

AGENDA

Synod
Christian Reformed Church

*To convene June 9, 1943
at Grand Rapids, Mich.*

**[PART I:
REPORTS]**

Office of the Stated Clerk
1137 Turner Avenue, N.W.
Grand Rapids, Mich., U. S. A.

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PREFACE

THIS volume is Agenda, Part I, of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church which is to convene in Grand Rapids, Mich., June 9, 1943. It contains a few reports which will be brought to the attention of the Synod.

Agenda, Part II, is to be published by the first of May, 1943. "Material for the Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk a month before the date of publication." (Acts, 1934, p. 298). "Synod further advises all Classes to meet early in the year, in order that all material for the Agenda, Part II, may be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by the first of April." (Acts, 1937, Art. 145, p. 110.)

Our respective Classes are requested to dispatch their material for Synod to the Stated Clerk as soon as possible. Kindly furnish the addresses of the elder delegates.

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1137 Turner Ave., N. W.
Grand Rapids, Mich., U. S. A.

AGENDA

PART I

REPORTS

REPORT I.

REPORT ON CHRISTIAN LABOR

(Cf. Acts, 1942, Art. 130, page 132: "Synod decides to include the report of the Committee of Synod in the Agenda, Part I, for the Synod of 1943, and to so instruct the Stated Clerk." See also Acts, 1942, Supplement XXI-b, p. 364.)

To the Synod of 1943.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

THE mandate of our committee is found in the Acts of Synod, 1940, page 42, Report No. VIII re Christian Labor Association (cf. also Supplement XVI, Acts of Synod 1940, pages 334-342),

"That Synod appoint a competent Committee to study all the deliverances of former Synods; formulate a revision of the contents of existing conclusions which will furnish our consistories as well as our people with clear consistent advice as to the stand we have to take with respect to labor unions; and report at a following Synod."

The Synod of 1940 adopted the following grounds for this mandate:

1. Lack of definiteness and consistency should be removed from our synodical decisions.
2. The present labor situation is complicated by the rise of the C. I. O.

The Synod of 1940 rejected Advice II and Advice III of the Committee of Pre-advice on the following grounds, "This matter is amply covered by the adoption of Recommendation I" (Acts of Synod, 1940, page 42). A precise statement of the matter contained in Recommendation I,

adopted by the Synod of 1940, which also covered the issues contained in the rejected Advice II and Advice III, is not given. The Synod of 1940 went on record to maintain that the issues presented in Advice II and Advice III of the Pre-Advisory Committee, were included in the resolution adopted by Synod. Lack of clearness as to our mandate compelled your Committee to make a study of the issues which made it necessary for the Synod of 1940 to appoint a committee. Synod rejected Advice II and Advice III and at the same time maintained that the matters contained in the proposals of the Pre-Advisory Committee are already taken care of in the adoption of Advice I. We believe this confusion must be removed.

HISTORY OF OUR MANDATE.

To the Synod of 1939 a request was presented by Mr. J. Gritter, a member of the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Acts of Synod, 1939, Art. 90, VI, page 70). This request of Brother Gritter did not have the support of Classis Grand Rapids East. However, the Synod of 1939 did accept the request of Mr. Gritter and acted accordingly. The petitioning letter of Mr. Gritter was referred by Synod to a committee composed of the Rev. L. Veltkamp and the Rev. H. Keegstra. This committee of Synod filed its report with the Synod of 1940 with the advice that a competent committee be appointed to make a study of all Synodical decisions touching Labor Unions, and, if possible, formulate a revision of the contents of existing Synodical decisions. The committee (Keegstra and Veltkamp) also advised Synod to adopt Advice II, "that on the basis of the Synodical decisions of 1904, Art. 119, pages 34, 35, points 2, 3, 4, a definite statement be given in regard to membership in the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, both of which stand condemned in the light of that decision." A third petition of Mr. Gritter upon which the committee (Keegstra and Veltkamp) acted favorably dealt with the matter of providing the C.L.A. with more effective aid than heretofore. By effective aid was implied not merely moral and financial support, but "the unreserved support of every leader in our churches, and, of which every Christian workingman should be a member" (Acts of Synod, 1940, page 338). In the letter of Brother Gritter to Synod there were contained three petitions, and in

connection with each of these the committee (Keegstra and Veltkamp) proposed to Synod an Advice, which were enumerated Advice I, II, and III.

As a committee we were at a loss as to the exact requirement of Synod. If the Synod of 1940 had clearly stated that our mandate was formulated in the three petitions of Brother Gritter, the task assigned to us would be very clear. After a careful analysis of the situation confronting Synod of 1940, we do believe it was the intent of Synod to act upon all three petitions of Brother Gritter. That the Synod of 1940 was of the same opinion seems to be clear from the grounds adduced for rejecting Advice II and III. Synod stated, "This matter is amply covered by the adoption of Recommendation I." We conclude, therefore, that the task as assigned to us by the Synod of 1940 can be stated thus:

1. To study all the deliverances of former Synods touching Labor Unions;
2. Formulate a revision of the contents of existing conclusions reached by former Synods, since in these decisions, it is claimed, there is a lack of definiteness and consistency;
3. Advise Synod in the matter of expressing itself in regard to Church membership and membership in such Labor organizations as the American Federation of Labor and the C.I.O., and,
4. Advise Synod further with regard to prescribing more effective aid to the existing Christian Labor Organization.

I. SYNODICAL DECISIONS ON LABOR UNIONS.

1. *Synod of 1883* (Acts, 1883, Art. 37).
 - a. Classis Hudson confronted Synod with the question how to deal with members or prospective members of the Church who belong to Labor Unions.
 - b. Classis Hudson informed Synod that the Consistory of Rochester deemed membership in such organizations to be contrary to the Word of God, the Christian conscience, and the well-being of the Church.
 - c. In its decision the Synod of 1883 referred to Art. 65 of the *Algemeene Bepalingen* (meaning perhaps Art. 75) and felt constrained to disapprove of certain organizations of employers and employees, but felt it could not lay down a general rule. It urged the officers of the Church to guard against such matters as are clearly in conflict with the Word of God and the rules of the Church.

2. *Synod of 1886* (Acts, 1886, Art. 90).

The Synod of 1886 considered the question of membership in the Knights of Labor. The Synod decided that a professor of the Christian faith may not be a member of the order of the Knights of Labor and all similar organizations bound by oath or solemn pledges. The Synod advised all members of the "Holland Christian Reformed Church" to refrain from joining such organizations. It was decided to deal considerately, but also to see to it that the holiness of the sacraments was properly guarded.

3. *Synod of 1888.*

The Synod referred the petitioning Classis Grand Rapids to the decision of 1886 as to the course to be pursued when members of a union are refused admittance in one congregation and accepted by another congregaton of the same locality (Acts, 1888, p. 19.)

4. *Synod of 1892*

The Synod of 1892 was asked to give a reply to two requests that:

- a. Synod fix its attention on the different unions in this country, since a consistent pursuit of their principles would result in a complete reversion of the present social order and be detrimental to the membership of the Church.
- b. Synod dsignate the unions membership of which it deems inconsistent with the membership of the Church. Synod was also requested to reply in how far ecclesiastical discipline should be applied to members who belong to less reprehensible unions.

The Synod of 1892 adopted the following decisions:

- 1) that each union must be judged according to its statutes and the purpose expressed therein; and,
- 2) that if the purpose of the union proves to be contrary to the Word of God and the foundations of the social order, then ecclesiastical discipline (admonition) cannot be avoided in the end.

The Synod of 1892 did not give a specific answer to the request to designate specific unions or organizations except what had formerly been expressed, i.e., Knights of Labor 1886 (Acts, 1892, pp. 27-28).

5. *Synod of 1900* (Acts 1900, page 21, Art. 37).

Classis Grand Rapids West had overtured Synod to mention by name in the Acts the unions whose constitutions were tested and found wanting by the various Classes. Synod gave no immediate reply, but referred the union issue to a committee to report to the following Synod.

6. *Synod of 1902* (Acts 1902, pages 111-137).

The committee appointed by the Synod of 1900 reported in a lengthy document. The report of the committee was read, and the Synod recommended it to the Church for diligent study, but took no further action.

7. *Synod of 1904*

In addition to the report referred back to the churches for diligent study, the Synod of 1904 was also concerned with two overtures dealing with unions. The overture of Classis Illinois read, "Synod come to a decision respecting the unions and decide that the members of existing unions cannot be members of the Church, and give the grounds for this. It also designates a way out for the laborer." The second overture, of Classis Iowa, stated, "Synod point out the way in which it becomes possible for our laborers to take a stand against unions on a revolutionary basis."

The committee that reported on this matter pointed out a number of existing evils in the Labor Unions of that day. Christians were advised to organize Christian Labor organizations, and thus avoid the un-Christian practices of the unions. The practices which make membership in the unions untenable are stipulated by the committee, and these are reproduced by the Rev. Schaver, "Church Order," pages 115, 116. Sinful practices of the unions are also discussed in the letter of Brother Gritter addressed to the Synod of 1939. (Cf. Acts of Synod, 1940, page 335.)

The decisions of the Synod of 1904 were of great importance. We offer the following translation:

1. that it may not be demanded of a Christian that he separate himself entirely from the communion with the world in natural life, though he should show himself to be controlled by a different principle in his speech and action;
2. that the Christian laborer may not be an idle (ledig) spectator of all the evil and injustice that is found in the sphere of labor;
3. that he cannot accomplish anything alone, and should therefore unite with others, in order to reach the goal with united strength;
4. that under the present circumstances in the world of labor organization is the duty of Christians in virtue of their office, and therefore as Christians they should seek to organize Christian Labor organizations;
5. that if any person should feel that Christian organization is neither desirable nor imperative, and should nevertheless want to join an organization of laborers, he should refrain from unions which,
 - a) exact an oath or a pledge of unconditional submission to the majority of the ruling body, with disregard of one's duty toward God, the State, the Church, and the family;
 - b) officially desecrate the Lord's day by holding business meetings, excursion trips, or doing aught else that is in conflict with the fourth commandment;
 - c) maintain in their rules and regulations the right to appoint pickets, or give permission to use force, or give occasion for the use of force by strikes, etc.;

- d) forbid a Christian to do what he as a Christian should do, or command him to do what he may not do;
- e) raise money in a manner condemned by the Word of God, e.g., dancing parties, card parties, Sunday excursions, etc.;
- f) have a religious ritual that is kept secret from all who are not members; and
- g) essentially are secret oathbound organizations.

The Synod of 1904 adopted the following general rules for ecclesiastical procedure and discipline:—

- 1) that the consistories seek to inform themselves by investigation of the condition of things in the industrial sphere, and of the principles of the unions, and act according to the knowledge thus acquired;
- 2) that the consistories tolerate no one in the communion of the Church who is and wants to remain a member of an organization which can be justly accused of the unrighteous practices mentioned. The consistory should act cautiously, should seek to educate, but should censure if necessary;
- 3) that consistories should punish those members who with or without authorization of the unions become guilty of force and other irregularities;
- 4) that the consistories bear with those who under the stress of circumstances belong to a neutral and tolerable union, but urge them to remain outside of these as long as possible, and to urge those who belong to them to break with them, or, better still, to form a Christian organization.

The Synod of 1904 also appointed a committee to study the union problem, and to formulate principles of Christian Labor organizations.

8. *Synod of 1906* (Acts 1906, Art. 106).

The committee appointed by the Synod of 1904 reported in 1906. A lengthy report was rendered, and the request of the committee to appoint another committee to make further study of the matter was adopted.

9. *Synod of 1908*

The report of the committee appointed in 1906 was comprehensive, but the Synod filed the document in its archives. No decision was taken indicating any progress or repeal of existing decisions. The committee was continued.

10. *Synod of 1914*

No report appeared in either 1910 or 1912, and at the Synod of 1914 a Majority and a Minority report was made. The majority report is very brief and offers nothing new on the subject. It is found in the Acts of Synod, 1914, Bijlage X. The minority report is rather lengthy. It declares as its candid opinion that it is doubtful whether the Church should express itself on such matters, and that it might be desirable to change the position taken by former Synods. This report is found in the Acts of Synod, 1914, Bijlage XI.

No decision was taken by the Synod of 1914. The Synod adopted the advice of the committee to appoint another committee to serve the following Synod with well-formulated propositions (cf. Acts of Synod, 1914, Art. 17, 4).

11. *Synod of 1916*

The committee appointed could not find satisfaction in either the Majority or the Minority reports made at the Synod of 1914. It advised Synod as follows:

- 1) Synod provisionally change the decision of 1904 relative to the unions. The following grounds for this position were adduced:
 - a) there are insufficient data to show that membership of the Church is inconsistent with membership in so-called neutral unions, unless it can be proved that a union according to its constitution leads into sin or sins, or in its continuous actions shows that it favors sins, because as long as there is no certainty in this matter it is not possible to maintain the position taken, and the present standing of members in the Church as "tolerable" is undesirable.
 - b) Since the two reports reveal a great diversity of opinion, the committee further advises Synod to urge all the members of our churches, and particularly our leaders, to make more special study of this important point, in order that they may come under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to a greater unity of opinion.
 - c) With a view to the present situation the following advice is given to our Christian laborers:—
 - a. If one is compelled to belong to a so-called neutral union, in order to provide for oneself, then one should always, in one's union and in the minds of one's co-laborers, witness strongly that one belongs to Jesus Christ and desires to seek His honor; and if one is hindered in this one should break with such a union.
 - b. In places where independent Christian organizations are desirable, there should be an attempt to cooperate as much as possible with other unions, in order to obtain or retain right and justice. (Cf. Acts of Synod, 1916, Art. 36, 9, page 38.)

The Synod of 1916 adopted the above proposals of the committee (Acts, 1916, Art. 40).

12. *Synod of 1924*

The Acts of the Synods of 1918, 1920, and 1922, contain nothing on the Union question. The problem of the Unions came to the attention of the Synod of 1924 through an overture of the Consistory of Zillah, with the request to revise the position adopted in 1916, "en terugkeeren tot het standpunt vroeger door ons ingenomen." The Synod of 1924 adopted a substitute motion, "Naar aanleiding van de instructie van den Kerkeraad van Zillah in re Unions, besluit de Synode tot het benoemen van een Commissie, wier taak zal zijn grondige

studie te maken van de verhouding, die de Kerk heeft in te nemen speciaal tot de Unions, en in 't algemeen tot allerlei organisaties van werklieden en werkgevers op maatschappelijk gebied. De Synode acht het gewenscht, dat deze zaak opnieuw onderzocht worde, omdat er blijkbaar in onze kerken in dezen weinig helderheid is, en daardoor veel verschil van gevoelen, en ook omdat het besluit van 1916 inzake de Unions een voorloopig karakter schijnt te dragen. De Commissie in deze materie rapporteere niet later dan 1 Febr. 1926, opdat de kerken het rapport rustig kunnen overwegen." (Acts of Synod, 1924, pages 100 ff.) (we underscore.)

13. *Synod of 1926*

The committee appointed by the Synod of 1924 reported as it was instructed. However, the Synod of 1926 did not adopt any conclusions, and deferred action.

14. *Synod of 1928*

The Synod of 1928 adopted with a few minor changes the proposals of the committee appointed in 1924. The decisions of the Synod of 1928 were formulated in three questions and their appended replies (Acts of Synod, 1928, pages 90-93). We offer the following translation:

Question 1—Is it in conflict with our Christian principles that members of the Church are also members of an organization(s) which does not positively adopt a Christian point of view and fails to act in keeping with our Christian principles?

To this question Synod replied that every Christian must be considered free to co-operate with his neighbor in every lawful sphere of social life and that he as a member of society has the perfect right to help in any social enterprise, and may unite with others in an organization, if the evident aims of such an organization or enterprise are not in conflict with the general principles of justice set forth in the Word of God. (Acts of Synod, 1928, page 91.)

Question 2—What is the nature of the solidarity of the unions and similar group organizations? Is every member of such an organization responsible for the decisions and actions of such an organization?

The Synod of 1928 adopted the following reply:

- a) A Christian who is a member of a social organization, of whatever nature, is bound of God faithfully to exert his influence as a Christian and to contend for righteousness and justice.
- b) A Christian becomes fully responsible either by consent or silence for whatever is sinful in the decisions and practices of the organization to which he belongs.
- c) A Christian who is a member of a union or a similar organization is free from personal responsibility only when he has in all seriousness protested against decisions and practices that clearly violate the bounds of justice, and when he has according to his ability sought to suppress the evil. If the organization in spite of such vigorous protests

persists in perpetrating evil, it is the duty of every Christian member of such an organization to withdraw and renounce his membership in said organization.

Question 3—What is the duty of the Church towards members who hold membership in a Union or a similar organization?

To this question the Synod of 1928 gave the following reply:

- a) The Church of Christ is in duty bound to exercise the power of the keys to purify herself from those who have joined themselves to organizations that are essentially in conflict with the Word of God.
- b) The Church must constantly be ready to instruct and reprove those who have joined organizations that are essentially not in conflict with the Word of God, but in which is found much that is worthy of disapproval and in conflict with our Christian principles.
- c) The Church must exercise church discipline in the case of members who are also members of organizations that are not essentially in conflict with the Word of God, but in which is found much that is worthy of disapproval and in conflict with our Christian principles, when it is evident that such members of the Church are parties to and guilty of actions that are in conflict with the command of God. Here, too, the rule shall be applied that only if one is personally guilty of censurable sin shall one become the object of ecclesiastical discipline.

The Synod of 1928 also adopted a portion of an overture submitted by Classis Grand Rapids West. The Acts of Synod, 1928, pages 94, 95, state: "Every Consistory is admonished to investigate the rules of every organization to which a member of its church belongs, and to be observant whether the members are accomplices in acts which are in conflict with the law of God, and if so, to deal with such members according to ecclesiastical discipline. The Classes must attend to the observance of this rule."

The Synod of 1928 also gave heed to an overture to appoint a committee to investigate whether the American Federation of Labor is to be considered a neutral union. (Acts of Synod, 1928, pages 95, 96.)

This Synod also appointed a committee to study the question as to how Christian Labor organizations and other Christian organizations in the social sphere could be revived. (Acts of Synod, 1928, page 95.)

15. *Synod of 1930*

The Synod of 1930 refused to commit itself on the character of the American Federation of Labor. (Acts of Synod, 1930, page 74.)

This Synod also received a report under the title, "Christian Social and Industrial Organizations." This report constituted a reply to the question what could be done for the resuscitation of distinctly Christian organizations in the sphere of industry and of social life in general. The report appears

in the Agenda, 1930, Part II, pages 231-235. The Synod of 1930 adopted the following as its reply to the question how the Church can best promote the organization of Christian labor organizations in the social sphere:

- 1) "By preaching unceasingly and uncompromisingly the biblical principle of the Christian's separation from the world. The Bible clearly teaches that believers constitute a peculiar people, and that as a holy people they are in duty bound to separate themselves from all that is unholy, and should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, but should avoid all social entanglements that might in any way compromise their Christian character and profession;
- 2) By setting forth clearly and unequivocally the anti-Christian spirit of the Marxian Socialism with its glorification of class hatred, class struggle, and class ethics, and its principle that might makes right; and by placing over against this the great fundamental biblical principles of justice as they apply in the industrial world and ought to be maintained by all those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ;
- 3) By calling particular attention to the principle of corporate responsibility, clearly taught in the Word of God (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 John 11; Rev. 8:14), affirmed by an enlightened Christian conscience, and recognized by sociologists; and by giving a discriminating answer to the question whether and in how far one can relieve himself of this responsibility by protesting;
- 4) By exercising discipline in the spirit of love, but nevertheless with a firm hand whenever her members become guilty of propagating un-Christian principles in the world of labor, assume an unbrotherly attitude towards their fellow-Christians, take part in acts of violence, trample upon the fundamental principles of justice, or refuse to break with organizations that are avowedly anti-Christian in character, or reveal throughout an anti-Christian spirit in their activities." (Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 234, 235.)

16. *Synods of 1934, 1936.*

The Synods of 1934 and 1936 recommended the Christian Labor organization for moral and financial support.

17. *Synod of 1939.*

Mr. J. Gritter presented his request to Synod. Synod appointed a committee to report at a following Synod.

II. THE QUESTION OF REVISING SYNODICAL DECISIONS.

The Synod of 1940 requested its Committee to "formulate a revision of the contents of existing conclusions which will furnish our consistories as well as our people with clear, consistent advice as to the stand we have to take with respect to Labor Unions." (Acts 1940, p. 42).

The petitioning letter of Mr. Gritter to the Synod of 1939 claims that various Synods have adopted resolutions on the Union question which lack unity and consistency. Apparently the committee that reported to the Synod of 1940 was of the same opinion. They wrote: "This lack of consistency and definiteness should be removed from our synodical decisions." (Acts of Synod, 1940, p. 340).

Your Committee felt at once that it could not be its task to rescind or revise any past synodical decisions. This is something which is from the nature of the case impossible. What your Committee can do with respect to the decisions of previous Synods, is limited to a pointing out of the inconsistencies which may be found to exist.

The question is, whether former Synods have always consistently taken the same stand with respect to membership in Labor Unions. From the preceding historical review it has already appeared in how far this can be maintained. We may leave a few of the earliest decisions out of consideration here, since they were on the whole rather indefinite. The Synod of 1892 was requested to name the Unions, membership in which it deemed inconsistent with membership in the Church, or determine in how far ecclesiastical discipline should be applied to those who belong to less reprehensible Unions. The Synod decided not to name any unions, but declared that, according to its judgment each Union must be judged according to its statutes and the purpose expressed therein; and that, if the purpose of the union proves to be contrary to the Word of God and the foundations of the social order, ecclesiastical admonition and discipline cannot be avoided in the end. (Cf. Acts of Synod, 1892, p. 27).

At the Synod of 1904 a report was read, which pointed out some of the evils of which the Unions are guilty, but which also called attention to the necessity of distinguishing between two kinds of Unions, namely, those which abide by the original purpose of the Unions, and those which are degenerating more and more. It also made some suggestions respecting the course of procedure to be followed by the churches in connection with those who were members of some Labor Union. Synod appointed a Committee for further study. (Acts of Synod, 1904, p. 33 ff).

This committee reported in 1906, but finally only advised Synod to appoint a committee for further study of this matter, to abide in practice by the decisions of 1904, without making any positive decisions, and to urge the leaders of the Church to make diligent study of the Labor Movement. The report of this committee also makes mention of two kinds of Unions, which it calls the *Labor and Trade Unions* and the *Socialist Labor party*, and calls attention to the fact that Labor Unions have gradually improved and are exercising a beneficent influence in more than one respect. (Acts of Synod, 1906, p. 59 ff).

At the Synod of 1908 the Committee brought out a comprehensive report, which is not incorporated in the Acts of Synod, but was deposited in the Archives. Synod adopted the advice of the committee to take the same decision, which the previous Synod had taken, that is, to urge more general study of the matter of Labor Unions. It continued the committee of three, but now added two new members. (Acts of Synod, p. 43).

There was no report until 1914, and then there were two reports, a majority and a minority report. No decision was taken, except to appoint another committee for further study of the matter, to offer the following Synod definite advice in the matter. (Acts of Synod, 1914, p. 13 f).

The committee appointed in 1914 reported in 1916, and at the conclusion of its report advised Synod as follows: Synod "urge all the members of our churches, and particularly our leaders, to make more special study of this important point than was previously done, in order they may come, under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, to a greater unity of opinion." With a view to the present condition of things, and as an advice to the laborers of our churches, the committee further advised Synod to decide as follows: (1) "If one is compelled to belong to a so-called neutral union, in order to provide for oneself, then one should always in one's Union and in the midst of one's co-laborers, bear strong witness that one belongs to Jesus Christ and desires to seek His honor; and if one is hindered in this, one should break with such a Union. (2) In places where independent Christian Unions are desirable, there should be an attempt to cooperate as much as possible with other Unions, in order

to obtain or retain right and justice." The advice of the committee was accepted.

In 1924 there was a request at Synod that the Church should change its stand with respect to present day Unions and should return to the standpoint formerly assumed. The consistory which brought this matter to Synod once more urged the appointment of a committee to study the whole matter, partly because of the prevailing uncertainty, and partly because the decision of 1916 was of a provisional character. Synod complied with this request and appointed a committee. (Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 100).

The committee appointed in 1924 reported at the next Synod, and suggested some very definite advice. But, while the advisory committee of Synod was quite in agreement with the conclusions of the committee appointed by the previous Synod, it advised Synod to postpone action in this matter for two years. Synod acted in harmony with this advice. At this Synod there was also a letter of an individual who expressed his desire to go back to the decisions of 1904. (Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 59 ff).

The report of the committee, which reported to the Synod of 1926 was placed in the hands of an advisory committee by the Synod of 1928, and this committee advised Synod to adopt the conclusions of the report of 1926 with some alterations. Since this advice was accepted and these conclusions are rather important we take the liberty to translate the most essential elements.

The first point concerns the question, whether it is contrary to our Christian principles that members of the Church join organizations in the social sphere, which are not controlled by Christian principles. The answer given is: "That every Christian must be regarded as free to cooperate with his neighbor in every lawful sphere of social life, and that he, as a member of society has the perfect right to participate in a communal undertaking or to join with others in an organization, if the well understood purpose of such an undertaking is not contrary to the general principles of justice contained in the Word of God."

The second question concerns the measure in which members of a Union are responsible for the decisions and acts of such a Union. The answer is: (1) "That a Chris-

tian, who is a member of a social organization, of whatever kind it may be, is duty bound ("van Godswege gehouden") to exert his influence as a Christian faithfully, and to contend for justice and fairness. (2) That he by agreeing or by keeping silent becomes personally fully responsible for that which is sinful in the decisions and the practices of the society to which he belongs. (3) That he, in order to be personally free from guilt, must first of all most earnestly protest against such actions as exceed the bounds of justice, and must try as much as possible to check the evil; and if the organization, in spite of this protesting, continues in the perpetration of that evil, it becomes the duty of the Christian to discontinue his membership in such a society."

Finally, the duty of the Church is pointed out in these words: (1) "That the Church of Christ is called to keep itself free, by the power of the keys, of such as have joined societies, which are in their essential being contrary to the Word of God.

Such societies are not only the secret societies, but also those organizations in social life which, be it in their statutes, in their official propaganda, or in their usual practices reveal themselves as anti-Christian. (2) That the Church with respect to those who have joined organizations, which are not essentially contrary to the Word of God, but in which nevertheless much is found that is worthy of disapproval and is contrary to our Christian principles (as many organizations of employers and of laboring-men), should always take action by instruction and admonition. The Church, which always has the calling to let the light of God's Word fall on every sphere of life, to warn her members against evil, to point out the right principles, and to urge the maintenance of these, should not neglect that task for the sphere of labor, and should urge her members to seek their strength especially in Christian organizations. (3) That it is possible to speak of ecclesiastical discipline with respect to members, who are also members of organizations, which are not essentially contrary to God's Word, but in which nevertheless much is found that is worthy of disapproval and that is contrary to our Christian principles, only when it appears that they are co-responsible and are jointly guilty of actions that are contrary to the commandment of God. In other words, if the purpose of a society

is in itself lawful and the organization in its constitution does not require anything of its members that is contrary to justice, the Church cannot take disciplinary action against anyone simply because of membership in such an organization, even though there may be many imperfections in such an organization both as to principle and as to practice. Here therefore the rule also applies that only the fact that one is personally guilty of a censurable sin makes one an object of ecclesiastical discipline."

In connection with an overture that had come to this Synod the following was adopted: "Every consistory is admonished to study the statutes of every organization to which a member of its church belongs, and to ascertain, whether the members are jointly guilty of acts which are contrary to the commandment of God, and if this should be the case, to deal with them according to ecclesiastical discipline."

Moreover, the same Synod, on the advice of its committee, appointed a committee to consider the question, "what might be done to revive Christian organizations in the social sphere." It also appointed a committee to investigate, whether the *American Federation of Labor* can be considered to belong to the so-called neutral societies. (Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 91-96).

Both of these committees reported in 1930. The former came to the conclusion that the Church could best promote the organization of Christian labor organizations (1) "By preaching unceasingly and uncompromisingly the biblical principle of the Christian's separation from the world;" (2) "by setting forth clearly and unequivocally the anti-Christian spirit of the Marxian Socialism with its glorification of class hatred, class struggle, and class ethics, and its principle that might makes right; and by placing over against this the great fundamental biblical principles of justice as they apply in the industrial world and ought to be maintained by all those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ;" (3) "by calling particular attention to the principle of corporate responsibility, clearly taught in the Word of God (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-15; II Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 5:22; II John 11; Rev. 18:4), affirmed by an enlightened Christian conscience, and recognized by sociologists; and by giving a discriminating answer to the question, whether and in how far one can relieve himself of this responsibility by

protesting; (4) by exercising discipline in the spirit of love, but nevertheless with a firm hand whenever her members become guilty of propagating un-Christian principles in the world of labor, assume an unbrotherly attitude toward their fellow-Christians, take part in acts of violence, trample upon the fundamental principles of justice, or refuse to break with organizations that are avowedly anti-Christian in character, or reveal throughout an anti-Christian spirit in their activities." The Synod of 1930 adopted the conclusions of this report, which are found in full in the Acts of Synod 1930, p. 74 f.

The other committee reported at the same Synod. The gist of the conclusion to which it came is found in these words: "On the basis of this material your committee has come to the conclusion that from a purely theoretical point of view the American Federation of Labor can be regarded as a neutral organization in the sense in which that term is accepted by the Synod of 1928. . . Your committee also had in mind the investigation of the actual operations of some of the labor unions to which our people belong, but found the task so enormous that it had to be abandoned." The Synod decided to pass the report of this committee on to the churches, but not to express itself on the character of the A. F. of L. The grounds for this decision were the following: (1) "We have no assurance that the A. F. of L. will retain its present character and remain free, e.g., from radical Socialism and Communism; (2) If Synod commit itself on the A. F. of L. the danger arises that similar investigation commitment will be requested for other organizations." (Acts of Synod, 1930, p. 74).

In going over the decisions of these various Synods it appears to your committee that our Synods were evidently rather hesitant about making definite commitments, and on more than one occasion turned down a request to name the unions to which Church members cannot belong, and even to express itself on the character of any particular union. On the whole it may be said that our Synods have been moving in the same general direction.

But now Mr. Gritter seeks to prove on the basis of the decision of 1904 that the A. F. of L. and C. I. O. are organizations to which the members of our churches cannot belong, since they are guilty of many of the sins

mentioned in that decision, and which are there declared to be incompatible with Church membership; and he desires that Synod shall express itself to that effect. Now it seems to your committee that our Synods in the past wisely refrained from naming particular organizations and from putting them, as such under the ban of the Church, partly because of the difficulty involved in passing an intelligent and true judgment on such comprehensive, complicated, and far-flung organizations as those just mentioned, which was already pointed out by one of the committees at the Synod of 1930; but especially because such a procedure is not in harmony with Reformed Church Government. This was repeatedly expressed in the Netherlands. Dr. Bouwman in his work on *De Kerkelijke Tucht*, p. 166 answers the following question: "*Of de kerk met haar tucht ook iets te zeggen heeft over de vereenigingen, die binnen haar kring leven of tot welke hare leden behooren?*" And he answers as follows: "Hierop moet geantwoord worden, dat vereenigingen niet kunnen vallen onder de kerkelijke censuur. Wel de leden der vereenigingen, voorzover zij leden der Kerk zijn, maar de corporaties zelve niet. Immers de kerkelijke tucht heeft te doen met personen, en niet met zaken." A little further on he says: "Nu gaat het echter niet aan, dat de Kerk, zooals in America en ook hier te lande wel het geval is geweest, maar zoo besluit, dat leden van bepaalde vereenigingen of genootschappen geen lid kunnen zijn van de Kerk. De Kerk treedt dan op een wijze, die niet in overeenstemming is met het karakter, en met het wezen der tucht. Immers het voorwerp der tucht is niet een lichaam of een vereeniging of een genootschap, maar een lid der Kerk, die zich in leer of leven kwam to misgaan." To this he adds: "Het kan noodig worden, dat iemand om een afwijkende overtuiging op maatschappelijk of politiek gebied moet worden behandeld, wanneer zijn afwijking raakt de gronden der leer, of wanneer de wijze van propaganda ingaat tegen het Woord Gods. Maar dan wordt het lid der gemeente niet gecensureerd, omdat hij lid is van een genootschap of vereeniging, maar omdat hij persoonlijk afwijkt van den weg door Christus in zijn Woord verordend." p. 167. The same position is taken by Dr. Greydanus in the *Reformatie* of April 14, 1939, by Jansen in his *De Kerkelijke Tucht*, p. 170 f., and by Van Dellen and Monsma, *Church Order Commentary*, p. 296.

And according to the report given by Dr. Grosheide the last Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands took the position that the Church proclaims and maintains the principle that a Christian may not belong to any organization whatsoever, which in principle or practice is in conflict with what Scripture clearly teaches or commands; and that the application of what the Bible requires is the task of the local consistories.

Finally, Mr. Gritter finds an inconsistency in the decision of 1928. He finds that in this decision Synod first recognizes corporate responsibility, and then in the last part of its decision says that when it comes to discipline or censure "the rule applies that only the fact that one is personally guilty of a censurable sin makes one an object of ecclesiastical discipline." This is not necessarily contradictory. It is quite conceivable that one is corporately responsible for evils found in such organizations as the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., and even for censurable evils, but that his corporate responsibility is not of such a nature as to make him necessarily an object of censure. Mr. Gritter seems to proceed on the assumption that, if one is corporately responsible for some sin or sins, which the Church regards as censurable, one is by that very fact also censurable. He must take that position, if he would justify a Church declaration to the effect that any and every member of our Church, who joins the A. F. L. or the C. I. O. should be censured. But this is an unwarranted generalization, and would be an entirely unwarranted position for the Church to take. It makes a world of difference first of all, whether our corporate responsibility in any sphere of life is purely passive or active. This is certainly true in civil life. We are co-responsible for the greatest evils of our city, our state, and our nation, if we do not protest against them and seek to stop them, but no judge will ever call us to account for this. But the situation is quite different, if it is found that we have become actively co-responsible by abetting, promoting, or taking an active part in the perpetuation of the evil. If the Church should have to censure its members for all the gross sins for which they are corporately responsible, it would certainly have to censure the majority, if not all, of them. The corporate responsibility of those who belong to unions in which glaring evils are found may differ very much. It makes a difference, whether an evil is committed by a local to which

one does or does not belong, and in which one has no voice; whether it is perpetrated in one's own locality or in some other distant place, so that one hardly knows of it; whether one encourages, promotes, and even takes an active part in the evil committed, or raises his voice against it, condemns it and seeks to prevent it. The responsibility may be of such a nature that it certainly calls for special admonitions, exhortations, and even rebukes, but does not necessarily warrant the application of Church censures. All this points to the necessity of investigating and treating each case by itself, and of judging it on its own merits. The subject of social responsibility is one that has come to the foreground more in recent times, and has not yet come in for careful consideration by authorities in Church government. In some cases they barely mention it. The usual position is that one becomes an object of censure only when one actively perpetrates some evil, either singly or jointly with others. And it would certainly be a dangerous thing for our Church to lay down a general rule in a matter that is so complicated and that calls for careful discrimination. Only a period of careful study can prepare the Church for any proper decision on this point. It seems to your committee that the decisions of 1928 are a sufficient guide for our churches. The only thing which seems to be required is that our consistories and ministers faithfully follow the directions given in 1928 and 1930.

III. SHOULD SYNOD EXPRESS ITSELF AS TO MEMBERSHIP IN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE A. F. OF L. AND THE C. I. O.?

Our survey reveals that Synod has in only one instance referred by name to a labor organization as one with which church members should not affiliate. This occurred in 1883 and again in 1886 when such direct reference was made to the Knights of Labor. However, this body was a secret organization and stood condemned on this very score. Outside of this instance, Synods have repeatedly declined to express themselves on any particular labor organization, as is evident from decisions made in 1928 and 1930. In 1928 the question was referred to the several Classes. Again, in 1930, Synod refused to commit itself as to the A. F. of L.

The question arises who shall be judge of the activity of a neutral labor organization such as the A. F. of L. or

the C. I. O.? Even though the constitution of such organizations are not in conflict with the Scriptures, the character of their activities will vary as to locality. This is the position which the committee reached in 1930 when it expressed itself as follows:

“It is self-evident that it was impossible for your Committee to observe the actual practices of all these organizations in this one city, not to speak of investigating the local unions in the dozen or more cities in which our people reside and affiliate with the unions. It should be added that the practices of the unions differ from place to place, and even in the same city.” (Agenda, 1930, pp. 229, 230).

In the light of this statement it becomes quite evident why the Synod of 1928 assigned the task of judging the activities of neutral unions to Classes and Consistories. (Cf. Acts, 1928, pp. 92, 93, 95).

We do not believe that the Church was in error when it declined to commit itself on any neutral labor organization. Granted that the constitution of the organization as a whole is not in conflict with the Word of God, none the less acts of individual locals may be definitely reprehensible. A member's responsibility for such acts, whether through active participation or corporately, can best be evaluated locally by consistory and Classis.

Should the Church remain silent as to the sinful practices of so-called neutral labor unions? That position the Church has never taken. The exercise of discipline through the preaching of the Word can and must be made more effective on issues arising from our social problems. The ministry has a duty in this respect which it must not neglect. The Committee on Christian Social and Industrial Organizations made this quite plain in 1930 (Acts, 1930, pp. 74, 75). This clear presentation of the disharmony between constitution and practice in the case of many labor unions will find ready response in the enlightened conscience of our members and lead to breaking ties with such organizations, and urge upon them instead the formation of Christian labor unions. Those members of our Church who are members of neutral labor unions must repeatedly be reminded of the implications of the Scriptural doctrine of corporate responsibility, as well as of the biblical principle of the Christian's separation from the world.

IV. THE QUESTION OF MORE EFFECTIVE AID FOR THE C. L. A.

Synods of our Church have on more than one occasion recommended the formation of Christian Labor Organizations. They have also gone on record as recommending moral and financial support for the C. L. A. However, in the petitioning letter, Brother Gritter insists that such moral and financial support is insufficient. He writes:

“From our leaders the C. L. A. must have much more; they must become members of it. That ought to be urged very strongly. Here is an organization which is trying valiantly to establish Christian Labor Unions everywhere in which Christians can live their principles and be protected against the un-Christian activities of the so-called neutral organizations; an organization which is worthy of the unreserved support of every leader in our churches, and, of which every Christian workingman should be a member. An expression by Synod to that effect seems to be entirely in order. We urge that it be made and that the attention of all members of our churches, leaders and others, be called to it repeatedly.” (Cf. Acts, 1940, page 338).

What Brother Gritter requests can hardly be considered as partaking of the task of the Church. The primary task of the Church is to preach the Word. The Ministry has the duty of instructing, exhorting, admonishing on the basis of the principles of the Word of God, as well with reference to the social spheres of life as to others. In substance the Synod of 1930 declared that it is the duty of leaders and members of our Church to support organizations which, both in theory and in practice, are in accord with the Scriptures. And the implication of this declaration should be evident to ministers and laity alike. But for Synod to assert that members of our Church should join one or other social or industrial organization is another matter. It is the task of the Church to declare the principles of the Bible which shall obtain in the social spheres, but it is the duty of various organizations to apply these principles. And as the Spirit of God binds these principles upon the hearts of men, the membership of the Church will organize Christian labor organizations, schools for Christian instruction, institutions of Christian mercy, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Committee recommends that

A. The Synod of 1942 adopt in re Labor Unions the position taken in 1916 and 1928, and the conclusions of the report "Christian Social and Industrial Organizations," as adopted by the Synod of 1930.

B. Synod expressly declare itself in agreement with the following principles:

1. Church membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union are compatible as long as such union gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin.
2. The Biblical doctrine of corporate responsibility and the Biblical teaching of the Christian's separation from the world make it imperative for members of neutral labor organizations to discontinue membership in any of such unions whose common practices are clearly in conflict with the principles of the Word of God.
3. Christian conscience cannot condone membership in a neutral organization if it continues and approves its sinful practices in spite of protests against them.
4. The doctrine of corporate responsibility does not imply that membership in unions which have engaged in sinful practices of itself makes one liable to ecclesiastical censure; however, when members of the Church render themselves guilty of acts which are contrary to the Word of God, the usual application of the rules for discipline shall be vigorously applied. Corporate responsibility may render one worthy of discipline, but the degree of guilt must be determined by the local consistories.
5. Consistories and Classes should take careful note of the practices of all organizations existent in their respective communities to determine whether membership in our Church and membership in such organizations are compatible.

C. Synod exhort the ministers of the Church to emphasize the Scriptural principles of the Christian's separation from the world, and of the sinful consequences of putting on an unequal yoke with unbelievers to obtain right and justice through means condemned by the Word

of God. Further Synod admonish the membership of the Church to break with all organizations which by repeated activity reveal an anti-Christian spirit. In short Synod urge upon ministers and elders by vigorous use of the keys intrusted to them to declare the principles of the Word of God which must guide the members of the Church in their relation to the world and the organizations of the world.

D. Synod exhort the churches to give moral and financial support to all Christian organizations in the social sphere.

RALPH DANHOF, *Chairman.*

LOUIS BERKHOF.

JOHN VAN VELS

GARRETT HEYNS, *Secretary.*

REPORT II.

REPORT ON YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

To the Synod of 1943.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

INTRODUCTION:

THIS being a continuation of the report rendered to the Synod of 1942 by your Committee, we suggest at the outset that you refer to said report found on pages 131-142 of Agenda II, 1942, for a proper understanding of that which follows.

The Committee's task was three-fold:

- a. Study the problem of our youth and their organizations.
- b. Study the effectiveness of the now existing organizations, and
- c. Advise regarding future development of these organizations.

Last year's report includes our findings on "a" and "b". Our present task is to suggest possible improvements. We come with our suggestions and recommendations in all humility, realizing that our problems are not solved by recommendations and decisions. Yet we feel that if conscientiously and prayerfully applied the remedies we offer will prove to be helpful.

I. SYNOD'S INTEREST IN YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS.

Before coming with our recommendations it may be well to remind ourselves of Synod's past interest in our young people from the point of view of their organizations, and to emphasize the propriety of such interest.

A. From this angle we present a short historical sketch which brings out this interest. So far as we could discover no Synod ever considered the matter of society life until after the formation of the American Federation of Reformed Young Men's Societies. That Federation sought the help of Synod in the matter of providing suitable literature for youth, shortly after its organization.

The Agendum of 1922, p. 16, contains an instruction from Classis Sioux Center, petitioning Synod to interest itself in the problem, mentioning as one of the two grounds the fact that the Federation was eager that such action be taken and had indeed requested it.

Synod acted favorably upon the overture of Classis Sioux Center and appointed a Committee which was to study the possibility of procuring and publishing such literature. It was told to work in conjunction with the Federation Board. The brethren J. B. Hulst, H. H. Meeter, E. J. Tanis, H. Bel, and H. Hoeksema constituted the Committee.

To the Synod of 1924 this Committee came with its report found on page 358 of the Acts. It advised that Synod appropriate \$3,000.00 per year for the writing and publishing of proper literature. A committee of Synod was to supervise the carrying out of this project, and the Publication Committee was to see to the printing and distributing of the books to be written. Instead of adopting these recommendations, Synod decided that the Federation was to be placed upon the accredited list for an annual offering to be used particularly for the publication of books. It decided, furthermore, that this money might not be used to pay the salary of a general secretary. It approved the proposal concerning the Publication Committee.

The Agendum of 1926 contains a report of the Literature Committee appointed in 1924. Over \$1,700.00 had been collected. Three books were said to be in the process of birth. One by Dr. H. Beets on "Great Men and Events in the History of the Reformed Churches", another by Prof. L. Berkhof on the "Social Teaching of the Bible"; and a third by the Rev. G. Hylkema on "Lodgism". The Committee was continued. A request that some of the Literature Fund money be used to pay the salary of a general secretary was again refused, p. 175.

Coming now to more recent times, we discover that Synod of 1937 endorsed the appointment of a Youth Secretary by the A.F.R.Y.M.S., and recommended the cause to the churches for an annual collection or contribution. It also appointed a committee to consult with the Federation Board for the purpose of drawing up a plan regulating his work and relationship to the church—"and for establishing permanent contact with the Federation".

This Committee consisted of the brethren J. Weidenaar, M. Arnoys and W. Kok.

To the Synod of 1938 the above-mentioned committee came with a report (pp. 44-48, Agenda I, 1938), advising the Synod to approve the appointment by the Federation of a minister as Youth Secretary. It also suggested the appointment by Synod of someone to represent itself upon the Federation Board. Synod did not adopt these recommendations, however. It merely expressed its deep interest in the Federation, urged the cause of a Youth Secretary upon the churches for an offering, and voiced the opinion that a layman be appointed rather than a minister.

Since then Synod has received an annual report from the part-time Youth Secretary, Mr. R. Postma, and expressing its appreciation for the work accomplished, has renewed its previously made recommendation that offerings be taken for this project.

In 1941 your present Committee was appointed upon the suggestion of the Board of the A.F.R.Y.M.S. to study the youth problem from the angle of their organizations. The Committee reported in part in 1942 and was continued.

The Synod of 1942 manifested further interest in youth by officially recognizing the A.F.R.Y.W.S. as an organization of value for the welfare of the Church, and recommending it to the churches for moral support.

B. This interest of Synod is certainly laudable. We can but add that it should have been manifested much earlier in history. For surely, since these organizations are established for the spiritual welfare of our young people, and our future leaders are trained at least in part in these societies, Synod ought to be vitally interested in their efficient functioning. No one can doubt there is room for improvement. That Synod can help steer our youth organizations in the right direction is our firm conviction.

II. THE PRESENT SITUATION AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS.

A. THE STUDY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES.

1. Questionnaire I. This was intended to obtain a composite view of the attitude of our young people themselves toward their organizations. For details

- people, it is easy to understand that lack of spirituality is the chief cause of non-participation.
- d. There is little uniformity in the methods used by consistories in the matter of encouraging youth organizations and in unifying youth work.
3. Questionnaire III. This sought definite information as to the percentage of our young people attending our youth organizations. See page 141. The statistics indicate that a far larger percentage of our young people should be enrolled as members.
 4. A General Conclusion to the above. It is evident:
 - a. That our leaders are well agreed as to the purpose and aim of our youth organizations, namely, to inculcate a knowledge of Scripture, particularly with a view to giving a clearer understanding of the problems of life and their solution in accordance with our Calvinistic world and life view. That, moreover, they are to serve as agencies for the fostering of Christian sociability.
 - b. That, although they are agreed that such organizations fit in with our Reformed scheme, our leaders are not very enthusiastic about the effectiveness of our societies in reaching these aims. Nearly all of them consider it to be moderate. It is of interest, however, to note that very few consider these organizations to be of little or no value—less than 5%.
 - c. That on the whole the membership is more charitable in its judgment than the leaders. Their estimate of the value of their societies is considerably higher than that of the leaders.

B. IMPROVEMENTS SUGGESTED.

Our problem is therefore, how shall we make our youth organizations, which are clearly looked upon as necessary and worth-while, more valuable and effective? What can be done to increase their effectiveness?

In suggesting improvements we are guided, in a measure, by the answers received to the question, "On what do you consider the effectiveness of your society to depend?" To this query seven possible answers were suggested by the committee. They are here listed in the order of their importance in the estimation of our young people.

see page 135, Agenda II, 1942. On the basis of the returns we drew the following conclusions:

- a. The large majority of our young people are convinced of the value of our youth organizations and have benefited by them.
 - b. There is a decided appreciation of the larger organizations, Federations and Leagues, as helpful in creating a spirit of unity.
 - c. Our young people feel that the success of their organizations depends very largely upon the co-operation of the membership. It was rated first in every group and that with a very large majority.
 - d. Leadership is esteemed to be very important especially that of the layman. Very naturally the importance of the minister as leader loomed much larger among the boys than the girls.
 - e. Federations and Leagues rank relatively lower than the factors which are more local in character with the exception of consistorial co-operation.
 - f. *The Young Calvinist*, which is published by the Federations, ranks high in the estimation of our young people.
2. Questionnaire II. This was submitted to obtain the views of our ministers. See pages 136-140. On the basis of these answers we concluded as follows:
- a. It is encouraging to note that there is considerable unanimity as to the general purposes of the youth organizations, namely, the study of the Word of God and the development of spiritual life. However, the replies do show that our ministers are not as convinced as to the effectiveness of the organizations in attaining these aims as the young people seem to be, as shown in the answers to Questionnaire I. This is borne out by answers to questions 2, 12, and 13 of Questionnaire II.
 - b. Both our leaders and our young people agree that the success of our organizations depends upon the co-operation of members and upon competent leadership.
 - c. Our Youth organizations being primarily interested in developing the spiritual life of our young

First, Co-operation of members
Second, Leadership of layman or society member
Third, *The Young Calvinist*
Fourth, Leadership of Pastor
Fifth, League Membership
Sixth, Consistorial Co-operation
Seventh, Federation Membership.

1. The enthusiastic **co-operation of the membership** is most essential. It must therefore be fostered. This is a local problem which Synod cannot very well solve. It is linked up, however, with proper leadership, the program followed, and the general attitude in a particular church toward spiritual matters. The young people must be given something definite to do in their organizations; something that will challenge them, and will stimulate teamwork.
2. Moreover, **leadership** of a high calibre is very necessary for an effective organization. More attention should be given to the problem of training leaders. No doubt our College and Seminary Faculties could give some fine training to those who must be leaders in the course of time. Also such organizations as our Bible Institutes would be able to render valuable service. Leaders must understand young people, must be sympathetic toward them. Possibly our ministers should be more active as leaders in our youth organizations than is now the case; especially when it comes to Young Men's Societies. At any rate the highest type of leadership is essential.
3. **Consistorial co-operation** seems to be non-existent in many cases. No doubt this is not due to ill-will, but rather to a failure to realize the vital importance of our societies for the vital health of our congregations. We suggest that our consistories pursue the following course of action:
 - a. That they actively encourage the organization of societies where these do not exist.
 - b. That they provide a suitable place of meeting.
 - c. That they diligently distribute the literature provided by Federations or Leagues.
 - d. That they persistently seek to interest our young people in their organizations at family visitation and by means of preaching.

- e. That they appoint a "youth-committee" by which contact is maintained with the societies and which shall constantly study ways and means to improve these organizations.
4. The **parents** clearly have a responsibility in this connection. They can do much to encourage their sons and daughters to join societies and to prepare for meetings. Moreover, parents, by membership in their own organizations, set a fine example for their children.
5. Our **Church Papers** should contain more material of specific interest to our young people, and should emphasize the value of youth organizations.
6. We are of the opinion that it is possible for our larger organizations, **the Federations and Leagues**, to render greater service to the cause than they have done. A more decided unity in their programs is to be desired; a working together to attain their common aim. To this end we should steer into the direction of a united youth movement.

III. A UNITED YOUTH MOVEMENT.

We have just suggested the advisability of steering into the direction of a united youth movement. What do we mean by that term? We have in mind a program of action which would serve to bring together all our youth organizations under one central head or body. This would serve to emphasize their common basis, aims, and ideals, and would give our young people that feeling of denominational unity which it is desirable to foster. We would be inaugurating a more comprehensive policy in regard to young people's organizations and would eliminate unnecessary duplication, a potential working at cross purposes, and detrimental forms of competition. This ideal might be brought about either through a standing Synodical Committee which would devote itself to this task, or through a central office through which the program of action would be carried out, or through a Youth Secretary who would work for the realization of the desired end. The exact method of procedure should be decided upon after further study has been given to the matter, as implied in our recommendation below.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS.

Considering all these possible ways along which improvement must be sought, we come with the following recommendations:

- A. That Synod reaffirm the stand taken by previous Synods and endorse the National Federations, and assert that these as well as the Leagues and local Societies are very valuable agencies for the spiritual development of our youth.
- B. That Synod urge the consistories to pay close attention to their local youth organizations, in accordance with the suggestions made above, and that they especially concern themselves with the problem of proper leadership. See II, B. 3.
- C. That Synod, since leadership is so essential, encourage its development in the following ways:
 1. Urge the proper authorities of our educational institutions—Calvin College and Seminary—to incorporate into the appropriate courses the subject of youth organization and leadership.
 2. Urge the editors of our Church papers to give greater attention to youth and youth organizations.
 3. Suggest to the editorial staff of *The Young Calvinist* in particular, that articles on youth leadership be featured now and then for the benefit of present leaders.
- D. That Synod appoint a standing Youth Committee of three representing Synod to which each of the existing Youth Federations shall be asked to add one member. This Committee shall report to each Synod. Its task shall be:
 1. To encourage the carrying out of the program suggested under IV, C, and whatever other program Synod may adopt.
 2. To seek the realization of the ideal of a United Youth Movement as suggested in III.
 3. To interest itself in the problem of our youth organizations, and devise ways in which they may be made more effective.

Respectfully submitted,

E. POST, *President.*

C. WITT, *Secretary.*

J. HOFSTRA.

REPORT III.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON A REFORMED ALLIANCE

(Committee 37, Article 135, Syn. Acts, 1942.)

To the Synod of 1943.

ESTEEMED BRETHREN:

I. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

UPON recommendation of its Committee on Church Order, the Synod of 1942 accepted the Overture of Classis Holland to "appoint a committee to investigate jointly with committees of other denominations the possibility, the advisability, and the value of a loose Reformed Alliance of such denominations that are loyal to God's Word as interpreted by their own Reformed Confessions," Art. 126, V, A. 1, a, Acts of Synod, 1942, p. 124.

Further, the committee to be appointed by Synod must "take cognizance of the Overture of Classis Muskegon, and of the Overture of the East Side Christian Reformed Church of Cleveland, Ohio, and of the letter of the Rev. Edward H. Rian".

Classis Muskegon overtured Synod as Classis Holland did to appoint a committee to explore the possibilities of an Alliance. The East Side Christian Reformed Church of Cleveland overtured Synod to appoint a committee "to promote correspondence and co-operation", p. 125. The latter overture also included besides the definitely ecclesiastical (Church) task of correspondence with other churches the mandate to seek closer co-operation of "Laymen of Calvinistic belief".

There seems to be an intimation that in addition to what Classes Holland and Muskegon overture the committee of Synod should take under consideration the possibility of organizing a Calvinistic Society for Calvinistic Action.

The specific projects for such an Alliance to realize are:

1. A united testimony to the essentials of the Reformed Faith;

2. The founding of an American Calvinistic University;
3. The organizing of a Reformed Literature Society; and,
4. The undertaking of a national radio broadcast.

Your Committee has interpreted its mandate as one of exploration and investigation. Of necessity it had to take cognizance of all that is involved in the above-mentioned projects. Your Committee, however, concerned itself chiefly with three questions: What are the possibilities of a loose Reformed Alliance? Would it be more feasible to have a Calvinistic Society to realize these projects? Or should we have both, an ecclesiastical (Reformed Alliance) and a non-ecclesiastical (Calvinistic Society similar to a Christian School Society) organization?

II. THE PITTSBURGH MEETING

The Rev. Edward H. Rian, chairman of a similar committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, invited the committees of the four other Reformed denominations to meet on October 15 and 16, 1942, in the Community House of the First United Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Pa.

The participating Churches were the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod. Unfortunately no representative of the Associate Presbyterian Church appeared.

The three members of our Committee present were: the Rev. Prof. L. Berkhof, the Rev. J. T. Hoogstra, Th.D., and the Rev. I. Van Dellen.

Pittsburgh was chosen by the Rev. E. H. Rian as the most centrally located meeting place.

The temporary officers of this meeting were: the Rev. E. H. Rian, chairman; and Dr. J. T. Hoogstra, secretary.

III. THE REV. E. H. RIAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Rev. E. H. Rian, upon whom the duty of convening the meeting had devolved, submitted the following introduction as a basis for discussion:

The first question he asked was: Why a Federation? There were two answers given. First, a federation would tend to unite the real forces of Calvinism in America. There is not such a federation in existence today. The Reformed Alliance does not amount to a great deal in its stand for Calvinism. Other federations have not been

sufficiently discriminatory for genuine Calvinistic action. The second answer is, that a federation will unite these forces to do something concrete. A federation should not be a debating society. It should do things.

The second main question was: What are the purposes of such a Federation? In his reply to this question the Rev. Mr. Rian listed six specific projects which such a Federation could carry out: 1. Radio Broadcasting (National Hook-up); 2. A Calvinistic Literature Society; 3. Preaching Mission; 4. Conference for self-development and for the propagation of our faith; 5. The founding of a Calvinistic University; and, 6. Christian fellowship.

The third main question was: How should such a Federation function? In the first place, it should not consider itself a super-denomination. He did not desire church union. Neither did he advocate that this Federation should exercise any ecclesiastical functions as discipline. Its powers would not be compulsory but advisory.

Positively: The basis of membership demands the subscription to one or more of the following symbols: Westminster Confession, The Larger and The Shorter Catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort. This Federation should also exercise discriminatory powers. One such discrimination is the insistence upon non-membership in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

The representatives who met at Pittsburgh and who will have benefited by the discussions should consider themselves the constituting body. Other denominations could join the Alliance only upon invitation.

If possible, there should be some kind of affiliate membership. Denominations may belong to the Federal Council, but there may be within these denominations churches, presbyteries, and synods who are sympathetic to our ideals. These should have advisory, not voting powers.

IV. CLARIFICATION OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED

In the overtures under consideration and in the introduction of the Rev. Mr. Rian there are two strands that seem to be interwoven. The discussion at this Pittsburgh meeting engaged itself first of all in disentangling these two strands.

There are certain matters that belong to the province of the church institute. These are usually labelled ecclesiastical matters. There are other activities that belong to the church organism or Calvinistic kingdom work. These are non-ecclesiastical matters, not in the sense that they are not the concern of the organized church, but in the sense that they are not within the province of the church to operate (for example, Christian schools and Christian hospitals).

Consequently, in disentangling the ecclesiastical from the non-ecclesiastical various possibilities became evident. We could have two organizations: an Alliance and a Calvinistic Society. Or we could have either an Alliance or a Calvinistic Society, preferably the latter.

If we should choose to have two organizations, then the duties of the Alliance would be, to take care of such matters as belong to the province of the church. Three things were mentioned: National Radio Preaching; A Preaching Mission; and Closer Fellowship for the purpose of mutual correction, encouragement, and development in the Reformed Faith.

The second organization would then be a Society of American Calvinists. The major assemblies of the denominations which were represented in Pittsburgh could each appoint a committee of two to *begin* such a movement. It would be within the province of the church to originate such a society and then surrender the control and operation after its organization has been effected. This society would remain related to the church in a moral way. It would seek synodical endorsement and permission to solicit funds much in the same way as other Kingdom societies do. Its function would be to interest itself in realizing a Calvinistic Literature Society and a Calvinistic University.

V. RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE PITTSBURGH MEETING

The resolutions proposed and adopted center around these two questions: Shall we have an Alliance? Shall we have a Calvinistic Society?

It may be well, to remark here, that none of the resolutions have any binding force. Proposals were voted upon to arrive at a cross section of opinion. Each repre-

sentative committee is at liberty to recommend the opposite of what was accepted.

Should we have a Reformed Alliance? A proposal was drafted to that effect:

"We favor the formation of the federation of Presbyterian and Reformed denominations professing and adhering to the Calvinistic system of doctrine as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism, and other recognized Reformed Confessions for the promotion of such ecclesiastical projects as:

1. The fostering of Christian fellowship among the churches constituting this federation;
2. The united propagation of the Reformed Faith, e.g., by radio preaching;
3. The deepening and strengthening of a Reformed consciousness in Christians in the churches of this federation as well as in other denominations by preaching".

After a lengthy discussion it was duly accepted that we express ourselves as *ideally* favoring such a proposed alliance, but that in the judgment of all present such an alliance was not practical *as yet*.

Our attention was then focussed upon the feasibility of a non-ecclesiastical organization. It was stated, that such an organization would be more influential and more inclusive. After a very comprehensive exchange of opinions the following proposal was adopted:

"We, the committee appointed by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, and the the Christian Reformed Church, in session October 15, 1942, at Pittsburgh, Pa., favor the formation of an alliance of individuals holding the system of doctrines expressed in the historic Reformed Confessions for the propagation of the Reformed world and life view through the publication and distribution of literature, radio broadcasting, and a university."

VI. THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED

The problems involved center around two facts. The first focal point is: What problems are involved in the formation of a Reformed Alliance? The second point

is: What problems are implicit in organizing a Calvinistic Society?

There are a few problems that are involved in the creation of a Reformed Alliance. Ideally, what is spiritually one should manifest itself as one as far as is possible in this sinful and abnormal world. There may be situations because of which this ideal cannot be attained *as yet*. Still we may not surrender this ideal.

A Reformed Alliance would exclude Reformed men of denominations untrue to the Reformed Confessions. To some this was a formidable objection. They could not concede an Alliance the right to exercise discriminatory powers of excluding denominations which as denominations are disloyal to the Reformed Faith.

There were others that approached the question from an entirely different angle. An Alliance is ecclesiastical. The church as the pillar of truth may not knowingly ally itself with error. Such would be the case if a church should unite in any way with a denomination known to be disloyal to the faith. This would be both sinful and detrimental to the welfare of the church.

Hence we must distinguish between orthodox members and the denomination. There may be many good members in an apostate denomination. True, perhaps they fail to let their testimony shine undimmed. Even if these good members feel offended an Alliance is powerless to do otherwise if it desires to be loyal to the truth. Churches can deal only with churches and not with individual members.

Such an Alliance would have to seek its power in its inherent strength rather than in its numerical strength.

What problems are involved in organizing a Calvinistic Society? The fundamental problem is: What is Calvinism? This question was asked several times in our discussions at Pittsburgh. Hence this is not merely raising academic questions. To some Calvinism is the Five Points of the Canons of Dort. For others it seems to be a belief in the inerrancy of Scriptures plus a few distinctive marks. To others it is a system of doctrine in action which demands an integration of all of life upon the presuppositions of the Reformed faith. It is urgent that all Calvinists come to grips with this fundamental question: What is Calvinism? Different historical antecedents will bring to light different interpretations and emphases.

Another related question is: Who are Calvinists? If we are to have a virile organization we must have men with convictions boldly taught and lived. In this respect a chain is as strong as its weakest link.

Besides these fundamental questions there is also this practical consideration. The Committee of the American Calvinistic Conference had done some pioneering in the ideals and projects this new organization would be interested in. True, the emphasis has been upon conference work. At the same time the two American Conferences have expressed as their ideal the founding of a university. They have succeeded in making contacts with many Calvinists of this nation and of other continents. In the minds of some of the members of the committee there is a possibility that this conference committee can become a nucleus for a Calvinistic Literature Society. At any rate, we should avoid duplication of labors.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.

In accordance with the foregoing report, your Committee submits to Synod the following recommendations for your action:

- A. Synod declare its cordial approval of a Federation of Calvinistic Churches for the better prosecution of joint ecclesiastical interests as an ultimate ideal in full awareness of the need of much preparatory educational work among the members of the Churches co-operating toward the attainment of this ideal.
- B. Synod declare itself as favoring the formation of an alliance of individuals holding the system of doctrine expressed in the historic Reformed Confessions for the propagation of the Reformed world and life view through the publication and distribution of literature, radio broadcasting, and a university.
- C. In order to do its share toward the realization of the aim set forth under Point B of this advice, Synod appoint a Committee of Two for the study and furtherance of this kind of work in co-operation with other similar Committees which co-operating Churches may appoint, and to suggest to this Committee of Two the advisability for it and the co-operating Committees to bear in mind also the

work of the Calvinistic Conference Committee and of seeking a broad meeting of Calvinistic men, as which possibly the Calvinistic Conference Committee can serve.

Respectfully submitted,

L. BERKHOF,
J. T. HOOGSTRA,
D. H. KROMMINGA,
I. VAN DELLEN.

ECUMENICAL REFORMED COUNCIL

P. S. The members of the Committee on a Loose Federation of Reformed Churches constitute also Synod's Committee for an Ecumenical Reformed Council (Comm. 16, Art. 135, Syn. Acts, 1942). In that capacity they take this occasion to inform your reverend body, that, due to the present world crisis they have not been able to do anything in furtherance of this project. They suggest to Synod the continuance of this Committee in the hope that the Lord will soon clear away the obstacles which at present put the meeting of such an Ecumenical Council out of the question.

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