

APPENDIX IV

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
appointed by Synod New Westminster, 1971
for Contact with the Christian Reformed Church

To the GENERAL SYNOD of the
CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES CONVENED AT TORONTO
on November 5, 1974.

Esteemed Brethren:

A. MEMBERSHIP

Your predecessor appointed the brethren H. AASMAN, Prof. Dr. J. FABER, M. KAMPEN and Rev. D. VANDERBOOM, M. Th. (convenor).
(Acts Synod 1971, Art. 96 sub. 18)

B. MANDATE

Synod 1971 continued the Committee for Contact with the Christian Reformed Church with the mandate "to discuss the matter of Church Correspondence with the (Synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland until the position of the Christian Reformed Church has become clear and the mandate as formulated and given by Synod Edmonton 1968, Acts Art. 134 sub VIII, has been completed" Acts Synod 1971 Art. 94.

(For mandate of Synod Edmonton 1968, Acts Art. 134 sub VIII see Appendix I)

C. MEETINGS

In February 1972 a meeting was held where the mandate was discussed.

To fulfill latter part of the mandate, namely the reference of Acts Synod 1968, Article 134, sub VIII and especially under VIII, 3 and 4 your committee contacted the committee of the Christian Reformed Church and requested them to provide us with the Acts of Synod 1971 of the Christian Reformed Church and their Committee Report to Synod 1972.

These materials were received.

Since this Report mentioned a recommendation to terminate the Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches no meetings were held for the time being.

D. DECISIONS

Synod 1972 of the Christian Reformed Church adopted the recommendation of its Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches and decided;

1. The main item remaining on the agenda is the correspondence with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodical). Of prime interest to the Canadian Reformed Churches is the question whether the Christian Reformed Church will break off that correspondence. Our denomination's present relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken is the province of synod and its Inter-Church Relations Committee, and the special committee for contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches is not involved in determining that relationship.
2. Synod assure the Canadian Reformed Churches of its willingness to continue discussions with them in the future, whenever they feel conditions will be conducive for fruitful exchange.

From this decision it could be concluded that the Christian Reformed Church had expressed 'unwillingness to enter into related matters'. However, by terminating this committee the possibility was taken away to address ourselves in the regular way to the Christian Reformed Community. We refer to the following heading: Observations.

E. MATERIALS RECEIVED

- a. Acts of Synod 1971 of the Christian Reformed Church;
- b. Report of the Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches as submitted to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church 1972;
- c. Copies of correspondence between the Committee on Inter-Church Relations and the Deputaten voor Contact met buitenlandse Kerken appointed by our Sister-Churches in the Netherlands.
Parts of this correspondence, as it relates to the Canadian situation is added to the report as Appendix II.
- d. After having evaluated this correspondence, which the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad forwarded to us, we have written a letter to the Committee for Inter-Church Relations of the Christian Reformed Church with the request to clarify the matter of their mandate.
A copy of this letter has been forwarded to the Committee for Contact with the Churches Abroad.

F. OBSERVATIONS

- a. Your committee was not officially informed of the decision made by the Synod 1972 of the Christian Reformed Church concerning the termination of its Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches.
This may be due to the fact that there was no Committee anymore after Synod 1972.
- b. Your committee has been unable to discharge the mandate of Synod New Westminster 1971 because the Committee for Contact was terminated.
- c. There are indications that no "unwillingness" is involved.
The matter of correspondence and relationships to other communities is still in study. In the Acts of Synods of the Christian Reformed Church of 1972 and 1973 we found decisions concerning the relationship of the Christian Reformed Church toward the 'Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Synodical)'. We quote from these Acts: Art. 59 Acts 1972:
"In 1970, the Inter-Church Committee was given a mandate with respect to matters bearing upon our Sister-Church relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken. That mandate was fulfilled in part, but at the Synod of 1971, the mandate was increased asking for an "inquiry into and evaluation of recent theological trends in our Sister-Church in the Netherlands" and "to advise the next synod whether or not such trends warrant a change in our relationship to these churches"."
The Synod of 1971 added to the mandate also the following: "That synod instruct the Committee of Inter-Church Relations to include in its inquiry the letter received from the Gereformeerde Kerken, and official pronouncements and decisions of the synods of the Gereformeerde Kerken".
We further quote: Art. 45 Acts 1973:
"Gereformeerde Kerken and the Problem of Sister-Church Relationship.
1. The Synod of 1970 mandated the Inter-Church Relations Committee to advise Synod whether our Sister-Church relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken should be altered because of recent trends in that Church.
In considering this question over the past three years, the committee faced the more fundamental question of the definition of a Sister-Church relationship in general, and whether that relationship as defined by the Synod of 1944 can be applied to any church with which we are in correspondence. That relationship was defined as a unity which, if it were not for the barriers of geography or language, would result in union. The implications of this relationship have not been fully accepted by the Christian Reformed Church in the years since the adoption of this definition, as is apparent by our requiring a colloquium doctum for ministers coming from the Gereformeerde Kerken. For many years,

therefore, we have had an official position which we were not ready to apply fully or to reject.

The Inter-Church Relations Committee recognizes that, given our present definition, it is likely that the demands of integrity will compel us to discontinue our Sister-Church relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken. Your advisory committee concurs in this. At the same time, however, we believe it is both important and necessary to maintain fruitful contact and correspondence with the Gereformeerde Kerken.

2. We, therefore, recommend

- a. That synod mandate the Inter-Church Relations Committee to study Articles 8 and 59 of the Church Order to determine the validity of the reference to "Sister-Churches" and "other denominations with which the Christian Reformed Church maintains full ecclesiastical fellowship".
- b. That synod mandate the Inter-Church Relations Committee to study our system of correspondence with other Churches (cf. Church Order Art. 49) with a view to such redefinition of the process of correspondence as will promote most fully the fellowship of the true church of Jesus Christ and will work most effectively to maintain and to restore the true unity of the churches.
- c. That the results of these studies be reported to synod in a definite report no later than 1975.
- d. That, until these studies are completed, we continue to exercise our Sister-Church relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken by means of appropriate admonitions and other representations, including a reference to the above studies and the reasons for undertaking them." (end of quote)
- d. The decision of Synod 1972 of the Christian Reformed Church, as quoted from the Acts, (see under D) does not mention the committee on Inter-Church relations as suggested in the Netherlands (see under E, Appendix II).

G. CONSIDERATIONS

- a. the matter of contact with the Christian Reformed Church was originated by the Canadian Reformed Churches,
- b. the possibilities to continue contact are still present when the misunderstanding as to the mandate of the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church is resolved,
- c. Synod 1973 has expressed itself that a redefinition of the process of correspondence must be reached before 1975.
- d. the fact that there is a time period of three years between Synods of our Churches and one year between Synods of the Christian Reformed Church, and the possibility of further developments within the Christian Reformed Church make the existence of a Contact Committee desirable.

H. RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the foregoing observations and considerations our recommendation to Synod is:

That Synod Toronto 1974 continue the Committee on Contact with the Christian Reformed Church with the mandate:

- a. to be diligent in the matter of the position of the Christian Reformed Church toward the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Synodical).
- b. to be diligent in matters of new official developments within the Christian Reformed Church.
- c. to remain as address for contact with the Synods of the Christian Reformed Church.

This report is respectfully submitted and addressed to Synod Toronto, 1974 and forwarded to the Churches for their consideration.

With brotherly greetings,
H. AASMAN
J. FABER
M. KAMPEN, secretary
D. VANDERBOOM, convenor.

APPENDIX I

Synod adopt the following:

Mandate for Deputies to be appointed by Synod 1968 to continue the contact with the Christian Reformed Church.

1. Deputies shall re-open the contact with the Contact Committee of the Christian Reformed Church and inform them of the decisions of this Synod, submitting to them the advisory report that led to these decisions.
2. Deputies shall point out that the contact on the part of the Canadian Reformed Churches started with the "Appeal 1962", in which the reasons for our separate existence were given and the Christian Reformed Church was earnestly warned not to proceed with the course of recognizing the Synodical "Gereformeerde Kerken" as faithful Reformed Churches.
3. They shall then inform the Contact Committee that the Canadian Reformed Churches can continue the contact only when this matter of correspondence (with related matters) is put in the centre of the deliberations. They shall, therefore, insist that a clear answer be given by the Christian Reformed Church to the three questions formulated by the previous Deputies (see their report, p. 13); even more so because the Contact Committee has never brought these questions before their Synod nor answered them themselves.
4. Deputies shall then wait till the next Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has expressed its willingness to enter into the discussion on this main obstacle. If the contrary should happen, Deputies shall discontinue the contact with the Contact Committee.
Deputies shall then send an urgent, Christian appeal to the Christian Reformed community in the same vein as (the first part of) the "Appeal 1962".
5. If, however, our urgent request is heeded, Deputies shall be diligent in discussing all matters that are found to be related to this main obstacle to the establishment of unity between the two Churches. Due attention shall be given to "the principles of Church correspondence adopted in 1944" (Acts Christian Reformed Church, 1947, Art. 96, sub d), and their implementations, the Reformed Creeds being the Standards for such a discussion.
6. Deputies shall keep the Churches informed of the reactions received and the progress and results.
7. Deputies shall scan the Acts of Christian Reformed Synods on any official changes in the Christian Reformed Church.
8. Deputies shall prepare a report of all their actions, together with recommendations, for the next Synod. Copies of this report shall be forwarded to the Churches.

APPENDIX II

Part of a letter from:

COMMITTEE ON INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS of the Christian Reformed Church

To:

Deputies of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands for Correspondence, Churches Abroad, c/o Rev. P. Van Gurp, Sec.

"Prior to June 1972, the Christian Reformed Church carried out its ecumenical task through its Committee on Inter-Church Relations and through special contact committees for specific churches. One of these committees was located in Canada for

contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. These committees worked independently of each other. Our committee did not know what the Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches would recommend to the June synod in 1972. The Synod did decide to terminate the special committee and I enclose a copy of the committee report and indicate the action synod took.

With this action synod placed the whole matter of our relationship to the Canadian Reformed Churches and to your churches into the hands of the Committee on Inter-Church Relations. The one unresolved problem for both your churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches is the sister church relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and the Gereformeerde Kerken (synodical).

It is known to you that the question of whether this sisterchurch relationship shall be maintained or not is presently being considered by our committee and by our synod. We have the matter under study for the past three years. At this writing our recommendation is not drawn up. That some changes will be recommended is likely; that the relationship will be fully severed is very unlikely. It is the concern of our committee to maintain every relationship with other churches that is legitimate and that we can hold with integrity over against our confessional standards. The "closeness" with which we relate to each church is the matter which is always under consideration. Therefore we have no problem with maintaining fraternal relationships with churches with which we are not able to have a full sister-church relationship."

APPENDIX III

Report to the Synod of 1972

Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches

Esteemed Brothers,

The report of this committee will be brief. The reason is that we have little to report on. The last meeting with the deputies of the Canadian Reformed Churches took place on April 12, 1970. Thus we have had no meetings to report on for the synods of 1971 and 1972. The prime reason, as we see it, lies in the peculiar stage of our discussions.

The main item for discussion left on the agenda is the correspondence which the Christian Reformed Church carries on with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodical). The deputies for the Canadian Reformed Churches have in unambiguous terms expressed their deep concern about that sister-relationship. This correspondence however, is not in the province of our committee for recommendation or action.

As a result the Canadian Reformed Committee has felt that little can be achieved by further meetings until our Synod and its Inter-Church Relations Committee have come to a definite decision on whether or not to change the sister-relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodical). To quote from one of their communications, "As far as we can see, it (another meeting) all depends on the progress which your Inter-Church Relations Committee has made and on the decision which your Synod 1971 will make on the matter of correspondence - However, if nothing can be reported about the results of the Inter-Church Relations Committee, we wonder whether a meeting of our two committees makes sense under the given circumstances" (Letter dated Dec. 1, 1970). And in reply to our request of March 20, 1971, for another meeting they state that, while they are not unwilling to meet, "there are - at least to our knowledge - no new points for discussion, and all we can do for the moment is, wait for our synods and their decisions" (Letter dated April 21, 1971, emphasis theirs).

We regret that, no doubt mainly for the above mentioned reason, we have not been able to meet with the Canadian Reformed Committee during the last two years, and that no further progress can be reported. Having analyzed the present stage of the discussion, we conclude that our committee should be discontinued. We feel, however, that it should be done in such a way that Synod thereby keeps the door open for further discussion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Accordingly we recommend:

1. That Synod discontinue the Committee for Contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Ground: The main item remaining on our agenda is the correspondence with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodical). Of prime interest to the Canadian Reformed Churches is the question whether the Christian Reformed Church will break off that correspondence. Our denomination's present relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken is the province of Synod and its Sister-Church Relations Committee, and our committee is not involved in determining that relationship.

2. That, in the event that one of our future synods changes the present relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken, Synod officially advise the Canadian Reformed Churches of such action and extend an invitation to them to initiate further discussion on this matter.

Respectfully submitted

P.M. JONKER, chairman

D. FARENHORST

G.J. HOYTEMA

J.B. VOS, reporter

APPENDIX IV

COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

To:

Delegates to Synod Toronto 1974 Consistories of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

Esteemed Brothers:

After our Report to Synod was finalized and sent to the Churches we received the following communication from the Committee on Inter-Church Relations of the Christian Reformed Church. We enclose a copy of this letter with the report for your information.

On behalf of the Committee,
M. KAMPEN, secretary

COPY:

Dear Brother:

Your letter of May 10 was received too late for our May meeting so it was read in our meeting of July 2, 1974. We did not meet in June which was the month of our Synod.

We are happy to hear from you and somewhat embarrassed that our communications with you have not been better. We had assumed that when the decision of synod was made discharging the committee of the CRC for contact with your committee, the decision would have been communicated by the committee as its last item of business. This apparently was not the case. For this we are sorry.

In the meantime, we have been continuing our contact with your "mother" church in the Netherlands with the hope that there will be a conceptual breakthrough that will issue forth in some positive discussions. At the same time we have been formulating a new policy for inter-church relations which was adopted at our recent synod. As a result of this we no longer have any sister-churches, having created a new category of "Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship". This is not the occasion for us to explain the meaning of this new relationship; we are addressing ourselves to that matter early in the coming season of meetings and will inform you and all other concerned churches as to what is involved.

In the meantime you may rest assured that matters involving our relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches is in the hands of this committee even though

that is not too clearly expressed in the Acts of 1972. All matters of inter-church relations are the responsibility of this committee.

I can also assure you that we will be discussing some positive action over against your churches in the near future. In the meantime we would be happy to receive a copy of the Acts of your synod.

With fraternal greetings,
w.s. TYMEN E. HOFMAN, Secretary

ADDITIONAL REPORT of the
COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
appointed by Synod New Westminster 1971.

Esteemed Brethren:

After the Report of your committee was forwarded to the Churches and to the delegates to General Synod Toronto some additional information was received and acquired in accordance with the mandate given by previous Synods. This information made it mandatory to prepare and submit an additional report. We request to receive it as such and to deal with it together with the original report.

Addition under E. MATERIALS RECEIVED (p. 2 report)

- e. via the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad we received a copy of part of a letter sent by the Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Churches of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland,
- f. via the same committee: A Summary of the Discussion between the Rev. prof. J.H. STEK, representative of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Deputies of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, held at Amersfoort March 30, 1974,
- g. we availed ourselves of a copy of the Acts of the Synod of the CRC, 1974.

Addition under F. OBSERVATIONS (p. 2 and 3 report)

- e. the possibility to continue contact seems to be still present, since the Committee for Inter-Church Relations (CICR) has been assigned the task of other committees for specific contact,
- f. from the correspondence between the Deputies of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the CICR it appears - see also Appendix II - that the "sister-church relationship" between the CRC and the GKN (syn.) was, up till Synod 1974 of the CRC, an unresolved problem,
- g. the discussion between prof. Stek and the brothers in the Netherlands shows that the "CRC meant to redefine the relationship between the Churches as mentioned in our original report". (see under F.c.), We quote: ". . . on the basis of the now existing rules the Synod of the CRC would have to cut off all relationship with the GKN completely. So in order to have a possibility to speak with the GKN this new proposal was born.",
- h. In June 1974 the Synod of the CRC decided on the matter of "redefinition of the process of correspondence" (Acts Synod 1974 CRC, Art. 62).

Addition under G. CONSIDERATIONS (pp. 3/4 report)

- b. the misunderstanding as to the mandate of the CICR is resolved; this committee seems to be the address by which the CRC can be approached,
- c. Synod 1974 of the CRC has expressed itself on the redefinition of the process of correspondence,
this means that this Church has established one relationship, to be designated: "ecclesiastical fellowship", in which fellowship six rules apply. We consider this to be a final decision, especially as far as the correspondence with the CRC and the GKN (syn.) is concerned. We refer to the adopted Recommendation C. 7 (Acts Synod CRC, Art. 62): "With regard to the GKN Synod encourages the ICRC to pursue appropriate avenues of increased contact".