

II. Adequacy of pensions and indexing

A. Material (see Art. 78)

B. Recommendation

That synod increase the former-plan maximum pension for 1992 in the United States from \$7,800 to \$8,034 and in Canada from \$8,460 to \$8,700.

Grounds:

1. This is consistent with past practice in granting ad hoc increases to former-plan pensioners.
2. This represents a partial offset for inflation.
3. This recommendation will require no quota increase over the SIC recommendation.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 83

Advisory Committee 9, *Creation and Science*, Rev. Vernon Geurkink reporting, presents the following:

I. Committee to Study Creation and Science

A. Materials

1. Report 28, pp. 367-433
2. Overtures 42-54, pp. 482-94
3. Overture 88, p. 636
4. Overture 91, pp. 637-38
5. Overture 93, pp. 638-39
6. Overture 94, pp. 639-40
7. Overture 95, p. 640
8. Overture 98, pp. 641-42
9. Overture 102, pp. 643-44
10. Overture 103, p. 644
11. Communication 1

B. Background

1. Mandate: Synod 1988 appointed a study committee composed of representatives from the areas of natural science, philosophy of science, and theology and assigned to that committee the following mandate:

To address the relationship between special and general revelation as found in Belgic Confession Article II and in Report 44 of the Synod of 1972 focusing primarily on the implications for biblical interpretation and the investigation of God's creation. This task should include, but not be limited to, such matters as the following: The concept of "vehicle/packaging/contents," the designation of Genesis 1 as "primeval history," the creation of Adam and Eve in God's image, the fall into sin, and the doctrines of creation and providence as they relate to evolutionary theory. The task should also include an investigation of the difference, if any, in our subjection to God's special and God's general revelation.

(Acts of Synod 1988, p. 598)

2. Confession: In pursuing this mandate, the study committee affirmed the church's confession

that the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is this world's Creator and Redeemer. The Word by whom all things were made is the same Word that became flesh in Jesus Christ. We are confronted by two books of revelation through which this one God reveals himself. The classic description of these two revelations is found in the Belgic Confession (Art. 2):

We know him by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God. . . .

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own.

(Agenda for Synod 1991, p. 371)

C. Observations

1. The committee calls synod's attention to the different kinds of actions that are proposed in the recommendations below. Synod is asked to "recommend" the report to the churches, to "call attention to" the Summary Conclusions, to "adopt" the Declarations, and to "approve" the points of Pastoral Advice.
2. The committee is convinced that the recommendations submitted for synodical action, and especially the Declarations, cannot be correctly understood apart from Report 28 and the Summary of Conclusions.
3. The report on creation and science has raised questions and concerns regarding the precise meaning of such basic concepts as general and special revelation and science and the relationship between them. A careful reading of the text of the report indicates that these terms and concepts are both distinguished from and related to one another. According to the report, general revelation is primarily God's revelation of himself. Through the works of his hands he reveals "not only his nature and his presence, but also that he is the source of all good" (p. 373). Because general revelation is divine revelation, it necessarily possesses divine authority. Created reality is not itself general revelation. Created reality is, however, a means by which and "through which God reveals himself and his wisdom" (p. 376). Science is one form of human investigation of "the data and structures of created reality and the historical process," and as such, science "deals with empirical phenomena through which general revelation occurs and by which the divine wisdom speaks" (p. 376).

The divine authority of general revelation may not be ascribed to the results of scientific investigation because science is but a form of human knowing which is always imperfect or incomplete (p. 375). Again, scientific knowledge may not be equated with divine revelation because "ultimately it is only by faith that we can truly and rightly hear the voice of wisdom, which structures and gives meaning to this creation" (p. 375). Moreover, because of the fall into sin, everyone "needs the Scriptures as 'spectacles' in order to read distinctly the revelation that comes through creation, history, and God's governance of the universe" (p. 373).

4. Though deeply appreciative of the motives for the study committee's minority recommendation but not wishing to commit the church to any

particular scientific theory of origins, the committee does not propose adoption of Declaration F (a minority recommendation) for the following reasons:

- a. Historically the Christian church in general has been reticent to issue formal declarations or confessional statements in this area. The Christian Reformed Church also has not considered it necessary to issue such a confession regarding this matter. There is wisdom in such a position.
 - b. Many members of the Christian Reformed Church are working in this area and are considering the evidence and, what is not yet clear, the impact it may have both on scientific theory and the understanding of the biblical account. The church should allow them to contribute to a resolution of the problem. Further study in this area is necessary.
 - c. The church should not bind the consciences of its members beyond what is the clear and indubitable teaching of Scripture and the creeds (cf. Section VIII, Summary Conclusion J, the second part).
5. The committee is recommending the Declarations (except Declaration F) and the Pastoral Advice of the study-committee report, with the following modifications:
- a. The underlining in Declaration A.
 - b. The addition to Declaration E.
 - c. The addition of Pastoral Advice D.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. David Holwerda and Dr. Al Wolters as representatives of the study committee and to Dr. Gordon Spykman as representative of the (study committee) minority recommendation.

—Granted

According to Rules for Synodical Procedure, Minority Report I is presented as information by Rev. Robert Walter.

Minority Report II is presented as information by Dr. Melvin Mulder.

Dr. Al Wolters and Dr. David Holwerda, on behalf of the study committee, address synod.

Dr. Gordon Spykman, on behalf of the minority recommendation, addresses synod.

Recommendation 2 of the majority report is placed before synod.

2. That synod recommend the study report (Sections I-VII) to the churches as a helpful presentation of the problems surrounding the creation-science debate and of Reformed perspectives concerning these problems within the context of the relationship of general and special revelation. (*N. B.*: An appendix is included as a simplified summary of a dominant scientific view of origins.)

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 86.)

ARTICLE 84

The afternoon session adjourns, and Rev. Louis Kerkstra leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1991 Fifteenth Session

ARTICLE 85

Rev. Gilbert Kamps reads Proverbs 3:1-10 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 597, "The City Is Alive, O God."

ARTICLE 86

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 83.)

Advisory Committee 9, *Creation and Science*, Rev. Vernon Geurkink reporting, presents the following:

I. Committee to Study Creation and Science

A. *Materials* (see Art. 83)

B. *Recommendations*

- 2, a. That synod recommend the study report (Sections I-VII) to the churches as a helpful presentation of the problems surrounding the creation-science debate and of Reformed perspectives concerning these problems within the context of the relationship of general and special revelation.

—*Adopted*

The following register their negative votes: Louis Andela (Hamilton), Jay Anema (Pacific Northwest), Barry Beukema (B.C. North-West), C. Eric Fennema (Iakota), Jacob Klaassen (Hudson), John Kreykes (Orange City), Richard Kuiken (Hudson), Melvin Mulder (Central California), Leonard Poot (Columbia), Riemer Praamsma (Hamilton), Sidney Roorda (Atlantic Northeast), Hilbert Rumph (Huron), Kenneth Sanders (Atlantic Northeast), Jelle Tuininga (Alberta South), Jacob Uitvlugt (Zeeland), Peter Vander Weide (Atlantic Northeast), and Joe Veldhuizen (Niagara).

John Engbers (Minnesota South) registers his negative vote with the following statement: "I register my negative vote on sending Report 28 'to the churches as a helpful presentation of the problems surrounding the creation-science debate' because: (1) I am of the conviction that the report is incomplete in not dealing adequately with the mandate given to them; (2) there is a lack of scriptural exegesis on pertinent passages, which makes the report confusing and not 'helpful' at all."

- 2, b. That the appendix be included as a simplified summary of a dominant scientific view of origins.

—*Defeated*

3. That synod call the attention of the church to the nine points of Summary Conclusions (Section VIII, A-I), noting also the tenth point (VIII, J), on which there is not unanimity.

—Adopted

4. That synod adopt the following Declarations as affirmations that add nothing new to the church's confessions but simply articulate in the context of the present debate what is central to the church's confession on these matters.

- a. The church confesses that both general and special revelation, *each in its own unique way*, address us with full divine authority. We affirm, therefore, that the whole of life must be lived in obedience to God and in subjection to his Word, that faith and life must be of one piece. This is true as much of science as it is of personal relationships, business practices, or politics. We reject any view of the Christian faith which limits its scope or any view of science which in principle excludes from its practice the influence of faith and the light of Scripture. On the contrary, we actively encourage the kind of Christian scholarship which challenges the secular assumptions of the academic mainstream by advocating the integration of Christian faith and learning.
- b. The church wishes to honor its commitment to the freedom of exegesis by not imposing upon its members an authorized interpretation of specific passages in Scripture, insisting only that such exegetical freedom be carried on within the limits of the analogy of Scripture and the confessional guidelines of its creeds.
- c. The church wishes also to respect the freedom of science by not canonizing certain hypotheses, models, or paradigms proposed by the sciences while rejecting others, insisting only that all such theorizing be subject to the teaching of Scripture and the confessions.
- d. The church confesses the unity of the human race both in creation and the fall and the unity of renewed humanity in Jesus Christ. God made from one all nations of the earth (Acts 17:26), and through this same one, sin entered the world so that all have sinned (Rom. 5:18-19). All those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ now reign in life (Rom. 5:17) and have become the one new humanity (Eph. 2:15). The church rejects all theorizing that undercuts or denies this biblical teaching of creation, sin, and redemption.
- e. The church confesses that humanity is uniquely created in the image of God and rejects all theorizing that tends either to minimize or to obliterate this created uniqueness. We reject, therefore, atheistic and naturalistic evolutionism, which denies the creative activity of God, disputes the existence of purpose in the created order, and reduces humanity to being nothing more than the end product of a natural process.

—Adopted

A motion carries to consider Declaration F (a minority recommendation):

F. The church declares, moreover, that the clear teaching of Scripture and of our confessions on the uniqueness of human beings as imagebearers of God rules out all theories that posit the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race (cf. V, C, 2).

A motion carries to table consideration of Declaration F (a minority recommendation) to consider F of Minority Report I.

F. The church declares, moreover, that the clear teaching of Scripture and of our confessions on the uniqueness of human beings as imagebearers of God rules out the espousal of all theorizing that posits the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race.*

**Note:* Of course, private research, theorizing, and discussion are not addressed by this declaration. **

Some points of the pastoral advice are helpful on how such activities should be carried out.

—*Adopted*

The following register their negative votes: John Boonstra (B.C. North-West), Keith Bulthuis (Red Mesa), Jason Chen (Pella), Roger De Groot (Chicago South), Charles Fennema (Quinte), Harry Groenewold (Alberta North), Henry Lunshof (Toronto), Carl Kloosterman (Red Mesa), Roger Timmerman (Thornapple Valley), Clair Vander Neut (Central California), Stanley Ver Heul (Greater Los Angeles), Simon Wolfert (Toronto).

The following register their negative votes with statements:

James Dekker (Alberta North): "This decision encourages mental reservation as a tenable Reformed position. Unless many invoke such a reservation, they will open themselves to the specter of ecclesiastical inquisition."

Clarence Menninga (Grand Rapids East): "I consider the approved Recommendation F to be unnecessarily restrictive of scholars who wish to investigate the history of the human race."

Thomas Niehof (Minnesota North): "I wish to register my negative vote. Though the recommendation makes reference to the Scripture it profoundly *fails* to deal with the Scripture passages that teach us what the image of God actually is."

Gordon Pols (Alberta North): "We err in binding conscience on a matter where Scripture and the creeds do not."

Wietse Posthumus (Toronto): "This decision is wrong. It binds the conscience in the extreme and restrains the very thought processes involved in scientific theorizing. In so doing we risk turning our back on what God may reveal through general revelation. Then we would not only insult the scientific community but God as well."

George Vander Weit (Lake Erie): "The Word of God, not the peace of the church, is our only rule for faith and life."

**On Thursday morning (Art. 93) synod added the following to the note under Declaration F (Minority Report I): Declaration F is not intended and may not be used to limit further investigation and discussion on the origin of humanity.

Willis Van Groningen (Quinte): "This decision binds the conscience of biblically faithful scholars beyond the bounds of scriptural and confessional warrant as is clear from the history and tradition of Reformed scholarship in this area (e.g., B. B. Warfield, A. A. Hodge, Albertus Pieters, James Orr, Francis Patton, James Mc Cosh, Herman Bavinck).

ARTICLE 87

The evening session is adjourned, and Elder Karl Bultsma, Sr., leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1991 Sixteenth Session

ARTICLE 88

Rev. Peter Vander Weide reads Ecclesiastes 5:2 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 462, "Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound."

The roll call reveals that Rev. Jae Sung Kim (Classis Kalamazoo) and Rev. Stanley Vander Klay (Classis Hackensack) are absent for the remaining sessions of synod.

The minutes are read and approved.

ARTICLE 89

The general secretary reads letters of greeting from the following churches in ecclesiastical fellowship:

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Mr. C. Ronald Beard, principal clerk

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Rev. Paul M. Martin, Interchurch Committee

Reformed Church in South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod), H. Rabali, chairman

Dutch Reformed Church in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Rev. Charles N. Jansz, president

Reformed Church in Japan, Rev. Yoshio Mitani, stated clerk

Evangelical Reformed Church in Brazil, Anke Procee Salomons, secretary

Reformed Churches of Australia, Mr. Ray Hoekzema, stated clerk

ARTICLE 90

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 53.)

Advisory Committee 8, *Church Order II*, Rev. George F. Vander Weit reporting, presents the following:

I. Committee to Examine Section IV of the Church Order

A. Materials

1. Report 28, pp. 285-302 (*Agenda for Synod 1989*)
2. Article 95, pp. 533-34 (*Acts of Synod 1989*)
3. Report 29, pp. 401-06 (*Agenda for Synod 1990*)

1. That all human beings, irrespective of gender, race, or any other temporal social distinction, are basically free. I Corinthians 9 and 10 give ample proof of the freedom of believers.
2. That all temporal social distinctions (gender, race, ethnic origin, economic status, etc.) are normally controlled by the pragmatic, purposeful rules of society.
3. That no regulation shall be made in the Church Order regarding any of the temporal social distinctions.

C. Recommendation

That synod not sustain the personal appeal of Dr. Florence Kuipers.

Grounds:

1. The content of this appeal is not substantially different from the appeal of Dr. Kuipers in 1990.
2. Synod 1990, in its advisory committee in particular and in several hours of plenary discussion more generally, addressed the concerns and issues of Dr. Kuipers's appeal.

Note: We regret that the appeal was not specifically and separately highlighted in the *Acts of Synod 1990*, as is warranted for personal appeals, but was instead grouped together with overtures of similar effect.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Art. 112.)

ARTICLE 93

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 86.)

Advisory Committee 9, *Creation and Science*, Rev. Vernon Geurkink reporting, presents the following:

I. Creation and science (continued from Art. 86)

A. Materials (see Art. 83)

B. Recommendations (continued from Art. 86)

5. That synod approve these nine points of Pastoral Advice:

- a. As instruction for the church and as a testimony to the world, the church urges its scholars to highlight in their sciences the basic perspectives that revelation provides.
- b. The church urges its scholars who seek to provide guidance to the church on sensitive issues of faith and learning to first submit their ideas and theories to peer review as the most appropriate arena for adequate scholarly assessment of their biblical, confessional, and scientific validity.
- c. The church reminds its scholars of the legitimate concerns of the members of the church regarding the significant issues of origins and urges its scholars in their speaking and writing to exercise prudence and to clearly distinguish what is merely plausible scientific speculation from what is accepted theory and/or fact.
- d. The church historically has not embraced the possibility of evolutionary forebears for humanity. Hence, the church reminds scholars that the

church should not be expected to embrace the possibility of evolutionary forebears without responsible biblical exegetical evidence and compelling scientific evidence.

- e. The church urges its scholars, including theologians and natural scientists, to exercise an appropriate critical restraint with respect to "the assured results" of their investigations and the "clear consensus" of their disciplines, mindful that interpretations of Scripture as well as theories of reality are ever in need of reformation (*semper reformanda*).
- f. The church reminds its members of the validity of the scientific enterprise as a way of carrying out the cultural mandate.
- g. The church reminds its members of the necessity of distinguishing in the context of the present debate what is essential to the faith from what is not and of the importance of allowing open and vigorous discussion on matters pertaining to the latter. Fellowship within the body of Christ should not be broken over such matters.
- h. The church encourages institutions of higher learning to provide forums for bringing together scholars from various disciplines to interact on critical questions concerning origins and thus assist the church in achieving greater clarity on these matters.
- i. The church reminds its members to be careful not to allow disputes over the origins of the creation, however important they are, to diminish or obscure our calling as stewards of the creation.

A motion carries to table Recommendation 5 and to consider an addition to Declaration F, which was previously adopted in Article 86, I, 5.

A motion is made that the following be added to the note in Declaration F:

Declaration F is not intended and may not be used to limit further investigation and discussion on the origin of humanity.

—Adopted

Recommendation 5 is placed before synod.

5. That synod approve the nine points of Pastoral Advice (listed above).

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 98.)

ARTICLE 94

The general secretary reports the following as information to synod: In response to the request of Synod 1990 (Art. 111, D, 3 and 4, pp. 678-79) that Classis Hackensack report progress to the 1991 Synod concerning its "pastoral work in reference to the decision of Synod 1989 and Church Order Article 96," classis reports the following as recorded in its minutes of March 5, 1991:

- a. The Committee appointed in March 1990 to study the matter of conscience came to this session of Classis with a dual report.
- b. Classis tabled the dual report until the September 1991 meeting of Classis to enable the churches to study the reports in greater detail, and still allow us time to present our report to Synod 1992, according to Synod's request.

The general secretary reports the results of Ballot 3.

ARTICLE 95

The morning session adjourns, and Elder Roger Vander Vliet leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 20, 1991 Seventeenth Session

ARTICLE 96

Elder Roger De Groot reads from Ephesians 3 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 528, "Lord, Speak to Me That I May Speak."

The president of synod announces the following ad hoc committee to gather scriptural reference regarding women in office: Rev. Clarence Boomsma, chairman; Rev. Morris Greidanus, reporter; Rev. Jacob Eppinga, Rev. Edward Tamminga, and Rev. Howard Vanderwell, alternate.

ARTICLE 97

Elder Maas Vander Bilt of the Reception Committee with regret informs the assembly that Rev. Kent Bull, fraternal delegate from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, because of his and synod's time constraints, was unable to address synod. A written message is distributed.

Elder Vander Bilt introduces fraternal delegate Rev. Arie Baars from the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 98

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 93.)

Advisory Committee 9, *Creation and Science*, Rev. Vernon Geurkink reporting, presents the following:

I. Creation and science

A. *Materials* (see Art. 83)

B. *Recommendations* (continued)

5. That synod approve these nine points of Pastoral Advice:

- a. As instruction for the church and as a testimony to the world, the church urges its scholars to highlight in their sciences the basic perspectives that revelation provides.
- b. The church urges its scholars who seek to provide guidance to the church on sensitive issues of faith and learning to first submit their ideas and theories to peer review as the most appropriate arena for

adequate scholarly assessment of their biblical, confessional, and scientific validity.

- c. The church reminds its scholars of the legitimate concerns of the members of the church regarding the significant issues of origins and urges its scholars in their speaking and writing to exercise prudence and to clearly distinguish what is merely plausible scientific speculation from what is accepted theory and/or fact.
- d. The church historically has not embraced the possibility of evolutionary forebears for humanity. Hence, the church reminds scholars that the church should not be expected to embrace the possibility of evolutionary forebears without responsible biblical exegetical evidence and compelling scientific evidence.
- e. The church urges its scholars, including theologians and natural scientists, to exercise an appropriate critical restraint with respect to "the assured results" of their investigations and the "clear consensus" of their disciplines, mindful that interpretations of Scripture as well as theories of reality are ever in need of reformation (*semper reformanda*).
- f. The church reminds its members of the validity of the scientific enterprise as a way of carrying out the cultural mandate.
- g. The church reminds its members of the necessity of distinguishing in the context of the present debate what is essential to the faith from what is not and of the importance of allowing open and vigorous discussion on matters pertaining to the latter. Fellowship within the body of Christ should not be broken over such matters.
- h. The church encourages institutions of higher learning to provide forums for bringing together scholars from various disciplines to interact on critical questions concerning origins and thus assist the church in achieving greater clarity on these matters.
- i. The church reminds its members to be careful not to allow disputes over the origins of the creation, however important they are, to diminish or obscure our calling as stewards of the creation.

—*Adopted*

6. That in response to the current debate concerning the report, synod call the attention of the churches to the distinction between general revelation and science; since the fall our understanding of general revelation through science or otherwise is imperfect and incomplete, so that to read distinctly what God reveals in creation requires the "spectacles" of special revelation. In that sense there is a primacy of special revelation.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod declare the committee's mandate fulfilled and therefore discharge the committee with thanks.

—*Adopted*

The president of synod thanks the members of the committee for the work they have done, and synod responds with a standing ovation.

8. That synod declare this to be its answer to overtures 42-54, 88, 91, 93, 94, 95, 98, 102, 103, and Communication 1.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 117.)

ARTICLE 99

Advisory Committee 5, *Synodical Services*, Rev. L. Bryce Mensink reporting, presents the following:

I. Denominational restructuring

A. Materials

1. Report 17, Section VI, pp. 215-16
2. Report 17-A, Section V, pp. 605-06
3. *Strategic Plan for Organizational Restructuring of the Agencies of the Christian Reformed Church in North America* (Report 17-A, Appendix D, pp. 619-33)
4. Communication 7 (6-5-91 memo from World Ministries)

B. Observations

The latest development in denominational restructuring is the May 1991 report of SIC called the *Strategic Plan for Organizational Restructuring of the Agencies of the CRCNA*. The advisory committee, for the most part in agreement with this document, offers several revisions. Copies are presented of only those pages on which changes were made. Proposed changes are italicized; the original wording appears in parentheses.

Pages 625-26:

- d. Accountability - The SIC shall
 - (1) Present a full report of its actions to each synod;
 - (2) Make periodic evaluations of its own programs and goals and shall submit appropriate recommendations to synod;
 - (3) Report according to standards and forms adopted for use by all agencies; and
 - (4) Through its members, present regular reports to the constituent classes of the regions they represent.
3. Management of synodical ministries. The SIC shall
 - a. Be responsible for developing and (maintaining) *implementing* a strategic denominational ministries and agencies plan with a one-, three-, five-year planning window, which will be used as the basis for managing the planning, coordinating, and integrating of the work of all ministries and agencies. This activity shall be carried out in keeping with synodical guidelines;
 - b. In developing and (maintaining) *implementing* a strategic denominational ministries and agencies plan, (seek) *secure* the participation of presidents or designated representatives of synodical agency boards affected by particular deliberations. Such designated representatives shall be members, preferably officers, of the boards which designate