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~~John Hampton~~

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R E P O R T

OF THE

DEPUTIES FOR CONTACT WITH THE

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CONTACT COMMITTEE

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REPORT OF THE DEPUTIES FOR CONTACT WITH THE
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CONTACT COMMITTEE.

To the General Synod of the
Canadian Reformed Churches,
convened at Orangeville, Ontario,
on November 7, 1968.

Esteemed Brethren:

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

I. INTRODUCTION

In the course of the years 1966 to 1968 your Deputies prepared a 'preliminary report' which was forwarded to the Churches. In this report we gave a chronological account of our activities up to a certain date, and of the results of our discussions with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church (hereafter mentioned as "C.C."). By doing so we wanted to give the Churches an idea of the procedure followed in the exercise of our contact.

The main reason for this preliminary report was the fact that the C.C. had the opportunity to go to their own Synod, to recommend certain decisions and to receive a new and more precise mandate.

Since we have come now to an 'initial conclusion' of our discussions concerning the issues mentioned in our mandate of Synod 1965, we are able to submit to your assembly a definite report. As will be made clear in the report itself, this does not imply that discussions have come to an end. There are still several issues which need further consideration and discussion.

The C.C. has submitted to the Christian Reformed Synod 1968 certain questions and recommendations which will be mentioned in this report. At the moment we are not able yet to inform Synod about the decisions of Synod 1968 of the Christian Reformed Church. However we request Synod to accept an appendix to this report which will be prepared as soon as the decisions of the Christian Reformed Synod are available and which will be forwarded to Synod Orangeville, 1968, at our earliest convenience.

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II. MANDATE

Our mandate was concisely stated in the Acts of Synod Edmonton, 1965, Art. 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 belijdenisgeschriften 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

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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. Thereafter several meetings with the Contact Committee were arranged.

The purpose and the result of the first contact-meeting with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church 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 MEDE 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 "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 Christian Reformed 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 September 15, 1966 in the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, Willowdale, Ontario."

Consequently we present in this report a summary of the talks and the considerations on the following matters:

- III. THE THREE FORMS OF UNITY (Mandate B, 2-a)
- IV. THE CONCLUSIONS OF UTRECHT (1905/1908) and THE DECISIONS OF LATER SYNODS ON THESE CONCLUSIONS (Mandate B, 2-b)
- V. THE CONCLUSIONS OF KALAMAZOO (1924) and THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF (Mandate B, 2-b)
- VI. THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT AND THE NEW CHURCH ORDER OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH (Mandate B, 2-d)
- VII. CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (Mandate B, 2-c)

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III. THE THREE FORMS OF UNITY

A. Mandate.

The mandate reads: "to examine with the Contact Committee the concrete situation, as it is also determined by differences regarding ... the following point: The Christian Reformed Church and our Churches have adopted the same confessional Forms of Unity, n.l. The Belgic Confession; The Heidelberg Catechism and The Canons of Dordt."

B. Material.

-- The Three Forms of Unity as they are edited and published in the 'Book of Praise' and the Psalter/Hymnal.

-- A Report on the text of Article 36 of The Belgic Confession, which reads as follows:

"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, we found the following information:

1. Christian Reformed Church.

In the 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 ..."): "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 ours). 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. Observations.

The text of The Canons of Dordt and the Heidelberg Catechism did not cause any problems. Article 36 of The Belgic Confession became an object of discussion. The report mentioned under 'Material' was forwarded to the C.C. and unanimously adopted at one of the joint meetings.

D. Consideration.

We came to the conclusion that there are no basic differences concerning the Three Forms which would be an obstacle for Church unity.

E. Recommendation.

Synod declare: that -- though there is a slight difference in the edition of the text of Article 36 of The Belgic Confession -- the Christian Reformed Church and our Churches have adopted the same Three Forms of Unity,

and that this difference in edition is not an obstacle for unity between both Churches.

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IV. THE CONCLUSIONS OF UTRECHT 1905/1908 and THE DECISIONS OF SYNODS OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH ON THESE CONCLUSIONS.

A. Mandate.

Our mandate reads: "to examine ... the concrete situation as it is determined by ... the following point: Besides those (Three Forms of Unity) the Christian Reformed Church has adopted 'The Conclusions of Utrecht 1905/1908' and an official interpretation of them".

B. Material.

The following material was exchanged between Deputies and the Contact Committee:

1. Besluit van de Generale Synode Groningen 1946 van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) betreffende '1905' (Acta Art. 113).
2. Rapport aan de Synode Groningen 1946 inzake op de verklaring van 1905 betrekking hebbende stukken.
3. Acts Christian Reformed Synod 1962, Art. 144, re: Conclusions of Utrecht.
4. Supplement 2 to the Acts of Synod 1962, re : Conclusions of Utrecht.
5. Eight questions concerning the position of the Christian Reformed Church re: Conclusions of Utrecht. (See report pp. 9-13).
6. "Memorandum", The Conclusions of Utrecht 1905/1908, an Obstacle to Reformed Unity?
7. Preliminary edition of questions to be submitted to the Christian Reformed Synod 1967.
8. Report of the C.C. to the Christian Reformed Synod 1967 (Acts of Synod pp. 178-184).
9. Transcription of the decisions of the Christian Reformed Synod 1967 (Acts of Synod, pp. 66,67).
10. Remarks made by the Canadian Reformed Deputies concerning the expression "initial conclusion". (See report p. 18)
11. Report of the Contact Committee to the Christian Reformed Synod 1968 (Agenda, pp.243-248)
- (12. Decisions of Synod 1968 of the Christian Reformed Church are not available and will be presented in the appendix to this report).

C. Observations.

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 Christian 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 Christian Reformed 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 Christian Reformed Church?

In the discussion the following was brought forward:
The Canadian Reformed brethren confronted the Christian Reformed Deputies with the question: "Does the Christian Reformed

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 Christian Reformed 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 Christian Reformed Church").

During the discussion of this question reference was made to remarks of the Christian Reformed 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 Protestant Reformed Church, Acts of Synod 1959, p. 111).

Furthermore, according to the Deputies of the Christian Reformed 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 Canadian Reformed Churches (Art. 29 of the New C.O. of the Christian Reformed 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 were not fully satisfied with this answer we felt 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 Christian Reformed Church"?
- b. How does this stringent requirement harmonize with the remarks in the letter to the Protestant Reformed 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 Christian Reformed Church, nor as a test for admitting ministers to the Christian Reformed 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 Christian Reformed ministry. Consequently, the answer of the Christian Reformed 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 (Acts 1962, Decision 6a, 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 Christian Reformed 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 asked the following questions:

- a. Are other explanations excluded by this statement?
 - b. How could the Christian Reformed 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, Decision 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, Decision 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 Christian Reformed 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 (Christian 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 creedlike 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?

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

- a) The C.C. was puzzled by certain acts of their own Church 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 membership or the ministry". 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 has been forwarded to all the churches and to all the delegates to Synod 1968 of the Christian Reformed Church, while everyone had the opportunity to acquire a copy.

The Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church submitted to your Deputies the preliminary text of their report to Synod (Material No. 7). The final reading of this report 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 an-

other 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."

The official text of the decisions of Synod 1967 of the Christian Reformed Church reads:

"Contact Committee With The Canadian Reformed Churches; Acts Art. 100.

A. Material: Report 15 (Acts pp. 178-184)

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 1967 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 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." (Acts of Synod, 1963, p. 22. Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church, Second Supplement, III, p. 25)

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."

Although neither the C.C. nor your Deputies were fully satisfied with the way in which the Christian Reformed Synod expressed itself, we considered that we would not enter into a new discussion on these issues and expressed as our conviction that the points B, 2 a and b were brought to an initial conclusion. The C.C. understood this expression as if we had come to the conclusion that '1905/1908' and 'Kalamazoo 1924' were no obstacles to unity.

In order to prevent misunderstanding it must be noted here that initial talks about '1924' had taken place already, because we

opened the discussion on certain rules in the Supplement to the New Church Order which speak about the acceptance of ministers coming from other denominations. (See New Church Order, page 65, sub 6, b and c). It was almost impossible to separate these two issues.

Consequently, we submitted to the C.C. the following remarks on the expression "initial conclusion":

"Re "INITIAL CONCLUSION".

For the sake of complete honesty and the prevention of any misunderstanding the Canadian Reformed Deputies want once more to dwell upon the meaning of the words: "Initial Conclusion" with respect to our dealing with 1908, 1924 and related matters.

As we have stressed before, this statement ('initial conclusion') does not and cannot mean that we on our part in any way have decided for our Churches that these issues have been clarified in such a way that no obstacles for unity are left. It only means that we as deputies have concluded our discussion with you on these matters, and have learned the present stand of the Christian Reformed Church regarding them. (The brethren must not forget that they and we are not in a similar position. You could "fall back" and go to your Synod every year. The first time we can do this is in the fall of 1968).

Furthermore, we want once more to express our concern as to what in our opinion is an ambiguous position of the Christian Reformed Church. At the one hand it has been said: 1908 is no longer a test for membership. Yet, at the other hand we are supposed "to abide by" these (and other) declarations. It stands to reason that we plan to pass this on to our Synod in our Report.

Up until now we, as deputies, have not (yet) discussed the contents of the 1924 Three Points. We have, however, our reservations concerning them. We cannot at this moment promise "to abide by" them, if it were only for the fact that they are one-sided (see Dr. J. Douma about 'spreken met twee woorden'). Another possibility would be that the Contact Committee ask its Synod to give a clear explanation of the intention of these three words "to abide by".

We leave it up to the Deputies of the Christian Reformed Church whether they deem it advisable to go into the matter of the Three Points. We are perfectly willing to do so. We have, then, to do this at a later date because it was agreed upon that we discuss the matter of correspondence first."

Special stress was laid on the remark concerning "to abide by". This remark was made after your Deputies had been informed by the C.C. that they had decided to request Synod to remove the inconsistency between the saying "to abide by" and "to recognize and bear

with scruples", and to give a clear explanation of the value of the phrase "to abide by". However, Synod 1967 of the Christian Reformed Church did not give a clear-cut answer to this question. The Contact Committee promised to approach Synod 1968 again on this matter.

The main points of the report of the Contact Committee are not known at the moment, but will be forwarded to Synod at our earliest convenience.

D. Considerations.

As a summary we submit the following considerations:

1. The Christian Reformed Church has adopted the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905/1908.
2. The 'Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk' in the Netherlands has submitted a request to the Christian Reformed Synod to have these Conclusions set aside because 'they are an obstacle to closer relationship with certain Reformed Churches that subscribe to the same Creeds as the Christian Reformed Church'. Synod 1962 did not accede to that request, since no evidence was brought forward that 1905/1908 was an obstacle to unity.
3. The Christian Reformed Synod, however, stated that these Conclusions shall not be used as "a test for membership or for holding office in the Christian Reformed Church, nor as a test for admitting ministers to the Christian Reformed Ministry."
4. Synod declared that "the Christian Reformed Church is willing to discuss differences in an effort to clarify our common Reformed Confession and thus remove whatever obstacles may exist."
5. The Christian Reformed Church is bound to receive proof that the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905/1908 are contrary to or unsupported by the Word of God.

After the Christian Reformed Synod 1967 we were able to consider the following:

1. The Conclusions of Utrecht are no longer to be included in a Colloquium Doctum with ministers coming from other denominations.
2. The only purpose of a Colloquium Doctum is "to acquaint ministers from other denominations with the nature and the content of decisions taken in connection with doctrinal issues, which have arisen in the past."
3. "To abide by" does not have a holding character beyond art.29 of the (new) Church Order.

E. Recommendation.

Since this matter will be tabled by the C.C. at the forthcoming Christian Reformed Synod 1968, Deputies are not able to give any recommendation at this date.

V. THE THREE POINTS OF KALAMAZOO 1924 and THE OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION THEREOF.

A. Mandate.

Our mandate reads: "to examine the concrete situation as it is determined by ... the following point: Beside those (Three Forms of Unity) the Christian Reformed Church has adopted The Three Points of Kalamazoo 1924, and an official interpretation thereof."

B. Material.

1. Eight questions submitted to the Contact Committee (see especially questions 1, 2 and 7; see report pp. 9-13).
2. Six questions brought up for discussion on the Three Points (see report pp. 20,21).
3. Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church 1959, Art. 196.
4. Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church 1960, Art. 170.

C. Observations.

It must again be observed that the 'Three Points of Kalamazoo' entered into the discussion when we dealt with Utrecht 1905. As a result we must refer, partly, to the observations made in Chapter IV of this report.

The question was raised whether we ought to discuss the entire contents of 'Kalamazoo' or the question of their binding character. Our mandate said to examine the official status of 1924 and the interpretation thereof.

The intrinsic value of the Three Points was described to your Deputies as follows: "As far as they have their roots in Scripture, they are general expressions", and "Synod did not express a dogma in 1924".

Consequently, six questions were put before the C.C. (see material 2);

The Supplement to the Church Order mentions, on page 25, sub 6b, the deliverances on Common Grace, 1961.

1. Under B 2 of our mandate we read: "De situatie wordt bepaald door de volgende omstandigheid: De besluiten van Kalamazoo, 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?
2. 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).
3. In view of this basis of unification (see question 2) 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).
4. 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?
5. 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)?
6. 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 more elaborate information be given from the official documents about the procedures in 1924 and the following years?

Since most of these questions are related to the 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 here to Chapter IV of our report. In addition we quote from the report of the C.C. to Synod 1967:

"In regard to the discussions about the Conclusions of Utrecht and the Three Points of Kalamazoo, it became evident that the Canadian Reformed brethren have definite scruples about these deliverances. They have also raised questions about their binding force. Certain statements in the decisions of Synod confuse them." (p. 179, Acts of Synod 1967).

"They question the wisdom of adopting official interpretations of specific points of doctrine, which tend to become regarded as creedal statements." (page 179)

"Because our communication with the Canadian Reformed Churches confronts these brethren with certain deliverances, we believe it is well to listen to their fears and misgivings. And we can say that our Canadian Reformed brethren show every readiness to meet the confrontation with these deliverances.

We are, therefore, required to take their fears, their objections, their questions, seriously, and to do our utmost to clarify our position in regard to the deliverances concerned, with a view to removing obstacles to Reformed unity." (page 180)

"There is one question which the Canadian Reformed brethren raise repeatedly ... that question concerns the nature of the binding force of these deliverances. They have asked us whether the Christian Reformed Church requires subscription to more than the Three Confessional Standards. Our answer was, 'No'. But then they ask what the specific meaning and purpose is of forwarding certain deliverances and resolutions to a minister of another denomination when he receives a call in the Christian Reformed Church, and informs 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." (Acts of Synod, 1963, p. 22; quoted in Supplement to Church Order, p. 25)." (page 180).

D. Considerations.

1. Your Deputies considered it not to be in their province to enter into a discussion on the 'contents' of Kalamazoo 1924, the Three Points.
2. The Three Points were "not intended to be a church dogma concerning Common Grace, but an expression concerning three truths that were jeopardized".
3. These decisions are still included in the Supplement to the Church Order, page 25, sub 6b, c.
4. (From decision Synod 1967) The inclusion of this decision in the letter of call forwarded to a minister from another denomination is to 'acquaint the ministers-elect from other denominations with the nature and the 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'.
5. They do not have a holding character beyond the provisions of art. 29 of the (new) Church Order.
6. The expressions 'to abide by' and 'not to agitate against' are inconsistent and insufficiently explained.

E. Recommendation.

Since this matter will be tabled by the C.C. at the forthcoming Christian Reformed Synod 1968, Deputies are not able to give any recommendation at this date.

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VI. THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT AND THE NEW CHURCH ORDER OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH.

A. Mandate.

Our mandate instructed us to "examine ... the concrete situation as it is determined by ... the following point: The Christian Reformed Church has adopted the New Church Order; our Churches still abide by the Church Order of Dordt 1618/1905".

B. Material.

1. List of changes in the Dordt Church Order by several Synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
2. The New Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church.
3. List of remarks put before the C.C. (see report)
4. Appeal to Synod 1963 of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. Observations.

The C.C. was informed about changes in the Church Order in use by our Churches, necessitated by the Canadian situation.

Concerning the New Church Order we present the following historical notes:

A Revision Committee appointed by the Christian Reformed Synod specifically petitioned the Christian Reformed Synod 1963 to adopt a draft as the official Church Order, and to keep in mind that previous Synods had already adopted the proposed Church Order. (Agenda Synod 1965, page 29). Actually, this proposed Church Order ~~was an~~, almost, literal translation of the 'Herziene Kerkenorde' as adopted in the Netherlands, by the 'Gereformeerde Kerken (synodaal)'. According to the Revision Committee this draft was "the best, and expressed true reformed Church polity". The Christian Reformed Synod 1963, however, decided to defer a conclusion on the grounds that "the number and weight of questions raised in various overtures makes a clear-cut decision unlikely at this time", also because there had been "insufficient time for the churches to consider this proposed revision".

The overtures dealt with at Synod 1965 clearly indicate that many members, consistories and classes found "hierarchical overtones" in the proposed Church Order.

It is superfluous to refer to the Appeal of our Churches to the Christian Reformed Synod and the publications concerning this proposed Church Order.

When the Christian Reformed Synod 1966 adopted a New Church Order 'a number of changes were made in the draft ... while Synod felt persuaded to omit a number of articles altogether'. This was mainly done to delete the 'hierarchical overtones' from this proposed Church Order.

When comparing the two Church Orders, we felt the need to bring up certain questions which needed clarification. We insert in this report the questions together with the answers given:

Article 1:

Question: Canadian Reformed Deputies still cannot get used to the singular "Church" in this and other Articles.

Answer: Reference is made to the Commentary on the New Revised Church Order. The quotation clarifies the matter.

Article 11:

Question: Is the work of evangelism the duty of the office-bearers or of the church? Is it part of the office of minister?

Answer: (Article 11b) "Every member is a witness", but the minister together with the elders have to stimulate this.

Article 18:

Question: We have some misgivings about the "synodical regulations" when it concerns the retired minister. According to Deputies a retired minister continues to be the minister of the local church and it is the church, which he has last been serving, which provides for him according to his needs and not according to synodical regulations only.

Answer: Ministers 'Pension and Relief Fund' are explained.

Article 25:

Question: Deputies doubt whether mercy should be administered by the Deacons to the needy in general. Does Galatians 6:10 refer to the office of Deacon in the church or to the Church in general?

Answer: This is tied in with the one office of Christ.

Article 27:

What is meant by "the church" in this article 27a? Denomination or local church?

Answer: See answer re Article 1.

Article 32d:

Question: Can a Classis or Synod own property and safeguard this?

Answer: At certain occasions Classis has (and HAD) to safeguard property, of course with inclusion of local regulations.

Article 34:

Question: Is it true that "the major assemblies are composed of office-bearers": are only office-bearers delegated, and is not too much stressed the office in this respect: a major assembly is an assembly composed of delegates from a minor assembly.

Article 34:

Answer: This question concerns the authority of major assemblies. There are two dangers: a) Super-Church; b) Independentism. Why must office-bearers be delegated? Clarification is given with past experiences in mind.

Article 44:

Question: Is Classis a body or a meeting?

Answer: This article was elucidated with examples of specifically Canadian matters and with reference to the Acts 1966 re: safeguards.

Article 45:

Question: "The Synod is the assembly representing the churches, etc." Would it not be slightly better to refer to Synod as composed of delegates from the churches?

Answer: Synod is not a meeting of combined classes, but a meeting of the churches.

Article 50:

Question: Deputies have no opinion on the Reformed Ecumenical Synods.

Answer: No reference to THE Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The Church order speaks in general of 'Reformed Ecumenical Synods'.

Article 52:

Question: Deputies are not used to the idea of choirs in the worship services.

Answer: Was better defined because of excesses.

Article 66:

Question: Deputies do not understand why members who move to another Christian Reformed Church are not allowed to take their own membership certificates with them.

Answer: (Article 66a) There is the responsibility of confessing members to join the church in the new place of residence. There is no idea of promoting the denomination as a 'Super-Church'.

(Article 66b) 'as a rule' is stronger than 'ordinarily'.

Article 72:

Question: Are societies under the supervision of the consistory or the society members?

Answer: Is considered to be of minor importance. Sometimes too much can be said in a church order.

Article 77:

Question: Is it the task of Synod to determine where foreign mission work is to be carried on, and to regulate the manner in which this task is to be performed? Who does the missionary work: Synod or the local churches?

Answer: a. Missionaries are called by local church.
b. Board matters are to be reported to Classis.
c. Responsibility of local church is promoted.

D. Considerations.

1. The Proposed Church Order was not adopted because of objections in the Christian Reformed Church against its 'hierarchical overtones'.
2. We are happy to state that in the final reading of the new Church Order the crucial articles have retained their Reformed character.
3. Although there are certain articles that raise questions and well known rules have lost some of their firmness, there are others which express the idea more consistently and to the point.
4. Your Deputies have expressed their gratitude that the Christian Reformed Church, apparently, gave heed to warnings and the "Appeal" of our Churches and has maintained the anti-hierarchical principle of this New Church Order.

E. Recommendation.

Synod declare that the New Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church, as adopted by Synod 1966, is not an insurmountable obstacle for further and closer contact, and eventually unity of both Churches.

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VII. CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHURCHES ABROAD.

A. Mandate.

Our mandate reads: "to examine ... the concrete situation as it is also determined by the difference regarding the fact that the Christian Reformed Church maintains correspondence with the 'Synodale' Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland; the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain correspondence with the 'Vrijgemaakte' Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

B. Material.

1. Acts of Christian Reformed Synod 1946 (Correspondence);
Acts of Christian Reformed Synod 1949 (Correspondence and Ecumenicity; Appeal br. J. DeHaas, Lethbridge; discontinuation of of correspondence);
2. Remarks of Deputies re: Correspondence (see report);
3. Minutes of discussion on these remarks (see report).

C. Observations.

During the discussions on this issue the Contact Committee pointed out, at several occasions, that we (as Deputies) were dealing with the relation between the Christian Reformed Church and the

Canadian Reformed Churches. The relation with the Churches in the Netherlands has been given into the hands of the 'Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Relations!

In agreement with our Mandate we had to discuss this issue, since our existence as Canadian Reformed Churches and our organization in Canada is directly related to the correspondence between the Christian Reformed Church and the (Synodale) Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands.

Since the discussion on this issue is not concluded as yet we present to you our observations with the answers given by the Contact Committee.

As to the issue of correspondence and 'inter-church relationships', we put forward the following questions:

1. Is it not true that in the past the Christian Reformed Church itself insisted upon such a close relationship as is formulated in the rules for correspondence that were finally accepted by the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken 1914?

(N.B. The brethren know the literal wording of these rules, including "het op elkaar toezien" etc. We see these rules against the background of what the Christian Reformed 'Fathers' desired in 1898:

"... een generale synode of concilie van gereformeerde kerken met het bepaalde doel, om alle vreemde bestanddelen in de onderscheiden Gereformeerde Kerken onzer dagen uit te zuiveren en om de gezonde richting allerwege te bevorderen. Eerst dan kan er volkomene eenheid en een welomschreven correspondentie tusschen alle Gereformeerde Zusterkerken tot stand komen, en ook eerst dan kan ten volle worden uitgemaakt, met welke kerken die correspondentie zal geschieden.")

2. How do the brethren, in view of this, consider the actual attitude of the Christian Reformed Church after 1944, when not only by the Liberated Gereformeerde Kerken, but also by members of the Christian Reformed Church itself it was insisted upon that the Christian Reformed Church should honour its own position and promises? (cf Acts 1946, art. 42 suppl. 1a; 1948 suppl. 38; 1949, art. 114 (DeHaas); 1950, art. 144 (Neerlandia). See also our Appeal that the Canadian Reformed Churches sent to the Christian Reformed Church, 1963, pp. 1 - 4).

Subsequently, is it not true that we must conclude that the Christian Reformed Church:

- (1) gave intensive attention to the conflict in the Netherlands;
- (2) refused to be informed from liberated side;

- (3) chose, without further ado, for the majority by saying "that there had been no change in the doctrinal position and ecclesiastical conduct of the Gereformeerde Kerken, which would warrant a change in our relation", which statement we reject as being untrue.
- (4) demanded that the (liberated) Gereformeerde Kerken, who were called "a group that is still in its infancy", present themselves as new Churches (which would have meant, on their part, a total disavowal of the Liberation as an act of obedience)?

3. Does the Christian Reformed Church still believe that the (synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken did not change, for example in ecclesiastical conduct, considering the fact that the Christian Reformed Church, though at first inclined to follow suit in the 'Nieuwe Kerkorde', finally (thanks to God) accepted a new Church Order which is, in fact, a strong repudiation of the hierarchy embodied in the Nieuwe Kerkorde of the (synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken?

4. Does the Christian Reformed Church still hold the stand of 1898 and 1914 as to the matter of Church-correspondence? Did not this attitude change since 1944 (Acts, p. 331)?

(We refer to the Report of a Committee ad hoc, containing a chapter on "the revision of our correspondence with other churches". Of the twelve propositions of the Advisory Committee we mention:

- (1) Other Christian (the word 'Reformed' is not used here, Dep.) churches and our own are closely related as manifestations of the one Body of Christ;
- (2) The Churches of Christ can be roughly divided into four groups: The Oriental churches; the Roman Catholic church; the Reformed churches (also Presbyterian); and the non-reformed." All (!) these churches are "closely related as being all and severally manifestations of the one and indivisible Body of Christ").

5. Does the Christian Reformed Church believe that it is "truly reformed" to maintain relationships with churches that are affiliated with the World Council of Christian Churches?

Deputies express their surprise that the Christian Reformed Church can meet with three member-Churches, which are affiliated with the W.C.C.C., considering their own decision concerning membership of the W.C.C.C.

6. Did the Christian Reformed Church also approach other churches for "closer relationship"? (We have read about the contact with the Reformed Church of America, which, as the brethren know, is in the process of seeking unity with the U.P.A. and in addition is a member of the W.C.C.C.).

7. Do the brethren not agree with us that in this age of false ecumenism, modernism, so-called "new theology" etc., we as Reformed Churches should stick to the attitude of the 'fathers' in 1898 (cf quote sub 1.)?

8. Returning to the correspondence with the (synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland: do the brethren not agree with us that it would be ambiguous and therefore quite impossible to maintain the same 'old-fashioned' (1898) relationships with both the 'synodical' and the 'liberated' kerken at the same time; not only

- (a) because the two are strongly opposed to each other in the Netherlands (that could be considered a 'Dutch matter', not within the province of the Christian Reformed Church);
- (b) but much more because (as we firmly believe) the 'synodical' churches can no longer be called truly reformed churches, considering their new, hierarchical church-order; their repeal of the decisions of Assen 1926; their toleration of Bible-criticism; their leaning towards the W.C.C.C., revealing itself in divers kinds of 'ecumenical' meetings, interchanging pulpits, etc.

9. Is it not true that, by maintaining such a close relationship with these churches, the Christian Reformed Church endangers itself by detrimental influences, from which we as Canadian Reformed Churches want, not only to keep away as far as possible, but also that the Christian Reformed Church, for which we feel sympathy for the sake of the 'fathers', do the same. (N.B. This may show to you that the Canadian Reformed Churches do not identify the Christian Reformed Church with the 'synodical' churches, notwithstanding the attitude of the former overagainst the churches which we believe had remained the 'old' Gereformeerde Kerken after the split. In that case -- of identifying both -- the General Synod 1965 would most surely not have appointed us for seeking contact with the Christian Reformed Church).

10. Considering the above questions, which prove that the contact you and we are maintaining at the present cannot be seen apart from the wider scope of the whole matter of our position as Reformed Churches of this age of ecumenism, do you not agree that it may be advisable that we together plan a meeting, including on your part the Committee for Ecumenism and Inter-church Relationships, and on our part the Deputies for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, who face the same problems, in order to discuss the whole matter of truly reformed, ecumenical relationships in this present age?

To these points (and questions) the following answers are given:

1. The Contact Committee agreed that the Christian Reformed Church 'insisted' on close relationship according to specific rules.

2. The attitude of the Christian Reformed Church after 1944 was discussed by the Contact Committee with the Committee for Inter-Church Relations. The answer of the Contact Committee: Indeed we made a judgment and passed a verdict after 1944. When today we examine these matters, we say that a different approach would have been possible; wiser, more justified and more charitable. However, you cannot turn back the clock. Our problem today is: there are two Churches in the Netherlands. Our eyes are directed to the (synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken but also to the (Liberated) Gereformeerde Kerken. We try to contact and to negotiate with the Liberated Churches. The statement of Synod 1952 (Berkel en Rodenrijs) that "the correspondence of the Christian Reformed Church with the (synodically) bound churches in the Netherlands at the outset present an insuperable obstacle to the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands for carrying on correspondence" forms, on the other hand, a hindrance for further contact.

It is felt by the Deputies of the Canadian Reformed Churches that we take notice of the remarks and accept them for information.

3. To question 3 the following answer is given: Even if there were and are changes, they are not of such character that they would warrant a change in our relation with the Synodical Churches.

A short discussion follows about 'change of character'; it is felt that further discussion is needed.

4. Re: Attitude concerning Correspondence 1898-1914-1944.

Contact Committee answers: In 1944 there was a lengthy report. Synod agreed with the remarks which were made IN SUBSTANCE ONLY, but did not accept them as new rules for Church Correspondence.

Rev. Verbrugge refers to the Acts 1947, Art 96 IIa: "On the assumption that they are Christian Churches, Synod adopts ... (etc.)"

5. Re: Affiliation with W.C.C.C.

Remarks of Contact Committee:

- (a) This is a matter in discussion in general sense in the R.E.S.
- (b) The Christian Reformed Church took a stand on W.C.C.C. in Synod 1967, this Synod expressed itself against W.C.C.C.
- (c) Even while we are not in the W.C.C.C., this does not mean that we do (or can) not have correspondence with Churches which have the Reformed Confession.
- (d) Synod 1944 spoke about "wider relationship". Deputies will receive a copy of the decisions of Synod 1944 and 1947.

6. Re: Closer relationship with other churches.

Answer: Yes, there is an initial contact with the Reformed Church. Confer: Acts 1960, p. 107, and Acts 1966, p. 59, Art. 84/III.

7. Re: Sticking to the old rules.

Answer: We agree on this point and we try to be faithful to the Word of God. Yet, we have to find our way in a certain era, and we must give answers to certain problems in accordance with the Word of God. To this statement was added: Though this embodies an ideal, it is only realised in practice. 'Our reach must be higher than our grasp'.

8. Re: Possibility to maintain correspondence with two Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

Answer: We do not agree. This does not mean that the problems mentioned (by the Deputies of the Canadian Reformed Churches) should not be discussed. If we e.g. would ENTER into relationship with a Church, we would certainly discuss these matters FIRST. On the other hand, this does not mean that we (as Contact Committee) are satisfied with the situation.

Rev. Verbrugge submits the question: 'In view of the fact that the Christian Reformed Church is in correspondence with the (synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken, and we are talking with each other, as Contact Committee and Deputies for Contact, would you feel that before you could be united with the Christian Reformed Church, the relationship should be broken?'

9. Re: Danger of influences through wider relationships.

Answer: We must not endanger ourselves; yet, we stress that we must not follow the road of safety, but must meet the challenge in a certain era and have a responsibility towards those we have a relation with.

'In a certain era' must be taken in this sense: 'What are the ways in which the voice of the Reformed Faith is heard'.

10. Re: Combined meeting of different committees.

Answer: This could be considered, but

- (a) It is not the mandate of Synod 1967;
- (b) We feel that we, as Contact Committees, must try to bring this matter to an initial close.

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D. Considerations.

1. The Christian Reformed Church did not sever correspondence with the 'Synodical' Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, since "there has been no change in doctrinal position and ecclesiastical conduct of the Gereformeerde Kerken which would warrant a change in our relation". (See letter to Mr. Joh. DeHaas, Transcript of the Acts of Synod 1949, Art. 114).

2. The Christian Reformed Church considers maintenance of Church correspondence also an opportunity to warn against unreformed developments in corresponding churches.

3. The Contact Committee admitted: "Indeed we made a judgment and passed a verdict after 1944. When today we examine these matters, we say that a different approach would have been possible; wiser, more justified and more charitable. However, you cannot turn back the clock. Our problem today is: there are two Churches in the Netherlands." (See further the answers mentioned in this report).
4. The attitude toward existing rules of correspondence has not changed. New rules for correspondence have never been adopted.
5. Besides that the Christian Reformed Synod has received the substance of a report which developed a wider scope of Church contacts, with the purpose of propagating the Reformed Faith. Synod did so 'on the assumption that other churches than our own are Christian churches indeed'.

E. Recommendations.

Whereas the discussions did not come to a conclusion, Deputies recommend to Synod to appoint Deputies for further contact with the Christian Reformed Church on the remaining issues.

We request Synod to express itself on the issue mentioned under No. 8 of the answers to our remarks, and on No. 5 of our conclusions.

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VIII. FINANCIAL MATTERS.

Deputies met eleven times while seven joint meetings were convened, mostly in Brampton as the most centrally located place.

Travelling expenses amounted to	\$ 313.65
Other meeting-costs and secretariat	51.10
Study-material Deputies	23.79
Exchange	<u>1.40</u>
	\$ 389.94
Received from Financial Committee Synod 1965	<u>389.49</u>
Outstanding exchange ...	\$ 0.45

The expenses of the last meetings have not been reimbursed; they amounted to \$56.50.

On February 14th a letter was received from the treasurer of the Financial Committee, informing us 'that funds have been depleted, and future accounts have to wait till after Synod 1968.'

Respectfully submitted,

G. VanDooren (Convenor)

F. Kouwenhoven

M. VanBeveren

D. VanderBoom)Secretary)