

## APPENDIX IX

### COMMITTEE ON CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHURCHES ABROAD REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD CLOVERDALE 1983

Esteemed Brethren,

We hereby submit to you a report of the activities of the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad, appointed by General Synod 1980

#### I MANDATE

General Synod Smithville 1980 gave our Committee the following mandate:

- a. "to continue the correspondence under the adopted rules with:  
The Free Reformed Churches of Australia  
De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland  
Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika;
- b. to refrain from entering at this time into correspondence with the Korean Presbyterian Church (Koryu-Pa);
- c. to charge the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad to continue the contacts with the Korean Presbyterian Church with the following mandate:
  - i to evaluate the Form of Government and to pass this evaluation on to the next General Synod;
  - ii to inform the Synod regarding the state of communication with these Churches and also evaluate the communication with the Korean Presbyterian Church (Koryu-Pa) as to the question whether official ecclesiastical correspondence, even if it would be warranted in principle, can be responsibly maintained, due to distance and language;
  - iii to make recommendations to the Synod regarding a future relationship with these Churches;
- d. to charge the Committee to evaluate the criticism of the Deputies of the Netherlands sister Churches on the Historical Review, Korean Presbyterian Church, and to report on this to the next Synod;
- e. to charge the Committee to send an invitation to sister Churches abroad at least one year prior to the date of 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 desirable and feasible;
- f. with regard to the proposed Reformed International Conference:
  - i that the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad be authorized to send two delegates to this Conference;
  - ii that a report on this Conference analyzing its basis, aim, powers, structure, members and agenda, along with a recommendation on how to proceed further in this matter, be sent to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches by the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad;
  - iii that Synod Smithville 1980 refrain from any official endorsement of this Conference due to its preliminary character;
- g. to charge the Committee to inform the Churches from time to time about that which is of interest in the Correspondence with Churches abroad" (Acts 1980, Art. 153)

#### 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.

- 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).

### 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. Geertsema, J. Faber, P.K. Meijer, W. Pouwelse, W. Loopstra, L. Selles, Cl. Stam, M. VanBeveren, M. VanderWel.
- b. The following minister of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland visited Canada: The Rev. C. Stam.

From the Deputies of these Churches, our Committee received a declaration that he is a minister in good standing.

#### 2. Acts — Yearbook

- a. As soon as the *Acts* of General Synod Smithville, 1980, were received a sufficient number of copies were sent to the Deputies of the sister Churches in Australia, The Netherlands and South Africa.
- b. Copies of the *Yearbook* of our Churches, although not an official publication of the Churches, have been sent to these Deputies. In this way they are kept informed about the general activities and statistics of the Churches.

#### 3. Notification and invitations

Letters of notification and invitation were sent to the sister Churches in Australia, The Netherlands and South Africa regarding the convening of Synod Cloverdale 1983. Copies of the Provisional Agenda were sent as soon as they were received.

#### 4. Interim report

Your Committee published a report on the subject of Korea in *Clarion* (Vol. 30, No. 22, Nov. 6, 1981). A copy of this report is to be found in the enclosures.

### IV THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

#### 1. Correspondence

- a. After Synod Smithville 1980 met, The Free Reformed Churches were informed about the main decisions of this Synod, as well as the mandate of the new Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad.
- b. After the receipt of the Acts of Synod Armadale 1980, a letter was sent to Australia (April 28, 1981) informing the Deputies that a certain letter mentioned in these Acts and addressed to General Synod Smithville 1980 was never received. For more details on this matter, see below.
- c. In April of this year we received notice that the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches would meet the following month in Kelmescott. A Provisional Agenda was included. No report from the Australian Deputies for Correspondence was received.

Our Committee extended greetings on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches to this Synod and wished them the blessings and guidance of the Lord in all their deliberations.

- d. A letter was received from the Australian Deputies conveying their best wishes upon the work of General Synod Cloverdale, as well as informing us that the

Free Reformed Churches of Australia have decided to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

## 2. Acts of Synod Armadale, 1980

The 1980 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia met from September 1-5, 1980, in Armadale. We would like to mention the following decisions:

- a. Synod under the heading *Report Church Book* made the following statement. "General concern is expressed that the lack of close and effective cooperation with the Canadian Committees over the years will eventually lead to a glaring lack of uniformity between the Churches. Consultation would also be required re the text of the Heidelberg Catechism as this is considered to be part of the essence of correspondence with Churches abroad" (Acts, Art. 19). Later the Deputies Church Book received the following mandate, "to continue the contact with the Canadian Committee for Church Book, with particular emphasis on joint consultations concerning the hymns and the revised texts of the Ecumenical and the Reformed Creeds, the Liturgical Forms and the Prayers, so that soundly based uniformity be achieved" (Art. 53, 7b).

In addition, under the heading "Foreign Sister Churches" the following comment is made, "Re Canada a developing divergence is noted in matters of common concern such as new versions of the Creeds, Liturgical Forms and Prayers, due to lack of consultation. Synod decides to send a letter to the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches convening at Smithville next November, explaining our concern in the light of the official correspondence as we desire it" (Art. 30). Finally, in the appendix the following letter can be found addressed to the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, dated Sept. 5, 1980:

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord,

During our Synod discussions of the Report submitted by our Deputies for Correspondence with Churches Abroad it struck us that in various areas which call for close cooperation between your Churches and ours little could be seen of significant steps in the right direction.

Out of concern for the obvious possibility of diverging directions in the future, we decided to voice this concern in the less customary way of a Synod-to-Synod letter.

We think in particular of matters of importance to all our Churches, such as the revision of the Church Order, the revision of Creeds, Liturgical Forms and Prayers, closely linked with the matter of Bible translation. The necessity for close consultation in these work areas must be apparent to you, as it affects the contents of the relationship between corresponding Churches. However, this consultation has been lacking completely.

Brothers, we do fear that this relationship could be damaged by decisions which, however beneficial they could be internally, within your Churches, do less than justice to the standing of your Churches in the world communion of Reformed Churches. Hence this urgent plea to give this matter your earnest attention.

May God bless your deliberation and guide your Churches by His Word and Spirit. (Signed by the Chairman and 2nd Clerk)

For your Committee's reaction see below: "Matter *Church Book*."

- b. Under the heading of *Mission* we find that a full-time mission worker, br. Peter 't Hart, has been appointed. As to the status and particular responsibilities of this brother, no information is supplied.
- c. Regarding the *Church Order*, the Deputies submitted a draft on the first 15 articles of a newly revised Church Order. After presenting Synod with an "excellent sample," they were charged to continue their work.
- d. On the subject of *Mission*, Synod decided "to instruct the Church council of Arma-

dale to investigate all aspects of the future development of the mission work in WA, with particular emphasis on the Scriptural methods to be followed, work areas to be defined and optimal use of resources" (Art. 34).

- e. Synod decided to appoint new deputies with the mandate to continue the contact with the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia* and "to keep in touch with developments between the Dutch deputies and the Free Church of Scotland."
- f. Various letters of appeal by the *Rev. A.H. Dekker* were considered. In the end the Synod decided to give "its approbation to the decision of the Church of Launceston to dismiss *Rev. Dekker* in accordance with Article 11 of the Church Order. *Rev. Dekker* will be eligible for calls from the sister Churches which will be advised of this. The Church of Launceston is to be reprimanded by letter concerning the fact that help from the bond of Churches was not requested at an earlier stage" (Art. 55).
- g. The *Rev. P. Lok* attended the Synod as a representative of De Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands.
- h. Synod also decided to adopt a set of regulations to govern its meeting.
- i. A Yearbook is attached to the Acts and supplies the following statistics (1980):
  - Albany — 441 members
  - Armadale — 1064 members
  - Launceston — 379 members.

### 3. Matter Church Book

The above mentioned highlights pay quite some attention to the matter of the *Church Book* and the relations between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia on that matter. We, as Deputies, were rather surprised to read the *Acts* 1980 and find these comments, plus the letter that has or was to be sent to Synod Smithville 1980. The reason for this was due to the fact that Synod Smithville *never received* the Australian letter and neither did your Deputies. As a result, we wrote the Australian Committee for Correspondence in a letter dated April 28, 1981, and told them that Synod Smithville had not received their letter and thus was unaware of their concerns. Furthermore, we advised them to forward their concerns on to the next Synod to be held in 1983. Until now no letter, either of explanation or to be passed on to Synod, has been received. In light of this, we see no way that Synod can fully address itself to this matter.

### 4. Conclusion

From the correspondence and the *Acts* 1980 we may conclude with gratitude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia desire to be faithful to God's Word, the Confessions, and the Church Order.

### 5. Recommendation

On the basis of the above, the Committee recommends to Synod that the correspondence with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia be continued in accordance with the adopted rules.

## V DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND

### 1. Correspondence

- a. After Synod Smithville 1980 the Dutch sister Churches were informed about certain matters pertaining to our relations with them. Decisions taken with respect to Korea and the Constituent Assembly of the International Conference of Reformed Churches were also communicated to them.
- b. The Committee received the provisional agenda of the General Synod Arnhem 1981. We informed the Deputies in The Netherlands that we would not be sending a delegate to this Synod, due to the expense factor and the upcoming Constituent Assembly of the ICRC in Groningen. Best wishes for this Synod were sent by telegram.
- c. On April 27, 1981, we wrote to the Dutch Deputies and directed their attention

to Art. 145 of the Acts Smithville 1980, in which permission is asked to use the Form for the Ordination/Installation of Missionaries in translated format. No response has been received.

- d. On Dec. 30, 1981, we wrote again to the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, as it is now called and included a copy of the changes to the Korean (Koryu-Pa) Forms of Government which we had translated into the English language. We also informed them that the Theological College had received degree granting status.
- e. The Deputies were told in a letter dated March 19, 1982, that the Canadian Reformed Churches would be represented at the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC by the Rev. M. VanBeveren and J. Visscher. We also asked them to consider the possibility of inviting the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They replied at a later date that such an invitation was beyond the mandate that they had received from Synod Arnhem 1981.
- f. We have received notification of the upcoming General Synod of our Dutch sister Churches to be held as of April 25, 1984, in Heemse. An invitation to send a delegate from the Canadian Reformed Churches was included.

## 2. Acts of General Synod Arnhem 1979

This Synod was convened for the purpose of appointing a professor of dogmatics at the Theological College at Kampen due to the forthcoming retirement of Prof. Dr. L. Doekes.

Prof. J. Kamphuis was appointed professor of dogmatics and Drs. D. Deddens was appointed to take Prof. Kamphuis' place, namely, as professor of ecclesiology.

## 3. Acts of General Synod Arnhem 1980

The purpose of this General Synod *ad hoc* was to appoint a professor of Old Testament at the Theological College at Kampen due to the forthcoming retirement of Prof. Drs. H.J. Schilder.

Appointed was Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann, professor at our Theological College at Hamilton.

## 4. Acts of General Synod Arnhem 1981

- a. This regular Synod dealt extensively with the *revision of the creeds, liturgical forms and prayers*.

- 1. The following were adopted after revision and declared free for use in the Churches:

The Apostles' Creed, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, Form for the Baptism of Infants, Form for the Baptism of Adults, Form for the Public Profession of Faith, Form for the Lord's Supper, Abbreviated Form for the Lord's Supper, Form for Discipline over members who have not made profession of faith, Form for the Ordination/Installation of Ministers of the Word, Form for the Ordination of Missionaries, Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, Form for the Solemnization of Marriage, Prayers for the Illumination by the Holy Spirit, Prayer for Thanksgiving, Prayers at the Opening and Closing of the meeting of Consistory, Classis and Synod, Prayers for the Opening and Closing of the meeting of the Deacons.

Regarding Article 9 of the Belgic Confession a committee was appointed to investigate whether or not 1 John 5:7 could be maintained as a proof-text for the Trinity.

- 2. Provisionally adopted, and not free for use in the Churches, were revisions of the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Canons of Dort as well as some Forms and several Prayers.

- b. Synod decided not to appoint general *deputies ad Art. 19, C.O.* (for indigent students), but to urge the deputies ad Art. 19 C.O. of the several Regional Synods to adopt among themselves a suitable form of cooperation.

- c. Theological students were strongly advised not to accept *student loans* from the government. The required repayment of the loans by ministers could mean extra financial burdens for the Churches.
- d. Much attention was paid to the *revision of the Psalm and Hymn Book* of our sister Churches. Synod again adopted several rhymings to be tested by the Churches.
- e. It was decided to introduce a classical examination for missionaries and to establish an *institute for the training of missionaries*. This institute will be independent and yet work in close cooperation with the Theological College.
- f. Synod adopted a letter to be sent to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in The Netherlands as an appeal for unity in the faith.
- g. Synod decided to invite the sister Churches abroad and the Churches with which provisional Ecclesiastical Contact is maintained to a Constituent meeting for a *Reformed International Conference*. (The invitation together with the agenda for the conference was received by General Synod Smithville 1980; see Acts Art. 153, B, 4, b).
- h. The Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the *Presbyterian Church in Korea* was continued in accordance with the adopted rules. It was reported that Prof. Dr. J. Douma had given guest-lectures at the Theological Seminary at Busan in 1980, and that during the same year Drs. J.M. Batteau and Drs. N.H. Gootjes had been sent out by the Netherlands Churches to serve at the Seminary as missionary professors.

It was decided to discontinue the financial support to the Seminary; its library, however, would still receive \$3,000 annually.

- i. A missionary lecturer has been sent out to teach at the Theological School of *the Churches of East-Sumba-Savu*. Ecclesiastical Fellowship with these Churches was continued.
- j. With the *Free Reformed Churches of Australia* and *Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* the Ecclesiastical Fellowship was continued.
- k. General Synod Groningen-Zuid 1978 had decided to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the *Igreja Presbiteriana Coreana do São Paulo*, but due to several reasons the relationship has not yet been realized.
- l. Synod decided to establish relations with the following Churches:

Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the *Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland*; the provisional relation of Ecclesiastical Contact with the *Free Church of Scotland*, the *Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka*, the *Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, *Second Presbytery*, the *Reformed Church of Japan* and, if certain conditions are met, with *Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* ("Dopperkerken").

With the following Churches initial contact will be continued: the *Reformed Churches of New Zealand*, the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church* in the USA, the *Igreja Presbiteriana Conservadora do Brasil* and the *National Presbyterian Church of Chile*.

The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad was instructed to seek contact with the *Presbyterian Church in America* (PCA) and with a Church in Nigeria, and to continue certain contacts in Europe.

With a view to the many contacts abroad, the Committee received the mandate to publish a bulletin in the English language every six months. Synod renewed the instruction to seek contact with other Churches whenever they would see a possibility for ecclesiastical fellowship and to prepare the realization of it in accordance with the adopted rules.

- m. Concerning the *Rules for Correspondence* Synod decided to request the sister Churches abroad to change Rule c as follows:

"The Churches shall inform each other as much and as soon as possible concerning proposals (c.q. reports) and decisions which pertain to linguistic or such like changes of the Confession or nonessential changes of the Church Order and the Liturgical Forms; concerning proposals for changes in essen-

tial points of doctrine, however, the sister Churches abroad shall receive ample opportunity (at least three years) to forward their judgment before binding decisions will be made."

Another change as proposed by Synod is that before the Churches abroad admit each other's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, the ministers shall submit a declaration from the Committee on Relations Abroad of their Churches that they are ministers in good standing.

- n. Synod decided to change the name of its Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad to "*Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad*." The argumentation for the change was that the old name caused misunderstanding in the English speaking Churches. While the Dutch word *correspondentie* may include the exercise of ecclesiastical fellowship between sister Churches, the English word *correspondence* means only exchange of letters.
- o. Regarding the *Canadian Reformed Churches* it was decided to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them in accordance with the adopted rules.

The Committee on Relations Abroad was instructed

1. to supply your Committee with information on the manner in which our sister Churches maintain correspondence with the Presbyterian Church in Korea;
2. to attempt to discuss (a) possible contrasting views as to the evaluation of the changes in the Dutch Church Order which the Canadian Committee was instructed to evaluate, and (b) the Dutch criticism;
3. to express the thankfulness of the Netherlands Churches that the instruction at the Theological College in Hamilton could continue without interruption and that the vacancy caused by the departure of Prof. H.M. Ohmann could be filled;
4. to pass on to the Netherlands Committee on the Revision of the *Church Book* the Canadian decisions re the *Book of Praise*.

## 5. Evaluation

- a. The revisions of the creeds, liturgical forms and prayers that were definitely adopted by General Synod Arnhem 1981, as mentioned above sub 4. a. 1. have been scrutinized by your Committee in accordance with the Rules for Correspondence. Your Committee declares that it considers the revisions to be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and in harmony with Reformed church polity.
- b. Concerning the proposed change of Rule c (see above sub 4. m), it should be noted that in 1967 (General Synod Amerfoort-West) our Netherlands sister Churches had adopted Rule c of the Rules for Correspondence with Churches Abroad as follows:

"to consult beforehand concerning possible changes of, or additions to, the Confession, Church Order and Liturgical Forms."

Our General Synods since 1954, however, consistently refused to accept the conditions of *prior consultation* as they considered that stipulation impractical and unnecessary. General Synod Hoogeveen (1969/1970) recognized the position of our Synods and judged that Rule c of our Rules for Correspondence guaranteed sufficiently the unity of the faith with our Churches.

It may be observed that the proposal to change Rule c can be considered an admission by our sister Churches that their old Rule c was indeed impractical. It was reported to Synod that when General Synod Groningen-Zuid 1978 adopted the revised Church Order, none of their corresponding sister Churches had sent any prior reaction.

The now proposed Rule c is introduced by the Netherlands Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad as clearer and as making it possible for the Canadian Reformed Churches to abolish their Rule c.

Your Committee, however, is of the opinion that the proposed Rule is more complicated than the old one. The distinction between essential and nonessential

changes as now proposed does not make the rule any clearer and is open to arbitrary application. Moreover, the second part of the proposed rule still implies *prior consultation beforehand*, but now with an undefined time-limit ("at least three years").

In the light of the decision of General Synod Orangeville 1968, Acts Art. 79, 6 (see also Report of Advisory Committee III, re Rules for Correspondence, page 96 and 97 of the Acts), our present Rule c is clear and provides a sufficient safeguard for maintaining the unity of the faith with Churches abroad.

- c. The second proposal to change the Rules for Correspondence pertains to the declaration to be submitted by a guest minister from abroad before he is granted the right to conduct services. The proposal is that the declaration will no longer be issued to the guest minister by the Committee of the Churches that are being visited but by the Committee of the Churches in which he is a minister. The change is in accordance with the decision of our General Synod Toronto 1974, Acts Art. 140. B. 3.
- d. Your Committee is surprised to read the instruction given by Synod to the Netherlands Committee on Relations Abroad (see above sub 4. o. b), namely, to attempt to discuss
  1. possible contrasting views as to the evaluation of the changes in the Dutch Church Order, which the Canadian Committee was instructed to evaluate, and
  2. the Dutch criticism.

While your Committee wondered about the meaning of this instruction, they noticed that the Report of the Netherlands Committee to Synod Arnhem 1981 makes mention of a personal discussion of a member of their Committee with Prof. Dr. J. Faber in *Clarion* regarding the question whether or not the Netherlands Churches had kept their rule of *prior consultation* when they adopted their revised Church Order. The Report then concludes, "Instead of criticizing the Netherlands Churches, Prof. Faber should have directed his criticism to the Canadian Committee."

As far as your Committee can gather from the official documents, a personal discussion inserted in the Report to General Synod was the only motive of Synod to give the above instruction to its Committee. Synod itself, however, does not appear sure about the issue since it speaks of *possible* contrasting views.

While your Committee has no intention of evaluating the above mentioned personal discussion, the fact that Synod Arnhem gave an instruction to its Committee regarding this matter, prompts your Committee to make some remarks.

Firstly, our Rules for Correspondence do not require that your Committee should scan all *proposals* concerning changes of, or additions to the Confession, Church Order and Liturgical Forms in our sister Churches and to judge whether or not the *proposals* to such changes and additions are considered acceptable. Rule c does not speak of *proposed* changes but of *adopted* changes. It would be very impractical and without much benefit if your Committee, not to mention our General Synods, had to react to all proposals submitted to the synods of our sister Churches — proposals which at a synod may be changed, amended, not acted upon and even rejected.

As far as the revised Dutch Church Order is concerned, it should be noted that two consecutive Synods of our sister Churches (1975 and 1978) dealt extensively with proposed revisions. Finally, in 1980, your Committee on Correspondence could report to General Synod Smithville that Synod Groningen-Zuid 1978 had adopted a revised Church Order, and that the Committee had scrutinized it, and declared it to be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and in harmony with Reformed church polity. Synod Smithville implicitly adopted this judgment as their own.

Secondly, it is to be borne in mind that not the Committee on Correspondence but a General Synod makes the final judgment whether or not a sister Church abides by the Reformed Creeds and Church Order, and whether or not changes

or additions are considered acceptable. The Committee, on the basis of their scrutiny, investigation and evaluation only makes recommendations to the General Synod of their Churches.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the question whether or not the Dutch Church Order as revised in 1978 is acceptable, could be answered only in 1980, and not earlier, by General Synod Smithville. Your Committee does not know of any valid criticism that may be directed at them in this respect.

## **6. Conclusion**

From the correspondence and the Acts of General Synods Arnhem 1979, 1980, and 1981, 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.

## **7. Recommendations**

Your Committee recommends to Synod

- a. not to accede to the request of General Synod Arnhem 1981 of our Netherlands sister Churches that their proposed Rule c for ecclesiastical fellowship (correspondence with Churches abroad) be adopted;
- b. 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. A few months after the close of Synod Smithville 1980 a letter was sent to the South African Deputies informing them of the decision of Synod to continue the correspondence relationship in force with Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika and telling them about some of the other significant decisions of Synod Smithville.
- b. A letter was received from the Deputies in South Africa on Sept. 21, 1981, informing us about the latest developments regarding the former congregation of the late Dr. C. VanderWaal (the so-called 14de laan - gemeenskap). They also requested a copy of the letter that we as Canadian deputies had sent to them about this congregation. They had mislaid this letter. To this we replied that we had sent them no special letter about this congregation, but that in response to letters from this congregation to us, we had referred them to the decision of the Synod of Toronto 1974 (Acts, Art. 57).
- c. Our Committee received a "Brief Report" of the Synod of Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke held at Johannesburg from April 16-20, 1982.
- d. On Oct. 8, 1982 we received a letter from the South African Deputies in which they apologized for not informing us about Synod Johannesburg 1982. We were also informed that this Synod had made a decision regarding the settling of brothers and sisters in the dispersion in Southern Africa. If brothers and sisters from abroad intend to settle in South Africa, they are requested to consult the Church of Johannesburg.
- e. In a letter received on July 6, 1983, the Deputies from South Africa notified us that Synod Johannesburg has adopted the rules of fraternal fellowship as drawn up by the Dutch sister Churches at Synod Arnhem 1981 (see under De Geref. Kerken in N.). They also mention that the former congregation of the late Dr. C. VanderWaal (the 14 de laan gemeenskap - Pretoria) has been admitted into the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA).

### **2. Acts of General Synod Pretoria 1980**

At the time of preparation of our report to General Synod Smithville 1980 we had not as yet received the Acts of Gen. Synod Pretoria 1980. However because of the importance of some of the matters we decided to report to Synod Smithville on some

of the highlights, as we gleaned them from the report of the South African Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Churches to Synod Pretoria 1980 and from the official Brief Report of Synod Pretoria 1980.

At this time we should mention some other matters of interest gleaned from the Acts of Synod Pretoria 1980:

- a. The situation at the time of Synod Pretoria 1980 was that the *Korean Presbyterian Church (Koryu-Pa)* had a "correspondent relationship" with Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, while deputies for Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke found it difficult and slow to get answers from Korea. At the same time, the "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland" has "ties of correspondence" with both Korean Presbyterian Church and Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. Synod decided to continue the efforts for contact with the Koryu-Pa.
- b. General Synod Pretoria 1980 decided to continue the correspondence with the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*.
- c. General Synod Pretoria discussed in particular the decision of the *Canadian Reformed Churches* at General Synod Coaldale to "recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as true Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ" and to offer the OPC the temporary relationship of "ecclesiastical contact." Synod decided to charge its deputies to give the matter further study.

The Acts mention that the newly appointed deputies for correspondence with foreign Churches were charged to continue the correspondence with the *Canadian Reformed Churches*.

- d. The newly appointed deputies for correspondence with foreign Churches were also charged to continue the correspondence with the *Free Reformed Churches in Australia*.
- e. Synod Pretoria 1980 spent a considerable amount of time discussing the report of "Deputies for Contact with Church Formations in South Africa." This report concerned in particular the relationship with *Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* (GKSA).

One of the obstacles for closer contact has been removed because these Churches have broken their relationship with the Synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. There was considerable reluctance at this Synod to regard Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika as "true Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ" because of differences in lifestyle etc.

Synod decided to appoint new deputies for contact with these Churches.

### 3. Acts of General Synod Johannesburg 1982.

General Synod of Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika met at Johannesburg on April 16, 17, 19 and 20, 1982. All three Churches, Johannesburg, Kaapstad, and Pretoria were legally represented. Of the decisions made by this Synod, we mention the following:

- a. General Synod Pretoria 1971 had judged that ministers in Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke should not function as "marriage solemnizers in government service" and decided not to grant the request to authorize ministers in the confederation of Churches to perform civil *marriages*. The Church of Pretoria was of the opinion that this was an improper decision and requested Synod Johannesburg 1982 to take away this decision. Synod decided to grant this request and decided that from now on it would be left to the freedom of the Churches to request a licence to perform marriages for a minister or other office-bearer. A set of rules for the above was adopted.
- b. The differences with *Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* have now been narrowed down to the following:
  1. Die Gereformeerde Kerk should break the ties with the RES.
  2. Die Gereformeerde Kerk should discontinue the practice of the so-called "double correspondence," for instance they have ecclesiastical relations with the

Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands.

3. Die Gereformeerde Kerk should condemn the practice of some of its ministers to conduct services in the "14de Laan Church" (a split from Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika).

The Synod appointed new deputies and they were charged to continue the discussions and report to the next Synod.

- c. General Synod Johannesburg 1982 decided to continue the existing relationship of *correspondence* with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches.

As far as the matter of "temporary ecclesiastical contact" was concerned, and as it is practised in both Canada and The Netherlands, there appeared to be some disagreement whether this was the proper way to proceed, especially because they did not want "two levels of correspondence."

It was decided not to "take over this model."

In this light, the decision with respect to the request of the Gereformeerde Kerken op Oost Soemba/Savoie for official ecclesiastical correspondence is strange. Synod felt that this might be desirable but would be very difficult, especially because of language differences and the lack of manpower on both sides. Synod then decided to instruct deputies to investigate to what extent the language differences would be an *impediment for the exercise of correspondence in accordance with the adopted rules and to look for a different kind of relationship that is Scripturally responsible* (emphasis-Comm).

Regarding the relationship with the Korean Presbyterian Church (Koryu-Pa), it was also decided to instruct deputies to *prepare a scripturally responsible form of ecclesiastical communion with the Korean Presbyterian Church, taking into consideration the differences in language and report to the next Synod* (emphasis-Comm).

As an example of difficulties in simple correspondence, it was reported that the Korean Presbyterian Church apologized in a letter, dated December 8, 1981, for not answering a letter from South Africa of April 30, 1979, while at the same time, neglecting to answer the questions in that letter.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the correspondence and the *Acts* received we may conclude with gratitude that Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika desire to be faithful to God's Word, the Reformed Creeds and the Church Order.

#### 5. 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. Form of Government

Synod Smithville 1980 charged our Committee to evaluate the Form of Government and to pass this evaluation on to you. On the surface this appears to be a rather straightforward request; however, we ran into difficulties because when we finally received the required material from Korea, we discovered that it was written in Korean characters, which none of us could read. Upon the suggestion of the Korean Deputies, the Rev. M. VanBeveren visited a certain Rev. Y. Ch. Kim in Toronto who supplied us with a verbal summary of the contents of the Korean material. While being thankful for this cooperation, the Committee was of the opinion that an actual written translation would be more helpful since it would allow a much more accurate scrutiny of the Form of Government.

To that end we once again approached the Rev. Bruce F. Hunt in Philadelphia, the former OPC missionary in Korea and a great help to us in researching the Historical Review. He obtained for us the services of Mr. Hong-Kwun Chung, a former teacher of Oriental languages in the Koryu-Pa Seminary-College at Busan. He, in turn, was assisted as far as the English language was concerned by Mr. Dwaine Whitley, an elder in the OPC.

After some time these men supplied us with a translation of the Korean material. Upon receipt of this document we decided to share it with the Dutch Deputies. In addition, we discovered that what we had was not a revised edition of the entire Form of Government, but a list of the *changes* that had been made.

As a Committee we have carefully studied these changes. We have found many interesting things in them, but nothing that is of such a nature that would hinder us from stating categorically that these changes are consistent with the principles of Reformed church polity.

In terms of contents, these changes deal with some of the following subjects: the various officers in the Church — lay evangelist, woman exhorter, licensed preachers, candidates for the ministry, the installed pastor, pastor emeritus, meritorious pastor, military chaplain, retired pastor, institutionary chaplain, missionary, subsidiary military pastor, elder, diaconate, financial matters, duties of a Session, congregational meetings, duty of the Presbytery, authority of the General Assembly, training for the ministry, examination of candidates, ceremony of installation, a minister coming from another denomination, and other matters.

This list of subjects immediately indicates that the Korean Form of Government is both more elaborate and deals with topics not mentioned in our Church Order. Of special curiosity might be the position of a "woman exhorter." She is a lady over 50 years of age, elected by two-thirds of the congregation, but not ordained. Her task is to visit the sick, the weak, and those under trial. The designation "meritorious pastor" is another one that rings strange in our ears; however, it describes a pastor who retires at 70 years of age and whose merits are remembered by the Presbytery which in turn conveys upon him this honorary title.

We could continue describing the contents of this document; however, that would serve little purpose beyond satisfying the curious. If Synod or its Advisory Committee would deem it beneficial to have copies made of this material, the Committee will gladly comply.

In short, we find nothing in these changes that constitutes an obstacle with respect to the recognition of The Presbyterian Church in Korea as a Church being governed by the principles of Reformed or Presbyterian Church government.

Having scrutinized these changes, there still remains the matter of the rest of the Form of Government. It is not available, as far as we could ascertain, in the English language; however, from speaking with Dr. K.S. Lee and Dr. S.G. Hur in Groningen, we learned that the remainder contains no surprises and is in line with your classic Presbyterian Form of Government. It differs not at all from the principles of Presbyterian church government as found with the OPC, the Free Church at Scotland, and so on.

Taking this into account, as well as the assurances of the Dutch Deputies, we have as a Committee no reason to suspect the remaining Articles of the Form.

Hence, the Form of Government in the Presbyterian Church in Korea does not form an impediment to recognition of these Churches as true Churches of Our Lord.

## **2. Communications**

Synod Smithville also mandated our Committee to deal with the state of communications with the Korean Churches and to evaluate whether a correspondence relationship could be responsibly maintained. Needless to say, this part of our charge has a difficult side to it seeing that it is impossible for us to predict how things might develop in the future.

At best, we can only point you to the following factors:

- a. For quite a number of years we had difficulties establishing a proper line of communications with the Korean Churches. Then in 1980 the Fraternal Relations Committee informed us that this was the result of internal difficulties and the fact that the material being requested was still in the preparatory stage. Furthermore, they promised to do whatever was possible to improve the line of communications.
- b. Since receiving this assurance in May of 1980 we have had no real reason to put the matter to the test.  
Our attention was focused on obtaining a translation of the material sent and of considering their request for correspondence with our Churches.

It may, however, be helpful to inform you that there are indications that communications have improved. In March 1983 we received a brief report *in English* of the 32nd General Assembly held in September of 1982. Its highlights included the following:

- 150 Churches which had previously left The Presbyterian Church in Korea, returned;
  - all seminary graduates shall serve in the Churches for two years before ordination;
  - one more Presbytery (Taegu) was organized and the number of Presbyteries is now 14;
  - current relations with other Churches:
    - Free Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Vrij)
    - Free Reformed Churches in Australia
    - Reformed Church in South Africa
    - Orthodox Presbyterian Church
    - Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod
    - Overseas Missionary Fellowship
  - newly established relations with
    - Reformed Church in Japan
    - Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
  - statistics — 736 Churches (including unorganized)  
153,862 total members (reunited Churches not included)
  - missionary work:
    - Taiwan — 2 missionary families
    - Brazil, Spain, France, West Germany, Canada, Japan, USA (among Korean immigrants)
    - South-East Asia — 10 missionaries planned among the native peoples.
- c. In connection with this, it should also be mentioned that the Dutch Deputies who requested the reaction of the Korean Churches to our last Historical Review (see Acts 1980) received a rather quick and extensive reply, again in the English language, from the Fraternal Relations Committee.
  - d. Finally, every year now we receive a notification of the upcoming General Assembly and an invitation, also in English, to be present. Our response has been to extend to them our best wishes, but at the same time to remind them that no official relationship is yet in place between our respective Churches.
  - e. From these remarks, you can see that the Korean Churches appear to be making a more concerted attempt to answer inquiries addressed to them, are informing others of developments within their Churches, and are doing so in the English language. No doubt for our sister Churches in The Netherlands the matter of communication has been helped considerably by the presence of Profs. Batteau and Gootjes in Korea. In the event of difficulties, these men can be relied on to supply the necessary information.

In summary, we may say that while there are indications of improvement in the matter of communications, we can as Committee make no predictions about the future.

### 3. Language

In addition to the foregoing matter, there is also the whole question of language. In a sense this presents us with an even greater difficulty. For while we are appreciative of the fact that the Korean brothers write to us in English, it is nevertheless so that we as a Committee are called upon "to take mutual heed that the corresponding Churches do not deviate from the Reformed Confession in doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline." To fulfill such a charge requires that the Committee be familiar with the Korean language, which we are not and probably never will be. The only way that we can "take heed" is to do so indirectly through English summaries of the actions of the General Assembly, through translations of pertinent material, through using the good offices of Profs. Batteau and Gootjes and through discussions at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. In short, language difficulties mean that we cannot exercise the first rule of correspondence to the same degree and with the same accuracy as we currently do with the other sister Churches.

And now the question: "Should this therefore lead us to reject the request of the Korean Churches to establish sister Church relations with them?" We do not think so! What we have with the Korean Churches, and what we will be confronted with more often in the future, is a request for a relationship with a Church that speaks a different language, has a different social and cultural background, and has a communication system that may not be nearly as advanced as ours. The request from the Korean Churches for correspondence is the first from a Church in the so-called "Third World," and we can be sure that it will be followed by more. What we are saying is that if we reject the Korean Churches on the ground of language difficulties we will be, by that very fact, rejecting many other Churches with whom the same problems will be encountered. In effect, we would be turning our backs to the many small, struggling Churches in the "Third World."

In this connection we would point you to that part of our report dealing with South Africa wherein mention is made of a request from De Gereformeerde Kerk op Oost Soemba/Savoë for correspondence. The Synod of Johannesburg 1982 reacted to this by instructing the deputies to investigate whether language would be an impediment to correspondence and to *look for a different kind of relationship* (emphasis — ours). In the case of the Korean Churches, Synod Johannesburg charged the deputies to prepare a Scripturally responsible form of ecclesiastical communion with the Presbyterian Church in Korea taking into consideration the difference in language.

The South African sister Churches would appear to be convinced that in the face of linguistic difficulties correspondence is not an ideal relationship to apply to either Oost Soemba/Savoë or to Korea. They seem to be looking in the direction of an alternative to correspondence.

We might also inform you that at the meeting in Groningen some time was spent informally discussing the matter of the rules of correspondence and their suitability for Churches that are not of Dutch origin. The reaction of the delegates was that a number of problems were being encountered and that attention should be given to making the rules more flexible.

Perhaps in anticipation of these difficulties the Church at Surrey overtured Synod 1980 to "study the feasibility of having another, less comprehensive relationship (i.e. a relationship different from correspondence) with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and possibly other Churches of our Lord such as the Koryu-Pa." Various grounds were attached to this request (see Acts 1980, Art. 154, 2, d, e, f, g). Synod reacted to this request in negative fashion stating in its conclusions:

1. "There is no reason to establish a different form of permanent ecclesiastical relationship with other Churches in the world than as regulated in the rules for correspondence.

2. These rules can be applied realistically according to the circumstances, like the lesser or greater degree of difference between the Churches" (Acts 1980, Art. 154).

In coming to these Conclusions Synod made a number of Considerations, and a case could be made, for stating that some of them are of doubtful character. To say that "rules for permanent interchurch relations must be dictated by Scripture and not by reality" would appear to be a false dilemma. And then to continue on in that same Consideration to state "these Scriptural rules should be applied realistically" makes it almost contradictory. In short, we have our reservations about the manner of Synod Smithville's response to the Church at Surrey.

In any case, if we read this decision properly then it would appear to give us as a Committee the right to propose to you something which is flexible within the context of the rules for correspondence. The way that South Africa appears to be moving is then ruled out. No alternative relationship, but rather different applications of the one relationship called "correspondence." In line with this Synod Smithville charged your Committee "to make recommendations to the Synod regarding a future relationship with these (Korean) Churches." In light of the Conclusions of Acts 1980 Art. 154 we read this as leaving the door open to other possibilities within the context of correspondence, for it does not say that we are to make recommendations regarding correspondence, but "regarding a future relationship."

#### 4. Correspondence and Korea

But where does this leave us with respect to Korea? As Committee we have spent quite some years occupying ourselves with the Korean question. We have sent you a number of reports, including an extensive Historical Review in two parts. We have evaluated the Confessions, church government, history and character of these Churches. In summary, we must state that there is nothing that forms an impediment to our recognizing the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koryu-Pa) as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and to entering into an official relationship with this Church. The only question that remains is, "what kind of a relationship — correspondence in its present form or correspondence in a revised form?"

As a Committee we recommend to you that the current rules for correspondence, in a *revised form*, be offered to the Presbyterian Church in Korea. In terms of revision, we propose to add the words "insofar as the circumstances will allow" to rule a., to change "Church Order" in rule c. to "Form of Government." We further realize that rule d. may generate some debate and confusion in the Churches, as if suddenly every visiting minister from Korea has access to the pulpit in the Canadian Reformed Churches; however, the understanding has always been that a visiting minister from a sister Church must have a declaration of good standing from his Church and be invited by a local consistory to lead in the worship services. Hence, this rule offers no particular problems.

In addition, to offering the Presbyterian Church in Korea these slightly revised rules, we would also recommend that you give our Committee the mandate to approach the sister Churches concerning the matter of interchurch relations. As things now stand the South African Churches may be about to enter on a different pathway in searching for an alternative relationship. We are opting, if Synod agrees with our recommendation, for a greater degree of flexibility in the application of correspondence. Meanwhile the Dutch Churches continue to stress the matter of prior consultation in their rules. What this means is that the sister Churches are moving in different directions on the matter of ecclesiastical relations. Surely that is cause for concern and for opening up discussion on this matter. It may be that such a discussion will lead to one set of rules that is mutually acceptable and sufficiently flexible to apply to all Churches.

#### 5. Recommendations

On the basis of the above, your Committee recommends:

- a. that the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koryu-Pa) be recognized as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- b. that we offer to them the status of sister Church governed by the following rules of correspondence:
  - i To take mutual heed insofar as the circumstances will allow that the corresponding Churches do not deviate from the Reformed Confession in doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline.
  - ii 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.
  - iii To inform each other concerning changes of, or additions to, the Confession, Form of Government and Liturgical Forms, while the corresponding Churches pledge to express themselves on the question whether such changes or additions are considered acceptable.
  - iv To accept each other's attestations and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments.
  - v To give account to each other regarding correspondence with third parties.
- c. that we inform the Presbyterian Church in Korea about the regulations that govern visiting ministers, namely the need for a declaration of good standing to be issued to the minister;
- d. that the Committee for Correspondence be charged to initiate a discussion with the sister Churches regarding the application of the rules of correspondence to various Churches and the creation of alternative relationships. Furthermore, that an attempt be made to come to a uniform set of rules that would be flexible but also faithful to the principles of interchurch relations.

#### 6. Criticism of the Historical Review by the Dutch Deputies

In dealing with the Korean matter there remains still one part to be dealt with, namely "to evaluate the criticism of the Deputies of the Netherlands sister Churches on the Historical Review." As Committee we have evaluated the criticism received and published the results of that evaluation in an article printed in the November 6, 1981 issue of *Clarion* (a copy of this article is appended to this report). The conclusion was that we had found no reason to amend or retract our conclusions/consequences as stated in the Historical Review.

Subsequent to this the Dutch Deputies were so kind as to present us with a copy of a report written for them by Prof. J. M. Batteau entitled, "The Hap Dong Presbyterian Church Group in Korea: An Overview." This report was prepared on site in Korea and gives a great deal of additional material and insight into the Presbyterian Church situation in Korea.

It should also be said that the Dutch Deputies had commissioned this report in large measure because they were desirous to check the validity of our Historical Review. And what does it say now about the Review? To quote Prof. Batteau, "The Canadian report, by the way, is an excellent and accurate one, and deserves careful reading by all those interested in these questions" (p. 9). His findings in the end run parallel to our own, and on the matter of the Hap Dong, constitute an elaboration on what we have found.

In light of the comments of Prof. Batteau, we remain more convinced than ever that our conclusions/consequences are correct.

We would, however, like to clear up a misunderstanding which has crept into Prof. Batteau's report, as well as into the reports of some of our sister Churches. Prof. Batteau wrote, "the Report-Visscher recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches offer a sister Church relationship to the Hap-Dong Church (which?) if they would indeed offer such a relationship to the Kosin Church (another name for the Presbyterian Church in Korea [Koryu-Pa] — Committee)."

In actual fact we recommended nothing of the sort. Under the heading *Consequences* we stated, "In light of the above, your Committee believes it to be only fair and

honest that, should the General Synod 1980 decide to offer to establish an official relationship with the Koryu-Pa, *because they have requested this*, we should be *willing to consider the establishment of a similar relationship with the Hap Dong, if so requested by these Churches*" (emphasis ours — Committee). It can thus be seen that we were careful in our wording and placed the onus on the Hap Dong. If *they* approach us and if *they* request a relationship with us, then we in turn will have to be fair and evenhanded with them. Hence our Review makes no mention of us "offering" a relationship to the Hap Dong.

With these remarks, we conclude our historical investigation and maintain our conclusions/consequences.

## VIII THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)

### 1. Delegates

Upon being notified by the Convening Church, De Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands, that the Constituent Assembly of the International Conference of Reformed Churches would be held from October 26 — November 4, 1982, in Groningen, The Netherlands, the Committee delegated Rev. M. VanBeveren and Rev. J. Visscher to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches. This delegation was made in response to our mandate "that the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad be authorized to send two delegates to this Conference" (Acts, Art. 153).

### 2. Appointments

The Assembly appointed the Rev. M. VanBeveren as Clerk and later made him the Provisional Secretary of the ICRC. The Assembly appointed the Rev. J. Visscher as a member of the Committee on the Constitution, together with the Rev. J.N. Macleod of Scotland and the Rev. D.W.H. Thomas of Ireland, and later made him the alternate Provisional Secretary. We relay this information to you to show to what extent your delegates participated in this Assembly.

### 3. Report

In reporting on this Assembly we would refer you in the first place to the article written by one of your delegates and published in *Clarion* (Year-End Issue 1982), to the official *Proceedings* and to the Constitution and Regulations (see the attached enclosures in the appendix). From these documents a fairly well-rounded picture can be obtained of the actions of the Assembly.

### 4. Questions, Reservations and Objections

As a further elaboration on this Assembly we would like to draw your attention to some questions that were raised both before and after the Assembly met:

#### a. *Invitations*

To begin with it should be mentioned that the organization, as well as the invitations extended to this Assembly, was firmly in the hands of the Dutch Deputies. They had received a mandate from Synod Arnhem 1981 as to who to invite and what to discuss. This is not to say that there was no flexibility in the agenda, for there was; however, in the matter of invitations there was no flexibility. We approached the Dutch Deputies with the request to invite the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They later replied that such a request went beyond the mandate they had received and the list of Churches they had been told to invite. Needless to say, we lamented this development.

#### b. *Sister Churches Only?*

Another issue that arose regarding invitations to particular Churches centered on the opinion of some who wrote in various Church magazines that they would have preferred an Assembly composed of the original four sister Churches: Australia, Canada, The Netherlands and South Africa.

While we can understand and sympathize with such an opinion, we must point out that such a viewpoint had been rendered untenable by the passage of time and developments. What we mean by that is this: there is no way that the Dutch Churches could have extended invitations to an Assembly restricted to the original four, and in so doing left out the Korean Churches with whom they also have correspondence. By the same token, it would have been impossible for the Australian Churches to have accepted an invitation which would have bypassed their sister Churches in Korea. The only real alternative the Dutch Churches had was to restrict the Assembly to those Churches with whom a correspondence relationship was in force and to refrain from sending invitations to those Churches with which preliminary ecclesiastical contact had been established. No doubt in order to make the Assembly as international as possible, they rejected such an alternative.

c. *Order of Business*

The order of business at the Assembly is another matter that has come under fire. The original agenda was set up in such a way that differences in Confessions, church polity, relations with other Churches, and missions would be discussed first. Thereafter the matter of the constitution and regulations would be dealt with.

We, as Canadian delegates, disagreed with the order of procedure. It was our concern that if the agenda remained structured in this way, that then a lot of time would be spent discussing and debating, but very little would be accomplished in terms of establishing a firm constitutional basis for the ICRC. The Canadian Churches had sent us to The Netherlands at a considerable expense and they would surely expect more for their money than a report of some speeches that were delivered and some debates that were held. They would want to know what concrete steps had been taken towards the establishment of the ICRC, how it would function and should we join. In light of these considerations, we therefore requested that the matter of formulating the constitution and regulations of the ICRC be given primacy of place on the agenda and that the papers to be delivered be scheduled to accommodate this change. The Assembly decided to do so.

Now, this change of emphasis was not met with agreement by all. Some were of the opinion that first all of the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, between the Church Order and the Form of Government, between fraternal relations and correspondence must be ironed out and a common basis established before we could go over to constitutional matters and the establishment of the ICRC.

This view immediately came under attack because, as some delegates stated, we came here precisely because our Churches in their Assemblies/Synods were convinced that we have the Reformed faith in common. If that basic assumption had not been there, we would never have been delegated in the first place. Besides, others remarked, it would be rather optimistic to assume that those differences that do exist between us could be resolved after a few papers and several days of discussion. This is not to say that the differences between Churches originating from the continental Reformed tradition and those arising from the English-Scottish Presbyterian tradition are major, but surely it would take more than just one Assembly to understand each other fully and to smooth out all of the wrinkles that remain in our relationships.

Still, the fact that the Assembly subsequently decided to deal with the constitution first should not be construed as an indication that now all of the remaining differences would be swept under the carpet. Rather, it showed that the Assembly was of the opinion that in spite of our differences we were one in the Lord and that we should proceed to lay the foundation for an organization that would in the future assist in bringing that unity to even greater and clearer expression.

d. *The Three Forms of Unity Only?*

Another decision of the Assembly that has come under critical scrutiny is that in the Basis of the Constitution both the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are mentioned. Some appear to be of the opinion that only the Three Forms of Unity should have been used in the Basis. At the bottom of such a view lies the opinion that either the Three Forms of Unity are sufficient for the task and/or they are superior to the Westminster Standards in various ways.

Now we do not want to launch into a discussion of the merits and demerits of respective Confessions; however, we would like to point out that such a viewpoint is either insensitive or unhistorical, or both. For many years the Reformed Churches have recognized that the Westminster Standards belong to that group of Confessions called Reformed. Every minister and student of symbolics is aware of that fact. Hence why the move to exclude the one and in so doing elevate the other? Also, it would be rather contradictory if the Australian, Canadian, and Dutch Churches, who have all recognized the Reformed character of the Westminster Standards, would suddenly support a move to exclude them from the Basis. Surely that would and could only be interpreted as an insult. One does not have to think about how we would react to an attempt to exclude our Confessions from something as important as the Basis of the ICRC.

e. *Membership*

With respect to the matter of membership in the ICRC, it should be noted that the Assembly was of the opinion that it had no alternative but to make those Churches represented at Groningen, charter members. This means that if they decide to join they will be admitted as members and be in a position to evaluate future applications for membership. If, however, it can be proven that any of the charter members are not in harmony with the Basis, their membership can be terminated. After ample discussion with the delegates, plus close examination of the various reports on correspondence, your Committee is of the opinion that no objections can be brought against any of the charter members that would disqualify them from membership in the ICRC.

f. *Authority*

On the point of authority, it should be clearly noted that the decisions of the ICRC shall be "advisory in character." The ICRC is not an attempt to build a super Church or an attempt to create an hierarchical structure that would lord it over the member Churches. Its purpose is to serve, not to rule, to advise, not to legislate.

g. *Benefits?*

Finally, the question has been asked, "what benefits do we derive as Churches from the ICRC?" To some extent that may be answered by pointing to the Purpose of the ICRC. There emphasis is placed on the Conference as a channel to express and promote the unity of faith, to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship, to promote missionary cooperation between Churches, to study common problems and issues, and to present a Reformed testimony to the world. Needless to say, these aims speak for themselves.

In addition, we as Committee, would draw your attention not just to the question, "what can we as Church get out of the ICRC?" but also "what contribution can we make to the ICRC?" To this more positive and constructive question, we would answer, "quite a few."

The international Reformed community that the ICRC would represent will always be a small one, composed in all probability of quite a number of young Churches from the Third World. As such these Churches are very much in need of various forms of assistance, and then we do not think primarily of financial assistance, but of advice and counsel in the areas of church government, theological education, missions, ethical matters and so forth. For this they look very much in the direction of the more established Reformed Churches. For instance,

at the Assembly questions arose as to whether our Theological College could be of assistance in training ministers for some of the smaller Churches. We were asked about the possibility of the Australian Churches cooperating with the mission work that the Church at Toronto is doing in Irian Jaya. Suggestions were made with regard to the development of a newsletter in the area of missions, as well as missions training, principles, practices and cooperation. In this way the list of areas that lend themselves to cooperative efforts can be expanded.

Yes, and the Canadian Reformed Churches can play a vital role in all of these developments. We are not large in number, but in terms of heritage, we are rich indeed. Surely, it is incumbent upon us to share what the Lord has given us, to be good stewards of His gifts and to be a hand and a foot to each other, not just in our local Churches, but also in the larger Reformed community.

h. *Finances*

At the present time very little is known about the overall costs of the ICRC; however, it is expected that these will not be large or excessive. A formula is being worked on that will take into account both the size of the Church and its financial capabilities.

i. *Other Particulars*

The Convening Church for the first meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches will be the Free Church of Scotland. The date has been set at Sept. 3-13, 1985. The place is Edinburgh, Scotland.

The Provisional Committee has been appointed and consists of Rev. J.N. Macleod (Scotland), Rev. D.W.H. Thomas (Northern Ireland) and Mr. D.J. Van Wijnen (The Netherlands).

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Free Church of Scotland have decided to join the ICRC. They are, as far as we know, the first Churches to do so.

j. *In Summary*

From the whole line of reasoning found in this report, it has become obvious that your Committee is very much in favour of the Canadian Reformed Churches joining the ICRC. As far as we can see there is no valid reasons why we should not request membership in this Conference and do what we can to advance the cause of the Reformed faith on an international scale.

Your Committee would once again advise that a delegation be sent to the next meeting composed of two members of the Committee and one theological professor as advisor. We favour a delegation of such a makeup because many issues that arise can only be debated properly and understood fully if the delegates are familiar with the matters of ecclesiastical correspondence and its recent issues and developments.

We would also urge you to recommend the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for membership in the Conference.

Among the issues that we would suggest for future discussion and debate by the ICRC at Edinburgh are the matter of the Church, the covenant, and inter-church relations.

Finally, we would urge you to invite the ICRC to hold its second meeting in Canada as guest of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

## 5. Recommendations

Your Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

- a. that the Canadian Reformed Churches agree to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches;
- b. that the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad be authorized to send, in accordance with the Constitution of the ICRC, two of its members as delegates to the first meeting of the ICRC to be held in Edinburgh in 1985, and that Dr. J. Faber be designated to attend as advisor;

- c. that the Committee for Correspondence be charged to recommend for membership in the ICRC the Orthodox Presbyterian Church;
- d. that the Committee be authorized to inform the Convening Church of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches would like to see the following subjects placed on the agenda:
  - i the doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions;
  - ii the doctrine of the Covenant in the Reformed Confessions;
  - iii the exercise of interchurch relations;
- e. that the Committee be authorized to invite the ICRC to hold its second meeting to be held in 1989 in Vancouver, BC as guests of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
- f. that the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad report to the next General Synod on the activities of the ICRC.

Respectfully submitted by your Committee  
 August 9, 1983  
 E. C. Baartman  
 A. C. Lengkeek  
 M. VanBeveren  
 J. Visscher (Convener)

<sup>1</sup>"An Update on the Korean Connection" in *Clarion* (Nov. 6, 1981)."

<sup>2</sup>A Report on The Constituent Assembly of the International Conference of Reformed Churches' (a slightly amended version appeared in *Clarion* [Year End Issue, 1982])"

<sup>3</sup>The Constitution and Regulations of the ICRC, along with the Interim Rules.

<sup>4</sup>The Proceedings of the ICRC."

(\*sent to General Synod only)

## CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

### ARTICLE I — NAME

The name shall be The International Conference of Reformed Churches.

### ARTICLE II — BASIS

The Basis of the Conference shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).

### ARTICLE III — PURPOSE

The purpose of the Conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member Churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member Churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member Churches in the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member Churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

### ARTICLE IV — MEMBERSHIP

1. Those Churches shall be admitted as members which:
  - a. adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis;
  - b. furnish
    - i their confessional standards;
    - ii their form of government;

- iii their form of subscription;
  - iv their declaratory acts (if applicable);
  - c. are accepted by a two-thirds majority vote of the member Churches, every member Church having one vote;
  - d. 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.
2. Termination of membership shall be by a two-thirds majority whenever the Conference is of the opinion that the member Church in its doctrine and/or practice is no longer in agreement with the Basis.

#### **ARTICLE V — AUTHORITY**

The conclusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member Churches are urged to receive the decisions of the Conference and are recommended to work towards their implementation.

#### **ARTICLE VI — AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the member Churches. The proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference. He shall send it to the member Churches immediately.

### **REGULATIONS**

#### **ARTICLE I — MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE**

1. The Conference shall convene every four years.
2. Each meeting of the Conference shall determine the time, place and convening Church of the next Conference.

#### **ARTICLE II — EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

The Conference shall elect the following officers: a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary.

1. The chairman shall:
  - a. call the meeting to order at the appointed time and see to it that each session is properly opened and closed;
  - b. insure that the matters on the agenda are dealt with as expeditiously as possible;
  - c. put to the meeting every motion that is made and duly seconded, as well as take the vote;
  - d. rule on all points of order, subject always to an appeal from two voting delegates.
2. The vice-chairman shall:
  - a. take the chair when the chairman desires to express himself on any question before the meeting.
  - b. assume the duties and privileges of the chairman in his absence;
  - c. render all possible assistance to the chairman.
3. The recording secretary shall:
  - a. call the roll every day once the devotions have concluded;
  - b. keep an accurate record of all the proceedings of the meeting;
  - c. insure that all documents are properly cared for;
  - d. forward three copies of the proceedings to the member Churches as soon as possible after compilation.
4. The corresponding secretary shall:
  - a. during the meeting of the Conference, assist the recording secretary whenever and wherever possible;
  - b. in between the meeting of the Conference.
    - i attend to all the correspondence:

- ii receive all reports from committees of the Conference and distribute them to the member Churches;
  - iii assist the convening Church;
  - iv publish materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference;
  - v report to the next meeting of the Conference on his activities and in the interim be responsible to the Interim Committee.
5. The Executive shall manage the proceedings of the meetings, arrange and propose the business to be transacted in every session and make recommendations concerning committees.

#### **ARTICLE III — INTERIM COMMITTEE**

The Interim Committee shall consist of the chairman, the vice-chairman and the recording secretary.

It shall:

- 1. oversee the work of the corresponding secretary;
- 2. invite one of the alternate committee members to serve when necessary;
- 3. report to the next meeting of the Conference;
- 4. be dismissed subsequent to its report to the next meeting of the Conference.

#### **ARTICLE IV — COMMITTEES**

- 1. The Conference may appoint a committee to study any matter that is deemed to be of mutual concern to the member Churches.
- 2. Every attempt shall be made to make the members of these committees as representative as possible.
- 3. Committee reports shall be in the hands of the corresponding secretary at least two years prior to the next meeting of the Conference.

#### **ARTICLE V — PARTICIPANTS**

The following are to be seated at the meetings of the Conference:

- 1. Voting delegates from the member Churches.  
Each member Church shall be entitled to send two voting delegates to the meeting.
- 2. Advisory delegates from the member Churches.  
Each member Church may appoint two advisors, but they shall have no vote.
- 3. Observer delegates from Churches that have made application for membership in the Conference.  
They may be invited to take part in all discussions but will not be accorded the right to vote nor be present at closed sessions.
- 4. Visiting delegates from Churches which have not yet applied for membership.  
They shall be granted the right to attend the open meetings of the Conference and have extended to them the usual courtesies for such occasions.

#### **ARTICLE VI — CONVOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE**

- 1. The convening Church shall organize a prayer service prior to the opening session of the Conference.
- 2. The convening Church shall appoint one of its members to preside at the opening of the Conference.
- 3. The convener shall designate three delegates who will collect, examine and report on the credentials of each delegation.
- 4. The convener shall supervise the election of the executive officers.

#### **ARTICLE VII — AGENDA MATERIAL**

- 1. The Conference shall place on its agenda;
  - a. correspondence from member Churches;

- b. applications for membership from other Churches;
  - c. reports from its special committees and corresponding secretary;
  - d. reports from its Interim Committee;
  - e. recommendations from any two member Churches to extend an invitation to another Church to send observers to the Conference.
2. Materials received for the agenda should be received by the corresponding secretary one year in advance. Material received less than one year before the opening of the next meeting of the Conference shall only be considered if the Conference so decides.
  3. The agenda must be finalized three months in advance and a copy sent to all member Churches.

**ARTICLE VIII — RULES OF ORDER**

1. To obtain the floor each speaker must be recognized by the chair. He shall address himself to the chairman with decorum and respect.
2. If a delegate fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the chairman shall call him to order.
3. If any delegate has spoken twice on a given issue, others who have not yet spoken shall be given priority by the chairman.
4. When the chairman believes that a motion has been sufficiently discussed, he may propose that debate be drawn to a close. Any delegate convinced of the same may move to close the discussion.
5. Decisions shall be taken on the basis of a simple majority of the votes cast, with the exception of Articles IV, 1. c, IV, 2, VI, of the Constitution and Article X of the Regulations.

**ARTICLE IX — FINANCES**

(remains to be determined by the Conference)

**ARTICLE X — AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS**

These Regulations may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

The proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the corresponding secretary one year prior to the meeting of the Conference.

**INTERIM RULES**

**ARTICLE I — THE CONVENING CHURCH**

The Free Church of Scotland is proposed as the convening Church of the first International Conference of Reformed Churches.

The *date*: September 3-13, 1985. The *place*: Edinburgh, Scotland.

(The alternate convening Church: The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands).

**ARTICLE II — THE PROVISIONAL SECRETARY**

The Rev. M. VanBeveren (Canada) is designated as the provisional secretary.

(The alternate provisional secretary: Rev. J. Visscher [Canada]).

**ARTICLE III — THE PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE**

The committees for interchurch relations in Ireland, The Netherlands and Scotland shall each appoint one member to serve on the Provisional Committee.

(The alternate committee: The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.)

**ARTICLE IV — THE CURRENT PARTICIPANTS**

- a. The Churches represented at the Constituent Assembly who later agree to for-

mally join the International Conference of Reformed Churches shall be recognized as established members of the Conference.

- b. These Churches shall notify the provisional secretary as soon as possible about the decision of their respective Assembly/Synod to join the ICRC.

#### **ARTICLE V — THE PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS**

- a. Each currently participating Church will be asked to submit to the provisional secretary a list of Churches whose doctrine and practice is known by them to be in harmony with the Basis of the Conference.
- b. The provisional secretary will send to these recommended Churches a copy of the Constitution-Regulations and the Interim Rules, together with a letter of information stating that they may apply for membership in the Conference.
- c. Applications for membership should be received by the provisional secretary no later than nine months prior to the first Conference.

#### **ARTICLE VI — THE AGENDA**

As per the Regulations, with the exception of the time factor mentioned in Art. VII, 2.

#### **ARTICLE VII — THE FINANCES**

- a. All costs of publishing and distributing the *Proceedings* of the Constituent Assembly will be borne by The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.
- b. All additional costs will be reimbursed on the basis of an equitable assessment levied on the member Churches.
- c. The Provisional Committee shall recommend to Churches, as soon as they agree to become members, to designate a sum which they will be prepared to contribute to the expense and benevolent fund of the Conference as a provisional financial agreement.
- d. The Provisional Committee shall serve the first meeting of the Conference with a proposal regarding an equitable assessment formula.

### **COMMITTEE ON CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHURCHES ABROAD AN ADDITIONAL REPORT TO SYNOD 1983**

Esteemed Brethren,

After submitting to you our Report, dated August 9, 1983, we have received some additional correspondence that should be brought to your attention.

#### **THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

##### **Acts of Synod Kelmscott 1983**

The 13th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held at Kelmscott, Western Australia meet from May 14-24, 1983. From the *Acts* we would like to mention some of the highlights:

1. Under the heading *Church Book* the Synod decided to adopt the new Psalm section and the Forms of the Canadian Reformed Churches. With respect to the latter, several criticisms were voiced and the Canadian Churches will be written and amendments suggested. As to the Hymns, Synod decided to accept only some for use in the Churches. They are Hymn 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 29, 32, 34, 36, 39, 40, 41, 44, 47, 49, 50, 53, 58, 59, 63. No criteria are given that explain why some are accepted and others rejected.
2. With respect to the *Church Order* the Synod adopted a revised version. Since the full text is not printed in the *Acts*, we cannot report on this revision at this time. As soon as a copy is received, we will scrutinize it and send you our recommendations.
3. As for the matter of *Bible translation* the Synod made a decision to recommend the

Revised Standard Version (1971 edition) for use in the Churches.

4. On the matter of *Church Relations* Synod decided to continue the correspondence with:

Canadian Reformed Churches  
De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland  
Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika  
The Presbyterian Church in Korea  
The Churches of Sumba-Savu.

- It decided to recognize as faithful Churches:

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland  
The Free Church of Scotland  
The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan.

It decided to investigate whether the Reformed Church of Japan and the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka can be recognized as true and faithful Churches.

It also decided to investigate the possibilities to seek new contacts with other Churches, in close connection with deputies from the sister Churches, especially The Netherlands.

Synod decided to request the Deputies "to formulate rules for temporary contact with Churches which do not yet belong to the sister Churches."

5. On the subject of the *International Conference of Reformed Churches* the Synod decided to join and to propose two amendments to the Constitution, one dealing with the RES and the other which stresses that members should strive for unity with member Churches of the Conference in their own country.
6. With regard to the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia* Synod decided to instruct Deputies to investigate whether that Church could be acknowledged as a true and faithful Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and to report their findings to the next Synod.
7. On the topic of *Mission* Synod decided to take note of the fact that the mission field in Western Australia had to be abandoned. It also took note of the fact that the employment of the full-time Mission worker, br. P 't Hart, was terminated.

### **Conclusion**

From the *Acts* 1983 we may conclude with gratitude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia desire to be faithful to God's Word, the Confessions and the Church Order.

### **Recommendation**

On the basis of the above, the Committee recommends to Synod that the correspondence with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia be continued in accordance with the adopted rules.

### **MANDATE TO DISCUSS THE RULES OF CORRESPONDENCE**

In our main report (see page 12, 5 d.) we have requested that the Committee be given a mandate to initiate a discussion with the sister Churches of the rules of correspondence in light of the fact that all kinds of additional rules have either been accepted or are being considered.

From reading the *Acts* of Australia 1983 we learn that they too are desirous of having rules for temporary contact and have mandated their committee to formulate a set of rules that can be proposed to their next Synod.

What this means is that in all of our sister Churches the rules for correspondence are being supplemented or soon will be supplemented by additional *permanent* rules for preliminary contact. We find this development lamentable and hence would request you for a mandate, *not to come up with all kinds of alternative relationships, but "to come to a uniform set of rules" for all the sister Churches.* It should be possible to come to a set of rules that are faithful to what we have at present and yet able to meet the needs of the future.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands has decided to make the following proposal to the General Synod of Heemse 1984 regarding the ICRC:

1. to set up a study group with the following tasks:
  - a. to present the member Churches with information about relevant literature on missionary matters;
  - b. to present the member Churches with information about existing colleges and/or courses for missionaries, and about opportunities for coordination;
  - c. to serve the member Churches, if possible, by setting up a missiology on a truly scriptural basis, for instance, by compiling an Introduction;
2. to institute a consultative committee with the following tasks:
  - a. to advise the member Churches on choosing mission fields;
  - b. to investigate and indicate opportunities for the coordination of development work on mission fields;
  - c. to investigate and indicate opportunities for the exchange of missionaries."

These are the latest matters that have come to our attention and we pass them on to you for your consideration.

May the Lord bless your deliberations.

For the Committee for Correspondence  
with Churches Abroad,

J. Visscher, convener/secretary