

AGENDA

Synod Christian Reformed Church

*To convene June 14, 1939
at Grand Rapids, Mich.*

[PART I: REPORTS]

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

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PREFACE

THE Synod of 1926, p. 174 of its "Acta," and reiterated by the Synod of 1937, p. 111, decided that hereafter its Agenda should be published in two parts, the first, to contain the Reports, to appear as soon as possible after January 1st; the second part to contain the Overtures to be laid before Synod, to be published on or before May 1st. The present volume is PART I. The second part is to appear on or before May 1, 1939. Classical stated clerks, please send us the overtures, the names of all the delegates, and the ADDRESSES of the elders by the first day of April, 1939.

The publication of this First Part of the Agenda is belated because only one or two of the Committees sent their reports before Dec. 1, as stipulated by the Synod of 1937, p. 111.

VOORWOORD

DIT boek is het eerste stuk der Agenda, voor de 1939 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, 1939, zie "Acta" der Synode van 1926, bl. 174, en verder bl. 111 der Acta Synodi 1937. De classicale stated clerks worden bij dezen vriendelijk uitgenoodigd om ons die voorstellen, alsmede de namen der gekozen deputaten, en de ADDRESSEN der ouderlingen tegen 1 April te doen toekomen.

Dat dit deel der Agenda wat later verschijnt dan gewoonlijk is veroorzaakt door het feit dat de respectieve Commissies, met een paar uitzonderingen, ons haar materiaal niet tijdig genoeg bezorgden.

Henry Beets

737 Madison Ave., S. E.,
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AGENDA

PART I

REPORTS

REPORT I.

SYNODICAL AND CLASSICAL EXAMINATIONS

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE mandate given your Committee reads as follows: "To study the relation of the Synodical Examination to the Classical Examinations, including the question of the necessity of the latter." (*Acts of Synod, 1937, p. 108.*)

This presupposes that Synod conducts the Preparatoir Examination, and does not demand a discussion of the merits or demerits of this arrangement. It therefore does not touch upon such questions as the advisability of returning this Examination to the Curatorium or of entrusting it to a Classis as is done in the Netherlands.

The two questions to be studied by your Committee are: 1—The relation of the Synodical to the Classical Examination, and; 2—The necessity of the Classical Examination. In the consideration of these questions, it is but proper that the second question be considered first. If it can be established that the Classical Examination is necessary, then the further question of the relationship of the two is in order.

I. THE NECESSITY OF THE CLASSICAL EXAMINATION.

A. We will first consider the occasion for this question.

1. This question has been raised before. At the Synod of 1916 there was an instruction both from a Classis and from a Consistory. While the Classis merely asked that the relationship of these examinations be more carefully defined, the Consistory proposed abolishment of the Peremptoir or Classical Examinations, *Agenda 1916, p. XIII.*

tion, they should examine the candidate. This is in full agreement with the relationship existing between our major and minor assemblies. No Synod should take to hand a matter which is clearly the affair of a certain Consistory or Classis, even though it should concern a matter regulated for all the churches in the Church Order.

2. A final check upon the candidate is necessary before he is ordained to the ministry of the Word.

a. We are living in an age of doctrinal indifference and moral laxity, and a double check is by no means superfluous. Moreover, the candidate is under no supervision during his candidacy. While at school he is under the supervision of the Faculty, and later as a minister he will be under the supervision of his Consistory.

b. Especially in these days when a long candidacy is not uncommon, a man might have fallen into error, either in doctrine or life, by the time that he has received a call and is ready to be ordained. It is therefore necessary that he be again examined before being ordained. It is true a minister may also fall into error, and there seems to be no provision for his further examination. This is not true, however, since he has signed the formula of subscription in which he declares that if "hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach or defend the same, either by preaching or writing until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis or Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis or Synod under the penalty in case of refusal of being by that very fact suspended from our office."

3. A more thorough examination than Synod is able to give should be required. Synod at most can not spend more than a day to examine a group of perhaps twelve men, while the Classis is able to devote the same amount of time (and more if necessary) to one or two. This examination of Synod, although sufficient for declaring a man a candidate, is inadequate for the weightier matter of ordaining him to the ministry of the Word. We believe, as we hope to show later, that the examination for ordination should be more thorough and comprehensive.

From the above considerations, it is evident that the Synodical Examination can only be preparatory, and *can not* be decisive. We have seen that the examination for ordination is a part of the lawful calling, and therefore can not precede calling. And even though this were not true, and Synod could give a provisional right for ordination, this *should not* be decisive, because of the practical reasons set forth above.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE TWO EXAMINATIONS.

Since the Classical Examination is a necessity, a discussion of its relationship to the Synodical Examination is in order.

A. The first question is: What is the distinction? This is the question that has been raised once and again, and the failure to see the distinction leads to the suggestion for the abolishment of the Classical Examination. But there is a distinct difference, as we have shown above. This difference is threefold:

1. The *purpose* of the Synodical Examination is to determine whether the aspirant is to be declared a candidate for the sacred ministry. The Classical Examination is to determine whether the candidate should be ordained to the Sacred ministry. This difference in purpose to our mind requires a different approach and content of the examination.

2. The *nature* of the Synodical Examination is preparatory. It is to determine whether the aspirant is eligible for a call, and does not assure the candidate of a call. God has not yet confirmed this young man's desire to enter the ministry, and we should not run ahead of God. The Classical Examination is of a decisive nature. Since the candidate has received a call, Consistory and Classis earnestly and prayerfully decide whether he shall be admitted to the ministry.

3. The *examining body* in the case of the Preparatoir Examination is the broadest ecclesiastical body of our church, since the candidate is a candidate for the entire church. The examining body in the Peremptoir Examination is the calling Consistory, assisted by the Classis. Even though it does concern the entire church, it nevertheless is the task of Consistory and Classis as shown above.

B. The next question is: In what way should the examinations differ? We reply: both in approach and content. This difference in content in our opinion does not consist in this, that the former is scholastic or scientific, and the latter more practical. The scholastic and scientific angle can safely be entrusted to our Faculty and Curatorium. The difference consists rather in this—that in the former examination it is to be determined whether a man is fit both in doctrine and life for candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church; and in the latter whether the candidate also has the ability to apply his knowledge to the ministerial office. This difference in purpose and nature requires that the content of the examinations be different, and it is with that in mind that we come with the following suggestions:

1. In both of the examinations the following should have a place:

a. *Dogmatics*. But the approach should be in accord with the purpose of the examination. Since the Synodical Examination is to determine whether a man should be a candidate in the Christian Reformed Church, the purpose should be whether the aspirant is truly Reformed, and the examination should be approached from this point of view. Since the Classical Examination is to determine whether a man should be admitted to the ministry, the purpose should also be whether he is capable of using what he has learned in the Gospel Ministry. In this connection, inquiry should also be made into the Standards and conflicting positions usually referred to as *Knowledge of our Standards* and *Controvers*. Experience has proven that these are closely related. They are included with dogmatics in the examinations in the Netherlands.

b. In both examinations *Practica* should also have a place. We feel that also in the Synodical Examinations careful inquiry should be made concerning the moral character and spiritual status of the aspirant. This has perhaps not come to its own in the past, due to the number of aspirants, and the lack of time. Yet, we consider this as a matter of greatest importance. If a student fails here, he should not become a candidate. Surely the Synod is vitally interested in this very thing, and can not be satisfied with a cursory examination in this matter. Naturally this will occupy an important place in the

Classical Examination, as it has in the past, since Consistory and Classis do consider this matter of utmost importance.

c. In both examinations *a sermon* should be delivered in whole or in part, upon a prescribed text. In the case of the Synodical Examination a copy of the sermon should be in the hands of the clerk of the Synod upon the first day of the meeting of Synod in order that these sermons may be placed in the hands of a Committee appointed to study them. In the case of the Classical Examination, the sermon should be handed in at least a week before the time of the Classical meeting to one of the critics. After the sermon has been delivered, and before the examination proper commences, the critics in the presence of the Classis, and in the presence of the candidate (s) shall evaluate it in an exhaustive and sympathetic way.

2. These three things are sufficient for the Synodical Examination. This is all the Synod can actually do justice to in the time at their disposal, and is all that is necessary for the purpose of determining whether or not the aspirant shall become a candidate. But in the Classical Examination we would suggest the following additions:

a. *Knowledge of the Scriptures*. This does not imply an examination in Introduction to the Old and New Testaments, but an examination to determine whether the student is acquainted with the contents of the Holy Scriptures. In the regulations pertaining to the Peremptoir Examination in the Netherlands, this is definitely stated: "De Kennis van den inhoud der Heilige Schrift."

b. *Church History*, especially of the Netherlands and America. There is a lack of historical consciousness on the part of our people today, and if our people are to acquire it, our ministers should possess it. Church history does have a place in the examination in the Netherlands, and in the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in America.

c. *Church Polity*. This is not to be a mere examination as to the principles. The purpose here is to determine whether the candidate is able to apply the principles of church government by placing before him definite cases or situations.

d. *Christian Ethics*. This subject should be included in the examination for ordination because it will come more to its own here than in the Synodical Examination.

Your Committee comes with the following advice:

I. That Synod declare that the Classical Examination is a necessity. *Grounds:*

A. The Classical Examination is part of the lawful calling.

B. A final check upon the candidate is necessary, especially in view of the long candidacies.

C. A more thorough examination than Synod can be expected to give should be required before a candidate is admitted to the ministry.

II. That Synod decide:

A. That the synodical examination is preparatory, and deal with the following matters:

1. Dogmatics.
2. Practica.
3. Specimen Sermon.

B. That the classical examination is decisive, and deal with the following matters:

1. Dogmatics (including Knowledge of the Standards and Controvers.)
2. Practica.
3. Specimen Sermon.
4. Knowledge of the Scriptures.
5. Church History.
6. Church Polity.
7. Ethics.

Respectfully submitted,

J. F. SCHUURMANN

MARVIN J. VANDERWERP

P. S.—Dr. R. Bronkema, chairman of the committee, did not see his way clear to serve on this committee. The remaining two members took it upon themselves to fulfill the mandate given the committee by the Synod of 1937.

REPORT II.

MEMBERS DEVIATING FROM OUR DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

YOUR committee on *members who deviate from our doctrinal standards*, herewith submits its report to your honorable body.

I. OUR CHARGE. On page 39 of the Acts of Synod, 1938, where the appointment of our committee is recorded, we read

"Since the Synod of 1936 expressed itself so outspokenly that 'there is urgent and widespread need of enlightenment in our churches as to the way in which Consistories should proceed with members who conscientiously object to certain doctrines of the Church . . .', etc. (see Acts 1936, p. 122).

"Your Committee recommends that such a Committee be appointed.

"A motion to adopt the advice of the Advisory Committee is carried, and the appointment of a Committee is referred to the Committee on Appointments."

The decision of Synod, 1936, referred to in the above decision, reads as follows: (p. 122, Acts, 1936)

"Since there is an urgent and widespread need of enlightenment in our churches as to the way in which Consistories should proceed with members who conscientiously object to certain doctrines of the Church, a need illustrated by the petition of Englewood I which concerns a member who denies the validity of water baptism and who in the opinion of the Consistory and Classis Illinois should be placed under discipline (cf. Acts 1888, Art. 57b);

"Since the problem presented by Englewood I as to how a member who denies the validity of water baptism can be removed from the church without being declared to be 'excluded from the fellowship of Christ' and accounted 'a Gentile and a publican' is a real problem, the more so since it seems to be a foregone conclusion that continued suspension from the Lord's Supper does not offer a solution; and

"Since the problem is very involved and the time is lacking to present to this Synod a satisfactory solution,

"Synod, realizing that the Acts of 1888, Article 57, b, state that members who conscientiously object to certain doctrines shall finally be disciplined, decides that a Committee be appointed to study the problem thoroughly and to report to the next Synod. (See Art. 188.)"

These are the two official Synodical decisions that have direct bearing on the question of the precise nature of the charge given to our committee.

It should be noted that there is (as so often happens, alas) no precise formulation of our charge *at the time of our appointment* and by the Synod that appointed us. The situation is this, that Synod 1936 approved certain opinions expressed by its pre-advisory committee on this matter when it appointed the first committee. And since this latter committee, as Synod 1938 decided, did not do the work for which it was appointed, Synod 1938 appointed the undersigned to carry out the original mandate of 1936. The result is that we gain the clearest understanding of our mandate, not from any new decision of the Synod that appointed us but from the decision of Synod 1936, to which Synod 1938 refers.

In the light of the decisions quoted above we believe the following is a fairly accurate statement of our charge:

To report to Synod on the question how to deal with members who deviate from the doctrinal position of our Standards so that they cannot be admitted to Holy Communion, but whom the consistory might hesitate to excommunicate by using the established Form since this involves the declaration that those excommunicated are outside the Kingdom of heaven.

II. IMPLICATIONS OF OUR CHARGE.

It is absolutely necessary for us to point out to Synod that the language used by Synod, especially of 1936, in the formulation of our charge, contains certain significant *implications*. It is a pressing need for us to point this out to Synod for two reasons:

First, it might reasonably be expected of us that we perform our work and deliver a report in harmony with these implications. Secondly, we *cannot do that*, for the simple reason that we *disagree with these implications*.

Permit us to discuss these implications one by one.

The first is this, that we are dealing here with an urgent problem of widespread proportions. In other words, many of our churches are supposed to be struggling with this problem and seeking Synodical light on it, and are desirous of Synodical action to guide them.

We seriously doubt whether this is true. No proof has been presented in substantiation of this contention. And we for ourselves are convinced that it *is not true*.

Do not misunderstand us. We do believe that there is considerable danger that some members in some of our churches may feel attracted to doctrinal views in conflict with our Confessions, and even embrace and defend them. But we cannot see that this real danger constitutes a new problem in the sphere of church discipline. We are convinced that common sense, the religious liberty of our land, the fact that there are churches and religious groups to satisfy almost every type of believer, and finally a calm courageous application of discipline according to Articles 72 and 76 of our Church Order, will take care of practically every, if not every individual case that may arise in the sphere of this supposed problem.

Let us explain in a concrete way. Here is a brother in one of our churches (as was the case in the concrete problem that is responsible for the request for Synodical study and action) who denies the validity of water baptism for the New Testament dispensation. What now? Have we now a problem for which there is at present no solution? Not at all. Our contention is as stated above, that common sense and exercise of the religious liberty that is his, will in all probability provide a solution. That is, the brother will leave us, and join with a group of like-minded believers. He will no longer feel at home with us. Ordinary honesty and self-respect will lead most professed followers of the Christ to refuse to continue membership in a church that is proclaiming teachings that they hold to be un-Scriptural. In other words, the man that denies water baptism or denies any other important doctrine formulated in our confession—the man who is in utter disagreement with our church on some important point *and yet wishes to remain with us* and observe Holy Communion with us, will be the *very rare exception*.

And suppose such a rare case does arise, as it did in one of our churches. Then we hold that a calm courageous exercise of church discipline will almost without fail provide the solution. The brother, namely, is censured, as Article 72 plainly rules that he should be. He “errs in doctrine.” Therefore he is asked to abstain from Holy Communion.

Permit us to remark that it is precisely at *this point* that our consistories must be conscious of both danger and solemn responsibility. In many churches round about us, there is no *courageous* exercise of church disci-

pline because of doctrinal errors. So that you may have in churches with a definitely Presbyterian or Reformed background, members, not molested in any way, who are known to embrace very un-Reformed views. As long as they are fairly blameless in walk and especially if they do not deny the Virgin birth, the Atonement and one or two other "fundamentals," they can dwell at peace in the church with whose teachings they do not agree at all. *That* is the danger. *That* means the slow but sure undermining of the Reformed character of our churches. That means that the church dares not assert itself as "the pillar and ground of the truth." And thus the view is subtly encouraged that doctrinal errors are not so bad, as long as men live right, and that denominational distinctiveness was a fetish of our fathers that we should outgrow as soon as possible.

Therefore we wish to say with all emphasis that *that* is the problem involved in the general question we are considering, the problem namely of maintaining the spirit of loyal and courageous exercise of church discipline in the case of all who "err in doctrine" as our fathers laid down the Scriptural rule in Article 72 of our Church Order. If this is not done, we certainly will soon face a serious situation.

But—and now we return to our main line of thought—if church discipline is courageously exercised, we see no great urgent problem of widespread proportions that demands Synodical action or new rules or methods of church discipline. If it is generally understood that those who "err in doctrine" cannot partake of Communion, such members will nearly always leave us. As already explained, most of them will leave as a matter of free choice. But if there be rare cases where this free choice is not exercised the experience of church discipline will usually if not always lead to voluntary severance of church relations.

In a word, to summarize the argument: how many of our churches today are at a loss how to deal with the problem of members who err in doctrine, who are refused holy Communion, and yet who persistently persevere in the desire to maintain their membership in our church? We are certain there are very few such cases. We are not sure that there is *even one*.

May we remark in this connection that the case in Englewood I that first brought this problem to the attention of Synod has been "solved" precisely in the way we have just indicated. First the brother, an elder of long standing, wanted to maintain his membership. But when the consistory persisted in its refusal to extend to him the fellowship of Holy Communion, and after the last Synod rejected the report which had given him considerable encouragement, he resigned his membership. In a word calm, persistent courageous application of church discipline caused the whole problem to evaporate before our very eyes.

The question may of course be asked, what must be done in case such a member *should* persist in the desire to retain his membership, in other words, should practically dare the consistory to excommunicate him according to the Form? What then? Surely most, if not all, of our consistories would hesitate long before using the Form with its solemn declaration of exclusion "from the fellowship of Christ." But what then? Surely, it is said, continued censure would hardly be a solution of the problem.

That is the second implication of the language adopted by Synod. "Since it seems to be a foregone conclusion that continued suspension from the Lord's Supper does not offer a solution." (Acts 1936, p. 122.)

Our answer is:

(a) It should be remembered as has just been reasoned that such cases would be very rare. And we should not be too ready to make a great urgent general problem of possible rare cases.

(b) When it is said by Synod of 1936, "Since it seems to be a foregone conclusion that continued suspension from the Lord's Supper does not offer a solution," it is silently assumed that there is, at present, *no other course open*. And the particular assumption is that excommunication by the use of the Form is out of order. But we are not convinced that in such cases excommunication by the Form could never be a right and a duty. We are, of course, all agreed that the mere denial of certain doctrines, say the validity of water baptism, would not give a consistory courage to declare a member outside the Kingdom of heaven. But when a member persistently declares, by establishing and maintaining his member-

ship there, "*This church* I recognize as the church of Christ," and yet he obstinately refuses to submit to the *teaching authority* of the *only* church of Christ he has promised to submit to; in other words, when he practically and persistently *accuses the church of Christ of false teaching* and thus endangers the peace of the church and encourages the spirit of rebellion against the teaching authority of the church of Christ, then we believe the time may come when he fully deserves censure and *excommunication* according to Article 76 of our Church Order:

"Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory . . . shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with the consent of the Classis."

To summarize our argument: there is a great difference between honest differences of opinion on certain doctrines between the members of various denominations, all peacefully living in their own church, and an obstinate refusal of a member to recognize the teaching authority of the church to which he has promised to submit.

The latter is very decidedly a *sinful* attitude of mind and heart. Even then a consistory might hesitate long before proceeding to excommunication by the Form. Surely it would never do this without the final advice of Classis or Synod.

(c) Usually continued censure or suspension from the Lord's Supper would be the wiser course. And your committee sees no objection to this course, in rare exceptional cases. We know of no church rule or precedent forbidding it. In unusual cases, and in view of the limitations of our knowledge and wisdom, it may be the only course that a consistory dares or should dare to follow.

But if such rare cases should arise, let each case be considered by itself. Let the consistory freely seek advice of Classis and even Synod. But then it would be better in the future to ask advice directly on the case *as such*. Then the committee or body studying the question has both a *clear* and a *limited* field before it, not the *vague* field of a general problem. And let it finally be repeated,

we doubt very much whether such individual cases will often trouble our church courts. Certainly there is no general and urgent problem.

In the light of all that precedes, it will be seen at once that your committee has no sympathy with the third implication of Synodical language quoted at the beginning of our report.

Synod, under the guidance of its pre-advisory committee, seems to imply that we must in all probability, find some new method to deal with these cases of doctrinal deviations, so that such members are excluded from our church, but "without being declared to be excluded from the fellowship of Christ." For Synod declares this is a "*real problem.*"

If our reasoning as found above is correct, then of course this is not necessary at all, since there is no urgent widespread problem, and since in unusual cases, either excommunication or continued censure may, with advice of Classis and (or) Synod, be perfectly proper.

We wish to add, however, that we are firmly of the opinion that such *erasure* of members, not involving real discipline, would be a grave mistake. We present the following considerations in defense of our view:

(a) Our fathers felt no need of such a method. They simply said, "if any one errs in doctrine" he should be disciplined. Let us hesitate long before we say or do anything to weaken or qualify the position that has not been found wanting throughout long centuries of Reformed history.

(b) It would be grossly inconsistent first to *discipline* such members, and then to declare officially that (without any repentance or change on their part) we dare not maintain or continue discipline to its logical conclusion. And that is what we declare if we *erase* them without excommunicating them.

(c) If such a new method were to be introduced, we would at once have to formulate a "shorter confession" of *fundamentals*, denial of which would lead to excommunication by the Form, while denial of other doctrines, *not so fundamental*, would be dealt with by means of erasure.

But then we would certainly be completely off the track. Where would the line be drawn, between funda-

mentals and non-fundamentals? And do we want to draw such a line? May we? Must not the church which is the pillar and ground of the truth maintain the unity and inviolability of all the truth formulated in our Confessions?

(d) Such a new method would conflict with and destroy the authority and prestige of our Confessions.

In the standards we speak, not merely as a denomination, but as the Church of Christ, the pillar and ground of the truth. And therefore every denial of a doctrine plainly and specifically formulated in our Confessions must be met with discipline as being a denial of Divine truth. And having once begun censure, because God's truth is denied, we must dare to maintain it. Else we lower large parts of our Standards to the level of *peculiar denominational* views that we dare not back up with our disciplinary authority as the church of Christ.

One final remark must not be omitted. It goes without saying that not every wrong idea some member may harbor should at once be dealt with by applying censure. Especially in view of the many winds of doctrine wafted in upon our people from the troubled religious world round about us, there is need of great wisdom and charity and patience in dealing with those who are perhaps, only temporarily, attracted by teachings that our Standards do not approve.

However, when there is open and persistent denial of doctrines specifically and plainly formulated in our Standards, then the honor and peace of Christ's church, the welfare of the erring brother and the sad conditions in many churches round about us, all call for disciplinary action.

We, therefore, advise Synod to declare:

A. Articles 72 and 76 of our Church Order make adequate provision for appropriate ecclesiastical action in the case of members who deviate from our doctrinal standards.

B. In case a consistory, after denying the Lord's Supper to a member who errs in doctrine, feels the need of guidance as to further procedure, the advice of classis can be sought.

THE COMMITTEE:

REV. W. P. VAN WYK.
REV. G. HOEKSEMA.
REV. J. J. STEIGENGA.

REPORT III.

REPORT ON ASSESSMENTS AND QUOTAS

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

YOUR Committee on "Assessments and Quotas" has the honor to present the following report:

OUR MANDATE

This may be found in the Acts of Synod of 1938, Art. 97, page 84:

"The Advisory Committee on 'Varia' presents its advice with regard to a belated overture of Classis Holland:

'Classis Holland, in its session of May 19, 1938, overtures Synod to consider assessments and quotas of equal importance, and equally binding on all churches, and that we no longer recognize or intimate a distinction between these assumed obligations. Since apparently often the one now suffers at the expense of the other, assessments being preferred above quotas in the order of payment by a number of churches.'

Your Committee recommends to reject this overture on the following grounds:

1. Such an arrangement assumes that all churches are equally able to bear the burden of the various Kingdom causes, which is not the case.

2. It would still further apply the principle of compulsion in the matter of the support of Kingdom causes, which is undesirable.

Our churches are not ready for such a change as proposed; and if Synod deems it desirable, this matter should be sent to the Classes for their opinion.

Instead of adopting this advice, Synod decides to appoint a Committee to study this matter and to report at the next Synod."

INTERPRETATION OF OUR MANDATE

We did not find it an easy task to come to a clear understanding as to just what is involved in our mandate,

and what is expected of us. The actual words of our charge are "to study *this matter* and to report at the next Synod." Do the words "this matter" refer only to the proposal of Classis Holland in its overture, or are we to study the whole situation in regard to assessments and quotas as methods of raising funds for the various denominational needs and obligations? Those of us who were present at the Synod of 1938 are convinced that the latter was in the mind of Synod. From the discussion on the floor of Synod it became evident that there is no unanimous and reasoned conviction among us that we should have *assessments* for Calvin College and Seminary and the Emeritus Fund, and *quotas* for Missions, Church Extension, Church Subsidy, etc. Neither is there apparently a clear understanding among us as to just where the difference between assessments and quotas lies.

THE DISTINCTION MADE BETWEEN ASSESSMENTS AND QUOTAS

That there is a distinction is felt quite generally by our Consistories and members. It is clear from the overture of Classis Holland as well as from the reply of the Advisory Committee. The Committee felt that assessments are more binding than quotas. There is "compulsion" in the former, not in the latter. Classis Holland refers to the undoubted fact that assessments are often preferred above quotas in the order of payment.

Neither is it strange that Consistories should be concerned first of all about the payment of the assessments. For if they do not pay the required amount, or if they fail to pay the amount in full, the shortage is held against them as a debt, and they can be expected to be admonished by Classis or (and) Synod to pay this debt. This is evidently what the Advisory Committee had in mind when under (2) they speak of further application of "the principle of compulsion in the matter of the support of Kingdom causes," which is undesirable, as they see it. Now it is true that the church has never yet *disciplined* any individual or consistory (congregation) for not paying the full amount to any church fund whatsoever. Yet, since no Consistory likes to be visited by a Classical Committee, or be the subject of Synodical discussion for any alleged delinquency, and since there is at present no fear that this will happen with respect to the various "quotas,"

it is easily understood that they turn their attention first of all to the payment of the assessments. The assessments are paid first, if possible in full, and then, if there is anything left, attention is turned to the quotas. We owe a debt of gratitude to Classis Holland for having called Synod's attention to the fact that all this makes for conditions that are undesirable and unfair.

NO SUFFICIENT REASON FOR THE DISTINCTION

Moreover, we agree with Classis Holland that there is no discoverable reason for making the distinction. The causes for which we levy assessments (Calvin College and Seminary, and the Emeritus Fund) are not more compellingly the business of the Church than the carrying on of Mission work, for instance, or the support of needy churches. Neither have we been able to discover any decisions by former Synods, in which light is shed on the question: "Why assessments for some and quotas for other causes?" It seems we have just drifted into the situation we have today, without a conscious attempt to base the distinction on grounds of Scripture or principle.

If the financial condition of our people had remained as flourishing as it was some years ago, the distinction which the two different names are intended to convey might not have made much practical difference. It is our conviction that in that case the quotas would have continued to come in as well, or practically as well, as the assessments. In other words, it is our conviction, as Committee, that many churches have had so many families *unable* to contribute the amounts agreed upon by our Synods, that the Consistories in turn have been *unable* to collect their congregational quotas and assessments. Since, however, for the reason stated in the foregoing paragraphs, assessments are now first attended to, it is especially the quotas that have suffered.

TO REMEDY THE SITUATION

Two things should be done, it seems to us. (1) Synod should stress the fact that congregations as well as the members individually are *financially responsible for the work we have undertaken together*. Only manifest inability excuses from the payment of our proportionate share. Congregations must realize that unless they pay their proportionate share, other congregations must pay

for them. If this can not be done (and usually it can not), the Christian Reformed Church is compelled to fail in its obligations toward its missionaries, emeritus preachers, professors et al.

(2) At the same time, it seems to us that this responsibility is the same for "quotas" as for "assessments." To bring this home we propose to drop one of the terms. And when it comes to the question which of the terms should be retained, we expect to show that the term "quota" deserves to be preferred to the term "assessment."

WHY "QUOTA" IS PREFERABLE TO "ASSESSMENT"

The term "quota," according to the dictionaries, simply means a proportionate share. It has no verbal form, and therefore conveys no idea of imposition or enforcement. It leaves room for the voluntary element that should be characteristic of the giving of God's people for his cause.

"To assess," on the other hand, means to value for taxation, and secondly to impose a tax or sum upon a person, or estate, or income, based upon that valuation. It presupposes therefore the power on the part of the assessor to tax the income and (or) property of those under his jurisdiction, and also the power to enforce the payment of the assessment or tax, quite irrespective of the question how the assessed may feel about it all. This power has from ancient times been exercised by the State, evidently with divine sanction. See Matt. 17:25, Matt. 22:17-21, and parallels, Rom. 13:5-7. Does the Church also thus "assess" its members?

THE PRACTICE OF OUR SISTER CHURCHES

In our sister churches, "De Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland," they have no assessments, as far as we have been able to learn. We read in Professor Dr. F. L. Rutgers' *Kerkelijke Adviezen*, vol. I, page 264:

66. Mag een Classis de kerken verplichten tot bijdragen anders dan het Classicale quotum?

.... Zeer zeker moeten kerkeraden zich houden aan de besluiten der Classe en deze aan die der Synoden. Maar-de meerdere vergaderingen moeten met haar besluiten ook blijven binnen den kring harer bevoegdheid. En daartoe behoort niet, dat zij met *dwingende macht* gaven van christelijke liefde aan iemand mogen opleggen. Ze mogen daarvoor wel een omslag maken *in dien zin*, dat zij

uitspreken wat h.i. ieder daarvoor behoort te geven; maar dat kan niet meer zijn dan *zedelijken* dwang; dus een besluit van gansch anderen aard dan besluiten, die ook uitgevoerd *moeten* worden, desnoods met kerkelijken dwang." See also pp. 267, 268, same volume.

[*Translation:* May a Classis demand obligatory contributions from the churches for other causes than the classical expenses?

" Consistories must certainly abide by the decisions of the Classis, as well as the Classes by the decisions of the Synods. But — these broader ecclesiastical gatherings must also see to it that in their decisions they do not go beyond the pale of their jurisdiction. And this (jurisdiction) does not include that they may with compelling authority impose upon anyone gifts of Christian love. They may permissibly designate a quota for these, *in this sense* that they say how much in their estimation each one ought to give for these causes; but this can never be more than *moral* compulsion; a decision, therefore, of an entirely different nature from decisions that *must* be executed, even with ecclesiastical compulsion, if necessary."]

We realize, of course, that neither the example of our sister churches, nor the opinions of Dr. Rutgers are in themselves determinative for our own ecclesiastical practice. But we believe that the Scriptures themselves stress not only the *obligatory* but also and at the same time the *voluntary* character that our gifts for God's kingdom ought to have, and that the term "assessment" does not do justice to this voluntary element.

WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES?

Under the Old Testament dispensation the Lord himself by law *imposed* upon his people the payment of the various tithes. Besides these imposed contributions the Israelites also were given opportunity to show their love for the Lord and his cause by "free-will offerings." See Lev. 22:18, 23:38, Deut. 12:6, 16:10 et al.

When we come to the New Testament dispensation, the situation is entirely different. Nowhere do we find a command, either by our Lord or by his apostles to pay tithes for the service of Jehovah's house. All offerings mentioned or recommended are "free-will offerings." This is in harmony with the general principle that under the New Testament the church has come to maturity, and that believers may be guided in many matters, for which formerly exact rules were given, by their gratitude and sense of responsibility as mature children of God.

Certainly the church has the *sacred duty* as well as the *privilege* to care for its poor and destitute, to carry on mission work, to help needy sister churches, to care for

the ministry of the gospel, to supply the material needs of its ministers. We see the New Testament church engaged in all these matters. General principles are given such as this that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," and that those who serve in the gospel should "live of the gospel." Luke 10:7, 1 Tim. 5:18, 1 Cor. 9:14. But we do not have a single instance in the New Testament where the church imposed an *assessment* upon its membership for any cause, or where the churches met in Council or Synod to impose such an assessment upon the various local churches. The Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) did not touch upon money matters at all, nor do we know of any other regulation with regard to obligatory contributions, the payment of which was enforced. Wherever we do read of contributions made for the church, the poor, or the ministry, it is stressed that the giving is voluntary: an offering to which love to the Lord and loyalty to his cause obligates his people. See e.g. Acts 5:4, 1 Cor. 16:1-4, Philipp. 4:18, Rom. 15:26, 27. In this last mentioned text the apostle speaks of the *obligations* that the churches of Macedonia have toward the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem, but nevertheless the obligation is prompted by love and honored voluntarily. "Yea it hath been their *good pleasure* and their *debtors* they are vs. 27."

Our conclusion is that there is no discoverable authority in the New Testament for the Church to levy "assessments" on its members or congregations. On the contrary: whatever we do read about the methods of raising money for carrying on the work of the church, points in the direction of voluntary gifts, prompted by the sacred obligations of love and gratitude.

At the same time it should be well understood and repeatedly emphasized that the *voluntary* character of our contributions towards the Lord's cause does not cancel or exclude our *obligation* to pay. "De offerdienst is ook *dienst* en daar past niets anders dan stricte gehoorzaamheid. En een iegelijk, die hier wat vrijbuiten wil, die vergeet dat hij priester-amtsdrager is, en verwaarloost op schandelijke wijze zijn ambt.

Het behoeft geen betoog, dat deze dienst een liefdedienst is, waarbij het met den dienst der barmhartigheid nog weer anders staat dan met den offerdienst voor de kerk des Heeren. Wat dit laatste betreft, spreken we dan gewoonlijk van "vrijwillige bijdragen." Nu zijn er, die

dit "vrijwillig" in dezen term ongeveer aldus uitleggen, dat men het doen kan, maar ook nalaten, en dat dit geheel aan ieders believen staat. Het is immers vrijwillig!

Door deze redeneering wordt de "vrijwilligheid" tot "willekeur" gedegradeerd; de christelijke vrijheid tot losbandigheid verlaagd.

We zullen daarom goed doen wel in te zien, dat dit "vrijwillig" alleen beteekent, dat de gaven met een vrijwillig of gewillig hart en met een blijmoedig-milde hand moeten gegeven. Het mag u niet afgedwongen worden, want elk met-een-zucht-gegeven offer heeft zijn waarde verloren, al was dat offer nog zoo groot! Dat maakt de zaak dus niet gemakkelijker maar moeilijker. God wil niet alleen dat wij offeren, maar ook dat wij blijmoedig offeren. Anders is ons geld met ons ten verderve! In elk geval sluit de vrijwilligheid de verplichting niet uit. Wij mogen en we moeten. De offeraar in Gods koninkrijk is vrije en onderdaan tegelijk; knecht en kind.

Deze verplichting ligt zeer voor de hand. Als krachtens het ambt der geloovigen de kerk is geïnstitueerd, de ambten zijn ingesteld, etc., dan ligt toch niets meer voor de hand, dan dat diezelfde geloovigen de verplichtingen die daaruit voortvloeien en die ze gezamenlijk op zich hebben genomen, nu ook nakomen, en dat ze gemeenschappelijk alle lasten dragen. *Elke* verplichting, ook die vrijwillig is aangegaan, moet nagekomen worden. Ge hebt uw huwelijk vrijwillig aangegaan, maar niemand zal toch zoo dwaas wezen om te meenen, dat hij nu geen huwelijksplichten heeft." (Het Ambt Aller Geloovigen, by H. V., Heraut, Oct. 9, 1938)

[*Translation:* "The service of offering is also *service*, and here nothing but strict obedience behooves us. Everyone who here desires to be something of a freebooter, forgets that he stands in the office of priest, and neglects his office in a shameful manner.

"Now it needs no argument that this service is a service of love, in which respect there is again a difference between the service of mercy and the service of offering for the Church of the Lord. With respect to the latter we usually speak of 'voluntary contributions.' Now there are some who interpret the word 'voluntary' in this term somewhat in this sense that one may do it but also leave it undone, and that this depends entirely upon each one's own pleasure. For — is it not voluntary?

"By means of this reasoning voluntariness is degraded into arbitrariness; Christian liberty into disorderliness.

"We shall therefore do well to realize that this 'voluntary' means only that the gifts must be given with a voluntary or willing heart,

and with a cheerfully-generous hand. It may not be forced out of you with compulsion, for every offering given with a sigh has lost its value, however large the offering may be! This does not make the matter any easier, but more difficult. God desires not only that we shall offer, but also that we do it cheerfully. Otherwise our money will perish with us! At any rate, the voluntariness does not exclude the obligation. We *may* and we *must*. The offerer in God's Kingdom is a free man and a subject at the same time; a servant and son.

"It stands to reason that this obligation exists. When, in virtue of the office of believers the Church is instituted, the offices established, etc., nothing is more reasonable than that these same believers now also honor the obligations connected with it all, obligations which they have assumed together; and that they bear all burdens jointly. All obligations, also those that have been assumed voluntarily, must be lived up to. You entered into your marriage voluntarily, but no one will be so foolish as to think that now he has no marriage obligations."]

Understood in this sense, we believe Classis Holland is right when it urges Synod to express that we consider assessments and quotas of equal importance *and equally binding* on all churches. (Italics ours).

OUR ADVICE

1. Since ecclesiastically the term "assessments" is a misnomer, we recommend that we drop this term from our ecclesiastical parlance, and that with respect to all the work in God's kingdom, for which we as a Christian Reformed Church are jointly responsible, we use the term "quota" to indicate the amount per family recommended by Synod to the congregations.

2. Synod remind the Consistories of the urgent necessity to keep before their congregations not only the privilege but also the sacred duty to contribute liberally toward the work of the Lord, which we have taken upon ourselves as Christian Reformed Church.

3. The Classes shall (may) consult with delinquent congregations through the Consistories and, if necessary, admonish them to become more abundant in manifesting their love for the Lord's cause. However, if the Classis is satisfied—with or without investigation—that a congregation has done what it could, the matter shall rest there; nor shall any unpaid portion of any quota be thereafter held against such a congregation as a debt.

Respectfully submitted:

R. BRONKEMA, *Pres.*
H. J. TRIEZENBERG, *Sec'y*
JOHN M. DYKSTRA
W. AARDAPPEL
J. TEN HARMSSEL

REPORT IV.

RADIO BROADCASTING COMMITTEE REPORT

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

YOUR Committee appointed by Synod in re Radio Broadcasting received the following *mandate*:

"We advise Synod to commit itself to the general program of action as recommended by the Executive Committee (for Home Missions) in points 1, 2, 3, and 4, and to appoint such a committee as there suggested. Adopted. Synod decides to refer to this Committee also Overture 51 of Classis Pella (*Agenda*, Part II, p. 182)." — *Acts of Synod 1938*, p. 69.

We quote the recommendations of the Executive Committee and the Overture:

A. "Your Committee overtures Synod to commit itself to this general program of action in the sphere of Evangelization by:

1. Authorizing a committee to arrange for radio broadcasting, provided it can be arranged in such a way that there will be no direct financial burden placed upon the Church. (Many religious broadcasts are made possible by the generosity of the listeners.)

2. Instructing a committee to make use of the printed messages and pamphlets as a follow-up method in propagating our faith." — *Acts of Synod, 1938*, p. 204.

(Note: Points 3 and 4 pertain to the calling of Missionaries for Evangelization work. And point 2 can only be carried out when point 1 is realized.)

B. Overture from Classis Pella reads as follows:

"Classis Pella overtures Synod to devise ways and means whereby our Reformed conception of life be broadcast on a National hook-up of the Radio, as now done by the Lutheran Church in the Lutheran Hour." — *Agenda, 1938*, p. 182.

Your Committee has the following to report:

I. Allow us to call the attention of Synod to previous decisions in re denominational Radio Preaching.

i. e., 13 one half-hour broadcasts; \$2,120.00 for a period of 26 weeks.

H. The matter of transcriptions. A good transcribed program (guaranteed to be perfect) costs in the neighborhood of \$60.00. Such a transcribed record may be used three or four times by other radio stations. If stations in New Jersey, Colorado, California, Washington (where many of our members are located) are willing to donate time our members there could listen to our Hour during the next week. If time must be bought in these States then a transcription is no cheaper than a regular service.

I. If we should decide to go on the air, we purchase our time from an Advertising Agency through whom we deal with the Station. This is at no extra cost. At the same time this Agency looks after our Hour by inserting it in various Radio-logs, magazines, sends out releases to newspapers, gives publicity, etc.

J. The longer our Church waits the harder it will be to get established on the air. We have this on the basis of good authority.

III. Convictions of your Committee:

A. We concur with the sentiments expressed by a previous Committee which reported to the Synod of 1930. We quote:

- “(1) There is today in America a great need for positive Christian preaching;
- “(2) We have, by the grace of God, received from our fathers a great heritage. Ours is a positive message, and it is our duty to spread it;
- “(3) Today we have:
 - a) An ever-growing modernistic-humanistic group;
 - b) A more or less emotional and superficial evangelistic group;
 - c) A large group of middle-of-the-road men . . . ”
- “(4) We have a great responsibility. Much shall be asked of those to whom much is given. It is our duty to propagate, to spread, to preach and teach our Reformed conception of biblical truth as much as in us is.”

B. The Radio is one of the greatest means to propagate the Word of God, and as a missionary enterprise has been neglected too long by our Church. The Radio may serve as a great instrument to reach thousands of people

and present to them the revealed will of our God. It may serve as an entering-wedge into many a home. We agree with the Executive Committee of Home Missions when it states in its report to Synod last year, "The first step (in the work of Evangelization), and we consider this to be of the greatest importance, is that the people among whom we intend to labor be informed with respect to the existence and the teachings of our denomination. No one will deny that to a host of people, our Church is unknown. Even the American church world is barely aware of its existence. The Reformed conception of life and the principles for which our Church stands have not been sufficiently propagated. . . . Radio broadcasting as an effective agency in the spreading of the gospel should not be discounted. Through the radio we can find an entrance where doors are bolted against us. In it we have an entering wedge which, with God's blessing, will prove to be an inestimable asset in the work of Home Missions. The radio will also provide us with an index as to the number and location of the listeners who are interested in our message and are disposed to receive our men into their homes." The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) has hundreds of missionaries who make contacts through their radio activity.

C. One man, and not a number of men, should be appointed as radio-minister. All successful radio broadcasts center about a personality. Cf. Dr. Maier (Lutheran Hour); Dr. Fuller (Old Fashioned Revival Hour); Dr. Bradley (People's Church of Chicago). The radio audience grows accustomed to one voice and in turn learns to love the speaker. One minister who will do this from week to week will be able to plan his messages and give them continuity as well as a necessary unity.

D. We need faith and vision in carrying out this program. We doubt whether our leaders realize the great possibilities in this unexplored field, as far as our denomination is concerned. If one congregation in our denomination in two years of broadcasting over a small station (only 250 watts) can reach into 105 cities and communities, and receive in one year more than 1500 pieces of mail what may we not expect if our entire group should broadcast a weekly service over one of our larger radio stations? Truly, the fields are white. Our nation needs a God-centered message. We have the message.

Let us take God at His Word and move forward by faith in His work.

E. The Character of our Programs. We believe that our messages should have 1. An evangelical ring, i.e., an announcement of good news. God revealing Himself in Christ Jesus to His glory in the salvation of sinners. 2. They should be positively Reformed in character. 3. They should be timely in their application. 4. They should propagate the Reformed world- and life-view.

IV. Recommendations of your Committee.

A. That Synod should hold up as its ideal a Reformed Hour over a group of stations as the Lord prospers us in this radio ministry.

B. That Synod express as its conviction that all of our churches should make use of the opportunities to broadcast over local stations in as much as this is possible, and at the same time urge all of our missionaries and ministers to avail themselves of such opportunities to spread the gospel.

C. To appoint a committee of five members who will contact one of the large radio stations and purchase time for the coming radio season (a period of 26 weeks) beginning on the first Sunday in October, 1939.

D. That this half hour be known as the "Back to God Hour," or some similar slogan.

E. That Synod appoint such a radio minister and prescribe his duties.

F. That Synod urge every congregation in our denomination to take up one offering for our proposed Hour before October 1, 1939.

Wishing you God's blessings in this and in all other matters.

Humbly submitted,

D. WALTERS, *Pres.*
E. B. PEKELDER, *Sec'y*
H. BAKER
B. ESSENBURG
M. FAKKEMA
J. DE JAGER

REPORT V.

THE CLASSICAL STATUS OF HOME MISSIONARIES

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE Synod of 1938 referred to our Committee the matter contained in the Acts of Synod, Article 96, IX, Page 83.

"IX. Classical Status of Home Missionaries:

"A. Material: Overture 15, p. 152, Agenda II. Report to Classis Sioux Center, pp. 115, 116, Agenda II.

"B. Recommendation: Synod declare that the decision of 1930, p. 146, applies also to missionaries in the new set-up of Home Missions.

Grounds:

"1. Home missionaries under the present Home Mission set-up, though the missionaries of the Church at large, are nevertheless, because of their membership in a particular church of a Classis, and their work within such Classis, privileged to be delegated to it, as provided for in the decision of 1930, p. 146.

"2. A consistory has the right to delegate such a missionary even though he be no ruling elder in that church, according to the latter half of the decision of 1930, p. 146.

"Synod decided to refer this matter to the same Committee that is to study the status of ordained ministers on the Indian Mission Field."

It appears from the foregoing that Synod considered that an expression on this matter would be premature. No specific reasons for its decision are given in the Acts of Synod. However, the words of Synod's decision, "Synod decides to refer this matter to the same Committee that is to study the status of ordained ministers on the Indian Mission Field," seem to indicate that in the mind of Synod the determination of the Status of Home Missionaries and that of Missionaries on the Indian Mission field are related. There also seemed to be doubt in the mind of Synod with respect to the correctness of the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

Your Committee is of the opinion that the Status of missionaries on the Indian Mission Field should be considered by itself. The relation of the missionaries among the Indians to the churches in the fields which they serve, is far different from that of Home Missionaries. The

home missionaries are officially connected as ministers with churches in the fields which they serve; whereas the missionaries on the Indian Mission field are connected officially as ministers with the churches which called and sent them and these usually are far removed from their fields of labor.

With reference to the status of Home Missionaries your Committee submits that in view of the facts:

1. That the Status of Home Missionaries and their delegation to major assemblies has been definitely decided by Synod, Acts 1930, page 146:

"In re delegating Home Missionaries to Classical Assemblies:

"a. Wherever possible, a Home Missionary should be connected, as minister, with one of the congregations which he serves, in order that it may delegate him to the Classical assemblies;

"b. In the event it is not possible for a Home Missionary to be delegated to Classical assemblies as stated in "a" above, it is within the jurisdiction of Classis, by way of exception to Art. 41, to grant a Home Missionary, when delegated by a church together with its Minister and an Elder, the privilege of membership in the Classical assembly."

2. That no consistory or Classis has overtured Synod to revise the decision of 1930.

3. That no reason has been adduced why this ruling does not apply to our Home Missionaries under the present Mission Order; there is neither need nor occasion for reconsidering that decision.

However, in view of the fact that an overture, accompanied with a report to Classis Sioux Center, was presented to Synod and, undoubtedly, Synod desires that it be considered, we wish to observe two things:

1. With respect to Overture 15, page 152, Agenda II, "Classis Sioux Center, het rapport van hare commissie aanbiedende, verzoekt de Synode om uitspraak te doen aangaande den kerkelijken status van zendeling-leeraren, zoodat zij naar de meerdere vergaderingen kunnen gedelegeerd worden.": that the ecclesiastical status of Home Missionaries and how they can be delegated to major assemblies has been defined by Synod in its decision of 1930, page 146.

2. With respect to the grounds given in the Report to Classis Sioux Center, Agenda, Part II, pages 115, 116, we make a second observation. First of all we quote the report as found in the Agenda:

"Dear Brethren of Classis,
"Assembled at Doon, Iowa, March 1, 1938:

"Your Classical Home Missions Committee was instructed at the last Classical session to advise Classis with regard to the question whether Rev. De Bruyn, Home Missionary of the Christian Reformed Church, can continue to serve as delegate of the Mission Board.

"In studying the above question, the attention of your Committee was called to a Synodical decision anent the status of Classical Home Missionaries. We find this decision in Acts of Synod 1930, page 145 ff. The following is a quotation from the Acts: "In re status of Home Missionaries, the Committee appointed by the Synod of 1928 advises adding the following amendment to Art. 42 of our Church Manual: 'It is within the jurisdiction of each classical assembly to grant the privilege of membership to its Missionaries.' Your Committee does not sustain this proposal because it conflicts:

"1. With Art. 33 of our Church Manual, 'Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, etc.' It would seem fair to conclude that only they that are delegated and have consistorial credentials shall have a vote;

"2. With Art. 41 of our Church Manual, 'The Classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, etc.' It appears that Classis by adding to its membership those who are not delegated by churches, does violence to this Article.

"Your Committee is of the opinion that a better way can be found and advises that Synod attach the following to Art. 41: In re delegating Home Missionaries to Classical Assemblies: a) wherever possible, a Home Missionary should be connected, as minister, with one of the congregations which he serves, in order that it may delegate him to the Classical assemblies; b) In the event it is not possible for a Home Missionary to be delegated to Classical assemblies as stated in (a) above, it is within the jurisdiction of Classis, by way of exception to Art. 41, to grant a Home Missionary, when delegated by a church together with its minister and an elder, the privilege of membership in the Classical assembly. *Reasons:* (1) Art. 33 requires that members shall have credentials signed by those sending them; (2) Art. 41 states that the Classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that delegate. *Adopted.*' Thus the quotation from Acts of Synod 1930.

"We call attention to the last reasons mentioned for the decision taken by Synod, which reasons represent the principle of our church government that only they may be members of Classis who have been sent with credentials, and are therefore delegates to Classis.

"If we apply these principles to the question given us, we must come to the following conclusion which we give as our advice to Classis.

"It is the unanimous opinion of your committee that Rev. De Bruyn cannot properly represent Classis as delegate to the Mission Board.
Grounds:

- "1. Home Missionaries under the present system adopted by the Synod are the missionaries of the Church at large, and not the missionaries of any one Classis;

- "2. No congregation has the right to delegate such a missionary to the Classis unless he should be a ruling elder in that church;
- "3. Classis has no right to extend to such a missionary more than an advisory vote, since according to Arts. 33 and 41, only those who are delegates have the right to vote;
- "4. Therefore, since such a missionary would not actually be a member of Classis he cannot be delegated to represent the Classis at the Mission Board;
- "5. Neither would the best interest of the Classis be advanced by a delegate who is not laboring within the territory and domain of the Classis.

"Humbly submitted,
Classical Home Missions Committee,
Leonard Verduin, Pres.
Benjamin H. Spalink, Sec.
Cornelius Oldenburg."

We observe here:

a. *Ground 1.* That although it is true that Home Missionaries are now the missionaries of the Church at large, they are, even as they were prior to the adoption of the present Mission Order, officially connected as ministers with local churches in the field assigned to them.

b. *Ground 2.* That this ground is at variance with the ruling of 1930 but does not prove its point. It begs the question. The decision of 1930 ruled that a home missionary can be delegated to major assemblies even though he is not a ruling elder in that church.

c. *Grounds 3, 4, and 5* deal with a concrete case in which the person was not delegated to a Classical Assembly and hence do not touch upon the ecclesiastical status of Home Missionaries and how they can be delegated to major assemblies.

In the light of the foregoing observations your Committee advises that Synod adopt the recommendation of the advisory committee as found in the Acts of 1938, Article 96, page 83, under IX B:

"Recommendation:

"Synod declare that the decision of 1930, p. 146, applies also to missionaries in the new set-up of Home Missions. *Grounds:*

- "1. Home missionaries under the present Home Mission set-up, though the missionaries of the Church at large, are nevertheless, because of their membership in a particular church of a Classis, and their work within such Classis, privileged to be delegated to it, as provided for in the decision of 1930, p. 146.
- "2. A Consistory has the right to delegate such a missionary even though he be no ruling elder in the church, according to the latter half of the decision of 1930, p. 146."

Humbly submitted,

HENRY BAKER. JOHN DOLFIN.
GEORGE HYLKEMA. CORNEAL HOLTROP.
JOHN BREUKER.

REPORT VI.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE TO RE-EDIT AND RE-WORK THE PROPOSED REVISED MISSION ORDER

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN :

YOUR committee, appointed by the synod of 1938 to "re-edit and re-work the proposed revised Mission Order," has completed its work in accordance with the mandate given by the Synod of 1936 (Acts of Synod, 1936, page 85), and reading as follows :

"1. That Synod declare itself in favor of an arrangement whereby our mission work shall be under the control of Synod.

"2. That our Mission Order be so revised that Synodical control for the sake of unity and co-operation be established."

In the Mission Order, which we herewith present to Synod, we have, to our best knowledge, included all the relevant material. There are decisions on record which would not be quite in place in the body of a Mission order, but which should undoubtedly be retained as working rules for our Board of Missions. There are also on record decisions that have been annulled by developments in our mission work, as, for instance, that found in Acts, 1920, Art. 21, page 17, requiring that all missionaries on our Indian Field be members of the Rehoboth congregation. This decision lost its binding power since the organization of other churches on our Indian Field. All the articles of the proposed Mission Order, if adopted, of necessity, supersede any previous decisions relating to the same matter.

Though the Synod of 1938 stated that the Article covering the work of the Secretary of Missions did not need re-editing, we feel that certain changes are necessary and have accordingly incorporated them.

Your committee herewith presents to your honorable body the proposed revised

new matter shall first be submitted by the Secretary to all the members of the Board for their opinion and advice before the Committee takes definite action. A report of matters which are of general interest shall be sent after each meeting to all the consistories.

ARTICLE IV

THE SECRETARY OF MISSIONS

SECTION 1. The Secretary of Missions shall labor under the supervision of the Christian Reformed Board of Missions, of which he shall be a member *ex-officio*.

SECTION 2. *His Duties Regarding the Board.* To act as its Secretary in keeping full and complete record of the transactions of the Board and its Executive Committee, conducting and having charge of the correspondence of the Board, and keeping files of all the letters and papers concerning the work of the Christian Reformed Board of Missions, (for which purpose he shall be provided with the necessary office equipment); to arrange and bring up all such business as requires the attention of the Board and its Executive Committee; to submit such documents as may be necessary for their information; to prepare and submit to the Board the reports to the Synod; and to attend the meetings of Synod for advisory services concerning mission matters.

SECTION 3. *His Duties Regarding the Missionaries.* To visit them and their fields from time to time, as directed by the Christian Reformed Board of Missions, for the purpose of counseling with them concerning their work and assisting them in case difficulties have arisen or are likely to arise, adjusting personal relations between the various workers, if necessary, and promoting such understanding and harmonious coöperation between the workers of the various posts as shall secure the harmony and advancement of the work.

SECTION 4. *His Duties Regarding Other Missionary Organizations.* To attend the meetings of the Home Missions Council and the Foreign Missions Conference and of such of their respective committees as his work in the interests of our own mission requires.

SECTION 5. *His Duties Regarding the Denomination.* To visit as many classical meetings and congregations as occasion may require, or the Board may advise, and his other duties will permit. The purpose of these visits shall be to enlighten our people on the subject of missions in all its branches; to stimulate prayer for missions and to encourage the study of mission literature. He shall encourage young men and women to consecrate themselves to the cause of missions; organize missionary societies wherever it is deemed necessary; promote mission festivals and conferences and present the cause of missions upon these occasions.

He shall also write or edit and advance the publication of missionary literature which pertains to our Indian and Chinese missionary work.

It shall also be his duty to study the financial problems of our heathen mission work and to promote such giving, by individuals and congregations, as will, with God's blessing, provide the means needed for our missionary undertakings.

SECTION 6. The Secretary of Missions shall provide the Christian Reformed Board of Missions with bi-monthly reports of his work.

SECTION 7. He shall be allowed one month vacation each year, to be taken at such times as shall least interfere with his work, the vacations to be arranged on consultation with the Board of Missions.

SECTION 8. The remunerations received by the Secretary for addresses within the circle of our own churches, are to be turned over to the General Mission Fund.

ARTICLE V

THE CALLING CHURCHES

SECTION 1. The Secretary of Missions and the Mission Board shall be diligent to encourage congregations to become supporting churches for missionaries.

SECTION 2. These are designated by Synod to call and to send out, officially in the name of Synod, the missionaries chosen by Synod.

SECTION 3. They shall, if possible, make special contributions toward the salaries of these missionaries. When these contributions from a given church amount to two-thirds or more of the salary of its missionary, or amount to double the quota it is obliged to pay the fund from which the missionary is paid, it shall, upon request, be excused from paying the quota for the work in which this missionary is engaged.

SECTION 4. They shall keep in personal contact with their missionaries and, in conjunction with the church and Classis in the midst of which the missionaries labor, have oversight as to their doctrine and life.

SECTION 5. They shall receive a report from their missionaries at least quarterly.

ARTICLE VI

ORDAINED MISSIONARIES

SECTION 1. *Qualifications.* (1) Age. Preferably between 24 and 32. (2) Health: Robust health, verified by physician's examination. If married, this holds also for his family. (3) Special love for and adaptability to mission work, verified by past experience and activity in this line. This also to be taken into account as to his wife. (4) Approved ability to work in coöperation with, and if necessary, under supervision of, other missionaries and the Board, appointed by Synod to have oversight of the work. (5) Tact and discretion to associate with outsiders, as Government officials and employees, with whom he may come in contact on the field. (6) Academic and practical requirements: *a.* Studious character; *b.* Special linguistic ability (to be verified by his record while at school); *c.* Apt teaching and acceptable speaking qualifications. (7) Administrative ability: *a.* Able and willing to take the initiative in affairs pertaining to his work; *b.* Good leadership. (8) All other things being equal, preference to be given to men who have already served in the ministry and have practical experience in ministerial and pastoral work.

SECTION 2. *Duties.* He shall do all he can in every way in preaching, teaching, visiting, etc., to promote the cause for which he has been sent out. To this end he shall do all diligence to acquire, as soon as possible, the language of the people among whom he labors.

SECTION 3. *Status:* *a.* As to our missionaries in China they shall retain both their office as ministers and their membership in the church sending them to China. They shall be permitted, however, to

accept associate membership in the Chinese Church as long as that is necessary for the development of that church and is desired by the Chinese church.

b. As to our missionaries to the Indian Field they shall have the same status as our other ministers, being officially pastors of the churches which called and sent them. However, with their own consent, that of the Mission Board, and that of their sending churches, they shall be considered as loaned to the churches on the field as pastors or associate pastors.

Then, as an exception to Article 41 of the Church Order similar to that made for Home Missionaries, they may be delegated by the churches which they are serving in the field to Classis and by that Classis to Synod. However, at no time should more than two ministers be delegated to the same session of Classis by any one church. As long as they are serving in such pastorates on the mission field, their calling churches waive the right to delegate them to, or from, their own Classes. Ordained missionaries, whose official membership thus remains with the church which sent them, shall not function as elders or deacons in the churches on the Mission Field.

SECTION 4. *Vacation and Furlough.* Missionaries on the Indian field shall be entitled to one calendar month vacation annually. Missionaries on the China field shall receive a furlough of approximately one year at the conclusion of each seven years of service abroad.

SECTION 5. Shall report regularly each quarter to the Board of Missions and to the Calling Churches.

ARTICLE VII

UNORDAINED MISSIONARIES

SECTION 1. *In China:* They have an advisory but not a deciding vote in the mission work on matters dealing with the church organization, doctrine, discipline, and with the administration of sacraments. In matters of general missionary administration, the disbursement of funds, the preparation of reports, and all matters not of a specifically ecclesiastical nature, they have a deciding vote.

SECTION 2. *Unordained Missionaries on the Indian Field* — viz., Camp-workers in charge of a separate post, the manager of Rehoboth, the principals of the Rehoboth and Zuni schools, hold membership in a General Conference where Mission matters are discussed, and all actions taken must be presented to the Christian Reformed Board of Missions for its ratification and execution.

As to their church membership, they should be active members of one of our organized churches on the field.

NOTES APPENDED TO OUR REPORT

1. Synod and the Board, as Synod's agency, shall arrange to bring the situation obtaining at present into harmony with the provisions of this Mission Order whenever this is necessary. However, as far as possible, no present contracts and agreements or existing relationships shall be abrogated or disturbed by the adoption of this Mission Order. Changes shall be made only after

consultation with all parties concerned — Synod (or Board), Calling Churches, and Missionaries — and upon mutual agreement.

2. Since Synod has relieved the Secretary of Missions of duties in regard to Home Mission work, and has entrusted the Jewish Mission Work to Classis Illinois and Hudson-Hackensack, this Order has been changed accordingly under the duties of the Secretary of Missions.

3. Since we were instructed to study the status of our ordained Indian Missionaries, we suggest that Synod give consideration to the feasibility of organizing a separate Classis New Mexico to include the churches of our Indian Mission Field.

4. Finally, because the Home Missions Council and the Foreign Missions Conference, with which our Secretary of Missions is to keep in contact, are fully as modernistic as the Federal Council of Churches; and our Church has taken a definite stand against affiliation with the latter; it is the opinion of your committee that this is the opportune time to sever our connections with these Mission Bodies. If Synod should concur in this opinion, the section which prescribes the duties of the Secretary of Missions in relation to these bodies should be deleted from the proposed Mission Order.

(Signed)

HENRY BAKER.
GEORGE HYLKEMA.
JOHN BREUKER.
JOHN DOLFIN.
CORNEAL HOLTROP.

REPORT VIII.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE EDITORSHIP OF "THE BANNER" TO PASTORAL WORK

To the Synod of 1939.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE Committee, appointed by you in 1938 in the matter presented by the Neland Avenue Church, submits the following report and advice.

The Consistory of said Church presents the following problem: "The consistory calls the attention of Synod to the fact that this work (Editorship of *The Banner*) entails a great deal of effort on the part of our pastor and takes from our congregation time and energy which are greatly needed. The decision of the Synod of 1936 has not changed this situation. We have willingly accepted these conditions in the past, but feel that Synod should give serious consideration to an early solution of our problem. Until now, the Consistory has made use of various means to afford relief as an attempt for a solution. We find, however, all our efforts unsatisfactory and are convinced that a different arrangement is necessary."

Your Committee gave much time and thought to the consideration of this matter. We are fairly astounded at the amount of work done by the pastor-editor. Besides being the pastor of a church of over 200 families, time was found for much work along other lines besides the great improvement of *The Banner* under his leadership. We are unanimously of the opinion that brother Kuiper is over-burdened and should have relief.

In considering ways and means to bring about this relief as requested by the Neland Avenue Consistory, your Committee subsequently considered three solutions, in the meanwhile having conferences with the Consistory, the Editor, the Publication Committee, and the Manager of *The Banner*.

I. The first consideration, which would definitely and also permanently solve the problem, was the appointment of a full-time editor for *The Banner*. While your Committee considers this to be the ideal solution, that should be borne in mind, yet the Committee does not advise this solution at the present time for two sufficient reasons:

1. The synodical decision is of too recent date to be reconsidered, especially in view of the fact that conditions have not changed.

2. The condition of the Treasury at present is such as to make such a move prohibitive.

II. The second consideration was that the work be divided between a Managing Editor and an Editorial writer. In order to judge this matter fairly a meeting was held with the Publication Committee, and the opinion of the Editor was sought.

Although your Committee favored this plan, after consultation with the Publication Committee and considering their resolution in answer to our request: "Although in the abstract it is possible to split the editorship into an editorial and a managing editorship, we are of the conviction that to do so would greatly endanger the unity of the paper and the harmony in the editorial management," your Committee decided not to recommend this solution to Synod.

III. In harmony with the resolution of the Publication Committee, "At the same time we declare our readiness to reduce the load wherever possible with the editor's concurrence by delegating certain labors to other individuals who will then labor under his supervision."

Your Committee came to the unanimous decision that Synod advise the Neland Avenue Consistory:

1. To confer with the Publication Committee with the request that the work of the Editor of *The Banner* be limited to what is essentially editorial work and that he be relieved of all the mechanical and editorially unessential work now engaged in. A good deal of this work may suitably be referred to assistants; such as Young People's Department; poetry; stories, correction of contributions, proofreading, etc.
2. To confer with the pastor in regard to non-congregational work — that he limit his activities as much as possible to the work in the Neland Avenue Congregation, and omit as much as possible all work outside of the congregation except the editorial work of *The Banner*, as reduced by the Publication Committees.

Your Committee is of the opinion that thus there will be sufficient time to attend to both the congregational and the editorial work.

Sincerely and Fraternaly yours,

The Committee,

J. K. VAN BAALEN

W. STUART

G. BROODMAN

D. ZWIER

H. HEKMAN

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