

**Protest of Mr. Brian Hilt (3)**

April 13, 2021

To: Synod 2021 of the PRCA

Dear Synod,

The following is a protest of a decision taken by Synod 2020 of the PRCA. I am aggrieved by the decision, which decision I struggle to see a need for or a profit from.

In Christ,  
Brian Hilt

**Decision Protested**

So as to be brief, I am not going to quote the full decision here. The decision I am protesting is Article 56, B, which is found on page 92 of the 2020 Acts of Synod.

**Concerning Legality**

I believe this protest comes before you legally. I am a member in good standing of a church within the PRCA. This comes to the next meeting of synod and is in harmony with Articles 30 and 31.

**Protest**

The following are the main points of my protest and the support for them.

1. It is not grounded in scripture, the confessions, or the Church Order.
  - a. Simply put, the decision is not grounded in anything besides the desires of men. Even if it is the desire of men who are delegates to synod, it is still only the desire of men.
  - b. There is not a single reference found to any of the confessions, Scripture, or the Church Order. If, as this decision says, "A protest must take issue with a specific decision and demonstrate that it is contrary to Scripture, the confessions, the Church Order, or a previous decision," then it follows that synod should do the same with their own decisions, especially those which reflect in such a negative manner on an appellant.
  - c. The only reference at all is to the "Rules of Synod for Protests, Appeals, and Overtures." Even that reference is not a solid reference as it is very general. The reference says that, "Brevity is *ordinarily* in the best interests of the *party protesting, appealing, or overturing*" (emphasis mine). The words I italicized are especially important. Ordinarily qualifies the rest of the sentence. It does not say always. It does not say must. Ordinarily means usually or normally. It does not

mean always or without exception. It is also important to note that this sentence is focused on what is in the best interest of the appellant, and it is not a rule for synod to use to reprimand an appellant or find an appeal illegal. It simply means this, usually it is best for an appellant to keep it clear and concise. It does not mean an appellant must keep it short and concise.

d. Article 30 of the Church Order says that matters shall be transacted in an ecclesiastical manner. VanDellen and Monsma write, "But in our ecclesiastical assemblies we should by all means seek to convince and persuade each other from the Word of God. We should not seek to force our opinions and convictions on others.... By mutual consideration of God's Word we should endeavor to come to a mutual conclusion." Nowhere did synod consider the Word of God in this decision nor even try to apply principles from the Word of God.

2. It is not in harmony with Article 31 of the Church Order.

a. Article 31 of the Church Order places no limitations on size or organization of protests, appeals, or overtures. To do so is unnecessary. VanDellen and Monsma said it well when they said, "Rules are necessary, but too many rules are a hindrance." I believe this falls into the category of too many rules.

b. The Reformed Churches of former years allowed an appellant to explain and defend by mouth rather than having to be in writing. VanDellen and Monsma write about this. The reason was that the abilities of those in the office of all believers vary. Some may struggle more with writing. Others may struggle more with speaking. Still others may struggle more with organization, but "It is to the Churches' own welfare that the appellant receive every legitimate opportunity to defend his position...."

c. In short, Article 31 places no restrictions on the length or organization of a protest. Rather, it gives the right of appeal to all those in the church intentionally without such restrictions.

3. It is not in harmony with the "Rules for Synodical Procedure."

a. Section IV is titled, "*Recommended Form*" (emphasis mine). It is not, "Required Form" or anything even close to that. It is what is recommended.

b. IV, A, B, and C all are what *should* be included, not what *must* be included. These are recommendations and not requirements.

c. The section quoted by the decision of synod is under what is *recommended*.

d. The nature of this section is clearly what the writer should keep in mind. It is completely different, and contrary, to make them requirements.

4. It is not in harmony with the office of all believers.
  - a. The office of all believers is an important principle of the Reformation and is at the heart of Article 31. It is not in harmony with this to place vague restrictions or limitations on the format and length of a protest or appeal.
  - b. The principle of the office of all believers is that those in the office have a voice, which voice should not be suppressed. This is consistent with Numbers 11:29. This decision does more to suppress than to guide or provide help.
5. It is opinionated, ambiguous, unenforceable, and not a good precedent.
  - a. It is opinionated in especially B, 1 and B, 3.
    - 1) "The length is unacceptable." Unacceptable according to what? Scripture and the Church Order do not give any length limits. Further, what then is too lengthy? Is it 10 pages, or 20 pages, or 100 pages? It was wise for no limits to ever have been included or implied before this. Cases may demand more length. Thus, this is an opinion that is of no value for Mr. C. Doezema or others in the future as the circumstances could all be different. To make such a demand on one submitting a matter ignores the fact that the length of the protest may not be a factor under his/her control such as the length of a consistory's correspondence.
    - 2) "The supplemental material included...was not carefully selected." Was it not? Where is the proof? The appellant certainly thought it was carefully selected and needed. He cared for the truth and good order enough to spend countless hours working on the protests and appeals. You may think it was not carefully selected, and the next may think it was.
    - 3) "Letters and decisions must be included only if they are substantive and are important to support the appeal/protest. Mere background information is not to be included." Once again, this is all opinion and not grounded. Who defines what is substantive? I do not think the appellant would have included documents if he believed they were not substantive. Would he willingly waste his time doing so? Also, is not background information helpful? We interpret Scripture in context. Should not materials include background information, which is context?
    - 4) "The document labeled a protest is not a proper protest; it is a letter with objections and questions." Objections are protests. Merriam Webster defines objection as "a reason or argument presented in opposition" and "a statement of opposition to an aspect of a judicial or other legal proceeding." Once again, this is wide open for interpretation and ambiguous.

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- b. Nothing here provides concrete direction for future reference. Some is specific to this appeal. Other is more general. What is consistent is that none of it can be referenced in the future for clear guidance on construction of an appeal.
  - c. It is unenforceable and not good precedent as it is so wide open for interpretation and not grounded in the confessions, Scripture, and the Church Order that no future assembly can even rightfully cite this decision as precedent.
6. It does not properly respect an appellant.
    - a. This is eerily like countercharging someone who brings a concern. Synod completed ruling on the appeals, which appeals were declared legal and valid appeals. They were declared legal and valid appeals because they were just that. Thus, they and the appellant, Mr. Doezema, do not deserve to be uncharitably judged as to contain serious flaws with no grounding in the confessions, Scripture, or the Church Order.
    - b. It discourages future protests or appeals by the appellant in this case and others. The appellant in this case and others devote countless hours of their time bringing a matter to an assembly. This decision only serves to place fear in potential future appellants that despite their pain and hours spent trying their best to organize and explain, a broader assembly may humiliate them by judging their work as containing serious flaws.
  7. This is not the proper place for a decision of this type.
    - a. If any more guidance is needed for appellants or protestants, it would be best for it to be put in the "Rules for Synodical Procedure" as that is the reference source available to an appellant or protestant.
    - b. Burying this decision in the *Acts of Synod* only serves to make adherence with Article 46 of the Church Order much more difficult.

### Protest of Mr. Les Kamps

4/13/21

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches  
to convene June 8, 2021  
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Mi

Dear Brothers,

After prayerful consideration and examination, I am compelled by my conscience to bring a protest to synod protesting the Synodical Deputies' approval of and concurrence with Classis East, January 13, 2021 decision to concur with Byron Center's decision to depose Rev. Andrew Lanning and to advise Byron Center's Consistory to proceed with the deposition of Rev. A. Lanning.