instructed the Board to revise the Mission Order according to the principles embodied in the Mission Order. (Acts 1924, p. 72 ff.)

G. In 1926, the Board reported that it had not yet completed its task of revising the Mission Manual, and the Synod instructed it to proceed with its work. (Acts 1926, p. 42.)

At this Synod it was decided, in regard to the missionary ministers in China:

(1) “That they shall retain both their membership and their office as minister in the church sending them to China.

(2) "That they are permitted to accept associate membership in the Chinese church as long as that is necessary for the development of that church and such is desired by the Chinese church. Grounds:

- a) "Thus the sending church retains full authority over the life and doctrine of the missionary;
- b) "In that way the sacraments can be properly administered in the Chinese church during the time she has no ordained men of her own" (Acts 1926, p. 41 and p. 57).

This Synod also appointed a committee to determine the status of Missionaries on Indian and Chinese fields. (Acts 1926, p. 179.)

H. In 1928 the committee reported that it was unable to present a report due to conditions in China.

I. In 1930 this committee reported, but Synod decided that a proposal simply affecting the status of the missionaries on the Indian field would create still greater confusion and a new committee was appointed to thoroughly revise our Mission Order. (Acts 1930, p. 145.)

J. In 1932 this committee presented its report which was virtually a draft of a new Mission Order. The committee on preadvice stated that this revised Order had virtually been in practice for some time and had proved satisfactory.

Although the committee of preadvice urged the adoption of this proposed "Manual of Rules and Regulations covering the work of Missions under the auspices of the Christian Reformed Board of Missions," Synod decided "the committee had not carried out its mandate and instructs it to perform its task." (Acts 1932, p. 47.)

K. In 1934 this committee reported that one of its members had died in the interim and definite instructions were lacking as to just what Synod wanted and therefore it suggested that Synod first express itself definitely on which principle it desired mission work to be carried on, namely, that of local autonomy or synodically-regulated authority.

At this same Synod there were present two overtures, one from Classis Pacific and one from Classis Pella, both urging the maintenance of the principle and the regulation of the practice in accordance with the accepted position that mission work must be carried on by the churches. Both urge

that our Mission Order be revised in accordance with the accepted principle and that all decisions contrary to that principle be repealed, lest our churches become inactive observers of the work rather than interested supporters and lest our church government also suffer:

The Synod of 1934 then decided:

(1) To reply to "a" and "b" above, namely, that the new Mission Order shall maintain the principle that "De zending door de kerken gedreven worde," and that the leading principles be stated, that "this has been done in the past, in 1912 in the adopted Mission Order and in 1924 Acts, p. 74, when in connection with the work in China the work of revision of the Order of 1912 was begun. This principle has never been repealed; Synod has never been overtured to do so; hence the principle stands unimpaired. Any committee chosen is expected to follow out this principle."

(2) To reply to "c" and "d" above, namely, that the Mission Order be revised during Synod as much as possible and that all decisions contrary to the principle be repealed, that "Synod appoint a new committee whose task it shall be to adapt our Mission Order to present-day mission conditions, on the basis of the already accepted principle." (Acts 1934, pp. 139, 140.)

This historical résumé clearly indicates that our task does not include a study and possible revision of the principles upon which our Mission work is based. Ours is the difficult task of seeking to bring into conformity to accepted principles not only practice, but decisions of Synod itself which conflict with the principles. Ours is the task of adapting a Mission Order to principles that are being vitiated in practice, are out of harmony with conditions as they exist and are also unpopular in the American religious world where the Board system is increasingly being adopted for much of the work of the Church.

II. It was stated in the report of the Synodical Mission Order Committee of 1934, Agenda 1932, I, p. 4 ff., that the proposed Mission Manual which stressed Board control rather than individual church control, "had virtually been in practice for some time and proved satisfactory."

Your committee in taking up this delicate task first sought to investigate conditions to ascertain whether, as this committee stated, conditions had been satisfactory, or whether as the two overtures from Classis Pella and Classis Pacific indicated, there was a very definite dissatisfaction.

We corresponded with all the churches supporting missionaries or their helpers to secure first hand information as to their attitude and feeling in this matter. The response we received was almost unanimous in the expression of their dissatisfaction with the existing practice, particularly in the matter of the relationship of the church that prays and pays with the workers for whom they pray and pay.

The contents of these letters indicate clearly what the sentiment of these calling and supporting churches is.

A. One church writes, "We have no official contact to speak of." The reason given is that the missionary pastor they are supporting is loaned to one of the churches on the Indian field. They have unofficial relationship, however, which consists in the receiving of reports, personal letters to relatives (some parts of which are read to the congregation when of general interest) and personal visits by the missionary during his vacation.

B. Another informs us through the pastor, "We have no other contacts with our missionary except those mentioned above (paying of salary and receiving information about their work) except that once in a great while when he attends Synod he stops here and speaks in our churches."

C. The clerk of one of a group of supporting churches writes the following in answer to our questionnaire:

"Rev. _____ is called and supported by _____. He forwards monthly reports to each church. Under direction of _____ he spends his bi-annual vacation _____ and preaches once in each church and once at the combined meeting of the four churches; he addresses the diverse societies, etc.; the expenses are paid by the four churches. Other committees have no jurisdiction over him. The Board has in a general way."

D. The pastor of a church supporting a missionary helper writes: "An occasional letter, say about every quarter, is the only contact which we have with our missionary . . . Last year . . . also he spoke at our Mission Festival."

E. Another pastor of one of a group of churches supporting one of our missionaries writes, "Usually a decided effort is made to raise the salary and on various occasions reports are read of the work done in the field. _____ visited the churches supporting him about two and a half years ago."

F. Another pastor of a church which alone is supporting a missionary writes, "Besides the two items you mentioned (paying of salary and receiving information of the work), we really have no contact with our missionary at all. We in no way determine his work, vacation allowances, etc. Personally I do believe there should be a change for the good here, if in some way it could be effected. Truly, our Boards do the mission work."

G. Another reports that the missionary helper is a member of the supporting church which pays the salary, prays for her, receives her reports and her personal visits to the societies when she is on furlough."

H. From the pastor of one of a group of churches supporting another one of our missionaries and a helper comes the report: "You are right. We do support _____ and _____. That is about as far as the contact extends itself. Of course, we do get reports from them. Our ladies remember _____ in a special way at Christmas time. When the missionaries return to the homeland they speak in our churches first. But that is about the extent of the whole thing. At times there are those who express considerable dissatisfaction that matters are as they are. We have nothing to say about our missionaries, no voice in their work. All we do is foot the bill . . . pay their salaries . . . and, in the past they have not always received what we paid Salaries were reduced without consulting us We were not even informed Contact is that we pay the money into the general treasury and hope the missionaries get it."

I. Another Clerk of a church supporting a missionary writes that "Our committee and the consistory felt gradually the incongruity of his position of trying to serve two masters Consequently we decided to so inform him (the missionary) that this dual relationship did not work out in practice and that henceforth we recommended that he deal directly with the Board, something against which he protests as being against 'de kerken zending drijven'."

J. Writes another pastor of a church supporting a missionary, "I find it very difficult with my consistory to keep up the enthusiasm on the part of the congregation for our missionary in _____ and I am convinced that this is mostly due to the fact that there is not sufficient contact

between the congregation and the missionary . . . We have in no way paid our missionary a living salary and what is worse few seem to worry about this . . . 'Let the Board take care of his salary. We have nothing to say about him anyway.' I am convinced in my soul that the Board-missionary set-up is detrimental to all missionary enthusiasm . . . The Board set-up takes away all responsibility and sense of obligation."

It is evident from these quotations that the method in vogue is not as satisfactory as the committee reported to Synod in 1932. Apart even from the requirements of our Mission Order and the prestige of our Church government which are suffering immeasurably under the present conditions, mere regard for practical considerations would warrant a change in the present arrangement.

III. The difficulty of the task and the delicateness of it, (of which the Committee is fully aware) have not prevented us from making an attempt at a solution to this most urgent and vexing problem. We recognize that there will be some difficulties in our proposals, which we may not be able to iron out in a month or two, or perhaps a year or two, but we believe that if we again secure sound footing, begin right, stand by our principles, which we have accepted, God Himself will bless the outcome.

We therefore propose the following revised Mission Order to take the place of the Order of 1912.

CONCEPT
MISSION ORDER OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
GENERAL PRINCIPLES

ART. I

Synod in conformity to the command of Christ, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations," and in behalf of the entire denomination selects a field and divides it into various districts.

ART. II

Every individual church shall share in this common responsibility of carrying out the command of Christ according to the measure of its ability.

ART. III

The work of missions shall be carried on in accordance with the infallible Word of God as interpreted by the

Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches and in harmony with the Church and Mission Orders of the Christian Reformed Church.

INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES

ART. IV

The calling and commissioning of Missionary Ministers shall be taken care of by the individual churches, who, with the approbation of the Board shall appoint the mission helpers and regulate and direct their work.

ART. V

The consistory of the commissioning Church shall, in consultation with the Mission Conference on the field, have the supervision of the doctrine and life of the mission workers and the converts at its post and shall exercise discipline according to the Church Order.

ART. VI

The commissioning church shall finance its post as far as possible, and where not possible, shall seek aid from the General Fund to which all the churches pay their proportionate share. Proper contracts covering the financial agreements between the commissioning churches and the workers should be drawn up.

ART. VII

The organization of the native churches shall be in charge of the commissioning church which shall seek the advice and secure the approval of Classis. Organization shall be effected only when there are a sufficient number of native believers desiring such organization and having qualifications to serve as elders and deacons in the church to be established. The Missionary Minister and the Conference on the field shall submit their opinion, together with the petition of the native believers to the consistory which supervises the post, for final action.

CLASSIS

ART. VIII

The examination of the Missionary ministers shall be conducted by the Classis of the calling church in accordance with Art. 4 of the Church Order. Before accepting a candidate Classis must assure itself of the following:

1. That the letter of call and a mandate approved by the Synodical delegates are present.

2. That a certificate of health by a reputable physician is present. This certificate must indicate that the candidate is free from organic disorders and is in robust health. If he is married, a similar certificate should be secured for his wife.

3. That the contract of co-operation in case more than one church is involved in the support, is present.

4. That the candidate is not more than 32 years of age.

5. That he has special love for, and adaptibility to, mission work as is evident from past experience or from special preparation in mission work at school, preferably a year of work at some mission school. If married, his wife, should manifest this same love for, and adaptibility to, mission work.

6. That he has approved ability to work in coöperation with, and if necessary, under supervision of other missionaries and the delegates of Synod appointed to regulate this work.

7. That he has tact and discretion in dealing with others, such as government officials and employees with whom he may be required to come in contact on the field.

8. That he has ability in linguistics, in teaching and in speaking.

9. That he has administrative ability, that is, ability to take the initiative and leadership in the work.

All things being equal, preference should be given to men who have already served in the ministry and have practical experience in preaching and pastoral work.

SYNOD

ART. IX

Synod regularly appoints one delegate from each Classis to constitute a Board of Missions which shall attend to such matters as are delegated to it by Synod. This Board is to be known as the Christian Reformed Board of Missions. Its office shall be located in Grand Rapids and it shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan.

The term of office of each member of the Board shall be two years.

The officers shall consist of President, a Secretary and a Treasurer.

The Board shall, according to the direction of Synod, acquire, possess, hold and convey the common mission property and take charge of the contributions and expenditures by a common treasury called the Mission Fund. They shall submit to every meeting of Synod a budget of receipts and expenditures.

The Board shall attend to the regular inspection of the mission field by one or more of its members.

The Board shall furnish advice on reports and overtures placed before Synod.

In special matters concerning which the Synod has made no provision and which cannot be deferred without injury to the cause of missions, the Board is empowered to act.

The members of the Board shall represent Synod at the meetings of their respective Classes and also at the Consistory or Combined Consistory meetings at which their presence is required according to the provisions of this Mission Order. At these meetings they shall have an advisory vote, and in case of disagreement with the decision of the consistories or Classes, the matter shall be submitted to the earliest major assembly for final disposition.

ART. X

Synod appoints a Secretary of Missions especially connected with the Board of Foreign Missions, but also charged with pleading for and promoting the interests of the Home and Jewish Missions. His work is described in the Rules for the Director of Missions.

ART. XI

Synod has the care of the common mission field over against a third party, such as the Government and other denominations.

ART. XII

The Training School for native workers shall be in charge of the Board of Missions, under the direction of Synod, and shall be maintained from the General Fund.

MISSION WORKERS

ART. XIII

Missionary Ministers have the same status as regular Ministers of the Word, being officially pastors of the church which called them. They shall, when rendered incapable of performing the duties of their offices, be dealt with either according to Art. XI or Art. XIII of the Church Order.

ART. XIV

The Missionary Ministers shall administer the Word and the Sacraments, attend to the spiritual interests of the helpers and all those with whom they are working on the field, and shall prepare the converts for the organization of native churches. They shall report periodically to their respective consistories and these consistories in turn shall report to the Board.

ART. XV

Missionary helpers, such as unordained interpreters, Colporters, etc., shall, when needed, be employed by the commissioning church with the approval of the Synodical Delegates. They shall labor under the direction of the ordained Missionary who is stationed at this post.

ART. XVI

In addition to the Medical Missionaries, the Board may, when deemed necessary, appoint unordained workers for the medical service and for schools. These workers, as also the manager at Rehoboth, shall work under the direction of the Board.

ART. XVII

Where the Medical Missionary is also an ordained minister and called by a church, he shall work under the supervision of the Board in consultation with the church or churches calling and supporting him.

ART. XVIII

Unordained mission workers when incapacitated in the service shall be given support from the Mission Fund.

ART. XIX

Conferences of the mission workers on the field shall be held periodically to discuss the various matters pertaining to the work and to report to the consistories and

the Board such matters as should be called to their attention. In case of serious departure in doctrine or life on the part of any of the mission workers, the conference shall at once inform the consistory concerned so that it may deal with the matter.

ART. XX

These articles have been so drafted and adopted by common consent that they, when the profit of the church shall demand it, may be altered. This, however, should not be done without the consent of the Synod.

IV. We have not completed our task, however, in merely proposing certain changes in our Mission Order. Ours is also the more difficult and delicate work of adapting present mission conditions to this Order. We are charged not only with removing from the Order regulations which clash with our accepted principle, but practices which conflict with the principles underlying this Order.

We humbly and prayerfully submit the following suggestions:

A. Synod entrust to certain churches definite fields or posts rather than workers.

B. The delegation of Synodically appointed representatives to do this and other work as outlined in the Order shall be left as it is, namely, one delegate from each Classis, but their work shall be limited so that the calling churches assume the responsibility implied in the calling.

C. The individual church or group of neighboring churches occupying such well-defined posts at the request or with the permission of Synod shall have charge of the following work:

(1) The calling of the minister and the paying of his salary directly and not through the Board.

(2) The administration of the Word and Sacraments as well as the discipline of the workers and converts.

(3) The organization of churches, securing of helpers and where necessary, medical service.

(4) The financing of the work or helping to finance it. Where help is needed this is to be secured from a general treasury to be in charge of the delegates of Synod (Board).

(5) All this work of the individual church or churches, of course, shall be subject to the control of the major

assemblies or their delegates as specified in the Mission Order.

D. Believing that all the workers in a certain district should be under the control of one consistory we have made the following division of posts and responsible churches:

1. *China field*. This shall remain in charge of the Grand Rapids churches which have called workers in this field, and the churches of Holland. These churches should meet together as combined consistory to regulate the work.

2. The Indian field should be divided into the following posts:

a) *Farmington*. Rev. L. P. Brink and Mr. Morgan. The Roseland churches now pay the salary of Rev. Brink. These churches should have charge of the entire post. The Kalamazoo churches are now supporting Mr. Morgan. This should be changed so that either the Roseland churches take over this responsibility, asking for financial aid from a General Fund or securing neighboring churches to assume responsibility with Roseland for this work.

b) *Shiprock and surrounding territory*. Some missionary should be called for this post and a calling church appointed.

c) *Toadlena and Beautiful Mountain*. Here, too, a man should be placed and a calling church appointed. Mr. Kobes is working there now.

d) *Nahaschitty*. Rev. Goudberg and Mr. Geo. Oppenhuizen are on this field. The churches of Classis Holland are in charge now and could remain so, meeting in joint consistory, to take care of the work.

e) *Crown Point, San Antone and Star Lake*. Rev. Bolt is working there and the Paterson churches are supporting this work. They should also meet in combined or joint consistory to take charge of this field.

f) *Zuni*. Rev. J. W. Brink is there. His salary is being taken care of by individuals. A calling church should be secured and this church should be responsible for this post.

g) *Rehoboth*. This field should be divided. We would suggest the following:

Gallup and Ft. Wingate—Rev. Hayenga has charge of this post.

Rehoboth and Two Wells camp work. Now be-

ing done by Rev. Kamps supported by the congregation of Drenthe, and Mr. Bouma. This arrangement could be continued since Rev. Kamps is loaned to the church of Rehoboth.

Hospital and School. Dr. Pousma, Mr. Bosscher, and others are at this post. Dr. Pousma is being supported by Classis Hackensack. This whole post should be taken care of by this Classis and the delegates of Synod (the Board). This post, because of its peculiar nature, namely, possessing a hospital and having a manager, should in a special way be in charge of the Board, since it does not for the most part fall under the work of preaching and administration of sacraments.

V. The committee is fully aware of the incompleteness of the suggestions made above. It, however, feels that it could go no further. Some further changes must await developments. This set-up as we have outlined it we believe to be a start in the right direction. We believe it will lead us back to a loyalty in practice to the principles we have adopted and just because of that, will lead to future blessings from the Lord who calls us to the work of missions and Himself has given us the principles for guidance in carrying out His commission.

We feel it will certainly link the work more closely to the churches supporting and praying for the work. It will help to allay the dissatisfaction which is general, as is evident from the letters from which quotations were given. Churches supporting missionaries feel they should have a voice in determining the salary not only but the method of work as well.

It will, we believe, stimulate a new interest in missions, for the churches will themselves remain active in the real work of missions instead of merely in raising the money.

Respectfully submitted,

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W. BODE,
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