

APPENDIX III

COMMITTEE ON CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHURCHES ABROAD REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD BURLINGTON-WEST 1986

Esteemed Brethren,

We hereby submit to you a report on the activities of the Committee for Correspondence With Churches Abroad, appointed by General Synod 1983.

I. MANDATE

General Synod Cloverdale 1983 gave our Committee the following mandate:

A. General

- “1. To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To request the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to make their revised version of the Church Order available to our Committee for Correspondence for possible comments and/or recommendations.
3. To add to the present Rule c of the Rules for Correspondence: ‘re proposals for changes in the Three Forms of Unity, the sister Churches abroad shall receive ample opportunity (at least three years) to forward their judgment before binding decisions will be made.’”

Rule c reads then as follows:

To inform each other concerning changes of, or additions to, the Church Order and Liturgical Forms, while corresponding Churches pledge to express themselves on the question whether such changes or additions are considered acceptable. Regarding proposals for changes in the Three Forms of Unity, the sister Churches abroad shall receive ample opportunity (at least three years) to forward their judgment before binding decisions will be made.

4. Again to request the Netherlands sister Churches permission to publish the translation of the Form for Ordination/Installation of Missionaries for use in the Canadian Reformed Churches.
5. a. To request the Churches abroad that in the matter of relationships or contacts with third parties “there be consultation and coordination between sister Churches.
- b. To request the Churches abroad that contacts in countries where sister Churches are already established be made not independently but in conjunction with these sister Churches.
6. To charge the Committee to send an invitation to sister Churches abroad at least one year prior to the date the next General Synod is to convene and to have our Churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of such Churches abroad, if invited and when feasible.” (Acts 1983, Art. 99, D, 1,2,3,4,5)

B. Korea

- “a. to obtain and evaluate the complete text of the Koryu-Pa's Form of Government;
- b. to enquire into the grounds of the many changes made in this Form of Government;
- c. to seek an official evaluation from the Koryu-Pa of the confessional and Church-political divergencies as these have been discussed and are being discussed with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church;
- d. to seek information from the Koryu-Pa regarding its relations with the Hap-Dong Churches so that the implications of establishing correspondence with

the Koryu-Pa may become completely clear in this respect." (Acts 1983, Art. 105, D, 3)

C. Relations with Churches

1. That whenever a discussion with the sister Churches on rules to cover ecclesiastical relationships is initiated, to urge the sister Churches to maintain Correspondence according to the adopted rules as the only form of permanent ecclesiastical relationship.
2. To inform the sister Churches that the Canadian Reformed Churches have not made it a common practice to formalize ecclesiastical contacts with Churches with which correspondence cannot yet be established." (Acts 1983, Art. 110, D, 1, 2)

D. The International Conference of Reformed Churches

1. to join the ICRC with the clear instruction to move the following amendments to the proposed Constitution:
 - a. a stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the Churches of which they are members;
 - b. that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC;
 - c. that under 'Authority' (Art V) change 'are urged to receive the decisions' to 'urged to *consider*';
 - d. to add to Purpose (Art. V, 5) 'to encourage each other as member Churches to . . .';
 - e. to amend the Regulations (Art. II, 4, b, iv) 'to forward to the Churches material . . .';
 - f. to amend the Regulations (Art. II) 'Each Conference shall elect . . .'
2. to request the ICRC at Edinburgh to deal with:
 - a. the doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions;
 - b. the doctrine of the Covenant in the Reformed Confessions;
 - c. the exercise of inter-Church relations.

To give these matters priority after amendments to the Constitution before attending to matters of Mission.

3. to appoint Prof. Dr. J. Faber as an advisor to accompany two of the members of the Committee for Correspondence to the Conference 1985 at Edinburgh;
4. to report to the next General Synod on the activities of the ICRC;
5. to authorize the Committee to invite the ICRC to hold its second Conference, to be held in 1989, in the Vancouver area, as guests of the Canadian Reformed Churches." (Acts 1983, Art. 121, D, 1,2,3,4,5)

II. RULES FOR CORRESPONDENCE

The rules for correspondence referred to in our mandate are:

- a. To take mutual heed that the corresponding Churches do not deviate from the Reformed Confession in doctrine, liturgy, Church government and discipline.
- b. To forward to each other the agenda and decisions of the broader Assemblies and to admit each other's delegates to these Assemblies as advisors.
- c. To inform each other concerning changes of, or additions to, the Confession, Church Order and Liturgical Forms, while the corresponding Churches pledge to express themselves on the question whether such changes or additions are considered acceptable. Regarding proposals for changes in the Three Forms of Unity, the sister Churches abroad shall receive ample opportunity (at least three years) to forward their judgment before binding decisions will be made.

- d. To accept each other's attestations and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments.
- e. To give account to each other regarding correspondence with third parties (Acts 1962, Art. 139; Acts 1968, Art. 79, 6, b)

III. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. Declarations

- a. The following ministers of the Canadian Reformed Churches, planning to travel abroad, requested and received a declaration that they are ministers in good standing in the Churches: The Revs. B. J. Berends, J. DeJong, M. van Beveren, D. VanderBoom.
- b. The following ministers of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland visited Canada: The Revs. Tj. Boersma, K. Deddens, J. H. van der Hoeven.

From the Deputies of these Churches, your Committee received a declaration stating that they were ministers in good standing.

2. Acts — Yearbooks — Books of Praise

- a. When the Acts of General Synod Cloverdale 1983 were received a sufficient number of copies were sent to the sister Churches.
- b. The Yearbook of our Churches, although not an official publication, was sent to all the sister Churches as well. It keeps them somewhat informed about our Churches and supplies pertinent data about statistics and addresses.
- c. As soon as the new and completed Book of Praise was published a number of copies were ordered and sent to the sister Churches.

3. Notifications and Invitations

Letters of notification and invitation were sent to the sister Churches regarding the convening of General Synod Burlington-West 1986. Copies of the Provisional Agenda were sent.

4. Interim Report

No interim reports were published by the Committee as a whole, although the convener did publish his address to Synod Heemse 1984 of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in *Clarion* (Vol. 33, No. 13, 1984), in addition, he wrote an extensive report in *Clarion* (Vol. 34, No. 23, 24, 25, 1985) on the first meeting of the ICRC.

IV. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

1. Correspondence

- a. After General Synod Cloverdale 1983 met, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia were informed about the decisions that pertained to them, as well as other matters that had to do with inter-Church relations. They were requested to send us as yet a copy of their revised Church Order.
- b. In Oct. 1984 we received a copy of the revised Church Order which was then scrutinized by your Committee. Their revision appears to be based in part on the revisions made by our sister Churches in The Netherlands, as well as the Canadian Reformed Churches. A number of additional changes were called for seeing the particular situation in Australia with only a small number of Churches. On the whole, your Committee had no basic objections to this revision.
- c. In Oct. 1984 we also received a copy of the interim report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the FRCA. It brought us up to date on various developments in the FRCA, especially as that related to contact with third parties.
- d. In March, 1985 we were advised about the General Synod of the FRCA that would meet in Tasmania, as of June 1, 1985. An invitation to attend was in-

cluded, but declined for cost reasons. Your Committee sent fraternal greetings instead via the mail.

- e. Attempts have been made to discover exactly what happened to the letter that was supposed to have been received by the General Synod 1980 from the FRCA regarding cooperation on the *Book of Praise*. It appears that it was lost by the postal service. As a result, we propose to drop this matter seeing that we now know the contents of this letter (see our report to General Synod 1983, *Acts* 1983, p. 311) and that time and events have passed this matter by.
- f. In April, 1985 a provisional agenda for General Synod 1985 was received and taken note of.
- g. In May, 1985 a request was received to pass on to the FRCA a copy of our translation of the changes made to the Form of Government of the Korean Presbyterian Church. This request was met.
- h. A copy of the *Acts* 1985 of the FRCA was received at the ICRC gathering in Edinburgh in September of 1985. Additional copies were received by mail.
- i. As soon as we were informed about the date of the convocation of General Synod 1986 Burlington-West, we informed the FRCA and invited them to send their fraternal greetings either in person or by mail.
- j. It would be in place here to inform you that we are experiencing some postal problems from time to time. This has not undermined the basic communication but it has slowed it down at times and made additional letters necessary.

2. Acts of Synod Launceston 1985

The 1985 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia met from June 1-10, 1985 in Launceston, Tasmania. From the *Acts* we would like to inform you about some of the highlights.

- a. Regarding the *Book of Praise* Synod decided to adopt the revisions to the Psalms and Prayer sections. As to the Hymn section, it added to its approved list the numbers 1B and 39. (At present 34 of the 65 Hymns in our *Book of Praise* have been adopted for use in the FRCA. As Committee we have never been informed as to what now the objections are to the other 31 that have not been adopted.)

As for the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity in their revised format, they were adopted provisionally for use in the Churches. Deputies were instructed to study the inclusion of the word "Christian" in the Apostles' Creed, and to report to the next Synod. As for the Liturgical Forms, they were all adopted for use, with the exception of the Forms for Excommunication of Non-Communicant Members, the Ordination of Missionaries, and the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper (Abbreviated) which were adopted provisionally.

- b. Regarding *Byford*, Synod took note of the institution of a new congregation in Western Australia, called the Free Reformed Church of Byford. This brings to five the number of Churches in the federation.
- c. Regarding the *Church Order*, Synod made a number of refinements and amendments to the Church Order which had been revised in 1983. None of the changes were major.
- d. Regarding *Mission*, it was decided that the next Synod would deal with the transfer of Mission assets to the Church at Albany for work in Papua New Guinea.
- e. Regarding *Relations with other Churches*, Synod made quite a number of decisions:
 - i. In response to various appeals, Synod agreed that decisions recorded in Art. 72 and 75 of the *Acts* 1983 were made with "undue haste and without due consideration." These Articles pertain to the recognition of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of

Ireland, and the Free Church of Scotland. Synod agreed that these types of decisions should not be made on the basis of oral information. Deputies were charged to as yet investigate these Churches and to submit extensive reports to the next Synod.

- ii Synod also agreed to change the name of its Committee from "Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Sister Churches" to "Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad." This change is in line with our Dutch sister Church, only they use the word "Committee" and not "Deputies."
 - iii On the matter of Rules for Temporary Contact, the Synod decided that "there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister Churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of sister Church relationship." It would appear that this rule makes it possible for the FRCA to use ecclesiastical contact as a temporary relationship and as a steppingstone to ecclesiastical fellowship. In this the FRCA follows the model of the GKN.
 - iv Synod decided to continue its correspondence relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timur-Sabu, and Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.
 - v Synod decided that an indepth evaluation should be made of the two chapters added to the Westminster Confession of Faith by the Presbyterian Church in Korea.
 - vi Synod instructed its Deputies to inform the Reformed Churches of New Zealand that its sister Church relationship with the Reformed Churches in Australia and its second level correspondence with the GKN (Synodical) are impediments for continuing the existing contact.
 - vii Synod decided to investigate whether or not the Reformed Church of Japan and the Presbyterian Church of Uganda could be recognized as true Churches with a view to a possible sister Church relationship. It also urged the Reformed Church of Japan to break its ties with the RES.
 - viii With regard to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, a letter was received by Synod in which the PCEA stated, "Synod recognizes the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to be true and faithful Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoices at the opportunity of involvement together in the International Conference, and expresses the hope that continued contact will open the way to closer relations in the future; at the same time recognizing our mutual responsibility to exhort one another to continued obedience to the Word of God, and to the doctrine and practice which is according to godliness." In response, Synod expressed its joy and gratitude with the resolution of the PCEA. It added, however, that not enough was known about the PCEA to be able to recognize it as a true Church of our Lord. Further, it instructed its Deputies to investigate the PCEA with a view to Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession, and to report to the next Synod.
 - ix On the matter of the ICRC, Synod decided not to rescind the decision of the previous Synod to seek membership. It decided to send two delegates to the first meeting at Edinburgh. Furthermore, it took over all of the amendments proposed by the Canadian Reformed Churches, as well as the topics proposed by the CRC. It said that Synod 1987 will have to make a decision on continuing membership in the ICRC depending on the report of the delegates and the Deputies.
- f. Regarding the *Revised Standard Version*, Synod instructed its Deputies to give

the matter of Bible translation further study, to monitor the work of the Translation Committee of the RSV and to invite submissions from the congregations on this issue, to report to the next Synod. A number of appeals and letters regarding the use of the RSV were passed on to the Deputies.

- g. Regarding *Training for the Ministry*, Synod mandated its Deputies to explore the possibility of the FRCA becoming formally involved in the maintenance of Kampen or Hamilton; to promote increased levels of awareness in the FRCA of the duty to give regularly and sufficiently to this cause.
- h. Regarding the *Westminster Confession*, Synod defeated a proposal to study and evaluate the Westminster Confession on the grounds that the FRCA recognizes the Westminster Confession to be a Reformed Confession and that it is not the task of Synod to make official pronouncements regarding the Westminster Confession. Its task is rather to promote a knowledge and understanding of this Confession.

3. Conclusion

From the correspondence received and from the Acts 1985 we may conclude with gratitude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia continue to be faithful to the Word of the Lord, to the Confessions, and to the Church Order.

4. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to Synod that the correspondence which we have with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia be continued in accordance with the adopted rules.

V. DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND

1. Correspondence

- a. After General Synod Cloverdale 1983 was terminated, we informed De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland about the decisions of Synod which had either a direct or indirect bearing on them. We also repeated the request to publish the translation of the Form for the Ordination/Installation of Missionaries in our new *Book of Praise*. This request was granted by Synod Heemse.
- b. In January of 1985 we received a letter from the Dutch Deputies in which they informed us about their contacts with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America. To date these contacts have borne very little fruit because letters go unanswered. Nevertheless, Synod Heemse 1984 instructed the Deputies to persist in their attempts. The Deputies assured us that they will keep us informed of future developments and not proceed at a faster pace than our Churches.
- c. In March of 1985 we wrote to the Dutch Deputies informing them about the make-up of our delegation to Edinburgh and expressed the hope that they would place more matters on the agenda than Mission. In that same month we received a letter from the Deputies informing us about Synod Heemse's decisions on the ICRC. This Synod expressed its agreement with the Basis of the ICRC and instructed its Deputies to propose an addition to the Regulations which would see the delegates rise to express their agreement with the Basis. It also proposed that a study Committee on Missions be set up and that the costs of the Conference be carried by an assessment based on the number of communicant members.

In agreeing with the Basis, Synod stated as grounds that the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards have never been a hinderance to acknowledging that each other's Confessions are Reformed. Also, it stated that agreement with the Basis means that the member Churches have found nothing in each other's Confessions that constitute an impediment as far as full participation in the Conference is concerned.

- d. In May, 1985, the Deputies asked us to react to the magazine *Lux Mundi* and to advertise its availability in our Church press. We also advised them to advertise in a number of leading American publications.
- e. As soon as we were informed about the date of Synod Burlington-West 1986, we wrote to the Deputies and invited them to extend their fraternal greetings. We also had to request copies of the Acts of Synod Heemse again. We received them only in December on 1985. That explains in part the tardiness of this report.

2. Representation at Synod Heemse 1984

- a. Synod Cloverdale 1983 instructed the Committee "to have our Churches represented to General Synods of such Churches abroad, if invited and when feasible." (Acts 1983, Art. 99, D, 6). In light of this mandate, and the fact that we sent no one to Synod Arnhem 1981, as well as the fact that Synod Heemse had certain matters on its agenda that would affect our Churches, it was decided to send the Rev. J. Visscher, as a member of the Committee to Synod Heemse.

- b. Rev. J. Visscher attended the Synod on June 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15. On Wednesday, June 6, in the evening Session, the Synod welcomed the delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Free Church of Scotland. All the delegates were invited to address Synod, which your representative did in the Dutch language. An English version of that address is attached to our report as an appendix.

On Thursday, June 7, your delegate sat in on three Committees dealing with Missionary training, inter-Church relations and the Church book.

During the plenary Sessions which your delegate attended matters relating to the Psalms, relations with Korea, Taiwan, prayers, forms, and appeal cases were handled. When the Synod went into closed Session, your delegate was requested to be present.

- c. On June 9, 1984, your representative traveled to Kampen where a special meeting was held with the GKN's Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (Anglo-Saxon section). Also present were Rev. J.N. Macleod representing the Free Church of Scotland and the Rev. N. Whitla of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

In the discussions attention was paid to the rules for correspondence, relations with third parties, pulpit fellowship, levels of ecclesiastical fellowship, temporary ecclesiastical contact, and other matters. In the course of the discussions it became clear that the Irish and the Scottish Churches have some reservations about the rules for correspondence as they currently present themselves. The opinion was expressed that at several points they were not practical and that at other points they could be construed as interference in the life of a foreign sister Church.

The Free Church expressed a willingness to consider correspondence, but the advice was given to refrain from being too aggressive in terms of approach and timetable. It was also stated that the Free Church has a history of different levels of inter-Church relationships.

Your delegate took the added opportunity to explain several decisions of Synod Cloverdale that had a bearing on our relationship with the Dutch Churches.

The place and function of the ICRC in the matter of inter-Church relations was also discussed at some length.

- d. On Tuesday, June 12, 1984, your delegate met once again with the Synod sub-Committee dealing with inter-Church relations. This time the whole afternoon was devoted to a discussion of the Canadian reaction to the Dutch Deputies' report to Synod, and the decisions of Synod Cloverdale.
- e. It should also be mentioned that your delegate became the center of some

controversy due to the machinations of the Dutch press. He was interviewed for an article in *Reformatorisch Dagblad* which appeared on June 9, 1984 and which gave the impression that the sister Churches in Canada and The Netherlands were at loggerheads. Several quotations were taken out of context and others were badly misconstrued. In addition, certain words of Prof. J. Kamphuis were also misrepresented and made to convey a certain message, namely, of "Liberated ecclesiastical imperialism."

As a result, when Synod met again on Tuesday, June 12, 1984, the members were in an uproar.

In order to calm the waters and to set the record straight, your delegate suggested that another interview be held, only this time it was scheduled with *Nederlands Dagblad*. This interview-article appeared in the June 16th issue.

Conclusions:

- i Your representative was very well received. He was admitted to all the Sessions of the Synod and to its Committees;
- ii A number of problems and misunderstandings could be dealt with in a positive and constructive manner;
- iii The use of theological professors and members of Committees as advisors to Synod impressed your delegate. It made for faster and more effective decision-making;
- iv The rules for correspondence are not without their difficulties when it comes to applying them to Churches that have a different historical and confessional background, as in the case of the Churches in Ireland and Scotland. Some of these difficulties are imagined and can be removed through mutual consultation and education. Others may require some modifications in the rules before they are removed.

3. Acts of General Synod Heemse 1984-85

- a. Synod adopted in a definitive form the revisions of all the Creeds, liturgical forms and prayers. Also adopted, after many years of study, were the 150 Psalms in a new version, and 41 Hymns. A "*Church Book*" (*Book of Praise*) will be published which will also contain the Church Order.
- b. It was decided to appoint General Deputies for matters related to the work of *deacons*. Their mandate is to give advice to the local Churches and to take the initiative only in emergencies.
- c. Synod decided to send again a letter to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in The Netherlands as an appeal for unity in the faith.
- d. Synod had to deal with appeals regarding the teaching of *Rev. Joh. Hoorn*, minister of the Church at Grootegast. This minister held and publicly promoted the view that the exhortation of Article 28 of the Belgic Confession to join the Church and unite with it, is not addressed to those outside the fellowship of the Church but is an admonition to those who belong to the Church and that they live in accordance with this membership. According to *Rev. Hoorn*, there are no believers apart from those who regularly attend the Assembly of the Church.

The decision of Synod was to reject the teachings of *Rev. Hoorn* as being contrary to Scripture and the Confession. With many Scripture references Synod showed that those teachings do not acknowledge the wide extent of Christ's work and the mercy of God in gathering His Church. It was stated that *Rev. Hoorn* ought to publicly recant his views.

- e. Much attention was paid to the *international relations* in which our Netherlands sister Churches are involved.
 - i The Ecclesiastical Fellowship was continued with the following Churches: *Canadian Reformed Churches, Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Vrije*

Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, Reformed Churches of Indonesia on East-Sumba/Savu, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

- ii Upon the request of the *Reformed Churches of Indonesia on East-Sumba/Savu* it was decided to send out a second Missionary-lecturer to teach at their Theological School.
- iii The two Missionary-professors, Rev. J. M. Batteau and Dr. N. H. Gootjes, are to continue their work at the Korea Theological College and the Kosin College.
- iv The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad was charged to continue to investigate what changes have been made in the Confessions and Church Order of the Korean sister Churches, and to gather more information about the *Korean Presbyterian Church (Reformed)*.
- v As it was reported that the *Free Church of Scotland* considers the existing rules for correspondence impractical, further discussions were deemed necessary before the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship could be realized. The provisional relation of Ecclesiastical Contact was continued.
- vi Also with the *Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, Second Presbytery*, the provisional relation of Ecclesiastical Contact was continued. More information on the relation between the *First Presbytery* and the *Second Presbytery* was considered necessary.
- vii Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the *Igreja Presbiteriana Coreana do São Paulo* could not be realized as the congregation had ceased to exist.
- viii The offer of provisional Ecclesiastical Contact extended to the *Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka* and the *Reformed Church of Japan* was maintained. The same relation is still offered to *Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* ("Dopperkerken"), but then under certain conditions.
- ix Contacts with the following Churches will be continued: The *Orthodox Presbyterian Church* in U.S.A., The *Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)*, *Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Reformed Churches of New Zealand*, the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, *Church of Christ in the Sudan under the Tiv*, *Iglesia Reformada Presbiteriana in Spain* and *Greed Evangelical Church*.
- x The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad had reported that the application of the existing rules for ecclesiastical relations with Churches of Presbyterian signature met with difficulties. The Committee had also proposed that in the relationship "Provisional Ecclesiastical Contact" the word "provisional" be deleted in order to make it a permanent relation, and to add as a new rule "to accept each other's attestations." Synod decided to charge that Committee to study the entire matter of the functioning of the forms of the ecclesiastical relations together with the existing rules, and to allow the Committee meanwhile to apply the existing rules for Ecclesiastical Contact in a flexible manner.
- xi Regarding the *International Conference of Reformed Churches* Synod decided:
 - a. to declare to be in agreement with the Basis, Constitution and Regulations as formulated by the Constituent Assembly;
 - b. to charge their Committee to send delegates to the Conference at Edinburgh 1985, and to present to that Conference a proposal re Mission (see our report on the ICRC).
- xii Concerning the *Canadian Reformed Churches* it was further decided:
 - a. to express the thankfulness of the Netherlands Churches that the vacancy at the Theological College at Hamilton due to the retirement of Rev. G. VanDooren, could be filled;

- b. to inform our Churches that there are no objections that the Form for the Ordination of Missionaries be translated into English for use in the Churches;
 - c. to keep the Canadian Deputies informed on the contact of the Christian Reformed Church with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church;
 - d. to keep the Canadian Deputies informed on the contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
- f. The *next General Synod* is scheduled for April 22, 1987 and is to be held at Spakenburg-Noord.

4. Evaluation

In accordance with the Rules for Correspondence, the revisions of the Creeds, liturgical forms and prayers as far as they were published in the *Acts*, have been scrutinized by your Committee.

Your Committee declares that it considers those revisions to be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and in harmony with Reformed Church Polity.

Not available to your Committee were the completed revised text of the Canons of Dort, the Forms for Excommunication and Readmission and some prayers. The scrutiny of those texts will have to wait until the "Church Book" has been received.

5. Conclusion

From the correspondence and the *Acts* of General Synod Heemse 1984-85 the Committee may conclude with thankfulness that de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland desire to be faithful to God's Word and to abide by the Reformed Creeds and Church Order.

6. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to Synod to continue the correspondence with De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the adopted rules.

VI. DIE VRIJE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA

1. Correspondence

- a. Immediately after Synod Cloverdale 1983 concluded Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika were informed about the decisions dealing with inter-Church relations.
- b. In Feb., 1984 we were informed about the Synod of the DVGKSA which would be held DV from April 5-9. In response we sent them the fraternal greetings of the Canadian Reformed Churches via the mail.
- c. In Feb., 1985 we were informed about the next Synod which would be held in April of 1986. Once again the fraternal greetings were sent. We also received an indication that these Churches look forward to having a delegate from the CRC present at their next Synod. Due to the costs to the Churches of sending delegates to Holland and Scotland, your Committee did not feel free to send someone at this time to South Africa. We are of the opinion that in the future consideration must be given to sending delegates to Australia and South Africa. These Churches have never been visited by any delegate from the CRC. They also are very sensitive to their isolation from the sister Churches. The Lord willing and monies permitting, an opportunity may present itself in the years to come.
- d. As soon as we were informed about the convocation of Synod 1986 at Burlington-West, we informed the DVGKSA and invited them to send their fraternal greetings. We also requested them to send us copies of their *Acts* 1984 Capetown by air mail, since they were never received by us and our report to Synod 1986 had to be prepared. In Nov. of 1985 these *Acts* arrived.
- e. In Jan. of 1986 we received the fraternal greetings of the DVGKSA addressed

to Synod Burlington. Furthermore, the Deputies informed us that DVGKSA has been offered a "fraternal relationship" by the Korean Churches. The South African Deputies add, "we have now accepted their offer, but emphatically not as (a lower level of) official ecclesiastical correspondence, but merely to give a name to the fact that we have much in common and that we regularly keep each other informed about our activities and decisions. As long as we have not resolved the language barrier, which plays a dominant role in the official correspondence relationship, we have no objection to, in this way, giving expression to the fact that we have regular contact with each other. Whether this stand will meet with our coming Synod's approval will be known in a few months time."

They also request us to send them any material that we may have on the Korean Churches relating to amendments to the Confessional Standards, Form of Government, Manual of Discipline and Directory of Worship.

They conclude, "it would appear that our contacts with Korea develop along the same lines and with the same problems. Therefore, it would be very useful if we could come to a common approach and consult and inform each other regularly on further developments in this regard."

2. Acts of General Synod Capetown 1984

General Synod of Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika met at Capetown on April 5, 6, 7 and 9, 1984. All three Churches, Capetown, Johannesburg, and Pretoria were legally represented. Two delegates were present from the "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland." These two delegates, Rev. H.J. de Vries and Br. J.J. Schreuder and also Rev. F.J. van Hulst, the newly "called" minister of the Church at Capetown, were welcomed to the meeting and received the privilege to serve the meeting in an advisory capacity.

Of the decisions made by this Synod, the following ones are worthy of mention because they may be of interest to our Churches:

- a. General Synod 1982 of Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke had condemned "double correspondence" (correspondence with more than one "Church denomination" in the same foreign country) as being in conflict with God's Word where it orders in II Timothy 2:19, "Let everyone who names the Name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This consideration had raised some questions in both the Netherlands sister Churches and in Church "denominations" within South Africa.

During the discussion of the report of Deputies for contact with South African Church "denominations" Synod Capetown decided that this consideration of the previous Synod should be read in the following manner: "that one should not resign oneself as Churches to 'double correspondence' because in our judgment one resigns then to a sinful situation of division."

- b. General Synod 1982 had decided to leave it to the freedom of the Churches to request a licence to perform *marriages* for a minister. This Synod also adopted a set of rules for the above. The Church at Capetown came to Synod Capetown 1984 with an appeal against Art. 14, 3 of these rules. This article reads: "When applicant(s) are not yet communicant members of Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke or a corresponding Church, the Consistory shall consult the neighbouring Consistory to determine whether confirmation of that marriage can take place on behalf of the government by a 'confirmer' from Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke. In such a case one must be on guard that the confirmation of the marriage does not become a Church service in disguise."

In the letter of appeal the Consistory of Capetown referred to Art. 70 of the Church Order and stated that the marriages of believers should be confirmed before the congregation and that unbelievers should have their marriages per-

formed at the courthouse. Synod decided to reject Capetown's appeal.

- c. Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Churches reported to Synod Capetown 1983 that they received an invitation to Synod 1983 of the *Canadian Reformed Churches* held at Cloverdale and the agenda for this meeting. They also received a copy of the report of the "Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad" to Synod Cloverdale. In a supplementary report the South African Deputies informed Synod 1984 about the decisions of Synod Cloverdale, among others, Acts, Art. 109. The following paragraph in the Acts Capetown, Art. 23, 2 should be of particular interest to our Churches: "These decisions of Synod Cloverdale, in particular those concerning ecclesiastical relations, meet with general approval by Synod and Synod decides unanimously to continue the correspondence with the Canadian Reformed Churches."
- d. During the discussion of the section of the report to Synod by the Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Churches, dealing with The Netherlands, Synod deals with a request from the Dutch Deputies for Correspondence to be informed about the grounds on which Synod Johannesburg rejected the form of "*temporary ecclesiastical contact*." Although Synod Capetown could not speak for Synod Johannesburg, the Synod still obliged by giving a number of reasons why the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke did not take over the form of "temporary ecclesiastical contact."

Another matter of concern that the Deputies brought to Synod was a news report in *Nederlands Dagblad* stating that the Dutch Deputies for Correspondence had proposed to Synod Heemse to scratch the word "temporary" in "temporary ecclesiastical contact" and to accept each others attestations. In the discussion the Dutch advisors gave an explanation of the reasons for deleting the word "temporary." It had to do with the Presbyterian view on the Church and that there is a clear difference between ecclesiastical contact and correspondence. However, Synod Capetown still decided to express its concern about this news report to Synod Heemse, in particular because Synod Arnhem 1981, conditionally decided to offer "temporary ecclesiastical contact" to a third party: "Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika."

Synod decided unanimously to continue the correspondence according to the established rules.

- e. Synod Johannesburg 1982 had given Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Churches the mandate to investigate to what extent the language differences with the *Reformed Churches in East Sumba/Savu* would be an obstacle to the exercise of correspondence according to the established rules and to look for another form of contact that is "Scripturally responsible." In accordance with the recommendation of the Deputies, Synod 1984 decided to inform these Churches that they are true Churches of Jesus Christ, but that at that stage it was not feasible to watch over each other. This will be done in brotherly letters of encouragement and wishes of God's blessings; it would be done more than once and could include the exchange of information, decisions etc. Synod had decided that the rules for correspondence should not be applied flexibly and that no second set of rules should be established.
- f. Synod Johannesburg 1982 had given Deputies for Correspondence with Churches Abroad the following mandate concerning the *Korean Presbyterian Church*:
 1. To continue the attempts for contact with the KPC;
 2. Taking into account the language differences to prepare a "Scripturally responsible form" of exercising ecclesiastical communion with the KPC and
 3. to report to Synod.In their report the Deputies informed Synod that the Korean Presbyterian Church in its General Assembly of Sept. 23-28, 1982 had decided to offer the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika the relationship of "official correspondent relations," they proposed to use the English language in correspondence.

A question from the Deputies whether the KPC can maintain "double correspondence" was answered in the affirmative.

Synod decided not to accept the offer of correspondence from the Korean Presbyterian Church as yet, because it was not clear what type of correspondence was meant with "official correspondent relations"; it must prevent that "double correspondence" results; and Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke was not finished as yet with the study of the Westminster Standards.

- g. Synod adopted a set of rules for correspondence with Churches abroad that appears to be a faithful *translation* in Afrikaans of the rules accepted by the Dutch sister Churches at Synod Arnhem 1981.
- h. Synod also decided to send a letter to the *South African government* regarding two pieces of legislation.
 1. Regarding the law on mixed marriages, the Synod explained that the prohibition of mixed race marriages cannot be based on the Bible.
 2. Regarding the Immorality Law that forbids immorality between Whites and Non-whites, Synod stated that the Scriptures state, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." There is no restriction to persons of a different race or nation. Therefore the law should be changed in such a manner that all immorality is forbidden and the mention of races should be eliminated.
- i. Synod 1982 had decided to send two delegates to the *Constituent Assembly of the International Conference of Reformed Churches*. These delegates served Synod 1984 with a lengthy report. The delegates recommended to Synod:
 1. to postpone the decision to take part in the ICRC until the Westminster Standards can be accepted as Reformed Confessions and it can be established that all participating Churches are true Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ and as such there is unity of faith with them;
 2. to send one or two observers to the first ICRC at Edinburgh;
 3. to appoint deputies for the study of the Westminster Standards;
 4. to inform the interim secretary of the ICRC of these decisions.

In the discussion the Dutch "advisors" made a strong plea to accept the Westminster Standards as Reformed Confessions and to participate in the ICRC. They pointed out that already in 1936 Synod Amsterdam recognized the Free Church of Scotland as a Corresponding Church and recognized the Westminster Standards as Reformed Confessions.

In spite of this, the Synod adopted the recommendations of the delegates.

3. Conclusion

From the correspondence and the Acts received, we may conclude, with gratitude, that Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika desires to be faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.

4. Recommendation

On the basis of the above, the Committee recommends to Synod to continue the relationship with Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in accordance with the adopted rules.

VII. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (KORYU-PA)

1. Correspondence

- a. A few months after Synod Cloverdale 1983 closed, your Committee wrote to Korea informing them about the decisions of the Synod which related to the PCK. Quite a number of months later it was all returned to us in a battered condition. We then sent a new letter with the relevant enclosures and solicited their response. No reaction was received.

- b. In Sept. of 1985 at the ICRC meeting in Edinburgh the convener of your Committee talked with Prof. Dr. P.S. Oh about the relations between our respective Churches. He was also asked about several matters. Regarding the Form of Government, he informed us that it is basically the same as the common Presbyterian Form of Government as one finds it in North America among the PCA and OPC. As for the changes made to it, he replied that they had to do with the local situation. They were not really changes in substance but more a matter of revision and updating. The basic Presbyterian polity remains in force. With respect to their relationship to the Hap Dong Churches, he stated that no official contact existed between the Koryu-Pa and the Hap Dong. They remain friends, but the Hap Dong are not willing to entertain anything more because of their isolationist viewpoint.

The meeting ended with Prof. Oh being given yet another copy of the decisions of Synod Cloverdale 1983. Emphasis was placed on the fact that a reply would be very much appreciated and was essential if the Committee was to make recommendations to Synod 1986.

At this late date no response has been received.

- c. The Deputies of the Free Reformed Church of Australia requested a copy of our translation of the changes to the Korean Form of Government. This has been sent.

2. Additional Information

After having read the Acts of Synod Heemse 1984-85 we would like to pass on to you some additional information gleaned from the remarks made by Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, professor at the PCK seminary at Pusan.

- a. Regarding the manner in which the PCK approaches inter-Church relations, he stated that it recognizes Churches and Missionary organizations who work together with it. Promoting the Church gathering work of the Lord Jesus Christ is not so much the criterion, as is the degree to which they are involved with others and can work in a profitable way with other Churches and/or organizations.
- b. Prof. Gootjes also informed Synod Heemse that from 1910 to 1970 the PCK had really no Confession. Its adoption of the Westminster Confession only came about in the year 1970. In addition, the translation of the old English of the Westminster Confession into Korean was not without its difficulties. Still today there are errors that, although not major, need to be corrected.
- c. On the point of the Form of Government, Gootjes stated that this is based on the American Form, but has been adapted to take into account the Korean situation.
- d. As to the question whether the Korean Churches really live up to the Confession, he said that one must be careful when one tries to view these Churches through Western eyes. In Korea the people still have to learn to work with the Westminster Confession, which has come to them from abroad. Yet it is a great thing that they have embraced this Confession and try to live out of it.

3. Evaluation

Taking into account our mandate from Synod 1983, the developments to date, as well as other information, your Committee comes to the following evaluation:

- a. On the basis of past studies, reports, investigations, discussions with sister Churches in Australia and The Netherlands, studies and comments of the Professors J.M. Batteau and N.H. Gootjes, contacts via the ICRC at Groningen and Edinburgh, there is every reason to declare that the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koryu-Pa or Kosin) is a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Problems of language and communication continue to be encountered and make entering into and maintaining a correspondence relationship impossible.
- c. The mandate your Committee has received from Synod Cloverdale 1983 is,

because of the above, not workable. To evaluate the complete text of the Form of Government presents numerous problems: How shall we obtain a copy when we receive no response to our requests? How shall we read it when it is in the Korean language? Does the Synod wish to spend a large sum of money in order to have it translated?

To enquire concerning the grounds of many of the changes made is a charge which is made impossible not only by language differences but also by the fact that your Committee is not composed of Koreans who live in Korea and understand all of the factors that went into this revision. Insofar as we were able we evaluated the changes and declared them to be no impediment. Was it really realistic of Synod 1983 thereafter to ask us to search out the grounds? That was not our original mandate.

From our own reports to you, as well as from other sources, we have rather exhaustively studied the relationship between the Koryu-Pa and the Hap Dong. We have never received even a letter from the Hap Dong and all the indications are that these Churches are rather isolationist, as well as splintered. We therefore feel that on this issue the matter is as clear as it will ever be. The Hap Dong poses no problems when it comes to recognizing the Koryu-Pa.

- d. Together with the PCK, the Canadian Reformed Churches are members of the ICRC. This implies a certain indirect recognition. The delegates to Groningen and Edinburgh were never instructed to request that the membership of the PCK be held in abeyance until our investigations were completed.
- e. All of our sister Churches either have correspondence with the PCK, as in the case of Australia and The Netherlands, or else they are considering some form of recognition, as in the case of South Africa. In addition, it should not be overlooked that our Dutch sister Churches have two representatives teaching in Korea on a permanent basis. They have never yet called into question the validity of having a relationship with the PCK.

4. Recommendation

On the basis of the above, your Committee recommends to you the following course of action:

- a. that the Canadian Reformed Churches recognize the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Koryu-Pa or Kosin) as a true Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
- b. that the implementation of entering into a formal relationship with the PCK be postponed until such time as communication problems can be resolved.

VIII. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

1. Correspondence

- a. On Jan. 13, 1984, your Committee wrote to the provisional secretary of the ICRC and informed him of the decision of the CRC to join the Conference, to move certain amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws, to request that a number of topics be placed on the agenda, and to invite the Conference to hold its 1989 meeting in the greater Vancouver area.
- b. At the same time your Committee also wrote to Prof. Dr. J. Faber and informed him of his appointment to act as advisor to the CRC delegation. He was also invited to address the Conference on the topic, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions."
- c. During January 1984, a letter was also written to the Rev. J.N. Macleod asking him to address the Conference on the topic, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in the Reformed Confessions."
- d. On March 20, 1985, we informed the provisional secretary that the CRC delegation to the ICRC meeting at Edinburgh would be composed of the Rev. M. van Beveren and J. Visscher, with Prof. Dr. J. Faber as advisor. We also in-

formed him that the Rev. J. Visscher, would introduce the topic, "The Exercise of Inter-Church Relations."

2. ICRC — Edinburgh 1985

- a. For an extensive report on the Conference meeting in Edinburgh, you are asked to consult the accompanying appendix. This material has already been printed in *Clarion* and most of the members of Synod will be familiar with it.
- b. We would, however, like to bring to your attention a number of points:
 - i. In many respects this first meeting experienced a number of start-up difficulties relating to organizational procedures, constitutional questions, and insufficient information;
 - ii. It soon became apparent that the agenda was a rather one-sided character in that most of the topics were filled with considerable theological content. This situation arose because most member Churches did not exercise their respective rights of input. This matter was addressed at the meeting and it is hoped that the next meeting will see a greater variety of topics and levels of presentation;
 - iii. The topics suggested by the Canadian Reformed Churches on Church, covenant, and inter-Church relations were received on a positive note. No fundamental disagreements were experienced and a great deal of agreement was evident. When differences did surface they could be traced to differing historical developments and practices. Unfortunately, the matter of inter-Church relations did not receive quite the airing that had been hoped for. Further discussion will be needed in this area. Still, a start has been made and the member Churches now receive a time during which to become acquainted with different perspectives and understandings on this matter. Hopefully, this will augur well for the future;
 - iv. The topics dealing with piety in the Psalms and the sacraments stimulated good discussions. The latter made more than a few waves but the waters calmed considerably after further clarifications were made. The speaker on the topic of the sacraments and new life in the Spirit made quite a number of statements, not all of which it seemed were representative of the thinking in the Free Church of Scotland, nor of Scottish Presbyterian theology. While this led to disagreement, it was not so that the end result was in conflict with the Basis of the Conference;
 - v. The Conference admitted as new members: the Free Church in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. This admission was granted after a sub-Committee of Rev. J.N. Macleod, Prof. H.M. Ohmann, Rev. A. Veldman, and Rev. J. Visscher, scrutinized the documents presented, interviewed the representatives of these Churches at length about the history and faithfulness of their Churches and determined that each of them is striving for unity with Churches which are already members of the Conference;
 - vi. The amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws of the ICRC could not be dealt with because the provisions for amending these documents could not be met. They have been placed on the agenda of the 1989 meeting (see more about this matter below);
 - vii. A Committee to deal with matters relating to Missions was agreed upon. This Committee has the potential to do very profitable work for the member Churches. Over against those who seem to see this type of Committee as a vehicle for interference in the Missionary dealings of the member Churches, we would once again reiterate that its findings are not binding on the members but are of an advisory character.
 - viii. A Committee to deal with the texts of the Ecumenical Creeds was also

appointed. This Committee arose as the result of a duly seconded motion made by the Rev. G. Van Rongen in response to several comments made by Prof. Dr. J. Faber in his paper. As in the previous case, the findings of this Committee will be of an advisory nature;

- ix As regards the next meeting of the Conference, more attention will have to be paid to organizational matters. The topics will need to encompass not only the theological, but also the ethical, pastoral, and missiology concerns of the member Churches.
- c. We would also like to take this opportunity to react to the amendments which the General Synod of 1983 wanted to see made in the Constitution of the ICRC.
 - i Synod 1983 wanted a "stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the Churches of which they are members." Your Committee is of the opinion that such a stipulation need not be added to the Basis. All the delegations spoken to by your delegates understood perfectly well that their subscription is only to the standards of the delegating member Church. If it would help to clarify certain misunderstandings that some people have, we would advise you to give us a mandate to request that the next meeting insert in its minutes an explanation along the following lines, "Subscription to the Basis means that we find nothing in the Confessions of the member Churches that hinders us from the fullest participation in this Conference in respect to its purpose."
 - ii Synod 1983 also requested us to inform the Conference that membership in the RES should be an impediment to membership in the ICRC. We, on our part, question the need for the Conference to include such a statement in its *constitutional documents*. As it now reads the Constitution under Article IV says, "Those Churches shall be admitted as members which . . . (c) are not members of the World Council of Churches or any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis." (emphasis ours)
Surely such a statement should suffice. If we as Canadian Reformed Churches insist on adding the RES, what is to prevent another member from requesting that the ICCC, the WARC and a host of other ecclesiastical organizations be added? The result would be that the ICRC would be perceived in a purely negative light as an anti-body, or as an organization in reaction. Needless to say, such an image should be avoided.
 - iii By the same token, we also have our difficulties with amending Art. III, 5, of the Purpose to read, "*to encourage each other as member Churches to present a Reformed testimony to the world.*"(amendment italic) In the case of our Churches we know this will never be done, especially taking into account Art. 30 of the Church Order. But why can the Conference, which is not strictly speaking an Ecclesiastical Assembly of one Church, but a meeting together of representatives from faithful Churches around the world, not issue a Reformed testimony?
To speak specifically, at the Edinburgh meeting Prof. Dr. P. S. Oh of Korea warned about the dangers of a reemerging Shintoism and the serious impact that could have on the Churches in Asia. Should this matter be brought officially to the attention of the ICRC at Vancouver 1989, would it not be appropriate for the Conference to speak out in a clear, Scriptural manner? Again, the fear of some may be that in this way the Conference becomes politicized. We must recognize that danger, and as a member Church, be on our guard against it. On the other hand, we must not let dangers that may never materialize force us into a do-nothing, say-nothing posture when the cause of Christ and His Church is threatened.

- iv As for the other amendments proposed to Art. V dealing with Authority and Art. II of the Regulations, we consider them to be more stylistic than basic and would request you to reexamine whether or not they are really of such importance that they require formal constitutional amendment.

3. Vancouver 1989

- a. At this early date it is not possible to make too many concrete proposals to you with regard to the meeting of the ICRC to be held D.V. in the greater Vancouver area in 1989.
- b. At present your Committee is considering a date in June of that year seeing that seems the most convenient for all parties concerned. The precise location remains a matter of discussion too, although the Church at Cloverdale because of its central place and its proximity to stores, post office, library, and other conveniences, is under serious consideration. Most likely the delegates will be given a choice of lodging: private homes, motels, and university residences. It should be mentioned that many of these details will have to be worked out in conjunction with the Interim Committee.
- c. It has become somewhat of a tradition, after Groningen and Edinburgh, that the hosting Church pays for incidental expenses relating to photocopying, typing, etc. It has also been so that this Church organizes an outing at its expense to some local place of note. The GKN offered the delegates a trip to Kampen and the FCS did the same with a trip to St. Andrews. If you do not object, then as good hosts a trip would be organized to some famous tourist attraction. We would, of course, try to keep expenses to a minimum.
- d. It would also be appropriate if you would appoint a local Church in the Fraser Valley to conduct a Prayer Service before the start of the Conference as has been done in The Netherlands and Scotland.
- e. With respect to the delegation to this Conference, we would propose that once again two members of the Committee for Correspondence be delegated as representatives of the Canadian Reformed Churches and that the Professors J. Faber and C. Van Dam be appointed as advisors. We nominate them in view of the fact that Prof. L. Selles is retiring this year and that Prof. Dr. K. Deddens is scheduled to return to The Netherlands in 1989.
- f. As for the topics to be dealt with, we can as yet not come up with concrete proposals seeing the time factor; however, with your leave we would approach the sister Churches in Australia and The Netherlands, and try with their help to arrive at a set of topics and speakers that would address the Conference on issues that are of mutual interest and concern.

4. Recommendations

On the basis of the above, your Committee recommends the following:

- a. That the constitutional amendments proposed by Synod 1983 be set aside, with the exception of the possible inclusion of a clause to explain our relationship to an understanding of the Basis;
- b. That the Canadian Reformed Church at Cloverdale be requested to organize a Prayer Service before the commencement of the 1989 meeting of the Conference;
- c. That the Professors J. Faber and C. Van Dam be appointed as advisors and that two members of the Committee be designated as delegates;
- d. That the Committee submit to the Conference a list of suitable topics after it has consulted with the sister Churches on this matter;
- e. That the Canadian Reformed Churches assume all reasonable costs that relate to its role as host of the meeting of the Conference.

IX. ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS

1. A Change of Names

- a. You will have noted elsewhere in this report and previous ones that our sister Churches in Australia and The Netherlands have renamed their respective Committees. The GKN have called theirs "The Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad." The FRCA have called theirs "Deputies for Relations With Churches Abroad."
- b. The main reason for this change in both cases has to do with the fact that the word "correspondence" was discovered to be problematic. It failed to convey properly the true nature of the work of these Committees and gave the impression that sister Church relations really only had to do with exchanging a few letters.
- c. The fact that a new, more English-speaking generation has arisen and that more and more contacts are being made in the English-speaking world where the word "correspondence" means very little and does not naturally allude to relations between Churches has also played a role.
- d. In light of the above, and seeing that your Committee has experienced the same kind of misunderstanding, plus the rather mundane fact that it is time to have new letterhead printed, we decided to approach you with a proposal for a name change.
- e. We would ask you to give serious consideration to changing the name of your Committee to "The Committee on Inter-Church Relations." We are of the opinion that this name is both descriptive of our mandate and to the point. It communicates well in the English language and while not a duplication of what our sister Churches have, bears a resemblance to what they have adopted.

2. Rules for Ecclesiastical Relations

- a. Synod 1983 instructed us to take up contact with the sister Churches on the matter of rules for ecclesiastical relationships (cf. Acts 1983, Art. 110). We did so by means of written and verbal communication.
- b. As you can gather from our report, however, the matter remains unresolved. The Committee of the GKN is at the moment busy studying the rules for correspondence and hopes to come to the next Synod with a proposal for revision. The sister Churches in Australia continue to maintain that a temporary relationship can be used if it would further the goal of sister Church status. The sister Churches in South Africa are going to consider a second type of relationship in addition to correspondence, but then on an unofficial level.
- c. Because of these developments your Committee would request that it receive a new mandate to consult with the sister Churches in the hope that a common approach might yet be developed.

3. The Free Church of Scotland

Our final proposal which we address to you has to do with the Free Church of Scotland and initiating contact with it.

a. *Background*

As a Committee our acquaintance with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) began with the reports which we received from the deputies of our sister Church in The Netherlands to their Synods. From these reports we gleaned a great deal of information about the FCS: its history, Church life and practices. Still, it has to be admitted that for us this Church remained largely a name, and not much more.

That began to change, however, in 1982 when the Revs. M. van Beveren and J. Visscher were delegated to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches at the Constituent Assembly in Groningen, The Netherlands. There we met

for the first time representatives of the FCS in the persons of the Revs. D. Lamont and J.N. Macleod. And then, as usually happens in those situations, you spend the first number of days sizing each other up. You inquire, you probe, you debate and slowly you get to know each other and the Churches that are represented. In the case of the Revs. J.N. Macleod and J. Visscher this whole process intensified even more because they spent day after day hammering out the Constitution and By-Laws, plus the Interim Regulations. As a result, your delegates may report that the first real impressions that we had were favourable in terms of the knowledge and commitment of these men to the Reformed faith.

Two years later, the Rev. Macleod and Visscher were to meet again in Heemse, and there once more opportunities presented themselves for discussion on all kinds of issues relating to their respective Churches. In addition, the groundwork was laid for later asking Rev. Macleod to address, on our behalf, the Conference at Edinburgh on the topic of "the doctrine of the covenant in the Reformed Confessions."

Finally, in September of last year, 1985, the Revs. M. van Beveren and J. Visscher, along with Prof. Dr. J. Faber, had the opportunity to travel to Scotland for the first meeting of the ICRC in Edinburgh and in that context to observe the FCS at close quarters. Their first impressions were sprinkled with culture shock. There is no doubt that the FCS does things differently. This became especially evident in the worship services where the liturgy is very simple, where organs of any kind are not to be found, where a precentor suddenly rises up and leads the congregation in singing, where the Psalter is divided in half — horizontally. But not withstanding all of these "novelties," your delegates made the necessary adjustments, and soon started to form opinions and evaluations.

With respect to the first mark of the true Church, namely, the preaching, they heard sermons delivered in three of the local Free Church pulpits in the Edinburgh area on two consecutive Lord's days. Some of the preaching was topical in approach, some had an experiential aspect to it, some of it was quite analytical, but all of it was Scriptural and Reformed. Homiletical approaches aside, they heard some sound preaching.

On the matter of the sacraments, not a great deal could be observed. They did discover that the FCS has quite a different approach to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in that most congregations celebrate it only twice a year. At the same time most members attend about half a dozen celebrations. You may wonder about that? The answer is that when the Lord's Supper is celebrated it is quite customary for members from neighbouring sister Churches to attend as well. Usually the actual preparations begin already at mid-week and it is customary for two or three preparatory services to be held during that week. In those services the nature of the Supper is extensively dealt with, as well as the matter of admission to the Supper and the consequences of partaking with an unregenerate heart. Finally, on the Lord's Day itself the actual Supper is administered.

On the matter of discipline, your delegation learned that the FCS is known for its strictness to Biblical norms. There was definitely no indication that discipline was either avoided, abhorred or trifled with. On the contrary, the impression was very strong that the FCS defends and promotes the holiness of the Lord in the lives of its Churches and members.

At the same time, it has to be admitted that what was seen by your delegates was only a very small segment of the FCS. It appears that most of the strength of the FCS lies not in the lowlands but in the highlands and the outer islands, especially the Island of Lewis where by far the largest concentration of FCS Churches and members are to be found. In part this explained why the Churches around Edinburgh were not that large.

To summarize this part, your delegates came away with a positive impression as regards the FCS and agreed that it would be of benefit to convey this to you. It was felt that if meaningful bridges are to be built from our Churches to the Presbyterian Churches in the ICRC, the key might well be the FCS.

b. *History*

With regard to the history of the FCS, we may report that it has over the years fought the good fight of the faith with courage and conviction. Its roots are to be found in the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries so ably led by John Knox and Andrew Melville. Its constant foe has been episcopacy and the unrelenting attempts of the state to gain dominance over the Church. Its authentic voice has been heard in the National Covenant of 1638. Its witness has been borne in the blood of its thousands of martyrs.

We have not the time now to go into many details. We would point out though that the history of the FCS in more recent times centers around the dates of 1843 and 1900. It was in the year 1843 that Dr. T. Chalmers led a great contingent of ministers and members out of the Church of Scotland in reaction to the liberalizing and hierarchical trends that prevailed there. Steadfastly, those who took part in the Disruption of 1843 maintained that they were the true and lawful Church. They insisted on retaining the name "the Church of Scotland" only they added to it the word "Free." As one of their leaders said, "The date of the existence of the present Established Church of Scotland is 1843; the date of *our* existence is 1560."

But history did not stop at 1843. In subsequent decades the FCS experienced many blessings under the Lord's hand. But then it began to change. How come? As G.N.M. Collins, the noted Free Church historian points out in his book *The Heritage of Our Fathers*, "The first and basic cause was, we may believe, the pride of achievement." Another sign of decline was, ironically enough, a zeal for ecclesiastical reunion. So fervent were some for reunion that they compromised on vital principles. Also, the FCS began to change her attitude to the Holy Scripture and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Liberalism in the form of the Higher Critical school made its impact felt. Revivalism under the leadership of Moody and Sankey with its Arminian stance gained a large following. Anti-confessionalism surfaced in its various forms.

All of these developments and others came to a head in the controversy surrounding the Declaratory Act. Properly understood a Declaratory Act, as its name suggests, was an act whereby a General Assembly would declare what it understood to be the true meaning, or meanings, of passages in the Westminster Standards whose importance might be uncertain. These Acts then functioned as explanatory Acts. However, in the movement for union between the FCS and the United Presbyterian Church which took place in the 1890s the Declaratory Act began to be used as a means of introducing doctrinal changes. Modifications were made in the doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature by the Fall, in the matter of the Civil Magistrate. Allowances were made for "diversity of opinion" when it came to the Confession.

The result was that the changes proposed and made were unacceptable to a minority of the members of the FCS. They voted against the union decided on in May of 1900. Once again a minority found itself claiming to be the true continuation of the Church of Scotland. Only in this instance this claim had enormous repercussions with respect to Church properties. The Free Church remnant maintained that the new United Free Church had abandoned the Establishment Principle, a principle firmly embedded in the constitution of the Free Church. As a result court battles ensued. These culminated in the matter coming before the House of Lords which sided with the minority.

Needless to say the hue and cry from the side of the United Free Church against the verdict of the House of Lords was no minor thing. The FCS was harassed

and its position misrepresented to the extreme. Finally, a Royal Commission was appointed which recommended the appointment of an Executive Commission to divide the funds and properties of the FCS between the rival claimants. Parliament followed the advice of the Commission in part and passed an act dividing the properties and funds, a division in which the FCS did not really receive what was right and equitable.

All in all it was a sad and divisive period in Scottish Church history. The wounds of which took many years to heal. Nevertheless, the faithful remnant in the FCS continued to persevere. And the Lord blessed them. The FCS resumed her Mission work in South Africa, made a new beginning in India and initiated new activity in Peru. Emigration brought her new congregations in Canada and the U.S.A. At the present time there are small congregations still in Michigan (U.S.A.), Prince Edward Island, Toronto and Vancouver.

On the homefront the FCS has shown herself to be neither sectarian nor isolationist. In 1930 she invited the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Free Presbyterian Church to work toward fuller cooperation with a view to possible union. The Free Presbyterian Church declined outright and to this day continues to go its sectarian way. The Reformed Presbyterians responded more positively and attempts to merge continue.

In summary, if this brief historical overview reveals anything, it is that the FCS has remained faithful to her Reformed heritage.

c. *Confessional Standards*

With regards to its confessional standards it should be pointed out that the FCS has the "original" Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as well as the Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560. The word "original" is placed between quotation marks because there is a difference between the Standards of Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and America.

d. *Indirect Contact Via the ICRC*

Although it has been touched on already, we would emphasize that via our membership in the ICRC we do enter into a certain undefined and indirect relationship with the FCS. It should also be noted that several member Churches of the Conference in Australia, Ireland, South Africa are either direct offshoots of the FCS or of her Missionary activity. She thus has a central role in the Conference.

In addition, taking into account our emphasis on the ongoing Church gathering work of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the need to work for unity wherever possible with other true Churches, and the second Purpose of the ICRC "to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member Churches," we have a responsibility to investigate whether a relationship with the FCS might be possible.

e. *Our Sister Churches and the FCS*

It should also be pointed out that both our sister Churches in Australia and in The Netherlands have taken up contact with the FCS with a view to entering into correspondence.

4. Recommendation

Your Committee would thus recommend the following:

- a. That the name for the Committee be changed to "The Committee for Inter-Church Relations";
- b. That the Committee be charged to continue its discussions with the sister Churches in the hope that a common approach to inter-Church relations may be worked out;

c. That the Committee be instructed:

- i to take up contact with the Free Church of Scotland with a view to officially recognizing them as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and entering into a sister Church relationship;
- ii to keep the current sister Churches informed of all progress made in this regard and to work in cooperation with them;
- iii to submit its recommendations to the next General Synod.

Respectfully submitted by your Committee,
February 6, 1986
E.C. Baartman
A.C. Lengkeek
M. van Beveren
J. Visscher (convener)