

## XV. LODGE AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Ever since its beginning in 1857, the Christian Reformed Church has taken a position relative to lodge membership. That position has always been one of opposition. In fact, when the denomination came into existence by separating itself from the Dutch Reformed Church, one of the reasons given for that separation was the Dutch Reformed toleration of lodge membership. (See *The Christian Reformed Church*, John Kromminga, p. 32.)

Subsequent synodical decisions indicate a continuing and firm opposition to the lodge and membership in the lodge. A report presented and adopted in 1900 is of great importance in understanding the position of the Christian Reformed Church regarding lodge membership.

In 1974 the study committee on Lodge and Church Membership presented an extensive report to synod. Synod adopted this report, and once more reiterated its firm stand against lodge membership by church members.

### A. DECISION OF 1974

1. That synod reaffirm as the basic position of the Christian Reformed Church that there is an irreconcilable conflict between the teachings and practices of the lodge and biblical Christianity, and that therefore simultaneous membership in the lodge and in the church of Jesus Christ is incompatible and contrary to Scripture.
2. Regarding the recommendations of the study committee to accept the report and to publish it as a popular pamphlet, decision was made:
  - a. That synod accept the report of the study committee as a resource document for the guidance of the churches regarding "the lodge and church membership."
  - b. That synod appoint a committee of three members which shall report to the Synod of 1975 with the mandate of preparing a summary pamphlet stating the stand of the church in the light of the study committee's report, with a view to its adoption as the official witness of the Christian Reformed Church's position on "the lodge and church membership."
3. That synod declare in the light of the committee's report, that:
  - a. The Bible clearly teaches that God's covenant people, as members of his church and citizens of his kingdom, owe full and exclusive allegiance to their Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. The covenantal life is a life of separation from sin and of consecration to the service of God and does not permit a double allegiance in which one's allegiance to Christ is in any way compromised.
  - b. The lodge (as defined and discussed in the report) in its essential character holds to and practices an anti-Christian religion. Its beliefs and rites cannot be harmonized with the claims of God's Word and are contrary to true Christian faith.
  - c. Because of what God's covenant people are, and because of what the lodge is, simultaneous membership in the church of Jesus Christ and a lodge is a violation of God's demands in the Scriptures.
  - d. Relative to lodge membership and related problems, the church, in obedience to Jesus Christ, must do all it can to preserve and manifest its specific distinguishing attributes of unity, catholicity and holiness. Furthermore, the church must preserve the "marks" of the true church by proclaiming the gospel to all men and teaching them to observe all things the Lord has com-

manded it, by administering the sacrament according to the instructions given in the Scriptures, and by exercising discipline according to the guidelines taught in the Scriptures.

e. The church in obedience to the Great Commission given it by its Lord must be ready, willing, consistent and persistent in its efforts to bring the gospel to all the people in our modern society, including lodge members. It must seek out the lost and wandering, bind up the wounded, bring Christ's healing to the sick and proclaim liberty to all captives in the bondage of sin and sinful relationships.

f. The lodge member who desires to become a member of the church must be kindly but firmly shown that his lodge membership is contrary to the will of God and that membership in the lodge and in the church of Jesus Christ involves a double commitment which our Lord himself does not tolerate. Those in the church who affiliate with the lodge must be shown the error of their way, and if they refuse to repent must be placed under the censure of the church.

g. The church must constantly remain aware of the complexity of its contemporary society and do its utmost to minister in an understanding manner to people who are deeply involved in specific complex situations. This ministry is to be exercised in loyalty to Jesus Christ, with steadfast prayer on behalf of those receiving the church's ministry and in the patient reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the will of God to specific life situations.

**B. DECISION OF 1975**

That synod appoint a new study committee to research the content, confessional character and function of the oath in the relationship of lodge members to their oath bound societies.

- References:* Acts of Synod, 1900, pp. 96-101.  
 Acts of Synod, 1958, pp. 67, 68, 416-422.  
 Acts of Synod, 1974, pp. 58-60, 504-567.  
 Acts of Synod, 1975, pp. 101, 547-569.