

First published in the very first yearbook of the Canadian Reformed Churches (1952) translated from Dutch to English by his daughter Sarah.

## Appendix 3

### Unions<sup>1</sup>

Concerning membership in the allegedly neutral Unions, the consistory (Canadian Reformed Church) of New Westminster declared the following:

- I. Membership in a union obliges a member to unconditional obedience (adherence) to all its laws, regulations and discipline that are presently in effect or may be enacted later. Consequently, these laws and regulations are given a status equal to the Word of God. Only to the Word do we owe obedience without reservation. Accordingly, we confess with Article 7 of the Belgic Confession, that we may not consider any decision (or writings) of men of equal value with the divine Scriptures, for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. For this reason, we may not promise now to obey laws and regulations yet to be determined, but rather we should hold to the Apostolic rule: “Test the spirits whether they are of God.”

We are, therefore, not justified in binding ourselves to the obligations above, which are an integral part of union membership.

- II. The Unions’ goal is to allow only union members to work on all projects and jobsites, a practice known as “closed shop.” This is already in effect on various projects. This practice is basically stealing someone else’s livelihood and forces other workers from the place that God has granted them under the sun. It is sin against both the sixth and eighth commandments.

But we must continue to believe that the Lord does not merely condemn stealing, but that he commands us to promote our neighbour’s good whenever and wherever we can. We must deal with him as we would have him deal with us. The Lord does not only condemn murder, but he commands us to love our neighbour, to show mercy and friendliness to him and to protect him from harm as much as possible (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 42 and 40).

However, membership in the Union makes it impossible to obey these commands of the Lord. Membership in the Union makes each member guilty of theft and murder.

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<sup>1</sup> J.T. Van Popta, *De “Unions” (Vakbonden) in Jaarboekje ten dienste van de Canadese Gereformeerde Kerken* (Yearbook of the Canadian Reformed Churches) (Goes, Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1952), pp 70-84; tr. Sarah Vandergugten, 1992, with some assistance from the late Rienk Koat. There are few references to actual documents; rather, the author had several constitutions and bylaws of various trade unions before him. Capitalizations of some words, e.g. “Unions,” and pronouns referring to God have been retained as they were in the original.

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In conversations about the Unions some will comment that Unions have accomplished some good. They promote the recognition of the interests of the labourers. In addition, the continued pressure to advance their members' well-being has had positive results. The position of labourers has become markedly better.

This may be true, but we may not judge Unions on the basis of their effectiveness. At any rate, that is not the most important issue. We must evaluate Unions on the basis of their constitution and their fundamental principles. These we must examine with the Word of God. The deciding question is, "Does submission to these statutes—which is part and parcel of union membership—bring a member into conflict with the Word of God?" If the answer is "yes", then none of us are allowed to become a member of such a Union. Everyone must order and direct his life in accordance with God's Word.

1. The Lord admonishes us not be ashamed of Him. "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). To confess Jesus Christ, the Lord, is to confess the Word of God, which proclaims Him as Saviour of our entire life. In Him we find the answer to proper relationships between employers and employees and the solution to the true well-being in the economic sphere. (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 11; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Thess. 4:6; 2 Thess. 3:6-12; Philemon; Jas. 5:1-6; 1 Pet. 2:2:18-25; Matt. 6:19-34; Mark 8:34-38; and many other places as well, for instance in the Books of Moses and the Prophets).

The Unions make no mention of the Word of God. And the only "name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) is completely ignored by the Brotherhoods. That is not surprising if we consider that one of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners constitutional articles states: "We recognize that all labourers have interests in common, regardless of their occupation, nationality, religion or color, because an injustice done to one is an injustice done to all" (Constitution and Laws, Section 3, Miscellaneous).

Now we might agree that the interests of all workers are the same. But this does not apply as far as their religion is concerned. The welfare of all workers is found, precisely, in serving Jesus Christ in their daily work, recognizing that it is from the Lord that they receive their reward (Col. 3:23 & 24). Consequently, whoever accepts as a basic principle that it makes no difference what a man's religion is but that the interests of all workers are equal, declares that the concerns of the workers need not take God's Word into account. In his advocacy of workers' welfare, he only considers earthly things. As this is the sin of the Unions, we needn't be surprised that they do

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not use Scripture when addressing the injustices suffered by the workers. The workers actually suffer greater injustice because of the actions of these Unions.

In conjunction with this, Section 17 of Article XXIII of the Constitution of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters needs to be mentioned: “No subject of a political or religious nature shall be taken into discussion at any time, upon a penalty of fifty cents, but subjects relating to the economic well-being of our members shall not be prohibited, even if they are of a political nature.”

It is crystal clear. God’s Word, which proclaims the gospel for the economic welfare of the labourers, may not be professed. Furthermore, regardless of whatever unbiblical theory about an admissible subject may be presented, I am to deny my confession that Christ is the only cause of economic well-being. In this situation I should forget the prayer to my heavenly Father for my daily bread—the prayer that hallows His Name, that promotes the coming of His Kingdom and that desires that all do His Will.

Union membership itself, in essence, obligates one to deny the Lord Jesus Christ as the only and all-sufficient God-given Saviour. Let us heed His Word, lest He also deny us before our heavenly Father. What a joy it is however, when we may comfort ourselves with His Word that he will confess us before His Father, if we confess Him before men. For this reason, we must refuse any relationship with the Unions.<sup>2</sup>

2. This will prevent us from listening to human arguments that would lead us to forsake the service which God demands from us. For this reason, it is entirely prohibited to equate decrees and resolutions of man with the divine Scriptures, for “all men are liars” (Ps. 116:11). We would become guilty of such a deed if we pledged to submit ourselves to decisions which are yet to be made by man at some future date. Such a pledge would constitute a promise of unconditional, blind obedience. With regard to decisions of man we must adhere to the Word of the Lord “...test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 Joh. 4:1); and “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21, 22). (See Art. 7 of the Belgic Confession). In so doing we may rejoice in the promise of God and continue to walk in the light, so that the great day of the Lord’s return will not come upon us as a sudden destruction (1 Thess. 5:3).

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<sup>2</sup> Note the early and unqualified use of “Unions” in a general sense; we know now that some unions exist that do espouse Scriptural principles (Translator’s note 1992).

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A member of the Union is not permitted to live according to this Word. The Unions compel their members to regard the word of men as equal to God's Word. Consider the following: Section 43.1 of the Constitution of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, etc., "Each member shall have a claim to all the rights and privileges of this Brotherhood as prescribed in the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Brotherhood, by adhering to the Obligation as prescribed in the Ritual."

Note here that "Obligation" is capitalized. By becoming a member a person takes upon himself a very important obligation. But what obligation? It is prescribed in the Ritual—again capitalized. That Ritual is a great secret. Only after a person has declared himself ready and willing to undergo the Ritual does he learn what that prescribed Obligation is. This means that when a person agrees to become a member, he agrees to this "Obligation" of which he knows nothing until he has already become a member. This law makes it impossible to first test the contents of the "Obligation" against the Word of God, to test whether its spirit and essence is of God.

The secretary of the Local Teamsters' Union, on behalf of the local Union, must make the following pledge: "In addition, I agree on behalf of the Local that it will abide by the regulations of the International Constitution and its amendments<sup>3</sup> all of which are herewith included for reference only." (these are only alluded to, without any further specific explanation - JTvP (Art. VII, Sec. 3: last paragraph).

This pledge has two aspects: It means that the secretary agrees to abide by the statutes that are presently in force, but also to abide by the amendments that are still to be introduced.

But the Lord says: No one shall make such a promise unless these amendments have first been measured against My Word. And if they are wrong, then have nothing to do with them.

Also, by means of these stipulations the Unions compel the members to place the words of men on an equal basis with the Word of God.

This same godless pride becomes apparent in the oath of allegiance which is required of the members. It states, "I agree without reservation to abide by all laws, rules and discipline of the United Association and its Local Unions, that are now in force and may hereafter be enacted."

Within the parameters of such a Constitution, the consequence is that the President General of the Brotherhood is granted authority that no person

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<sup>3</sup> The *American College Dictionary* defines "amendment" as: alteration of a motion, bill, constitution, etc.

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except the Lord Jesus has been granted. That becomes clear when one examines Art. VI, Sec. 2a and b of the Constitution of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters:

VI, 2a. "In all legal questions or grievances that are placed before him, the President General shall make a pronouncement except on matters of appeal to the General Executive Committee of the next convention."

VI, 2b. "Whenever the President General makes a pronouncement or orders a local Union to abide by the statutes, and the local Union refuses, then the local Union may have its charter temporarily revoked or recalled by the General Executive Committee."

It is possible to appeal the decisions of the President General to the General Executive Committee or at a convention. These conventions are held every four years and are attended by delegates of the local Unions. Notwithstanding all this, whenever the President General makes a pronouncement, or makes a ruling, then this must be obeyed, even pending the appeal decision. Failure to do this may result in temporarily revoking or recalling of the charter, which normally guarantees the local Union all its rights and powers. This means that one must always subject oneself to the decisions and rulings of the President General, a sinful man, who of himself is untruthful and more vain than vanity itself.

But let us remember Article 31 of the Church Order: "What the majority decides is good and shall be settled and binding, UNLESS it can be shown to be in contradiction with God`s Word" (and the Church Order). This is a scriptural rule which not only applies in the church and in life related to the church, but also requires our unconditional adherence outside of church matters. We have not, through the grace of God, liberated ourselves from the synodical yoke in the Netherlands, only to bend ourselves under the selfsame yoke of the Unions here in Canada. It would be a return to bondage.

3. That Union membership indeed involves bowing under that yoke of slavery is quite clear from the regulations concerning strikes. The Constitution of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters etc. states in Section 15e and g."

"The General Executive Committee shall have the power to sanction strikes that are in accordance with the Constitution and Laws of the United Brotherhood,

"and whenever necessary to defend the local union in any place against any aggression of the employers, such as any combination of lockouts, attempts to dismantle or destroy the organization, and to lend support to any local by

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assessing a per capita levy, and by ordering a strike against any employer implicated, regardless of the locale of the working place,

“and to order strikes in anyplace, notwithstanding the agreements, which may have been entered into by a subordinate Union, District, State or Provincial Council, unless such agreements are approved by the President General.”

We realize now that whenever the General Executive Committee of the President General orders a strike, the local union and its members must comply without fail.

Similarly, Art. XVIII, Section 6 of the Constitution of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters states:

“Any member that willingly and knowingly goes to work or remains in the service of a person, firm or corporation whose workers are on strike or locked out, may be tried by the Executive Committee of the local union unless he has received permission to work from the International or from the Joint Council of the Local Union.”

The obligation placed on us by God and the authority given by God, that each one must judge whether continuing to work is in accordance with God’s Word, is in this instance ignored and taken away. The freedom which Christ has obtained for us is thereby suppressed.

4. God commands in the fifth commandment that we must show all honour, love, faithfulness to those in authority over us (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 39).

And the Lord commands us also to honour and obey the authorities He Himself has instituted, both in the business organization and on the job site (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Pet. 1:18-25).

God commands us in the sixth commandment, that we must love our neighbour as ourselves and to show patience, peace, gentleness, mercy and friendliness toward him, to protect him from harm as much as we can (H.C. Q & A 107).

God commands us in the eighth commandment, that we must promote our neighbour’s good wherever we can and may, and deal with him as we would like others to deal with us (H.C. Q & A 111).

We desire to obey these commandments of God, do we not? Well then, we must realize that membership in the Unions makes one an accomplice in the sins of

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the Unions as well. And their sin is this: revolutionary rejection of the God-given authority that is ordained in the workplace. The sin of the Unions is this: the ousting of one who is not a Union member from his rightful God-given position, in other words: manslaughter. Their sin is essentially this: begrudging a non-member a profitable position they desire for themselves; i.e. theft, robbery.

Is this exaggerated? Judge for yourself. The Unions' goal is to allow only Union members to work on particular job sites or in businesses. In many businesses and on many jobs, they have been successful in achieving a closed shop. By threatening to go on strike, unions have forced employers to comply with their demands and forced them to hire only union members. Thus, the employers frequently do not dare to resist the will of the Unions.

Where do we see here the respect for the authority of the employer—respect demanded by God? And where do we see the love towards one's neighbour, even though he is not a Union member? And where do we see any evidence of patience and peace and gentleness towards him? Where is the evidence of protecting one's neighbour from harm and doing good even to one's enemy, in the event the Union and its members consider a non-member as their enemy? They begrudge their fellow-workers their God-given place under the sun. And Unions refuse to treat these, their neighbours, as they themselves would like to be treated. For the Union members it is jobs and salaries. For non-members there will be nothing. If it were up to the Unions and if they could have their wish, they would have all businesses hire employees that were under their control, in other words: closed shop.

Rev. 13:16-18

“Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number six hundred and sixty-six.”

Rev. 15:2 & 3

“And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”

5. The Lord writes in 2 Cor. 6:14 & 15, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what

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fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?” We also read in verse 17, “Therefore come out from them and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean, and I will welcome you.”

This word of the Lord, proclaims the duty and consequently also the right to separate oneself from any organization—whether it be a church, a Union, or any other organization—that is led by unbelief, contradicts God’s Word, follows godless ways and refuses to repent.

Is this duty and is this right acknowledged by the Unions? It does not look like it. It is practically impossible for a Union local to withdraw from an International Brotherhood.

Section 25c of the United Brotherhood of the Carpenter states: “A Local Union may not withdraw from the United Brotherhood or dissolve or decertify itself as long as ten members in good standing oppose this.”

Indeed, with this article the Brotherhood maintains the opportunity for a Local Union to withdraw from the Brotherhood. But the door is only slightly ajar. Even if there are more than 1000 members in a Local—and that is quite possible—and there are only 10 members that oppose the local, this Local is prevented from withdrawing from the United Brotherhood or seek separation from it. Nevertheless, thus far we can conclude that the Constitution does allow the possibility of dissolution or separation.

Indeed. But woe to that member who advocates or encourages the dissolution or withdrawal of the Local Union from the United Brotherhood. He will be reckoned with those who diminish the value of Unions and he will always be excluded from Union membership in the United Brotherhood. This is so, because section 55B stipulates: “Any official or member, who attempts to cause disunity between the members or works against the interest and the harmony of the United Brotherhood, or who advocates or encourages the distribution of funds, or the dissolution of a Local Union, or the separation of a Local Union from the United Brotherhood, or embezzles funds, shall be expelled and shall never be permitted membership in the United Brotherhood.”

The Constitution of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters speaks in a similar manner when with reference to a separation, i.e. in Art. 18, Sec. 5a, 7:”...the basis for complaints against members, local unions, Joint Councils, or



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Executives for which one must appear to face charges, will among other things consist of the following: (7) Secession or fostering the same.”<sup>4</sup>

Though the Brotherhoods may be ever so godless in their Constitution and Bylaws, yet the local unions submit to this compelling rule: once a member, always a member. They are not permitted to withdraw from the tyrannical Executive of the Brotherhood which denies the Lord Christ His crown. They must continue to follow their leadership. And whoever for the sake of Christ the Lord were to call up others to secede from the Brotherhood, he knows what the consequences will be. He will be judged like a criminal according to the Constitution of a Brotherhood or be forever condemned as the greatest sinner according to the Constitution of some other Brotherhood.

As for the ties that link a member to the Local Union, it is difficult to break these as well. The member in question cannot take that decision all by himself. Also, herein the Local has the last decisive word.

We read for instance in Section 47A of the Constitution of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters: “A member can withdraw or break his bond with the United Brotherhood by asking for dismissal in writing. It will require a quorum to accept such a dismissal. Any member that has been dismissed can be reinstated only as a new member. Any member that wishes to withdraw or to break the bond with the United Brotherhood shall make his request in writing, which request shall be examined for a period of two weeks. A member that resigns will be issued a resignation card which is to grant him honourable withdrawal from the United Brotherhood.”

With reference to this matter, the Constitution of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters stipulates in Section 4 of Article 17: “Local Unions shall have the jurisdiction regarding the granting of honourable withdrawal cards. The refusal to grant an honourable withdrawal card shall be subject to an appeal in accordance with the procedure laid down by the constitution, with the exclusion of any appeal to the national convention.”

Thus, the decision about leaving the local union is the prerogative of the union itself, not that of the member concerned. The Union of Teamsters is by virtue of its Constitution bound to certain rules regarding the withdrawal card. In Article 17, Section 5c, for instance, we read that “Any member of the International Union who discontinues our occupation or moves into another

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<sup>4</sup> The *American College Dictionary* has: Secession: an act of seceding, act of separation. Secede: to withdraw formally from an alliance or association, as from a political or religious organization.

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occupation or profession shall be granted an honourable withdrawal card and may not continue to be member of the International Brotherhood. But, prior to the granting of such a withdrawal card, this person must submit himself to all the rules and statutes of Local and International Union.”

True, it is possible and permissible to resign. One may even receive an honourable withdrawal and written proof. But one will never receive this in the event he disassociates himself from this godless movement for the sake of the gospel of Christ. The prerequisite for such an honourable withdrawal card is submission to a presumptive authority which is hostile to God. This power compels him to promise unconditional obedience and to demonstrate this to sinful, and ultimately, untruthful and vain people. In doing so, he shares in the unrighteousness of the unions. But that submission is in essence a rejection of the gospel and a denial of the Lord Christ. He, as the Saviour ordained by God Himself, bought you body and soul, not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood and delivered you from all your sins. This includes also the sin of rejection of the authority of the Word of God, or revolution and theft and manslaughter. For He has delivered you from all dominion of the devil; that is also from the dominion of the devil which in accordance with the ungodly authority of the Unions attempts to enslave you body and soul. He has made you his own and keeps and preserves you as His possession, for which reason you owe Him absolute, unconditional obedience.

This means that there is certainly a possibility for a member to break with the Union. But we know well enough by now what this entails in case it takes place without the consent of the union. If you are no longer a member of the union, then there is no longer work available there where you used to have it as a member of the union. You will be out in the street without further ado. And the union could not care less whether or not you will be able to support yourself and your family.

In view of all this, what should be our attitude towards the unions? God has already answered this question. “To not be unequally yoked with unbelievers... Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them says the Lord and touch nothing unclean” (2 Cor. 6:14, 17). Is it indeed not most comforting that the Lord attaches this promise to His command: “... I shall be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:18).

God did not promise us the highest possible wages. He has, however, promised that Our Almighty Father will provide us as His sons and daughters with all good things, and that even the adversity which He sends us in this vale of tears He will turn to our benefit (H.C. Lord’s Day 9).

Rev. Jules Van Popta (1916 - 1968)

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Therefore: ... Whosoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matt. 16:25). Does that promise not make us immeasurably rich?