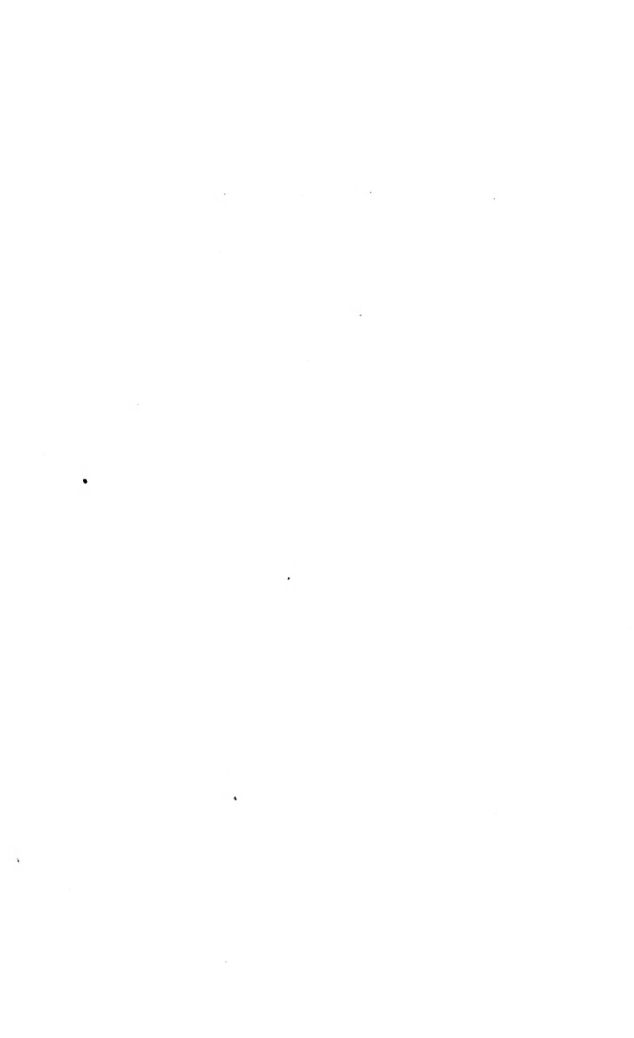


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THE CONSTITUTION

OF THE

Reformed Church in America,

(KNOWN FOR A TIME AS THE "REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH," AND ALSO DESIGNATED IN THE ACT OF INCORPORATION, PASSED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW YORK, APRIL 7TH, 1819, AS "THE REFORMED PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH,")

EMBRACING

THE CATECHISM, THE COMPENDIUM, THE CONFESSION OF FAITH, THE CANONS OF THE SYNOD OF DORDRECHT, AND THE LITURGY.

WITH AN APPENDIX

CONTAINING

- I.—FORMULAS FOR THE USE OF CHURCHES.
- II.—RULES FOR RECEPTION OF MINISTERS.
- III.—RULES OF ORDER.

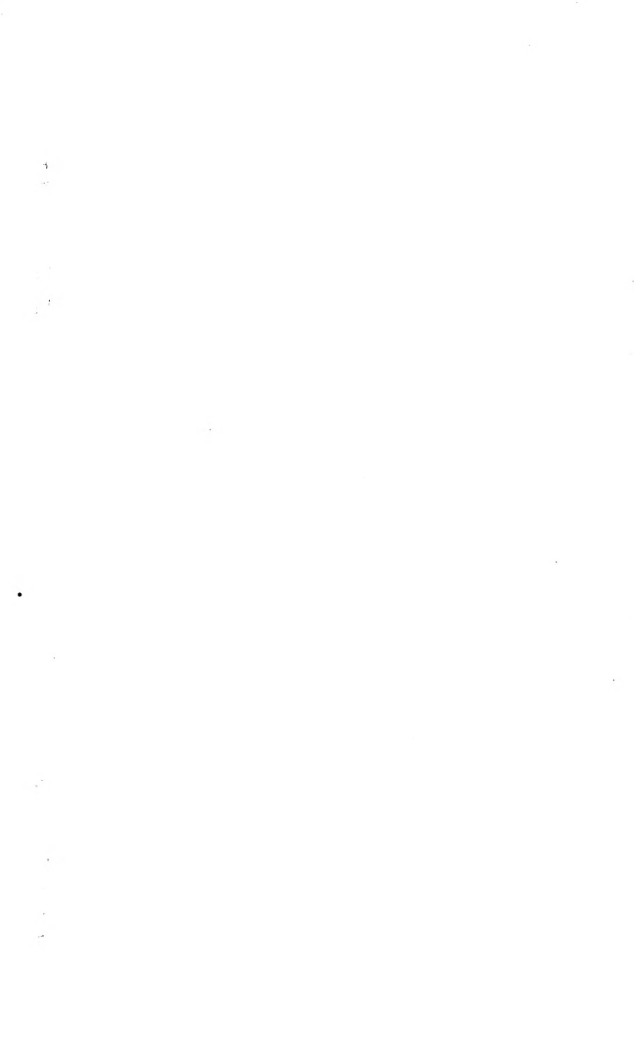
NEW YORK:

BOARD OF PUBLICATION
OF THE

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA,

34 VESEY, CORNER OF CHURCH ST.

1874.



PREFATORY NOTE.

IN the year 1867, the Reformed Dutch Church, which is named in the following pages, dropped from its ecclesiastical name the word "Dutch," which was first formally assumed therein in the year 1792, and added the words "in America," so that the said Church might thenceforth be known as "The Reformed Church in America." (See below, Chap. II., Art. 5, Sec. 1.) Yet, in order that the absolute identity of "The Reformed Church in America" with "The Reformed Dutch Church" might be subject to no possible doubt or dispute, it was also ordained, that the epithet "Dutch" should be retained in all those places in this Constitution in which it had previously been used; but should be inclosed in brackets, to indicate the purpose of the Church to discourage the ecclesiastical and popular use of the word as part of its name.

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INTRODUCTION.

FOR the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary there should be certain *Offices* and *Assemblies*, and a strict attention to *Doctrines*, *Sacraments*, *Usages* and *Christian Discipline*; of all which the following ecclesiastical ordinances particularly treat.

ARTICLE I.

Of the Offices in the Church.

SEC. 1. The Offices in the Church are fourfold, viz :

1. The Office of Ministers of the Word.
2. The Office of Teachers of Theology.
3. The Office of Elders.
4. The Office of Deacons.

ARTICLE II.

Of Ministers of the Word.

SEC. 1. No person shall be allowed to exercise the office of a Minister, without being thereinto regularly inducted, according to the Word of God, and the order established by the Church.

SEC. 2. Every person contemplating the work of the ministry, before he commences his course of Theological studies, shall furnish satisfactory evidence of his being a member, in full communion and in good standing, of a Reformed Protestant Church; of his piety, abilities and

literary attainments; and thereupon shall be admitted into one of the Theological Schools; and, during the prosecution of his studies there, shall be subject to the rules and regulations thereof; and, when he shall have completed the prescribed course and term of Theological studies, shall be admitted to an examination according to the regulations of the schools, as established by the General Synod; and, if found qualified, shall receive a professorial certificate to that effect, which shall entitle him to an examination for licensure before the Classis to which he belongs.

SEC. 3. In the examination, strict attention shall be paid to the attainments of the student, not only in the original languages of the Sacred Scriptures, in Biblical literature, in composition, and his method of sermonizing, but he shall be especially examined respecting his knowledge in Theology, his orthodoxy, his piety, and his views in desiring to become a preacher of the Gospel.

SEC. 4. Whoever, upon examination, shall be approved by the Classis, must, before he is licensed, attest his adherence to the doctrines of the Gospel, by subscribing the following formula, viz:

“We, the underwritten, testify, that the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Confession of the Netherland churches, as also the Canons of the National Synod of Dordrecht, held in the years 1618 and 1619, are fully conformable to the Word of God. We promise, moreover, that, as far as we are able, we will, with all faithfulness, teach and defend, both in public and private, the doctrines established in the standards aforesaid. And, should ever any part of these doctrines appear to us dubious, we will not divulge the same to the people, nor disturb the peace of the Church, or of any community; but will communicate our sentiments to the ecclesiastical judicatories under which

we stand, and subject ourselves to the counsel and sentence of the same."

SEC. 5. After subscribing the aforesaid formula, the candidate shall be entitled to a certificate, or testimonial, signed by the President of the Classis before which the examination is held, containing a license to preach the Gospel; which license may, for cause, be revoked by the Classis.

SEC. 6. Any person of whose gifts, piety and promise of usefulness the Classis is satisfied, may be recommended by the same to the General Synod for a dispensation from any of the above requirements as to study. Such recommendation shall always be accompanied by a full statement of the reasons for the same. And no dispensation shall in any case be granted except by the General Synod, and on the recommendation of the Classis.

SEC. 7. A candidate for the ministry may not, under any pretence whatever, administer the sacraments; nor can he be a delegate to represent a church in any ecclesiastical assembly.

SEC. 8. Every candidate for the ministry is to consider himself under the immediate direction of the Classis which examined him, and is to visit such congregations, and preach in those places to which the Classis shall send him; but, if no particular directions are given, he may preach at his own discretion in any congregation that shall invite him.

SEC. 9. A candidate who has accepted a call, must be examined for his becoming a minister. In this final examination, besides a repetition of his previous trials in composition and sermonizing, the original languages of the Sacred Scriptures, Biblical literature, and his knowledge of Theology, as well Didactic as Polemic, he shall be interrogated respecting the nature and administration of

the Sacraments, the duties of the ministry, and his knowledge of Ecclesiastical History, and of Church Government.

SEC. 10. Upon giving satisfaction in this examination, the candidate shall subscribe the following formula, viz :

“ We, the underwritten, in becoming Ministers of the Word of God, within the bounds of the Classis of N. N., do hereby sincerely, and in good conscience before the Lord, declare, by this our subscription, that we heartily believe, and are persuaded, that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed (Dutch) Church, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made in the National Synod, held at Dordrecht, in the year 1619, do fully agree with the Word of God. We promise, therefore, diligently to teach, and faithfully to defend, the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writings. We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which are condemned in the above-mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict them, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church pure from such errors. And, if hereafter, any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrine should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiment to the Classis, that the same may be there examined ; being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Classis, under the penalty, in case of refusal, to be *ipso facto* suspended from our office. And, if at any time the Consistory, or Classis, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion, and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us an

explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby p. omise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving, however, to ourselves, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall conceive ourselves aggrieved by the action of the Consistory or Classis ; and, until a decision is made upon such appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed."

SEC. 11. The Classis before which the examination of a candidate is held shall fix a day for his ordination, which ordination shall be conducted by the Classis with proper solemnity ; a sermon suited to the occasion shall be preached, and the promises, directions, explanations of duty, with a laying on of hands, shall be agreeable to the form for that end expressly made and adopted ; after which a certificate of his ordination, signed by the President, shall be given.

SEC. 12. The office of a Minister is to persevere in prayer and the ministry of the Word ; to dispense the Sacraments ; to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well as over the whole congregation ; and lastly, in conjunction with the Elders, to exercise Christian discipline, and to be careful that all things be done decently and in good order. Every Minister must consider himself as wholly devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ in the services of the Church, and shall faithfully fulfill the obligations of his call, in preaching, catechizing, and visiting his flock ; and be instant in season and out of season ; and, by word and example, always promote the spiritual welfare of his people.

SEC. 13. No person shall be ordained to the ministry of the Word, without settling in some congregation, except

for missionary work under the direction of the Classis, or in foreign lands ; and no person, when ordained, shall be at liberty to relinquish his calling as a Minister for any secular avocation, except for important reasons, concerning which the Classis shall inquire and determine.

SEC. 14. Ministers who, by reason of old age, or habitual sickness and infirmities, either of mind or body, are not capable of fulfilling the duties of the ministry, may, upon application, and sufficient proof of such incapacity being made to the Classis, be declared *emeriti*, and be excused from all further services in the Church during such infirmity ; reserving, however, to them the title, rank, and character which, before such declaration, they enjoyed. In all such cases, before the Classis declares any Minister *emeritus*, they may require a stipulation in writing from the Consistory to which he belongs, under their common seal, and signed by their President, to pay such Minister annually, in half yearly payments, during his exemption from pastoral service, for his support, such sum as the Classis shall deem reasonable, having due regard to the stated salary of such Minister, and the situation and ability of the congregation. This stipulation shall at any time be subject to modification or discontinuance by the Classis.

SEC. 15. For the regular application for dismissal of a Minister from his charge, it is required that a neighboring Minister of the same Classis to which the congregation belongs, be invited to be present, and superintend the application for said dismissal of the Minister from his congregation, countersign it, and deliver it, with a report upon the subject, to the Classis, which report and document shall serve as a basis upon which the final dismissal and certificate of the Classis shall be founded. But it is provided, that whenever either Minister or Con-

istory shall not join in the application, that fact shall be plainly stated in the report above described, in which case no dismissal shall be made by the Classis except after a hearing of both Minister and Consistory in open Classis, of which hearing ten days' notice shall have first been given to both parties by the President of the Classis, whose warrant for such notice, and call of Classis, shall be the report as above described. Nor shall any dismissal be effected under circumstances now specified, except by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the Classis present.

SEC. 16. All Ministers of the Gospel are equal in rank and authority; all are Bishops or overseers in the Church; and all are equal Stewards of the mysteries of God. No superiority shall, therefore, be ever claimed or acknowledged by one Minister over another; nor shall there be any lords over God's heritage in the Reformed (Dutch) Churches.

SEC. 17. Consistories of vacant congregations shall not invite or permit Ministers of other denominations, whose characters and standing are not known, to preach within their bounds, unless they exhibit satisfactory evidence in writing, of a recent date, of their regular authority for that purpose, and their good standing; and, in all doubtful cases, such Consistories shall consult a Standing Committee of Classis, to be appointed for that purpose.

SEC. 18. The Classis shall receive no Licentiates or Ministers under their care from any body of professing Christians who maintain doctrines different from those of the Reformed (Dutch) Church, without an open and explicit declaration, on their part, that they have renounced such doctrines, as contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and the standards of our Church.

SEC. 19. If any application be made for the admission

of a Licentiate or Minister from other churches, it shall be the duty of the Classis to subject him to such examination as shall enable them to proceed with freedom in his case.

ARTICLE III.

Of Teachers of Theology.

SEC. 1. As it is of the greatest importance that Professors of Theology should be sound in the faith, possess abilities to teach, and have the confidence of the churches, they shall always, for the greater security, be chosen and appointed by a vote of three-fourths of the members present in the General Synod. To prevent, as far as possible, the unhappy consequences of partiality, haste, or undue influence in obtaining an office of such consequence to the Church, a nomination of one or more candidates shall be previously made, upon which the Synod shall fix a day when they will proceed to an election; provided that no appointment of a Professor of Theology shall ever be made on the same day on which he is nominated; and provided also that no one nominated shall be set aside, except by the regular process of balloting for an election. An instrument, certifying the appointment, and specifying the general duties of the office, shall be signed in the presence of the General Synod, by the President thereof, and by him be given, in the name of the Church, to the person elected.

SEC. 2. No person shall be appointed to the office of a Professor who is not a Minister in good standing; and every Professor of Theology shall continue in his office during life, unless in case of such misbehavior as shall be deemed a violation of the obligations entered into at his appointment; or unless he voluntarily deserts or resigns his profession, or from age or infirmities becomes incapable

of fulfilling the duties thereof; of all which the General Synod alone shall judge; and to that Synod a Professor of Theology shall always be amenable for his doctrine, mode of teaching, and moral conduct.

SEC. 3. No Professor of Theology shall be permitted to officiate until he shall have subscribed the following formula, viz: "We, the underwritten, in becoming Professors of Sacred Theology in the Reformed (Dutch) Church, by this our subscription, uprightly, and in good conscience before God, declare that we heartily believe, and are persuaded, that all the articles, and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed (Dutch) Church, together with the explanation of some points of the said doctrine, made in the National Synod, held at Dordrecht, in the year 1619, do fully agree with the Word of God. We promise, therefore, that we will diligently teach, and faithfully defend, the aforesaid doctrine; and that we will not inculcate or write, either publicly or privately, directly or indirectly, anything against the same. As, also, that we reject not only all the errors which militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which are condemned in the above-mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute the same, openly to oppose them, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church pure from such errors. Should it nevertheless hereafter happen that any objections against the doctrine might arise in our minds, or we entertain different sentiments, we promise that we will not, either publicly or privately, propose, teach, or defend, the same, by preaching or writing, until we have first fully revealed such sentiments to the General Synod, to whom we are responsible; that our opinions may, in the said General Synod, receive a thorough examination, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the General Synod,

under the penalty, in case of refusal, to be censured by the said Synod. And whenever the General Synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion, and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrines, may deem it proper to demand from us a more particular explanation of our sentiments respecting any article of the aforesaid Confession, Catechism, or Explanation of the National Synod, we promise hereby to be always willing and ready to comply with such demand, under the penalty before mentioned; reserving to ourselves the right of rehearing, or a new trial, if we shall conceive ourselves aggrieved in the sentence of the General Synod; during the dependence of such new trial, we promise to acquiesce in the judgment already passed, as well as finally to submit, without disturbing the peace of the churches, to the ultimate decision of the said General Synod."

SEC. 4. No Professor, while in office, shall have the pastoral charge of any congregation, or sit as a member of any ecclesiastical assembly or judicatory; but as a Minister of the Gospel, may preach, and administer, or assist in administering the Sacraments in any congregation, with the consent of the Minister or Consistory.

SEC. 5. A Professor shall not be at liberty to resign his office without the consent of the General Synod, except upon giving three months' previous notice to the President of that body, of his intention so to do.

SEC. 6. A Professor of Theology, being amenable only to the General Synod, shall, when entering on the discharge of his duties, take a dismissal from the judicatory with which he is connected; and on retiring from office shall be dismissed to such ecclesiastical judicatory as he may elect.

ARTICLE IV.

Of the Offices of Elders and Deacons.

SEC. 1. The office of Elders is, in conjunction with the Ministers of the Word, to exercise Christian discipline, and to be careful that all things be done decently and in order; to take heed that the Ministers, together with their fellow Elders and Deacons, faithfully discharge their respective duties; and also, especially before or after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances permit, and as shall be most for the edification of the congregation, to assist in performing visitations, in order particularly to instruct and comfort the members in full communion, as well as to exhort others to the regular profession of the Christian religion.

SEC. 2. The office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect the alms and other moneys appropriated for the use of the poor, and, with the advice of the Consistory, cheerfully and faithfully to distribute the same to strangers, as well as to those of their own household, according to the measure of their respective necessities; to visit and comfort the distressed, and to be careful that the alms be not misused; of the distribution of which they shall render an account in Consistory, at such time as the said Consistory shall determine, and in the presence of so many of the congregation as may choose to attend. Should more be collected than the necessities of the poor may require, such surplus may, with the consent of the Consistory, be devoted to other purposes, connected with the wants of the Church.

SEC. 3. In all cases the Elders and Deacons shall be chosen from the male members of the Church, in full communion.

SEC. 4. In forming new churches, the Elders and Dea-

cons shall be chosen by the male communicants, and a neighboring Minister of the Reformed Church shall preside, and notice of the time and place of such election shall be published, at least two Sabbaths, in the church, or usual place of worship, previous to the election.

SEC. 5. In churches already organized, the manner of choosing Elders and Deacons shall be as follows:—A double number may be nominated by the Consistory, out of which the members of the Church in full communion may choose those who shall serve;—or, all the said members may unite in nominating and choosing the whole number without a previous nomination by the Consistory;—or, the Consistory for the time being, as representing all the members, may choose the whole. The result of such choice shall be published in the church, or usual place of worship of the congregation, three successive Sabbaths previous to their ordination, to the end that all lawful objections to such ordination may be offered to, and duly adjudicated by, the Consistory. But where either of these modes has for many years been followed in any church, there shall be no variation or change but by previous application of the Consistory to the Classis, and express leave first obtained for altering such custom.

SEC. 6. The Elders and Deacons shall be chosen to serve two years, except in cases of vacancy occasioned by death, removal out of the congregation, resignation, or dismissal from office by a judicial sentence of the Consistory; in either of which cases, the person or persons chosen shall serve for the residue of the term only.

SEC. 7. In order to avoid the inconvenience of an entire change at one time, the first Elders and Deacons of new congregations shall, at the first meeting of the Consistory after their ordination, determine, by lot, who of their number shall serve one year, and who shall serve two years;

so that one half of the whole number of both Elders and Deacons may thereafter be elected annually. The same course shall be pursued in enlarging Consistories, so far as relates to the additional members. Elders and Deacons may be re-elected, but in such case need not be re-ordained.

ARTICLE V.

Of Ecclesiastical Assemblies in General.

SEC. 1. The Ecclesiastical Assemblies which shall be maintained are :

1. Consistorial.
2. Classical.
3. Synodical.

SEC. 2. In these assemblies, ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted, and that in an ecclesiastical manner. A greater assembly shall take cognizance of those things alone which could not be determined in a less, or that appertain to the churches or congregations in general, which compose such an assembly.

SEC. 3. The transactions of all Ecclesiastical Assemblies shall begin and conclude with prayer.

SEC. 4. Those who are delegated to attend the assemblies shall be admitted on credentials, signed by those who send them ; and such only shall be entitled to a vote.

SEC. 5. In all assemblies there shall be a President and Clerk. The duty of the President shall be to state and explain the business which is to be transacted, to preserve order, and, in general, to maintain that decorum and dignity becoming a judicatory of the Church of Christ. The duty of the Clerk shall be to keep a faithful record of all the proceedings.

SEC. 6. A Classis has the same jurisdiction over a Con-

sistory, which a Particular Synod has over a Classis, and the General Synod over a Particular.

SEC. 7. No member of an Ecclesiastical Assembly shall be allowed to protest against any of its acts; any member who dissents from any such acts shall have a right to require the names of all the members present who vote for or against the same, to be entered in the minutes, and published therewith for the information of all concerned.

ARTICLE VI.

Of Consistories.

SEC. 1. The Elders and Deacons, together with the Minister or Ministers, if any, shall form a Consistory, and the Minister shall preside at all consistorial meetings; but, in the absence of a Minister, the Consistory may appoint one of the Elders to be their President *pro. tem.*, and it shall be competent for the several Consistories to prescribe the mode and time of calling their meetings. If there be a plurality of ministers, they shall preside in rotation.

SEC. 2. When joined together in one Board, the Elders and Deacons have an equal voice in whatever relates to the temporalities of the Church, to the calling or dismissal of a Minister, or the choice of their own successors; in all which they are considered as the general and joint representatives of the people. But in admitting members to full communion, and in dismissing them to other churches; in exercising discipline upon those who have erred from the faith, or offended in morals; and in choosing delegates to attend the Classis, the Elders, with the Ministers, have alone a voice.

SEC. 3. No Consistory shall be constituted in any place without the previous advice and concurrence of Classis.

SEC. 4. A majority of the Consistory, regularly con-

vened, shall be a quorum for the transaction of business ; and, in like manner, a majority of Ministers and Elders alone, or of Deacons alone, so convened, shall be a quorum respectively. It shall be the duty of the Consistory, when an election shall have been omitted at the usual time, to appoint another time for that purpose, on an early day, giving the like notice as herein above prescribed ; and, in like manner, to provide for filling vacancies.

SEC. 5. As the spiritual government of the congregation is committed to the Ministers and Elders, it is their duty at all times to be vigilant, to preserve discipline, and to promote the peace and spiritual interest of the congregation. Particularly before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, a faithful and solemn inquiry is to be made by the President, whether, to the knowledge of those present, any member in full communion has departed from the faith, or in walk or conversation has behaved unworthy the Christian profession ; that such as are guilty may be properly rebuked, admonished, or suspended from the privilege of approaching the Lord's Table, and all offences may be removed out of the Church of Christ.

SEC. 6. None can be received as members in full communion, unless they first shall have made a confession of their faith before the Minister (if any) and the Elders, or have produced a certificate of their being members in full communion of some Evangelical Church ; all such shall be published to the congregation, and be registered as regular members in the Church.

SEC. 7. In every congregation, a distinct and fair register shall be preserved by the Minister of every baptism and marriage there celebrated, and of all who are received as members in full communion. It shall be the duty of the several Consistories to make a statistical report to the Classis at their meeting immediately preceding the annual

meetings of the Particular and the General Synod, according to such formula as the General Synod shall prescribe, and accompany the same with such remarks on the spiritual state of the congregation as they may deem proper.

SEC. 8. Every Consistory shall keep regular minutes of its meetings and proceedings, and shall lay such minutes, so far as the same relate to ecclesiastical proceedings, at least once a year, before the Classis with which it is connected, for their information.

SEC. 9. It shall be incumbent upon members of the Church, in removing from the bounds of one church to another, to obtain from the Consistory a certificate of membership and dismissal.

SEC. 10. Consistories possess the right of calling Ministers for their own congregations, except where otherwise provided for by charter. But, in exercising this right, they are bound to use their utmost endeavors, either by consulting with the Great Consistory or with the congregation at large, to know what person would be most acceptable to the people.

SEC. 11. A Minister of the Classis must be invited to superintend the proceedings, whenever a Consistory is desirous of making a call. The instrument is to be signed by the members of the Consistory, or by the President in the name of the Consistory; and if the Church be incorporated, it is proper to affix the seal of the corporation. When the call is completed, it must be laid by the Consistory before the Classis, and be approved by the same, before it can be presented to the person called; and if the call be accepted, the name of such Minister shall be published in the church three Sabbaths successively, that opportunity may be given for stating lawful objections, if any there be. When any circumstances shall, in the judgment of the Consistory, make the presiding of their own

Minister at its sessions undesirable, they may, on the request of their pastor, invite a Minister of their own Classis to preside on the occasion.

SEC. 12. For the purpose of uniformity, the form of a call shall be as follows :

“ To N. N.

“ *Grace, Mercy and Peace, from GOD our FATHER, and JESUS CHRIST our LORD.*

“ WHEREAS, the Church of Jesus Christ at ———, is at present destitute of the stated preaching of the Word, and the regular administration of the ordinances, and is desirous of obtaining the means of grace, which God hath appointed for the salvation of sinners, through Jesus Christ his Son: AND WHEREAS, the said Church is well satisfied of the piety, gifts, and ministerial qualifications of you, N. N., and hath good hope that your labors in the Gospel will be attended with a blessing: Therefore, we (*the style and title of the said Church*) have resolved to call, and we hereby solemnly, and in the fear of the Lord, do call you, the said N. N., to be our pastor and teacher, to preach the Word in truth and faithfulness, to administer the holy Sacraments agreeably to the institution of Christ, to maintain Christian discipline, to edify the congregation, and especially the youth, by catechetical instructions; and, as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, to fulfill the whole work of the Gospel ministry, agreeably to the Word of God, and the excellent Rules and Constitution of our Reformed (Dutch) Church, and to which you, upon accepting the call, must with us remain subordinate.

“ In fulfilling the ordinary duties of your ministry, it is expressly stipulated, that, besides preaching upon such texts of Scripture as you may judge proper to select for our instruction, you also explain a portion of the Heidel-

berg Catechism on the Lord's Days, agreeably to the established order of the Reformed (Dutch) Church ; and that you farther conform in rendering all that public service which is usual, and has been in constant practice in our congregation. The particular service which will be required of you is (*here insert a detail of such particulars, if any there be, which the situation of the congregation may render necessary ; especially in case of combinations, when the service required in the respective congregations must be ascertained ; or when the Dutch and English languages are both requisite, the proportion of each may be mentioned or left discretionary, as may be judged proper*).

“To encourage you in the discharge of the duties of your important office, we promise you, in the name of this Church, all proper attention, love, and obedience in the Lord ; and to free you from worldly cares and avocations, while you are dispensing spiritual blessings to us, we (*the Elders and Deacons, etc., the style and title of the Church*) do promise and oblige ourselves to pay to you the sum of —, in — payments, yearly, and every year as long as you continue the Minister of this Church, together with (*such particulars as may refer to a parsonage or other emoluments*). For the performance of all which, we hereby bind ourselves, and our successors, firmly, by these presents. The Lord incline your heart to a cheerful acceptance of this call, and send you to us in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace.

“Done in Consistory, and subscribed with our names, this — day of —, in the year of —.”

Attested by N. N., Moderator of the call.

SEC. 13. Since it is deemed of the highest importance that there should be regular instruction on the great articles of the Christian faith, in order to preserve the truth,

and to promote the prosperity of the Church, every Minister shall, in the ordinary morning or afternoon service on the Lord's Day, explain the system of the Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism adopted by the Reformed Churches, so that, if practicable, the explanation may be annually completed, but shall never be extended beyond the term of four years. The several Classes shall, at their stated meetings, preceding the annual meeting of General Synod, make strict inquiry whether the preceding part of this section has been fully complied with by every Minister, and if any Minister shall be found deficient, without sufficient reason, the Classis shall inflict such censure as they in their wisdom may judge the omission to merit ; and the several Classes shall make a full and faithful report of the result of their inquiries and doings on this behalf to the Particular Synod.

SEC. 14. When any Minister shall be duly convicted of any offence which affects the purity of his clerical character, he shall, in consequence of such conviction, be suspended from his office ; and if the conviction and suspension shall be sustained on a final appeal, his pastoral connection with the congregation in which he was settled shall be, *ipso facto*, dissolved.

SEC. 15. Consistories which have hitherto combined with one or more neighboring Consistories, in making calls, and having a Minister to serve in common, may not at pleasure break such combination ; but whenever their situation and circumstances render them capable of severally calling a Minister, a representation thereof must be made to the Classis, and leave be first requested and obtained, before their former connections can be dissolved.

SEC. 16. As in calling a Minister, Consistories are bound to consult with the Great Consistory, or with the congregation at large, so when other matters of peculiar import-

ance occur, relating to the peace and welfare of the whole congregation, they are strongly recommended to seek such advice. All who have ever served as Elders or Deacons, constitute, when assembled, what is called the Great Consistory ; but being out of office, and not actually members of the Board of Corporation, they have only an advisory voice.

ARTICLE VII.

Of the Classis.

SEC. 1. A Classis consists of all the Ministers, and an Elder delegated by each Consistory within the bounds prescribed by Particular Synod. Collegiate Churches shall be entitled to an Elder for each ordinary worshiping assembly. To constitute a Classis, at least three Ministers and three Elders are required.

SEC. 2. Classis shall have the power of approving or disapproving calls ; constituting and dissolving the pastoral relation ; ordaining, installing, suspending, deposing, and dismissing ministers. They shall have the power of forming and disbanding congregations, of approving and dissolving combinations of two or more congregations ; and of exercising a general superintendence over the spiritual interests and concerns of the several churches, and an appellate supervising power over the acts, proceedings, and decisions of the Consistories relating to Christian discipline.

SEC. 3. The peculiar prerogative of Classes, that of examining students of Theology for their becoming candidates for the ministry, and of candidates for their becoming Ministers, is very important, and must always be attended to with great prudence, zeal, and fidelity. Every student of Theology, when he shall have become prepared for examination for licensure, shall present himself for

such examination to the Classis within whose bounds he resided when he entered upon his preparatory studies, and a candidate who has received a call, must be examined by the Classis under whose jurisdiction the Church that has made the call is placed.

SEC. 4. Every Classis shall keep a book, in which the forms of subscriptions for candidates and Ministers of the Gospel are fairly written, which those who are examined and approved shall respectively subscribe in the presence of the Classis. It shall also be the duty of every Classis, annually, to report to the Synod all persons who have been examined and licensed, as well as those who have been ordained; and also, all removals of Ministers from one place to another, or by death, which may have happened within the jurisdiction of such Classis, since the last session of Synod.

SEC. 5. Whenever the examination of a candidate for the ministry, the approbation of a call, or any other special business, shall render an extraordinary meeting of the Classis necessary, it shall be the duty of the President of the Classis, upon application being made to him for that purpose, to call, by circular letters, the members together. And, whenever two Ministers and two Elders belonging to the Classis shall, upon *any occasion*, request in writing, under their hands, an extraordinary meeting, the President of the Classis may not refuse calling the same; provided that the expenses attending all extraordinary meetings of the Classis shall be paid by the person or congregation at whose request, or for whose benefit, such session is held.

SEC. 6. The meetings of the Classes shall be semi-annual, at such times as they may respectively determine; and at every ordinary session there shall be a sermon, or other devotional services, or both.

SEC. 7. The Classes shall, at their meeting next preceding that of the Particular Synod, appoint delegates to attend the said Synod, and nominate delegates to the General Synod ; and, at the same meeting, shall put to the Ministers and Elders, respectively, the following inquiries, and enter in detail the several answers given by each Minister and Elder, on the minutes, for the information of the higher judicatories :

1st. Are the doctrines of the Gospel preached in your congregation in their purity, agreeably to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms of our Church ?

2d. Is the Heidelberg Catechism regularly explained agreeably to the Constitution of the Reformed (Dutch) Church ?

3d. Are the catechising of the children and the instruction of the youth faithfully attended to ?

4th. Is family visitation faithfully performed ?

5th. Is the 5th Sec., 6th Art., in the Constitution of our Church, relating to the conduct of church members, carefully obeyed, previous to each communion ?

6th. Is the temporal contract between Ministers and people fulfilled in your congregation ?

7th. Is a contribution made annually by your congregation to each of the Benevolent Boards and Funds of the Church ?

ARTICLE VIII.

Of the Particular Synod.

SEC. 1. Every Particular Synod shall comprehend a certain number of Classes to be designated by the General Synod, and shall consist of four Ministers and four Elders from every Classis within its bounds ; and nine Ministers and nine Elders, when regularly convened, shall constitute

a quorum for the transaction of business; excepting those Synods which consist of not more than five Classes, in which case six Ministers and six Elders may form a quorum.

SEC. 2. To the Particular Synod belongs the power to form new Classes, to transfer a congregation from one Classis to another, to exercise a general superintendence over the spiritual interests and concerns of the several Classes within its bounds, and an appellate supervising power over their acts, proceedings, and decisions relating to Christian discipline.

SEC. 3. Every Synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to general edification.

SEC. 4. A copy of the minutes of every session of the several Classes held since the last session of Synod, shall, at the opening of the Synod, be produced and laid on the table for the inspection of the members. The Particular Synod, from the several reports of the Classes, on the state of religion, shall prepare a Synodical Report, to be presented to the General Synod, accompanied with the statistical tables of said Classes

SEC. 5. The Particular Synod shall meet annually, at such time and place as they may determine; and special meetings may be held for the transaction of any extraordinary business, upon the written request of four Ministers and four Elders to the President of the Synod; and, in such case, it shall be the duty of such President to give notice to the members of Synod of such meeting three weeks previous thereto, stating the particular object for which the Synod is to be convened.

ARTICLE IX.

Of the General Synod.

SEC. 1. The General Synod shall consist of three Ministers and three Elders from each of the Classes, composed of fifteen or less than fifteen churches; and an additional representation of one Minister and one Elder shall be allowed for each additional five churches. These persons shall be nominated by the Classes to the Particular Synod to which they belong, who shall have power to appoint them delegates to the General Synod; but, for good cause, it may appoint other persons than those so nominated; or, in case no nomination is made, may appoint the delegates for the Classis or Classes who shall have omitted to nominate. The body thus constituted shall be called "The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America."

SEC. 2. The removal of any delegate, during the period for which he was appointed, from the Classis which he was commissioned to represent, shall vacate his seat in the General Synod.

SEC. 3. The General Synod shall meet annually, at such time and place as they may determine; and twelve Ministers and twelve Elders, when regularly convened, shall be a quorum for the transaction of business.

SEC. 4. The General Synod shall have original cognizance of all matters relating to the Theological Schools, the appointment of Professors, and their course of instruction; the appointment of Superintendents of said schools, and the regulations thereof; and shall possess the power of regulating and maintaining a friendly correspondence with the highest judicatories or assemblies of other religious denominations, for the purpose of promoting union and concert in general measures which may be

calculated to maintain sound doctrine, prevent conflicting regulations relative to persons under church censure, by the judicatories of either denominations, and to produce concert and harmony in their respective proceedings to promote the cause of religion and piety.

To the General Synod belongs the power to constitute Particular Synods, and to make any changes in the same ; to exercise a general superintendence over the spiritual interests and concerns of the whole Church, and an appellate supervising power over the acts, proceedings, and decisions of the lower assemblies, relating to Christian discipline.

SEC. 5. When, in the circumstances of missionary fields, it shall be impracticable for a Classis to comply with all the requirements of the Constitution, the General Synod shall have full power to grant such dispensation as the wants of the case may demand.

SEC. 6. If circumstances should require a meeting of the General Synod previous to the next ordinary meeting, the President shall, on a joint application of six Ministers and six Elders requesting the same, call an extraordinary meeting at the place where the next ordinary meeting is appointed to be held, notice of which meeting shall be given to members of Synod at least three weeks previous to the time of such meeting, stating the particular business for which it is called, not, however, excluding the transaction of such other business as the Synod may deem proper.

ARTICLE X.

Of Customs and Usages.

SEC. 1. The Sacrament of Baptism shall, if possible, be administered in the church, or some other place of public worship, at the time of public worship ; and the form for

Baptism shall in every case be retained. But it is recommended that no private baptism shall be administered without the presence of at least one Elder, who shall accompany the Minister for that purpose.

SEC. 2. Every church shall observe such a mode in the administration of the Lord's Supper as shall be judged most conducive to edification; provided that the Form for the administration of the Lord's Supper shall be read, and a prayer suited to the occasion shall be offered, before the members participate in the ordinance.

SEC. 3. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered at least twice a year, and it is recommended that the same be administered once every two or three months.

SEC. 4. For the purpose of uniformity in the order of worship, the following is to be observed by all the Churches :

1st. Invocation.

2d. Salutation:

3d. Reading the **Ten Commandments**, or some other portions of Scripture, or both.

4th. Singing.

5th. Prayer.

6th. Singing.

7th. Sermon.

8th. Prayer.

9th. Collection of Alms.

10th. Singing.

11th. Benediction. The order of the afternoon and evening services shall be the same as the morning, excepting the reading of the Ten Commandments. The last service on the Lord's Day shall conclude with the Christian Doxology.

SEC. 5. No Psalms or Hymns may be publicly sung in

the Reformed (Dutch) Churches, but such as are approved and recommended by the General Synod.

ARTICLE XI.

Of Discipline in General.

SEC. 1. Discipline is the exercise of the authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has given to His Church. Its objects are the vindication of the honor of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the benefit of the offender.

SEC. 2. Nothing shall be admitted as matter of accusation, or considered an offence, which cannot be shown to be such from Scripture, or the laws and regulations of the Church.

SEC. 3. All baptized persons are members of the Church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline.

ARTICLE XII.

Of Offences.

SEC. 1. Private offences are those that are known to an individual only, or at most to a very few.

SEC. 2. Such offences are not immediately to be presented before a Church Judicatory, but the offender shall be dealt with according to the mode pointed out by our Lord in Matt. xviii. The same course shall be adopted in cases of personal or private injuries; but if, on due forbearance, these tender and Christian proceedings are unavailing, the whole matter shall be represented to the Judicatory, to which the offender is amenable.

SEC. 3. Informers who have not taken these previous steps shall be considered as guilty of an offence against the peace and order of the Church, and be censured accordingly.

SEC. 4. Public offences are those that require the cognizance of a Church Judicatory : being so notorious and scandalous that no private measures would obviate their injurious effects.

SEC. 5. When any person is charged with an offence, not by an individual, but by general rumor, the previous steps prescribed by our Lord in case of private offences are not necessary, but the proper judicatory is bound to take immediate cognizance of the matter.

SEC. 6. To constitute a general rumor, or *fauna c'amosa*, it is necessary—

1st. That it specify some particular sin or sins.

2d. That it should have obtained general circulation.

3d. That it be not transient.

4th. That it shall be accompanied with strong presumption of its truth.

SEC. 7. The following are to be considered as the *principal offences* that deserve the punishment of suspension or removal from office, viz: Heresy, Public Schisms, open Blasphemy, Simony, faithless Desertion of Office or intruding upon that of another, Slander, Lying, Perjury, Adultery, Fornication, Theft, Forgery, Acts of Violence, Drunkenness, scandalous Traffic ; in short, all such sins and gross offences as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which, in a private member of the Church, would be considered as deserving excommunication.

SEC. 8. In admitting accusations against a Minister or Elder, the rule prescribed in 1 Tim. v. 19, shall always be observed, and accusers must come forward openly to support the charge.

SEC. 9. If Ministers of the Word have committed any public, gross sin, which would render their appearance in the pulpit under such circumstances highly offensive, it shall be the duty of the Consistory, in order to prevent

scandal, to close the pulpit against such criminal, and refer him to be tried by the Classis as soon as possible. The proceedings of the Consistory in such cases are at their peril, and are not to be considered as a trial, but only a prudent interference, and binding over the person accused to the judgment of his peers.

SEC. 10. In case of like offences by an Elder or Deacon, the Consistory shall immediately proceed to his trial, and, upon conviction, he shall be forthwith suspended from his office, and excluded from the privileges of the Church.

SEC. 11. If any member of the Church shall be duly convicted of an infamous crime by any civil court, he shall, *ipso facto*, be suspended from any ecclesiastical office with which he may be invested, and excluded from the privileges of the church, until he shall have established his innocence, or manifested his repentance to the ecclesiastical judicatory to which he is amenable.

ARTICLE XIII.

Of Process and Trial.

SEC. 1. Offences may be brought before a Judicatory by individual accusation or common fame. In the former case, the process must be in the name of the accuser or accusers. In the latter, no person need be named as the accuser.

SEC. 2. In exhibiting charges, the time, place, and circumstances shall be accurately stated in writing, that the accused may be enabled the better to defend himself.

SEC. 3. Great caution is to be exercised in receiving accusations where there is good reason to believe that they are preferred through passion or improper and unchristian motive; or where the accuser is under censure, or not of good character, or has the prospect of temporal advantage.

SEC. 4. All citations shall be issued and signed by the President or Clerk, who shall also furnish citations for such witnesses as may be required on either side.

SEC. 5. A copy of the accusation shall be furnished to the accused at the time when the citation is served; which citation shall designate the time when, and place where, the accused shall put in his answer. Not less than ten days shall be allowed to intervene between the time when the citation is served and the answer received; and no shorter period shall be allowed between receiving the answer of the accused and the trial of the case, unless by consent of all the parties interested.

SEC. 6. When the accused refuses to obey the citation, he shall be cited a second time, which second citation shall always be accompanied by a notice, that, if he still refuses to appear at the time and place appointed, he shall not only be liable to censure for contumacy, but that the Judicatory will proceed to the trial and decision of his case as if he were present.

SEC. 7. In cases where it is demanded by either party, a commission of the Judicatory may be appointed by it to take testimony at a distance; of which commission, and of the time and place of their meeting, due notice shall be given to all the parties.

SEC. 8. To establish an accusation against any member of the Church, the testimony of more than one witness is required. The witnesses, after being sworn or duly affirmed, shall be examined in the presence of the accused, and he shall be permitted to cross-examine them. Yet, if two or more witnesses bear testimony each to different acts of the same general nature, this, if not disproved, shall be considered sufficient to establish the accusation. The evidence shall be faithfully minuted and subscribed by the witness, and in this final form, with the sentence or

decision, be entered on the records ; and the parties shall be allowed copies of the same, at their own expense, if desired.

SEC. 9. No accusation shall be admitted unless brought forward by the accuser within the space of two years after the crime shall be alleged to have been committed ; excepting when it shall appear that unavoidable impediments prevented the bringing an accusation sooner, and at the trial the accuser shall not sit in judgment upon the case.

SEC. 10. No professional counsel shall be permitted to appear and plead in cases of process in any of the ecclesiastical courts ; but, in the trial of any case before a Consistory, a member of the Classis may be employed to prepare and conduct the case on either side. And, in the higher courts, if any accused person feel unable to represent and plead his own case to advantage, he may request, or the President may appoint, any Minister or Elder belonging to the judicatory before which he appears to prepare and conduct his case as he may judge proper. But the Minister or Elder so engaged shall not be allowed, after pleading the case of the accused, to sit in judgment as a member of the judicatory.

SEC. 11. Such as obstinately reject the admonitions of the Consistory, or have been found guilty of the commission of an otherwise gross offence, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper, which act of suspension may be published at the discretion of the Consistory ; and, being suspended and repeatedly admonished without discovering marks of repentance, the Church shall then proceed to the last remedy, namely, Excommunication ; agreeably to the adopted form, and conformably to the Word of God. But no person shall be excommunicated without the previous approval of the Classis.

SEC. 12. Before the Church proceeds to excommunication, the obstinacy of the offender shall be publicly notified to the congregation, declaring his offences, together with the particular care and attention bestowed on him, by admonition, suspension from the Lord's table, and by repeated remonstrances. This procedure shall be comprised in three several steps. In the first instance, the name of the offender shall not be mentioned, that he may in some measure be spared. In the second, with the advice of Classis, his name shall be expressed. In the third, the congregation shall be informed, that, unless he repenteth, he will be excluded from the communion of the Church; so that, if he remain obstinate, his excommunication may take place with their tacit approbation. The interval between these notifications shall be at the discretion of the Consistory.

SEC. 13. When an excommunicated person becomes penitent, and is desirous of being again reconciled to the Church, such desire shall be publicly declared to the congregation, either before the administration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other seasonable opportunity; that, if no objections are offered, he may, on declaring his repentance, be publicly re-admitted to a participation of the Lord's Supper, agreeably to the form appointed for that purpose.

ARTICLE XIV.

Of Appeals and Complaints.

SEC. 1. Any member of the Church, conceiving himself to be personally aggrieved or injured by the decision of a Judicatory, may appeal therefrom to the next higher Judicatory. Also, a Consistory or Classis considering itself aggrieved by the judgment or censure of a higher Judicatory, enjoys the same right of appeal.

SEC. 2. Any one intending to appeal from an act or de-

oision of a Judicatory, must at the time of the action, or within ten days thereafter, give notice of such intention to the President of the body from whose action he intends to appeal. Within ten days after such notice he shall send to said President in writing the appeal, with the reasons thereof. On default of this, the appeal falls.

SEC. 3. An appeal made by a Judicatory must be made by it as such regularly convened, and the appeal, with the reasons thereof, must be sent in writing to the President of the body appealed from, within twenty days of the action from which the appeal is taken. On default of this, the appeal falls.

SEC. 4. If an appellant give notice and satisfactory reasons to the President of the Judicatory to which the appeal is made, that he cannot attend at the next stated meeting of that body, his appeal shall lie over to the next following stated meeting. But if he fail to appear, and prosecute his appeal without such notice and reasons, it is to be considered as relinquished.

SEC. 5. It shall be the duty of every Judicatory that has tried a case originally or by appeal, in recording its decision, to set forth at length the reasons thereof, that the record may exhibit, as far as practicable, everything that had an influence on its judgment.

SEC. 6. It shall be the duty of any Judicatory from whose act or decision an appeal is made, to transmit a certified copy of the action appealed from, signed by the President, and countersigned by the Clerk, together with the appeal and reasons accompanying the same, to the Judicatory appealed to, at the next regular meeting thereof, and the papers thus transmitted shall be considered the documents in the case.

SEC. 7. An inferior Judicatory shall be permitted to send a commissioner to the one appealed to, for the pur-

pose of making explanations relative to the case ; it being expressly understood, that the original parties in the case shall have the same right of being heard in every stage of the trial, from one court to another.

SEC. 8. For all cases that have originated in the Consistory, the Particular Synod shall be the Final Court of Appeal, except when as many members of the Particular Synod, as there are Classes connected with the Synod shall, within ten days of its adjournment, declare in writing to the President that the case adjudicated is a proper one for appeal to the General Synod. In such case an appeal, if constitutionally made, shall be entertained by the General Synod.

SEC. 9. In order to prevent vexation and delay in the judicial proceedings of any ecclesiastical assembly by means of successive appeals in the progress of any trial or investigation, the party who may consider himself aggrieved by any decision, upon any incidental question which may arise before a final sentence is pronounced, may state his objections to such decision, and require to have the same noted in the minutes of the proceedings, to the end that he may avail himself thereof on an appeal from the final sentence, without arresting the progress of such investigation or trial. And in such cases every decision objected to, as well as the objections, shall be distinctly stated in the minutes of such assembly, and sent up with the appeal to the appellate Judicatory for review.

SEC. 10. Individuals who have voted in a lower court upon a case which is carried up by appeal, or who have prepared and conducted such case, shall not be at liberty to vote upon the trial of the appeal in the higher courts.

SEC. 11. If a minority or any member of a minority of any inferior Church Judicatory shall consider any sub-

ordinate decision or any part of the formal proceedings to have been so erroneous, as injuriously to affect the interests of truth or of vital godliness, they may present the same by way of complaint to the next higher Judicatory for its examination and decision.

SEC. 12. This complaint, if entertained, brings the whole record of the case under the review of the superior Judicatory.

SEC. 13. No such complaint shall be entertained except after notice given to the President of the body complained of, and the sending of the complaint, and reasons for it, as prescribed in cases of appeal.

ARTICLE XV.

Of Rules and Amendments.

SEC. 1. The General Synod shall have power to make all such rules and regulations as may be necessary for carrying the foregoing articles into execution, except where provision is thereby made for that purpose.

SEC. 2. No alteration shall ever be made to the foregoing articles, but by previous recommendation from the General Synod to the respective Classes, and the consent of a majority of the same to such proposed alteration, together with the final declarative resolution of the General Synod for the time being; and the articles as thus determined and declared shall be and are the authoritative and only Constitution of the Reformed Church in America.

APPENDIX.

I.—FORMULARIES.

No. 1.

Form of a Professorial Appointment.

To the Rev. ———,

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, reposing confidence in your piety, learning and talents, have elected you a Professor in their Theological College at ————. The branches in which you are to instruct the youth committed to your charge are, ————, with such modifications as the Synod may hereafter direct.

To free you from wordly cares and avocations, while discharging the duties of your office, we promise and oblige ourselves to pay to you the sum of ————, in ———— payments, yearly and every year, as long as you continue Professor in our Seminary as aforesaid. For the assumption of the powers, and the execution of the duties of your office in the Theological Department of the College, this is your commission, and may the Head of the Church render your labors useful and pleasant.

Signed by order of the Synod,

—————, *President.*

Done in General Synod,

this ——— day of ———, 18—.

No. 2.

Form of License.

To all whom it may concern, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, we send greeting:

Be it known, that ————, having presented to the Classis of ——— testimonials of his literary and theological acquirements from the Professors of the Theological Seminary at ————, was admitted to an examination in the Hebrew and Greek languages, and the different branches of Theology as prescribed in the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America, and that the Classis being well satisfied of his gifts, piety, and qualifications to preach the Gospel, did, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, resolve that the said ——— be, and hereby is, allowed and authorized as a candidate for the sacred ministry within their bounds, and wherever the Providence of God may call him, to preach the Gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour. And the said Classis recommend him to the esteem and attention of all those to whom these presents may come, as well qualified to preach a crucified Saviour.

The Classis do fervently pray, that the great Head of the Church may further qualify him for the work of the ministry, and make him eminently useful in that part of His vineyard where he may be called.

Done in Classis, in the ———, on this ——— day of ———, 18—.

———, *President.*

———, *Clerk.*

No. 3.

Form of Testimonial of Ordination.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, to all whom it may concern, we send greeting:

Be it known that ——— was admitted by the Classis of ——— to an examination on the different branches of Theology, as prescribed in the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America, preparatory to ordination, and the Classis being well satisfied with his gifts, piety and qualifications to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, did, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, resolve that the said ——— be ordained to the Gospel ministry, and in conformity to said resolution did, on the ——— day of ———, set him apart solemnly to the work of the sacred ministry, according to the rites and forms of the Reformed Church, and receive him into ministerial communion. And the said Classis do recommend him to the esteem and attention of all those to whom these presents shall come, as qualified to preach the Gospel, and to administer the Sacraments of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Classis do fervently pray that the great Head of the Church may abundantly qualify him for the work of the ministry, and make him eminently useful in that part of the vineyard where he may be called to labor.

Done in Classis, at ———, on this ——— day of ———,
18 —.

———. *President.*

———, *Clerk.*

No. 4.

Form of a Certificate of the Dismission of a Minister from his Congregation.

THIS certifies that the undersigned, by request, was present at a meeting of the Consistory of the Church of ———, on the ——— day of ———, A.D., ———, and superintended the proceedings thereof, when it was resolved that an application be made to the Classis of ——— for a dissolution of the pastoral connection between the Rev. ——— and said Church; and that the Rev. ——— declared his concurrence in such application

—————

No. 5.


Form of Certificate of Dismission of Church Members.

THIS certifies, that ——— is a member in full communion of the Reformed Church of ———, in good and regular standing; as such ——— is at ——— own request, dismissed, for the purpose of connecting ——— with the ——— Church of ———, to whose Christian fellowship and confidence ——— is hereby affectionately commended; and when received by them, ——— peculiar relation to this Church shall cease,

By order of Consistory.

—————, *President.*

Given at ———, ———, 18—.

 This Certificate is valid only for one year from its date, except where there has been no opportunity of presenting it.

No. 6.

Form of the Register of Baptisms.

DATE OF BAPTISM.	NAMES OF THE BAPTIZED.	NAMES OF THE PARENTS.	TIME OF BIRTH.	REMARKS.

N.B.—In recording the name of the Mother, give her family or maiden name.

No. 7.

Form of Certificate of Marriage.

To all whom it may concern: This certifies that the Bonds of Marriage between —— and —— were by me confirmed, according to the usages of the Reformed Church in America, on the —— day of ——, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ——.

Given at ——, this —— day of ——, A.D., 18—.

} *Minister of the Reformed*
 { *Church in ——.*

No. 8

Form of Consistorial Report.

Annual Report of the Church of

Dated _____, 18__.

Pastor. _____

	CENSUS NUMBER OF FAMILIES.		
	On Confession.	REC'D.	COMMUNICANTS.
	On Certificate.		
	Dismissed.		
	Suspended.		
	Died.		
	Total now in Com- munion.		
	Infants.	BAP.	C. C. & S. S.
	Adults.		
	Number of Catechu- mens.		
	Number of Sabbath Schools.		
	Total Number of Schol'rs.	SAB. SCH.	
	Religious and Be- nevolent Purposes.	CONTRIBUTIONS.	
	Congregational Purposes.		

No. 9.

Form of a Classical Report.

CHURCHES.		
PASTORS.		
Census	Number of Families.	
COMMUNICANTS.	REC'D	On confession.
		On certificate.
	Dismissed.	
	Suspended.	
	Died.	
	Total now in Com'n.	
BAPT'P.	Infants.	
	Adults.	
C. C. & S. S.	Number of Catechu- mens.	
	Number of Sabbath Schools.	
	Total number of Scholars.	
CONTRIB'G.	Religious and Benev- olent Purposes.	
	Congregational Pur- poses.	
Office Address.		

Remarks on the spiritual state of the congregation.

The name of the Stated Clerk of the Classis to be underscored, or the letters S. C. appended to his name.

No. 10.

Form of the Citation of a Person accused.

By order of the ———,* you, Mr. A. B. ———, † are hereby summoned ‡ to appear before said ———, and answer to the charge herewith presented, at ———, on the ——— day of ———, at ——— o'clock ———.

(Signed) ———, *Pres.*
 ———, *Clerk.*

Done in ———, at ———, this ——— day of ———, 18—.

—————

No. 11.

Form of the Citation of Witnesses.

By order of the ———, § you, Mr. A. B. ———, || are hereby summoned** to appear before the said ———, at ———, on the ——— day of ———, and at ——— o'clock in the ———, to give your testimony in the case of C. D., presently under process for censure by said ———.

(Signed) ———, *Pres.*
 ———, *Clerk.*

* Consistory of the Reformed Church at ———, or the Classis of ———.

† Member of, or Elder, or Deacon in said Congregation ; or Minister at ———, under the inspection of said Classis.

‡ If the process be raised at the instance of a party complaining, add, after "summoned," at the instance of C. D.

§ Consistory of the Reformed Church at ———, or the Classis of ———.

|| Member of, or Elder, or Deacon in said Congregation ; or Minister at ———, under the inspection of said Classis, and if the witness belongs to a different judicatory, the blank is to be filled up accordingly.

** If the process be raised at the instance of a party complaining, add, after the word "summoned," at the instance of C. D.

II.—THE RECEPTION OF MINISTERS.

1. No licentiate nor ordained minister, from any other ecclesiastical body, shall be received into any Classis until, either by documentary evidence or examination, they shall have become satisfied of his competent literary qualifications; nor until, upon examination, they shall also become fully satisfied of his competent theological attainments, his piety, soundness in the faith and ability to teach, and shall have received his entire assent to the standards of our Church, as to doctrine and discipline.

2. That if any candidate or minister, applying for admission into any Classis, shall, in the judgment of Classis, have sought and obtained licensure or ordination from any ecclesiastical organization for the sake of an easier admission into our Church than upon the strict terms enjoined upon our own students at New Brunswick, it shall be considered a disqualification, to be removed only by a dispensation from the General Synod.

3. No licentiate shall be received as a candidate under the care of Classis, or be privileged to minister in, or receive a call from our Churches, unless he shall have spent the same amount of time in actual attendance on theological instruction that is required from our own students; and any deficiency in this respect shall be made up by study in our own Seminary.

4. It is enjoined on the Standing Committee on Doctrine in the several Classes, when a vacancy occurs, to send to such vacant church, immediately, a list of the licentiates of our own Seminary, and to use their endeavors to procure for them an early hearing; and it is recommended to the consistories of our Churches, in all cases, promptly to endeavor to obtain their services.

5. Whenever a Church becomes vacant, it shall be the duty of the Classis to exercise guardianship over it, and when requested by the consistory, to supply it as far as practicable by their personal services—thus preventing the disorganizing influence of casual and indiscriminate ministrations; and to maintain such a supervision over it, and minister such aid as is necessary to carry out these rules, and such as a destitute Church is entitled to claim from its very relations.

6. No foreign minister shall be received on mere private letters of introduction or recommendation; but, in all cases, full ecclesiastical certificates shall be required.

7. No foreign minister shall be received by any Classis, unless he shall have undergone a probation of one year under the care of a Classis, and shall then present the same testimonials, and undergo the examination required by the first of these rules.

8. These rules shall be inserted in some conspicuous place in the minute-books of the respective Classes.

III.—RULES OF ORDER.

1. At every stated meeting of the Synod, a sermon shall be preached by the last President, either before his opening the session with prayer, or at some time afterward, which the Synod shall deem most convenient. If the last President and the Adessor be absent, the oldest minister present shall take his place and perform the above duties.

2. The President and Adessor shall be elected by ballot, by a majority of all the members present; and if after the first vote there is no election, the choice shall be made from the two who have the highest number of votes. The clerks shall be elected by plurality.

3. The duties of the President shall be :

(1.) To take the chair at the hour to which the Synod stands adjourned.

(2.) To open and conclude with prayer.

(3.) To direct the Clerk, immediately after a quorum has appeared, to call the roll.

(4.) To censure absentees when their absence shall be judged not to have been necessary.

(5.) To propound the subjects for deliberation.

(6.) To confine speakers to the point, and to save them from unnecessary interruption.

(7.) To state and put the question, when the members are prepared to vote.

(8.) To prevent members from leaving the Synod without permission.

(9.) To decide questions of order, subject, however, to an appeal to the house by any two members.

(10.) To give the casting vote in all equal divisions.

(11.) And, in general, to maintain the order and dignity becoming the judicatory of the Church of Christ.

4. After calling the roll, the minutes of the last sit-

ting shall be read, and considered as open to correction. The business on the minutes of the last meeting or sitting, shall, without powerful reasons, be taken up and concluded first, in the order in which it stands, before any new business be introduced.

5. A motion made must be seconded, and afterwards repeated, or read aloud from the Chair, before it is debated; and every motion except a motion for adjournment, shall be reduced to writing if any member require it.

6. An amendment may be made to any motion, and it shall be decided before the original motion. It may be, in its turn, suspended by an amendment to itself, which must first be considered and decided. But no additional amendment to an original motion can be received until the previous one has been disposed of.

7. When a question is under debate, no motion shall be received except to adjourn, to lay on the table, to postpone indefinitely, to postpone to a certain time, to commit to a standing committee, to a select one, or to the committee of the whole, to amend, or for the previous question; which motions shall have precedence in the order stated.

8. When the previous question is moved and seconded, it shall be in this form: "Shall the main question be now put?" and until it be decided all amendments and debate shall be inadmissible. If the vote be in the *affirmative*, the original motion shall be immediately put, without further amendment or debate. But if there be an amendment or amendments pending at the time, the question shall first be taken on such amendment or amendments in their proper order, without debate. If the vote be in the *negative*, the debate shall continue as before.

9. A question shall not be called up or reconsidered at

the same session of the Synod at which it was decided, unless by consent of two-thirds of the members present.

10. No member shall be allowed to protest against any of the acts of the Synod; but any member who dissents from any such acts shall have a right to require the names of all the members present, who vote for or against the same, to be entered in the minutes, and published therewith for the information of all concerned. In other cases, the yeas and nays shall not be recorded unless on the demand of one-fifth of the members present.

11. The mover and seconder of a motion may withdraw it before debate has commenced on it, but not afterwards, unless by leave of Synod.

12. In filling blanks, when various motions are made, the vote shall always be first on the highest number and longest time.

13. Every member shall rise and address himself to the President only, closely attending to the subject in debate, avoiding all personal reflections; and no member, without the special permission of the Synod, shall speak more than twice on the same subject. When two or more members rise to speak at the same time, the President shall determine who of them shall be heard first.

14. After the President has begun to take the vote, or the Clerk to call the roll on a division of the house, no debate nor remark shall be allowed.

15. A motion to adjourn or to lay on the table, and all motions in relation to priority of business, shall be decided without debate. The motion to postpone or to commit shall preclude all debate of the main question.

16. When an appeal is taken from a decision of the Chair on a point of order, the President shall have the right to explain the grounds of his decision, but the appeal shall be decided by the house without debate.

17. No member shall leave the Synod to return home or for other business without their consent ; nor shall members, without express permission, engage in private conversation, go from or change their seats during the transaction of business ; interrupt another when he is speaking, except he be out of order, or to correct mistakes and misrepresentations ; and if any member act indecently or disorderly, contrary to these rules, the President shall reprove or otherwise censure him, as the Synod shall judge proper ; the member still having the privilege, if he think himself denied any right or unjustly blamed by the President, of respectfully and modestly requiring the decision of the house in the case,

18. All the sittings of General Synod shall be concluded by regular adjournment and prayer.

19. At the close of every session of General Synod the roll shall be called, and the names of those who are absent without permission shall be recorded.

20. *Standing Committees :*

- (1.) Professorate.
- (2.) Overtures.
- (3.) Synodical Minutes.
- (4.) Domestic Missions.
- (5.) Foreign Missions.
- (6.) State of Religion.
- (7.) Education.
- (8.) Judicial Business.
- (9.) Widows' and Disabled Ministers' Funds.
- (10.) Publication.
- (11.) Nominations.
- (12.) Correspondence.
- (13.) Accounts.
- (14.) Leave of Absence.
- (15.) Board of Direction.

21. All distinctive titles or appendages to the names of members of Synod shall be omitted in recording the minutes of this Synod : such distinctive title being prefixed or appended to the name of the member in the list of members constituting the Synod.

22. *Primarii and Secundi :*

(1.) When a Primarius shall find it impracticable to attend the judicatory to which he is delegated, it shall be his duty as soon as may be, to notify a Secundus, and when he shall take his seat it shall not be vacated to give place to the Primarius.

(2.) At the commencement of the session, the members delegated, whether Primarii or Secundi, shall be recognized and recorded, but when the Primarius shall appear at any subsequent period of the session, then the Primarius shall take the seat of the Secundus, and the Secundus shall not be considered a member again, unless by request of the Primarius, and express permission obtained by the Synod.

23. *Judicial Business :*

(1.) Any appeal, complaint, or other judicial business, which shall be presented or reported to the Synod, shall be first referred, with all the papers and documents appertaining thereto, to the Committee on Judicial Business, who shall inquire whether the same has been regularly brought before the Synod, and whether all the constitutional steps in the case have been taken, and, if the same shall be found in order, they shall digest and arrange all the papers and documents connected therewith, that the subsequent proceedings in the case before the Synod may be regular and systematic ; provided, nevertheless, that the said committee shall be required to report upon every matter that may be referred to them.

(2.) Whenever any case thus reported shall be taken

up for trial, the President shall solemnly announce from the Chair that the Synod is about to proceed to the consideration of judicial business, and enjoin on the members to recollect and regard their character as judges of the highest court of Jesus Christ on earth, known to the Constitution of the Reformed [Dutch] Church ; after which it shall not be in order, during the pending of such trial, to transact any legislative business bearing on the case.

(3.) In recording their decision, it shall be the duty of the court who have tried any judicial business in the original case, or by appeal, to set forth at length the reasons thereof, that the record may exhibit, as far as practicable, everything that had an influence on their judgment ; a certified copy of which, with the act of proceeding appeal from, shall be sent up by them to the court to whom the appeal may be taken. Such inferior court shall also be permitted to send a commissioner to the Synod, for the purpose of making any explanations relative to said case, it being expressly understood that in every case the original parties be not lost sight of in any stage of trial.

(4.) In taking up an appeal, after having ascertained that the appellant has conducted it regularly, the following shall be the order of trial :

[1.] The sentence appealed from shall be read.

[2.] The appeal and reasons of appeal shall be read.

[3.] All the documents in the case shall be read, in the order prescribed by the Committee on Judicial Business.

[4.] The original parties shall be heard, commencing with the appellant.

[5.] The commissioner of the inferior judicatory which has tried the appeal may be heard in explanation of the grounds of their decision, and of the manner of their proceeding in the case.

[6.] The appellant may be heard in reply.

(5.) After all the parties shall have been fully heard, and all the information gained by the Synod which shall be deemed necessary, the parties shall withdraw, when the roll shall be called, that every member may have an opportunity to express his opinion on the case, after which the final vote may be taken.

(6.) The decision may be either to confirm or reverse, in whole or in part, the judgment of the inferior judicatory, or to remit the cause, with instructions or for a new trial.

(7.) In the trial of all judicial business brought before the Synod by complaint or reference, the same order of proceeding shall be observed, as far as practicable, as in cases of appeal, but no complaint shall be entertained unless notice of the same shall have been given before the rising of the judicatory whose act is complained of, or within ten days thereafter.

24. *Religious Exercises :*

(1.) The afternoon of the first day shall be devoted to exercises of prayer and praise.

(2.) The first half-hour of each subsequent morning session shall be so spent after the reading of the minutes.

(3.) The Lord's Supper shall be observed on the afternoon of the second day.

(4.) A sermon in behalf of the benevolent operations of the Church shall be preached on the evening of the sixth day of the session.

25. The morning of the third day of the session shall be devoted to the purpose of hearing from the secretaries of our various Boards such oral statements as they shall see fit to make ; after which, an opportunity shall be afforded for a free interchange of opinion and feeling among the members of the Synod in regard to the benevolent operations of the Church.

26. A rule of order may be suspended for the time by unanimous consent.

27. These rules (except 22, 23, 24, and 25) shall be read at the opening of each General Synod.

INDEX TO THE CONSTITUTION.

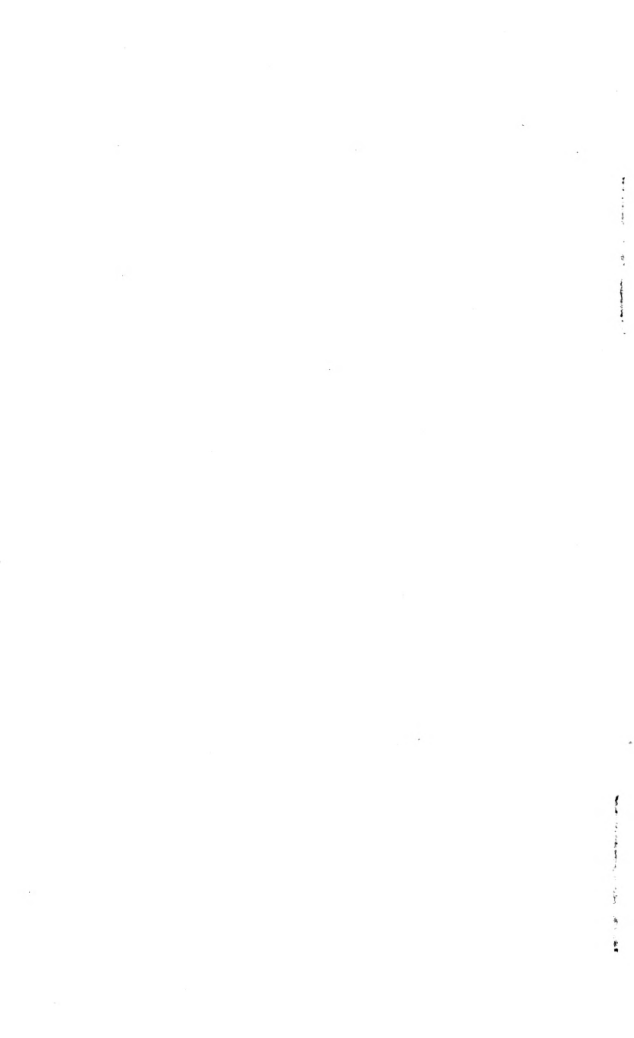
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