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Esteemed Brethren:

The Deputies appointed by Synod Edmonton 1965 (Acts 1965, Art. 177) present the following report for your consideration:

I. MANDATE

Our mandate was concisely stated in the Acts of Synod 1965, article 177:

"A. De Synode heeft kennis genomen:

1. Van de brief van de Contact Commissie van de Christian Reformed Church, d.d. 13 maart 1965, waarin ze ons bericht, dat de Synode van de Christian Reformed Church 1964 een speciale contact commissie heeft benoemd "To communicate with the Canadian Reformed Churches with a view to establish a closer relationship with these churches", en het verzoek doet een commissie te benoemen om de vraag te bespreken, hoe een nauwere relatie tussen hun en onze Kerken tot stand kan worden gebracht.
2. Van het voorstel van de Kerk te Edmonton overeenkomstig het verzoek van de Synode van de Christian Reformed Church een commissie te benoemen met bepaalde instructies aangaande de zaken, die haars inziens besproken dienen te worden.
3. Van het voorstel van de Particuliere Synode van de Kerken in Ontario 1965, deputaten te benoemen met de opdracht contact op te nemen met het "Special Contact Committee", benoemd door de Synode 1964 van de Christian Reformed Church, om met dit Committee te spreken over die dingen, die in het verleden eenheid naar het Woord des Heren in de weg hebben gestaan; en over wat thans eenwording in de weg staat, met als doel, dat de belemmeringen voor schriftuurlijke eenheid worden weggenomen.
4. Van het schrijven van de Kerk te Barrhead, 20 September 1965, waarin ze de Synode verzoekt overeenkomstig het voorstel van de Kerk te Edmonton te besluiten.

B. De Synode overweegt:

1. Het is de Zoon van God, die door zijn Geest en Woord Zich een gemeente vergadert, beschermt en onderhoudt in de enigheid des geloofs. Het is de roeping van alle gelovigen met Christus te vergaderen, door met elkaar de eenheid der Kerk in de enigheid des geloofs en der kennis van de Zoon van God te onderhouden in de concrete situatie van vandaag.
2. Die situatie wordt voor wat de Christian Reformed Church en onze Kerken betreft bepaald door o.a. de volgende omstandigheden:
 - a. De Christian Reformed Church en onze Kerken hebben dezelfde belijdenisschriften als Formulieren van Enigheid aanvaard: de Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis, de Heidelbergse Catechismus en de Dordtse Leerregels.
 - b. De Christian Reformed Church heeft daarnaast aanvaard:
De Besluiten van Utrecht (1905/1908) en een officiële interpretatie daarvan (1962).
De Drie Punten van Kalamazoo (1924) en een officiële interpretatie daarvan (1959/1960).
Onze Kerken hebben naast de Drie Formulieren van Enigheid geen andere verklaringen aangaande de Leer der Kerk aanvaard.
 - c. De Christian Reformed Church onderhoudt correspondentie met de synodaal gebonden Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Onze Kerken onderhouden

correspondentie met de vrijgemaakte Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

d. De Christian Reformed Church heeft een nieuwe Kerkenordering aanvaard.

Onze Kerken hebben nog steeds de Kerkenorde van Dordt/Utrecht (1619/1905)

C. De Synode besluit

Vier deputaten te benoemen met de opdracht:

1. Met de contact-commissie van de Christian Reformed Church na te gaan hoe hun en onze Kerken met elkaar op het fundament van de apostelen des Lams de eenheid der Kerk in de enigheid des geloofs en der kennis van de Zone Gods dienen aan te gaan en te onderhouden

en

daarom met genoemde commissie de concrete situatie, zoals die mee door de onder B 2 genoemde verschillen bepaald is, te toetsen aan de Drie Formulieren van Enigheid.

2. De Kerken op de hoogte te houden van hetgeen in de contact-oefening verhandeld is en een rapport in te dienen bij de volgende Generale Synode. "

When considering this mandate your Deputies deemed it necessary to have an informative meeting with the Deputies for contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to discuss together a course of action. After this, unofficial, meeting was held a date for the first meeting with the Contact Committee was arranged.

Along the lines of the minutes of this and the following meetings we want to give you an idea of the procedure which was followed in the "toetsing van de concrete situatie zoals die door de bestaande verschillen is bepaald."

The purpose and the result of the first contact-meeting with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church (hereafter called C.C.) was not much more than a preliminary discussion of the method of ~~exercising~~ this contact. The main point therefore was the matter of agenda. Since our mandate states that we had to "examine the factual situation on the foundation of the Three Forms of Unity", it was felt that we ought to speak also about the cause for and the right of our existence as Canadian Reformed Churches. This point was stressed because our mandate included that we had to examine the situation "zoals die M/EDE door de onder B 2 genoemde verschillen bepaald is".

The C.C. was of the opinion that the question about the relation with the churches in the Netherlands was in the province of another Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, namely the Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Relations. Your Deputies, on the other hand, maintained that it would be impossible to touch solely upon some doctrinal matters and not upon this important issue, and that we only could reach the heart of the matter in the entire framework of the mandate, since our meetings are not arranged with the purpose of church-correspondence but of unification and union.

The discussions concerning agenda and method resulted in the agreement that the mandate of the Deputies of the Canadian Reformed Churches should be taken as the starting point of the discussions, and that the first point of discussion would be the one mentioned under C. 1 b "met genoemde commissie de concrete situatie, zoals die mee door de onder B 2 genoemde verschillen bepaald is, te toetsen aan de Drie Formulieren van Enigheid". After discussion of the points B 2. a, b and c of the mandate of Synod 1965, it was decided that documents, necessary for a good discussion, would be exchanged. These documents were:

- a) Wijzigingen in de Kerkenorde van Dordt, zoals deze door de Canadian Reformed Churches is aangepast aan de Canadese situatie.
- b) Photocopies of certain parts of the Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church 1959, 1960 and 1962, concerning the Conclusions of

Utrecht 1905/1908 and the Three Points of Kalamazoo 1924.
c) The New Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church.

At the end of the first meeting a joint-statement was prepared and adopted. This statement has been published in the Canadian Reformed Magazine of June 24, 1966, Vol. 15, No. 26; a translation in the Dutch language appeared in the issue of July 2/ July 9, 1966, Vol. 15, Nos. 27/28. This statement reads:

"At the first meeting, which was held on June 1st, 1966 in the Rehoboth Chr. Ref. Church, Toronto, the Reverend John C. Verbrugge presided. In an opening statement he declared that the basic things on which we are without a doubt one in heart are much greater than the things which at present separate us. When we first see how much there is on which we are united in Christ we will certainly have a basis on which to stand to discuss the things which separate us. It is important to rightly understand each other. When we can see each other through eyes of faith and from out of our relationship with Jesus Christ, our vision will be better in focus and we will be able to make more accurate and more charitable judgment of each other.

After some general discussion about the purpose of our coming together it was agreed to proceed with the outline expressed in the mandate given to the committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches by the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

This mandate reads as follows:

To examine, together with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, how their and our churches are to enter into and maintain together the unity of the Church in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God on the foundation of the apostles of the Lamb, and therefore to examine, together with the said Committee the concrete situation, as it is also determined by the differences regarding the following points:

1. The Christian Reformed Church and our Churches have adopted the same confessional forms as Forms of Unity: The Belgic Confession; The Heidelberg Catechism and The Canons of Dordt.
2. Besides those the Christian Reformed Church has adopted: The Conclusions of Utrecht (1905/1908) and an official interpretation of them (1962); The Three Points of Kalamazoo (1924) and an official interpretation of them (1959/1960);
Our Churches have not adopted any other declaration concerning the doctrine of the Church beside the Three Forms of Unity.
3. The Christian Reformed Church maintains correspondence with the "Synodical" Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands; the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain correspondence with the "Liberated" Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.
4. The Christian Reformed Church has adopted a New Church-Order; our Churches still abide by the Church-Order of Dordt/Utrecht (1618/1905).

In the course of the discussion it was agreed upon that the progress of our work would be facilitated by mutual exchange of materials in the Acts of Synod of the two bodies.

After the Committee members have had a chance to study these materials they will meet again Sep. 15, 1966 in the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, Willowdale, Ontario."

II. THE THREE FORMS OF UNITY (B. 2a Mandate)

At a following meeting with the C.C. the matter of the text of the Three Forms of Unity was considered. The text of the Heidelberg Catechism and of the Canons of Dordt did not cause any problems. Article 36 of the Belgic Confession became a point of discussion. It was decided that at a forthcoming meeting a report on this matter would be submitted and discussed. Further it was agreed upon that the sequence of discussion should be 2 a-b-d-c (instead of 2 a-b-c-d) i.e. that the matter of church correspondence would be the last point to be discussed.

Some questions concerning B 2b which were prepared beforehand were submitted to the C.C. The members of the Committee answered the questions as well as they could under the circumstances, because they did not have an opportunity to study and to discuss them among themselves. It was felt that these questions -- after a preliminary discussion -- should be reformulated and forwarded to the C.C.

To facilitate further discussions your Deputies considered the following matters and made the necessary decisions.

- a. Since it was agreed with the C.C. that reports of our meetings would not be published as yet, the question was raised whether we should ask the churches to abstain from detailed publications about local contact-meetings. It was felt that this was not in our province; according to our mandate the churches must be informed, from time to time, about the issues discussed.
- b. A report on the text of Art. 36 Belgic Confession was forwarded to the C.C. This report reads:

"ON ART. XXXVI CONFESSION OF FAITH.

Checking on the situation concerning the "twenty words" in both the Christian Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches, I found the following information:

1. Christian Reformed Church.

In the (official?) edition printed in the Psalter Hymnal the twenty words do not appear in the text anymore. A footnote offers this explanation and information:

"In the original text this sentence reads as follows (the asterisk is placed after the words "... to protect the sacred ministry ...", vD.): "Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the Kingdom of Christ promoted." (underlining mine, vD.) The Synod of 1910, recognizing the unbiblical teaching, contained in this sentence, concerning freedom of religion and concerning the duty of the state to suppress false religion, saw fit to add an explanatory footnote. The Synod of 1938, agreeing with the Synod of 1910 as to the unbiblical character of teaching referred to, but recognizing a conflict between the objectionable clauses in the Article and its footnote, decided to eliminate the footnote and to make the change in the text of the Article which appears above, corresponding to the change adopted in 1905 by the General Synod of the "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland". (See Acts of Synod, 1910, pp 9, 104-105; also Acts of Synod 1938, p. 17).

2. Canadian Reformed Churches.

In the (second print of) The Book of Praise, Provisional Edition, the

underlined twenty words appear in the text itself, though between brackets. A footnote offers this information:

"The twenty words between brackets () were deleted by the General Synod of 1905 of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland as not being in harmony with the biblical teaching concerning the mandate of the government. The Christian Reformed Church did the same in 1910 (See Acts of Synod, 1910, pp. 9, 104-105). Other Churches of Reformed origin in the Netherlands maintained these words. The Canadian Reformed Churches may be considered to agree with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, although up to the present they did not deal specifically with this issue."

3. Difference.

Consequently, there is a (small) difference. The one Church has still the twenty words in the text, though between brackets. The other Church has removed them from "the face of the page". The one Church says: "they are not in harmony with the biblical teaching"; the other says: "they are unbiblical teaching". As far as we know, the Churches in the Netherlands still have them in the text, though within brackets. Obviously, at the one side of the ocean there was and is the uneasy feeling that leaving out this sentence would not be completely right. It might be (come) a loss of something good. At this side of the ocean the Christian Reformed Church was not plagued by such a feeling.

4. Conclusion.

Whether completely deleted or printed within brackets, this change in confession did not solve the problem. At the one hand there is the conviction that the twenty words can be understood in a biblical sense and that we must fear to fall into the trap of "the idea of the neutral state"; at the other hand, omission of these words did/does not take away the confession that the magistrate "have to protect the sacred ministry, that the Kingdom of Christ may thus be promoted".

We believe that, whether deleted or not, the discussion around these twenty words is an unfinished business. Further study of Scripture and history (the historical meaning of these twenty words among other things) will be necessary.

We also believe that the sub 3 mentioned difference is not necessarily an obstacle between both Churches."

- c. Report Synod 1968. It was agreed that a draft report be made to give Synod an idea of the procedure of our contact and of the results.
- d. The "Deputaten van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland" will, at the request of Mr. F.J. Kerkhof, receive this report.
- c. The re-formulation of Questions concerning the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905/1908 were adopted and forwarded to the C.C. (See Chapter III.)

After a joint discussion of the report on Article 36 of the Belgic Confession this report was unanimously adopted. The text of the Confession was not further discussed.

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III. CONCLUSIONS OF UTRECHT (1905/1908) (B. 2b Mandate)

In the year 1908 the Christian Reformed Church accepted the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905, which Conclusions deal with certain points of doctrine. At Synod 1960 of the Christian Reformed Church several overtures were submitted in which

overtures the idea was set forth that these Conclusions are of such a nature that "they are an obstacle to closer relationship with certain Reformed Churches that subscribe to the same Creeds as the Christian Reformed Church" (Acts Synod 1960,p.46). At the same time a letter was received from the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland which letter also looks upon these Conclusions as "an obstacle to unity".

Synods of the Christian Reformed Church considered this letter and the overtures, and in 1962 an "official interpretation" of the decisions of Synod 1908 was laid down in the following statements or recommendations:

1. Synod does not accede to the request to set aside the Conclusions of Utrecht.
2. Synod re-affirms that the adoption of these Conclusions was a declaration of agreement with these formulations, and advises that they be understood in the light of the Study Committee Report.
3. Synod states that these Conclusions shall not be used as a test for membership or holding office in the Christian Reformed Church, nor as a test for admitting ministers to the Christian Reformed Ministry.
4. Synod declares that the Christian Reformed Church appreciates the striving for unity with other Reformed Churches which is reflected in these overtures and that it encourages further efforts toward promoting such unity.
5. Synod declares that the Christian Reformed Church is willing to discuss differences between themselves and other Reformed groups in an effort to clarify our common Reformed Confession and thus to remove whatever obstacles may exist.
6. Synod responds to the communication of the "Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk In Nederland" by informing them that:
 - a. it observes that if there are statements in one of the Conclusions that seem to leave room for the misinterpretation to which those churches properly object, other statements in that conclusion clearly forbid maintaining such interpretation.
 - b. Synod refers them to recommendations 1-5.
 - c. Synod assures them "that we share with them a concern for maintaining a faithful witness to the gospel that will endeavor to further the unity of Christ's Church."
7. Synod declares this to be the answer to (several) overtures. (Acts Synod Chr. Reformed Church 1962, pp.108,109).

After having considered these interpretations, together with some statements in the (New) Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church concerning the requirements for future ministers in the Christian Reformed Church (Church Order 1965, p. 25 sub 6) a discussion about certain issues ensued. After these preliminary talks the following questions were submitted to the Contact Committee in a combined meeting. These questions read:

- "1. Our first question was: Does the Chr. Ref. Church require anything more than subscription to the Three Forms of Unity? What is the meaning of forwarding of certain deliverances to a minister of another denomination when he receives a call in the Chr. Ref. Church.

The result of the discussion was the following:
The Can. Ref. Brethren confronted the Chr. Ref. Deputies with the question: "does the Chr. Ref. Church require anything more than subscription to the

Three Forms of Unity" (C.f. New Church Order, 1965, p. 25 sub 6: "When a congregation decides to call a minister from another denomination, the consistory shall include with the call letter a transcript of these deliverances:

- a. The position of the Chr. Ref. Church, taken in 1867 and 1881, regarding oath bound societies.
- b. The doctrinal deliverances on common grace of 1924 and 1959-1961.
- c. The resolutions of 1928 and 1951 relating to worldly amusements. The consistory shall inform the pastor-elect that acceptance of the call implies his promise to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of his ministerial office in the Chr. Ref. Church.")

During the discussion of this question reference was made to the remarks of Synod 1960, Acts p. 114: "If we do not require submission in the sense of demanding total agreement with the Three Points; if we recognize and bear with scruples which you may have, in the expectation that we together may come eventually to a better understanding of the truth; and not bar those who have certain misgivings or divergent interpretations, and the observation of Synod 1959, that "they (the Three Points) were not intended to be a church dogma concerning Common Grace" (Communication to the Prot. Ref. Church, Acts of Synod 1959, p. 111).

Furthermore, according to the Deputies of the Chr. Ref. Church, the words "to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of their ministerial office" are not identical with "to subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity", nor do they preclude the right to appeal against any of these resolutions, confirmed in Art. 31, C.O. of the Can. Ref. Churches (Art. 29 of the New C.O. of the Chr. Ref. Church) in the ecclesiastical way.

The latter can also be said about the observation of Synod 1960 (Acts. p. 114) "that you will agree not to agitate against official interpretations".

Because we are not fully satisfied with this answer we feel free to repeat our first question in this form:

- a. What is the exact purpose of forwarding these resolutions (Church Order, Supplement, p. 25 sub 6) to pastors-elect, considering the words "that acceptance of the call implies his promise to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of his ministerial office in the Chr. Ref. Church."
- b. How does this stringent requirement harmonize with the remarks in the letter to the Prot. Ref. Church (Acts, p. 114) "If we do not require submission in the sense of demanding total agreement ... etc."

- 2. Synod 1962 stated that "these conclusions shall not be used as a test for membership or holding office in the Chr. Ref. Church, nor as a test for admitting ministers to the Chr. Ref. Church". Among others on the ground: "this is in harmony with the precedent recent Synods have established in dealing with the Three Points of 1924" (Acts 1962, Decision 3, p. 108)

Yet, Synod 1965 decided that incoming ministers must abide by these deliverances in the exercise of their ministerial office (New C.O. p. 25), which can only be understood as a test for admitting ministers to the Chr. Ref. ministry. Consequently, the answer of the Chr. Ref. brethren, that recent synods only referred to the Synods dealing with the Three Points of 1924, cannot be considered to be satisfactory.

- 3. Synod 1962 decided (Dec. 6a, Acts 1962, p. 108): "The statement of the conclusions, "That according to the confession of our churches the seed of the covenant, by virtue of the promise of God, must be held to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ ... " is understood by our church in the light of the conclusions themselves, not as a judgment concerning the nature of the child,

but rather as a statement of the church's proper approach in dealing with the covenant child".

By doing this the Chr. Ref. Church chose out of the divers possible explanations only one as representing their official ecclesiastical position in this matter. (The decision reads: "is understood by our churches".)

In this connection we have the following questions:

- a. Are other explanations excluded by this statement?
- b. How could the Chr. Ref. Church choose this interpretation (not as a judgment concerning the nature of the child), whereas the literal wording of Utrecht 1905 speaks of the (presupposedly regenerated) nature of the child?
- c. Is it not better to abide by the Reformed doctrine (in the Form of Baptism of Infants) that "the church's proper approach in dealing with the covenant child " is to state that our children are conceived and born in sin and must be regenerated?

4. Synod 1962 decided:

Not to set aside the Conclusions of Utrecht (Acts 1962, Dec. 1, p. 108). Synod reaffirmed that the adoption of these conclusions was a declaration of agreement with these formulations, and advised that they be understood in the light of the study committee report (Acts. 1962, Dec. 2, p. 108).

In this respect our question is whether the decisions of 1908 are still a part of the Colloquium Doctum as described in Acts 1962, Supp. 2, p. 141: "The decisions of 1908 also belong to those doctrinal declarations. Furthermore, all ministers who come to us from non-sister churches are only admitted after a colloquium doctum is held with them".

5. Synod 1962 advised, "that they be understood in the light of the study committee report" (Acts 1962, p. 109, sub 2). This report states: "Although they were formulated over half a century ago, it should not be forgotten that biblical truth does not change The question arises whether a church that wants to be true to the Word of God may properly set aside its agreement with a statement of biblical doctrine unless that statement can be shown to be contrary to or unsupported by the Word of God" (p. 142).

Our question is then: Does the Chr. Ref. Church consider the conclusions of 1908 as a statement of biblical truth that does not change?

6. The study committee report says (on page 142): "that the (Chr. Reformed) church may not set aside such a statement of biblical doctrine unless that statement can be shown to be contrary to or unsupported by the Word of God."

The General Synod 1946 of the "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)" sprak uit:

- a. dat de verklaring der generale synode van Utrecht 1905 betreffende het dusgenaamde "infra- en supralapsarisme", de dusgenaamde "eeuwige rechtvaardigmaking", de dusgenaamde "onmiddellijke wedergeboorte" en de dusgenaamde "onderstelde wedergeboorte" veelszins onjuist en daarom reeds als pacificatie-formule ondeugdelijk is.
- b. dat deze verklaring door onze kerken niet meer voor haar rekening wordt genomen."

Our question is: Is the Christian Reformed Church ready and willing to receive proof that these conclusions of 1905/1908 in many respects "can be shown to be contrary to or unsupported by the Word of God"?

7. In studying the different documents forwarded to us we discovered that the position of the Christian Reformed Church with regard to 1924 is similar to

that concerning 1908. Of both of them is said: "it is not a church dogma", "they contain biblical truth" and "we do not accede to the request to set them aside".

Our obvious question is: Why then are the conclusions of 1908 omitted from the list mentioned in Church Order, Supplement page 25, sub 6?

- 8. We have considered the following three facts:
 - a. Synod 1955 and 1956 assigned to the Conclusions of 1908 an "almost creed-like status, when they made them a test for incoming ministers" (Acts 1962, Suppl. 2, p. 143).
 - b. Synod 1962 decided "that these conclusions shall not be used as a test for membership or holding office in the Christian Reformed Church, nor as a test for admitting ministers to the Christian Reformed Ministry" (Acts 1962, Decision 3, p. 108).
 - c. Synod 1949 declared "that there has been no change in doctrinal position and ecclesiastical conduct in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland which would warrant a change in our relation."

Our questions are:

- a. Did not the decision of 1962 imply the factual condemnation of the acts of the (synodaal) Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, which suspended and deposed those who refused to submit to the demand not to teach anything that was not in full agreement with the doctrinal declarations on presupposed regeneration?
- b. How must we see the relation between the decision of 1962 (no test for membership of incoming ministers) with the decision of 1949 (no change in doctrinal position or ecclesiastical conduct which would warrant a change in our relation), on the basis of which decision the Christian Reformed Church still maintains the relation of sister-churches with the (synodaal) Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland?
- c. Is it not true, therefore, that Synod 1949 gave an unsatisfactory and unjustified answer to Mr. Joh. DeHaas by not acceding to his request to appoint, at least, a Committee to study the matter?

From the answers given, and the discussion about these matters it appeared that

- a) The C.C. was puzzled by certain things of which it did not see the consistency. They promised to bring this up in a report to Synod 1967.
- b) Concerning the matter of "1908" not being included in the list of communications to be forwarded to incoming ministers the C.C.: expressed the need for more clarification from the side of Synod.
- c) Concerning the question asked under No. 5, it was stated by the C.C. that the statement "biblical truth does not change" is true by itself, but not in the context of the decision of Synod 1962
- d) To the question whether the Christian Reformed Church would be willing to receive proof that the conclusions 1905/1908 can be shown to be contrary to or unsupported by the Word of God, the answer was given that Synod is bound to receive such proof.

On the other hand, the Deputies of the Canadian Reformed Churches were warned not to force a problem upon the Christian Reformed Church, where Synod 1962 said "1905/1908 is not a test for members of ministers". To which remark the Deputies replied that this point was brought up because the "Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland" received the answer that "not enough grounds

were given". The point was stressed that this issue must be completely clear to prevent any trouble afterwards in the course of the contact.

As a result a "Memorandum" was prepared by Deputies which will be forwarded to all the churches and to all the delegates to Synod 1967 of the Christian Reformed Church, while everyone will have the opportunity to acquire a copy. This Memorandum is added to this report as an enclosure.

The Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, after having met separately, provided the Deputies with a request to be made by them to Synod 1967.

The final reading of this request is found, as a conclusion of the Report of the Contact Committee to Synod 1967 of the Christian Reformed Church, in the Agenda Synod 1967, pages 60 and 61. After having stated, in this report, that "it should be obvious that there is reason for some confusion, and that there is need for clarification" the report concludes

"We come, therefore, with a request for clarification. We ask that Synod express itself on the following matters:

1. Synod has decided that the Conclusions of Utrecht "shall not be used as a test for membership or holding office in the Christian Reformed Church" (Acts, 1962, p. 108). At the same time Synod has decided "not to set aside the Conclusions" (Acts 1962, p. 108). Are we correct in assuming that they are no longer included in a Colloquium Doctum with ministers coming from another denomination? Or are they still included? They are not listed anymore among the deliverances to be included with the letter of call to a minister from another denomination (Acts, 1963, p. 22).

2. In connection with the decision reached regarding the Three Points of 1924, that led to the union with the Protestant Reformed Churches, Synod said, "if we do not require submission in the sense of demanding total agreement with the Three Points; we recognize and bear with scruples which you may have, in the expectation that we together may come eventually to a better understanding of the truth; and not bar those who have certain misgivings or divergent interpretations" (Acts, 1960, p. 114, Cf. also Acts 1961, p. 68-69). The letter addressed to the Protestant Reformed Churches (Acts, 1961, p. 68-70) clearly speaks of a Colloquium Doctum, and so the Three Points are included in the matters listed by the Synod of 1963, p. 22, to be sent to a minister called from another denomination.

What are we to assume as to the exact intent of the forwarding of these deliverances? (Concretely in this connection we think of the decision of 1924, but the question has general reference to the entire matter of forwarding certain synodical deliverances). Is it to acquaint the minister-elect from another denomination with the nature and content of the decision taken in connection with doctrinal issues, which have arisen in the past in the Christian Reformed Church; and to determine whether his coming into the Christian Reformed Church would occasion any serious conflict in his conscience regarding the position which the Christian Reformed Church has taken on specific issues, those dealt with in these deliverances? Or is it meant to determine whether the minister can fully subscribe to the content of the deliverances? In connection with the Three Points Synod said that "total agreement" was not a requirement. Yet the Synod of 1963 still retained the expression "abide by".

3. The phrase "his promise to abide by" first came into use in 1956 (Acts 1956, p. 38) in connection with calling ministers from the Gereformeerde

Kerken in Nederland. That whole statement, "it shall inform him that acceptance of the call implies his promise to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of his ministerial office in the Christian Reformed Church" was reaffirmed in 1963 (Acts, p. 22). However, not only was the occasion for doing so different from that of 1956, but between 1956 and 1963 significant modifications regarding both 1908 and 1924, referred to above, had taken place. What is now the precise value of the phrase "to abide by"? Article 29 of the Revised Church Order governs our thinking in regard to decisions by ecclesiastical assemblies. Does the statement, "his promise to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of the ministerial office in the Christian Reformed Church" have a holding character beyond the provisions of Article 29 of the Church Order? That is the impression of the Canadian Reformed brethren. For that reason we ask Synod to indicate what the precise value is of the phrase, "to abide by". This will surely facilitate our further discussions. Assurance that there is no intention in that requirement to go beyond the provisions of Article 29 of the Church Order, and that there is no intention to bind the conscience beyond the Word of God, will serve to further continued fruitful discussion."

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IV. CONCLUSIONS OF KALAMAZOO 1924 (B. 2b Mandate)

In one of the meetings of the Contact Committee with the Deputies of Synod 1965 the following questions were submitted and discussed:

1. The Supplement to the Church Order mentions on page 25, sub 6b, the deliverances on Common Grace, 1961.
We were not able to study the decisions of Synod 1961 and/or the communications received and sent.
2. Under B2 of our mandate we read: "De situatie wordt bepaald door de volgende omstandigheid: De besluiten van Kalamazoc, 1924, en de officiële interpretatie daarvan".
Our question is: Does the Christian Reformed Church still require the promise to abide by these deliverances as a test for incoming ministers?
3. Will the Christian Reformed Church -- in case of unification -- insist on the same basis as was proposed to the Protestant Reformed Church, namely
 - a) If you will agree that the Three Points are neither Arminian nor Pelagian; etc. etc., and
 - b) If we do not require submission in the sense of demanding total agreement with the Three Points, etc., etc. (Acts Synod 1960, p. 114).
4. In view of this basis of unification (see question 3) our question is: What exactly is the borderline between "not to agitate against official interpretations" (Acts 1960, p. 114a), and having "certain misgivings or divergent interpretations" (Acts 1960, p. 114b).
5. Acts 1959, p. 111 state: "They (the Three Points) were not intended to be a church dogma concerning Common Grace", but apparently they are a church dogma concerning "three truths that were jeopardized". We say "apparently" because Synod stated: "only the Three Points were at issue", and "Synod considered it mandatory to declare itself on them."
Is our conclusion justified that these statements do not deny that there is a church dogma besides the Three Forms of Unity?
6. Synod 1960, p. 114 (second paragraph) stated: "and may in time become inactive because they have served their purpose and are no longer needed".

Apparently these deliverances concerning the Three Points did NOT become inactive, because Synod 1965 included them in the Church Order, p. 25, sub 6b,c, and asks ministers from other denominations to abide by them.

Synod also states: "Synod may on occasion be compelled to make emergency decisions which serve a definite purpose in a given historic moment". On the same page we read (p. 114) that 1924 "is still necessary to maintain at the present time" (Acts 1960).

How must we understand the above in the light of the decision of Synod 1962 (no test for membership)?

7. Synod 1924 expressed that "Hoeksema en Danhof in de grondwaarheden gereformeerd zijn, zoals ze in de Belijdenis geformuleerd zijn". Nevertheless, they were suspended and deposed by Classes on the ground of "insubordinatie aan de bevoegde kerkelijke autoriteiten".
Could a more elaborate information be given from the official documents about the procedures in 1924 and the following years?

Since most of the questions were related to previous discussions about "the communications forwarded to future ministers, as laid down in the Supplement to the Church Order, page 25 sub 6b and 6c, we refer to the conclusion and request in the report of the Contact Committee submitted to Synod 1967.

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V. CHURCH ORDER (B-2d Mandate)

Preliminary talks have been held, but the discussion on this issue has not been concluded. In the definite Report to the forthcoming General Synod, in which report will be included the result of the discussions on "Correspondence", the Deputies wish to go further into these matters.

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VI. DECISIONS SYNOD 1967 of the CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH.

One of the reasons why this report reaches the Churches at such a late date is the fact that the Deputies for contact with the Christian Reformed Church wanted to include in this report the decisions of Synod 1967 of the Christian Reformed Church on the Request of the Contact Committee as mentioned in Chapter III of this report.

At the moment we can not do more than give a transcript of the decision as it was made on 20 June 1967. The official text is:

"Contact Committee with The Canadian Reformed Churches

- A. Material: Report 15 (Agenda, pp. 55-61)
- B. Orientation:

In this report the Contact Committee with the Canadian Reformed Churches asks for clarification concerning a matter which can be summarized by three questions taken from the Committee Report:

1. "Are we correct in assuming that they (the Conclusions of Utrecht) are no longer included in a Colloquium Doctum with ministers coming from another denomination?"
2. "Is it (Colloquium Doctum) to acquaint the minister-elect from another denomination with the nature and content of the decision taken in connection with doctrinal issues, which have arisen in the past in the Christian

Reformed Church; and to determine whether his coming into the Christian Reformed Church would occasion any serious conflict in his conscience regarding the position which the Christian Reformed Church has taken on specific issues, those dealt with in these deliverances?"

3. "Does the statement "his promise to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of the ministerial office in the Christian Reformed Church" have a holding character beyond the provisions of Article 29 of the Church Order?"

It should be remembered that these three questions arise in the context of our Committee's assignment of seeking contact with the brethren of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The answers which Synod gives to these questions should therefore be specifically directed to the issues raised by the representatives of the Canadian Reformed Churches, namely, the Conclusions of Utrecht and the Three Points of 1924.

C. Recommendations:

1. That Synod, in answer to question 1 above, declare that the Committee is correct in assuming that the Conclusions of Utrecht are no longer to be included in a Colloquium Doctum with ministers coming from another denomination.

Ground:

In 1963 Synod adopted the following rules governing the admission of ministers from other denominations:

"(6) When a congregation decides to call a minister from another denomination, the consistory shall include with the call letter a transcript (available from the stated clerk of Synod) of these deliverances:

(a) The position of the Christian Reformed Church, taken in 1867 and 1861, regarding oath-bound societies.

(b) The doctrinal deliverances on common grace of 1924 and 1959-1961.

(c) The resolutions of 1928 and 1951 relating to wordly amusements. The consistory shall inform the pastor-elect that acceptance of the call implies his promise to abide by these deliverances in the exercise of his ministerial office in the Christian Reformed Church.

(7) Before a pastor-elect from another denomination may be installed the consistory must arrange with the Classis for a "Colloquium Doctum" to be conducted. When the Classis and the Synodical Deputies are satisfied with the results of this colloquium, the pastor-elect is admitted to our denomination and may be installed. Classes are encouraged to conduct a "Colloquium Doctum" with ministers from sister churches".

2. That Synod instruct the Committee to respond to question 2 in the affirmative.
3. That Synod, in answer to question 3, instruct the Committee to reply to the Canadian Reformed Churches regarding the Conclusions of Utrecht and the Three Points of 1924 in the same spirit that the Synod of 1960 replied to the Protestant Reformed Church (De Wolf Group) regarding the Three Points of 1924, stating:

- a. That they (Canadian Reformed) are "not to agitate against official interpretations".
 - b. That we (Christian Reformed) will "recognize and bear with scruples" which they (Canadian Reformed) may have, "in the expectation that we together may come eventually to a better understanding of the truth".
 - c. That we (Christian Reformed) will "not bar those who have certain misgivings or divergent interpretations". (Quotations taken from Acts of 1960, p. 114)
4. That Synod instruct the Committee to continue contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches in the light of the above decisions. "

It will be clear that this decision will be discussed again in the forthcoming joint meetings with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church.

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VII. CONTACT GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN (Onderh. Art. 31 K.O.) WITH THE COMMITTEE ON INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS

The Deputies deem it advisable to add to this preliminary report a summary of the communications between the Deputies of the Churches in the Netherlands with the Committee on Inter-Church Relations.

Mr. F.J. Kerkhof had the opportunity, during his visits to the United States and Canada, to confer with ministers of the Canadian Reformed Churches and of the Christian Reformed Church. From his talks we quote the following:

"Bij gesprekken bleek dat in het verleden veel misverstand is gerezen door het niet ontvangen van gezonden brieven. Voorts, dat het schrijven van de Synode (Nederland) van 7 juni 1965 enige teleurstelling had veroorzaakt wegens het wijzen op de "onoverkomelijke hindernis" gelegen in de correspondentie tussen de Christian Reformed Church en de synodaal gebonden Kerken in Nederland. Hij vreesde dat dit het laatste woord zou zijn. Hem is verzekerd dat dit niet zo was, dat wij een gesprek op prijs zouden stellen, waarbij wij ons voorstellen, dat vooral de Canadian Reformed Churches hierbij zouden betrokken zijn. De vurige wens leeft in Canada dat onze kerken met de Canadese zusterkerken rekenen, overleg plegen en niet overhaast te werk gaan, doch liever deze zaak eens even aan de Canadian Reformed Churches overlaten."

At a later date the Deputy from the Netherlands had an official meeting with the Deputies of the Christian Reformed Church. During this meeting the "background" of the "liberation" was explained and the implications of this liberation in connection with correspondence between the churches. The Deputies from the Netherlands are of the opinion that "de Canadian Reformed Churches kennis kunnen nemen van de inhoud van de briefwisseling met de Christian Reformed Church". After this meeting Synod 1966 of the Christian Reformed Church adopted the following recommendation: "Synod authorizes its Committee on Inter-Church Relations to continue discussions with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Onderhoudende Art. 31 K.O.)".

Respectfully yours,

G. VanDooren (Chairman)
F. Kouwenhoven
M. VanBeveren
D. VanderBoom (Secretary)