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ERRATA: Please note that on Page 145, Article 3 (c), point 3, it should read:  
*all deputies' reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of  
Article 3(b) of the RULES.*

On Page 147 Article 17 should be: *Article 14*

# REPORT ON BIBLE TRANSLATION

*To: Synod 1989 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia*

*cl- FRC of Armadale, convening church.*

*From: Deputies for Bible Translation*

*Esteemed Brothers:*

*Synod 1987 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia appointed the undersigned as Deputies for Bible Translation, and instructed them to report to the Churches prior to Synod 1989.*

## SECTION I

# General Activities

## 1. MANDATE

Synod 1987 gave the following instructions:

- a. to investigate once more the NIV and NASB and to investigate the New KJV to see if any of these translations would be better than the RSV. The reports of previous deputies and the reports of deputies of our Canadian sister-churches can be consulted and used for this investigation.
- b. to use as criteria:
  - i. faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.
  - ii. readability and suitability for worship services, for instruction and for memorisation
  - iii. consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures.
- c. continue to monitor developments regarding the use of the RSV within the churches, in co-operation with similar committees in sister-churches.
- d. monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the RSV.
- e. maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translations.
- f. report to next Synod

## 2. ACTIVITIES

The Deputies met a total of thirteen times.

When the Deputies began their work, a notice was placed in *Una Sancta*, inviting churches and church members to make submissions. There has been no response to date.

Your deputies have written to the translation committees of all the Bible translations under study, and obtained from a variety of sources a large number of books, articles and reviews relevant to the subject.

In the course of their work, each of the deputies has read and studied large portions of each translation.

In order to give structure and cohesion to their report, the Deputies first addressed the following matters:

1. The text of the OT and NT
2. Method of translating
3. Criteria for suitability

Subsequently, the Bible translations were examined individually:

4. Preliminary report on the 1990 edition of the RSV
5. The New American Standard Bible (NASB)
6. The New King James Version (NKJV)
7. The New International Version (NIV)

For the information of the Churches, articles were submitted to *Una Sancta* under each of these headings. Much of what follows has already appeared in these articles.

## 3. BIBLIOGRAPHY

As already noted, a large amount of material was gathered and used in coming to this report. Had time permitted, a comprehensive bibliography would have appeared as an appendix. As it is, each section of this report is accompanied by its own set of references.

## SECTION II

# The Text of the Bible

### 1. THE BASIC TASK

From the mandate one can see that the matter of the text of the Bible from which one makes a translation is basic. Obviously one must first establish the text from which to translate before any actual translation can be attempted. Just as a minister must first of all establish the text from which he will preach before he starts to exegete it, so the translator must first determine the precise text from which he will make a translation. We will therefore pay attention to this basic issue first.

One sometimes finds that the textual question is often reduced to how translators treat the text of the NT. Much attention in the form of books, publications and articles have tended to focus on this important subject. Readers look at what a translation does with passages such as the ending of Mark 16 or the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11). However, it is also important to look at the text of the Old Testament as well. For the establishment of the underlying text of the Old Testament is not without its problems either. Thus we should take a look at how the text of both the Old Testament and the New Testament are determined.

### 2. THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Tracing the history of the transmission of the OT text is an exact, scholarly science. We will try to offer just a brief, simple outline to allow the reader to see the problems involved.

Usually scholars and translators use the Hebrew, or to be more precise, the Masoretic Text (MT) of the Old Testament. Jewish scholars, called 'sopherim', began to standardise the text of the Old Testament as well as other texts. The 'masorettes' continued this process. In order to disprove the assertions of the Christians they made marginal notes ('masorah') in their texts. By the middle of the first millennium they dominated this field of textual criticism. Two families of texts (Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali) prevailed with the Ben Asher text winning out. In general (though there are quite some internal variants within these Masoretic texts of various families) this is the Masoretic Text. It is written in Hebrew and is therefore often called the Hebrew OT text.

Originally this text had only consonants since the Hebrew language is consonantal (each word going back to a root of three consonants) with the reader being capable of supplying the proper vowels. You can imagine the confusion if the English Bible was published using only consonants! The reader would have to supply the vowels. Sometimes many possibilities would exist, giving different readings. The same occurred with the consonantal text of the OT. Since the use and understanding of the Hebrew language was quite limited, the proper understanding of the OT text was in danger. In this situation the Jewish scribes came to the rescue.

The Masorettes supplied the vowels and many other useful notations. For example, some words in Hebrew can be pointed (given vowels) differently, giving different words and meanings. This applies especially to verbal forms. As a consequence differences of opinion as to the specific vowels arose, producing the Kethiv (what is written) or Qere (what is read) notations. It has been estimated that there are more than 1,500 such variants. Since the original manuscripts did not have vowel pointings and since even the scribes differed, the textual scholar must pay close attention to this matter.

In addition these Masoretic scribes had their 'ancient scribal traditions' of which we know 18. Some of these are noted for example in the New International Version (NIV).<sup>1</sup>

Besides the Masoretic Text the Lord has also given much other supplementary and comparative material. Various translations of the Old Testament were made out of zeal for the spread of the Scriptures. The Septuagint<sup>2</sup> or Greek translation of the Old Testament is the most notable. It provides valuable assistance for settling the OT text first of all because this translation dates way back to the third and second centuries BEFORE CHRIST! There are many manuscripts of this version. Even with this version not all manuscripts are identical but one can distinguish text-types. In the third century Origen produced a text of the LXX in an attempt to standardise it. He made six columns (hence it received the name 'Hexapla') to include respectively the Hebrew text, a transliteration of the Hebrew, the Greek translation of Aquila, the Greek translation of Symmachus, the Septuagint itself and finally the Greek translation of Theodotion. This laborious and voluminous undertaking was to settle the text of the Old Testament once and for all. For the Jews and Christians had fought long and hard about the OT text in their debates. Origen desired to settle these debates about the text.

Besides the Septuagint there are the Aramaic paraphrases or targums, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac version, the Coptic (Egyptian) version, the old Latin, the Vulgate, and the other translations included in Origen's Hexapla. Today the Lord has blessed us with even more ancient testimony to the OT text. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have given scholars much exciting work. One benefit was that these scrolls included portions of the Hebrew text of the OT. And this testimony does not come from the ninth century or later as with the Masoretic Text, but they originate from the first and even second centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord! Generally they vindicate the Masoretic Text and the long-standing conviction of the church to use the Masoretic Text from which to translate. In a few cases they side with the versions. Modern translations may then decide to translate the reading of the Dead Sea Scrolls as supported by the ancient translations.

One might think then that with all these variants the text of the Old Testament has become rather unreliable or subject to the insights or fluctuating opinions of the textual scholars. But this is not true. The ancient scribes are to be applauded for their careful transcription of the OT text. Their work was stretched out over centuries ensuring that the final product, though in the ninth century, was accurate. Their zeal and extreme precision assures us of an authentic OT in its original languages as a basis for an English translation. A trip to and a tour of an established synagogue

would confirm how the Jewish rabbis even today meticulously hand-write and check and re-check the books of the OT. If more than three mistakes are made in a handwritten copy, it cannot be used for synagogal purposes.

But how do the various translations use this basic text? It is the task of the deputies to ascertain which underlying text the four relevant translations (Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, New King James Version, and the New International Version) have used, and to evaluate if they have made a good or bad choice. For instance, some translations rest heavily on the ancient versions or translations, while this is quite unnecessary. Such reliance on the ancient versions often betrays a critical desire to depart from the Masoretic Text, since the MT is somehow objectionable. That spirit should be opposed and not allowed to infiltrate the churches.

The issue of versions becomes even more critical when translators decide that neither the Masoretic Text nor the ancient versions are reliable, understandable or correct. Scholars then resort to what is called a 'conjectural emendation' which is a scholarly way of describing an educated guess. And this happens in spite of the fact that these verses or words are not missing in the MT or the versions! In a submission made by deputies from our Canadian sister-churches it was reported that the RSV found it necessary to correct the Hebrew text of Hosea 31 times! Only 2 were definitely warranted, 5 were possibly warranted but 23 were definitely not warranted! You can find such educated guesses in the RSV in the Old Testament in the footnotes beginning with "cn" (correction of the Hebrew).

So it is necessary to pay close attention to the underlying text of the Old Testament from which translators work. As we review the four translations under study this matter of the text of the OT will need close scrutiny. In a preliminary way we can already say that the three translations do improve on the RSV in that these three do not deviate from the Hebrew Text as quickly and as often in an unnecessary way. Thus they could be recommended above the RSV in this one respect. Further study must bear this out.

### **3. THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

#### **A. ITS IMPORTANCE**

"It must be recognized that most of the books written for or against translations deal almost exclusively with the Greek Text and its problems" (B. Sheehan, WHICH VERSION NOW, p.1). This is unfortunately true in an age in which the NT tends to eclipse the OT.

Nevertheless the text of the NT is important for believers and the church. The Scriptures are "inspired of God" or literally "God-breathed" (NIV, 2 Tim. 3:16). As such the words come from the mouth and mind of God. It is of great importance that we know exactly what God has said, and all that He has said. God has also stated that He punishes any tampering with his words. Those who add to his words can expect the addition of the plagues of his revelation, while those who detract from it will have their portion in the tree of life removed (cf. Rev.22:18.19). Both sins are abominable to God.

Thus we will not be satisfied with the general idea of what God has said. Statements that a translation does not deny any cardinal teachings of the NT will not satisfy us. Since important argument hinge on words, verbal tenses and moods, and grammatical intricacies, the exact words of Scripture are of great importance.

#### **B. THE MANUSCRIPTS**

It is common knowledge that the original manuscripts of the gospels, letters and books of the NT are no longer present and have probably perished long ago with use. If we still had them, much debate and uncertainty would be prevented. However, God has blessed us with many copies (of copies, etc.). So we are not handicapped. In fact there are 5338 Greek manuscripts of the NT (used by the Eastern church which maintained the Greek language) alone, not counting all the other versions (there are approximately 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate which the Western church used till the sixteenth century) and other manuscripts! So there is an overwhelming abundance of material.

Most of the manuscripts date between the fifth and fifteen centuries. Some earlier ones have now come to light from the third and fourth centuries. They come in different forms. The codices (book-form) come either in capital letters without spaces (uncials or majuscles) which usually date from the third to the sixth centuries A.D. or in cursive or running script (minuscles) which date from the ninth century on. Minuscles (with the small letters and spaces as in our handwritten material) outnumber the uncials ten to one. Besides these codices many papyrus texts, preserved in the Egyptian sands, have come to light. <sup>3</sup> These date back to the second to fifth centuries, but their scribal reliability is often questionable.

With all these manuscripts available one would think that the task of establishing the text of the NT would be trouble-free. For a large percentage of the text this is indeed true. Yet God has not left the church without work to do in this field. Here too the truth remains that God is sovereignly in control, but God holds man responsible. Applied to the task of settling the text of the NT, this means that God has wonderfully and sovereignly preserved thousands of manuscripts of the NT for the sake of his church. At the same time God demands that man studies those manuscripts carefully so that the exact words of God may be determined.

This latter task arises because no two manuscripts (from all the thousands) are alike. Some basic facts about these manuscripts and their study should be presented.

First of all, these manuscripts are all laboriously hand-written until the printing press replaced the scribe. That is why they are called "manuscripts", which means "written by hand." And these manuscripts were not always made by trained scribes but often by untrained ones so that a host of errors is apparent in many of them. Moreover, the material they were written on differs from papyrus to potsherds to vellum, making some more readable than others. To complicate matters, some manuscripts were erased and used again, giving scholars today the difficult task of uncovering the original text of the NT it offered. So the study of these manuscripts encounters many snags, demanding much knowledge and linguistic expertise.

Being hand-written, the manuscripts were prone to scribal errors. One can appreciate this fact if faced with the exhausting task of reproducing rolls and rolls of papyrus to be copied. When we remember that in many manuscripts there were no spaces between words, there was no punctuation, only capital letters were used and abbreviations

were often employed, we can sympathize with the scribes. And if one had to write the copy down while the NT was being dictated, even more difficulties arose because one had to rely on the ear instead of the eye. So no matter how carefully a manuscript was copied not one is free of mistakes. And if other copyists used that manuscript there was a chance that the errors would be multiplied. So no two manuscripts are the same. Scholars call these differences variants (different readings).

Some such errors which are found in almost all manuscripts include errors of eyesight, the misreading of abbreviations, the omission of lines or their repetition because the eye jumped forward or backward a line, the omission or addition of words because the eye jumped to the same word elsewhere in the text, error of mishearing because words sounded the same, and errors of spelling.

Besides accidental changes scribes also introduced changes to improve the style of the text (to make it sound more like the literary, Hellenistic Greek instead of like the common (Koine) Greek of its days. Scribes sometimes tried to correct the errors of a previous scribe, or they harmonized a passage with a parallel passage (especially in the gospels). Some scribes obviously had a theological axe to grind. Heretical scribes would introduce readings favourable in their views, while orthodox scribes could be inclined to add or to subtract in order to counteract heresy. Those who study the transmission of the NT text must thus have a thorough knowledge of the history of the church when these manuscripts were written.

Obviously, the less copying that occurred between the original (autographs) exemplar and the copy the better the copy. This does not necessarily mean that the earliest manuscripts are the best. A later manuscript may be a copy of a very early exemplar and thus contain a very accurate text.

This brings us to the vexing question of how to evaluate the variety of manuscripts. To some the earliest witnesses, such as the early codices (the leaf-form or book instead of a scroll) and the papyri, are the best simply because they are the earliest. Others debate and oppose this view strenuously by checking the quality of the earlier manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> For example, ten copies are made of a work. Two are faultless and 8 contain many and various errors. One faultless copy is lost while the 8 faulty ones are multiplied. But the one quality copy remains in one area where it issued exclusively. If we find only a few, very old copies of the 8 faulty manuscripts and many, later copies of the one faultless copy, we might be inclined to say that the few, very old copies were the best. However, if we know the ancestry, a different picture emerges. The earliest copies turn out to be less valuable than the more recent copies which were based on a better exemplar. Textual scholars must therefore look at the ancestry and character of the various manuscripts to see which have most faithfully transcribed the text of the NT. This science demands much painstaking research.

All of this background information might cause some to despair, as though it is impossible to arrive accurately at the true text of the NT. That conclusion would be a gross exaggeration. Scholars from all camps agree that 95-97% of the text is established without doubt or debate. It is about the remaining 3-5% that scholars honestly differ with each other. We will try to explain the differences fairly, showing at the same time what implications they have for the translation of the NT.

Before going into the matter itself it might be good to explain that the division of opinion on the remaining 3-5% of the NT text is not a division between reformed/evangelical thought over against liberal/modernist thought. We should not think that the one side defends the faith and integrity of the Scriptures, while the other side is out to discredit the same. Although this caricature is sometimes made, it is erroneous. While there are textual critics (as there are translators) who do not adhere to the infallibility of the Bible, one cannot divide the camps into conservatives and liberals. Those who advocate the text underlying the KJV or the NKJV mostly have a high view of Scripture. Those who advocate an eclectic text which underlies the NASB, NIV & RSV also number men with the same high view of the Bible. Their commitment to the inspiration of the very words of Scripture drives them to gain the correct text of the NT. We can read this in the forewords to the NASB & NIV.<sup>5</sup> The differences are due to honest, scholarly debate.

How do scholars approach the remaining 3-5% of the NT text? For our purposes two differing approaches are discernible:

- (i) follow the Byzantine text as the KJV & NKJV basically (with some variations) do, or
- (ii) follow a text based on eclectic principles as the RSV, NASB & NIV do.

Some explanation is in order. First of all, the term "text" was used. It might be more precise to call it a "text-type" as is the practice in the field of textual studies. Scholars group all the manuscripts into these text-types on the grounds that they not only have been copied from one another in the past but also because,

*"...the manuscripts belonging to a particular text-type all reflect the same sort of errors, the same variants at crucial passages, the same general pattern of development. Of course, because all of the manuscripts in any one text-type have themselves been hand-copied, no two manuscripts in any one textual tradition are precisely identical. Nevertheless a manuscript can often be assigned to one text-type or another; and if a manuscript reflects two or more text-types, it is said to be mixed".<sup>6</sup>*

All the manuscripts are classified into four such text-types:

1. The Byzantine text-type. This text-type stands behind the Greek text from which the KJV & NKJV are translated. Its name originates from the Byzantine Empire which continued to use Greek in contrast to the Roman Empire in the West where Latin took over. Though its manuscripts are relatively late it has more witnesses than the other three text-types combined.
2. The Western text-type. Its name comes from the fact that its witnesses come from the west of the Roman Empire. This text is not homogeneous but exhibits fairly wild and undisciplined scribal activity. Some doubt that it can be called a true text-type.
3. The Caesarean text-type. As the name suggests the center of activity was in Caesarea where especially Origen worked. As mentioned above (under the OT), he did much work on the Greek text of the OT. This text blends readings from the Western and Alexandrian text-types.
4. The Alexandrian text-type. Alexandria in Egypt was most probably its center. We have some early,

excellent uncial manuscripts as witnesses to it. Westcott and Hort gave this text-type preeminence but subsequent research has questioned that favoritism.

The problem in assessing the four translations concerned surrounds this textual matter. As said above, the NKJV (as does the KJV) follows the Byzantine text-type while the other three follow a text picked and chosen mostly from the Alexandrian text-type plus readings from the Western text-type and Caesarean text-type. Such a text in which scholars pick and choose from all text-types is called an "eclectic text". Such a text stands behind the RSV, NASB & NIV. It seems that one must either choose the Byzantine text-type or a revised version of the Alexandrian text-type. Unfortunately, scholars have not come to agreement on this question, with even reformed scholars at odds on the issue. As stated above, one cannot neatly classify this division into liberals on the one hand (favouring the eclectic text) and conservatives (favouring the Byzantine text-type).

Scholars such as J. van Bruggen<sup>7</sup> and W. Pickering<sup>8</sup> dispute the accuracy of these classifications of the text-types, and they strongly contest the validity of promoting the one text-type, the Alexandrian, above the rest. On the other hand, prominent scholars such as B.B. Warfield, E.J. Young, D.A. Carson, G.D. Fee, E.H. Palmer and D. Macleod defend the eclectic text.<sup>9</sup>

After having read some important works on this subject the deputies grow in appreciation for the complexity of the problem.<sup>10</sup> Simplistic answers, such as that the Lord has always preserved the "church-text" (meaning the Byzantine text-type used by the KJV) and we should not deviate from it because of our high view of Scripture, are not to the point. In the first place, "church-text" is a misnomer, since the church obviously used the other text-types too. Secondly, to elevate the Byzantine text-type because of its numbers, while disregarding its lateness and while not being sure of its origin, does not seem sound either. What does one do with the other three text-types which the early church used?

The deputies appreciate the needed criticism which Pickering and van Bruggen levelled at the theory of Hort. They have used the evidence gathered by other scholars for this purpose. Weaknesses in the theory which dethroned the Byzantine text-type have been pointed out.<sup>11</sup> Also, the call for the reinstatement of the Byzantine text-type as a good witness to the text of the NT, should not go unheeded. Yet the historical methods and the pursuit of factuality should remain normal tools for textual scholars and for ministers. Bob Sheehan condenses these principles for choosing the best text as follows:

- i. *has this reading ancient support?*
- ii. *has this reading geographical support (from all the areas of the ancient church)?*
- iii. *what weight is to be attached to this reading and its evidence in the light of other readings and their evidence?*

*In addition to this external evidence, the eclecticist uses internal evidence. This internal evidence involves two kinds of probabilities. The first type of probability is based upon the problems of copying and the habits of scribes. The second type of probability is based on what the author is more likely to have written".<sup>12</sup>*

Ministers learn these skills during their training at seminary so that they can establish the text from which they will preach. We should expect that translators should capably do the same.

As deputies we therefore conclude:

1. Do not elevate the Byzantine text-type as the Textus Receptus (received or accepted text).
2. Do not demote the Byzantine text-type as too late, too full, too sub-standard as has been done in the past decades since Westcott and Hort's theory won the day.
3. Do not promote only the Alexandrian text-type as the preeminent one as Westcott and Hort tended to do, blindly disregarding the other manuscripts.
4. Do not count the manuscripts and abide by the majority of manuscripts. The Majority Text, which tends to count instead of to evaluate the manuscripts, has this weakness.
5. Instead, use the acquired skills of textual scholarship to evaluate which is the best text. This unavoidably involves eclecticism, selecting the best text from ALL the text-types while using the principles stated above.

If these conclusions are good, then we can finally decide on the textual matter concerning the four translations. We would then agree with the assessment of Bob Sheehan and others:

*"If, as this booklet contends, the best text is a cautiously selected eclectic text, then the best versions are NASV & NIV. The RSV & NEB (New English Bible) are too free, and the KJV is based on the Received Text."<sup>13</sup>*

The RSV is too inclined to follow only the Alexandrian text-type or the oddities of the Western text-type (as in Luke 24) when these text-types are the only witness to a reading. The NASV & NIV have sifted the evidence with more care and sensitivity. One would ask that in the future more appreciation and weight is given to the readings of the Byzantine text-type. However, to follow only that text-type as the NKJV does cannot be justified on scholarly grounds either. Textually, the NASB & NIV are thus to be preferred. Both are an improvement on the RSV as far as the choice of the text is concerned.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See Gen.18:22; Judges 18:30; 1 Sam.3:13; 2 Sam.12:14; Job 7:20;32:2; Jer.2:11; Hos.4:7.

2. The Septuagint (meaning 70) is often designated as LXX because 70 translators, according to Jewish fable, allegedly worked on the whole OT simultaneously, producing a completely homogenous translation!

3. For good information about the various manuscripts see B.M. Metzger, THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, Oxford & New York, 1968.

4. Pickering, W., THE IDENTITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT, pp.121- 152.

5. The NASB states that it has been "produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in Hebrew and Greek were inspired by God." The preface to the NIV says all the translators are "committed to the full authority and complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures, which they believe to be God's Word in written form."

6. D.A. Carson, *THE KING JAMES VERSION DEBATE*, p.26.
7. J. van Bruggen, *THE ANCIENT TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*, Winnipeg, 1976.
8. W.N. Pickering, *THE IDENTITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT*, Nashville, c.1977,1980, pp.33-34,41-58.
9. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, "A Critique of W.N. Pickering's *THE IDENTITY OF THE NT*," *Westminster Theological Journal*, Spring 1979, 397-423; and "The Majority Text and the Original Text of the NT," *The Bible Translator*, Jan. 1980, 107-118.
10. E.g. Ernest C. Colwell, *STUDIES IN METHODOLOGY IN TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE NT*, Grand Rapids, 1969.
11. Recently a doctoral dissertation was published by Rev. Dr. W.F. Wisselink, *ASSIMILATION AS A CRITERION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TEXT: A Comparative Study on the basis of passages from Mt., Mk. and Lk.*, Kampen, 1989. This dissertation deals with alleged harmonisations or conflation in the gospels and concludes that all the text-types, not only the Byzantine one, have harmonisations. Therefore it asserts that the alleged, common position that the Byzantine text-type is of inferior quality because of its harmonising tendency is methodologically wrong (see *Nederlands Dagblad*, 10 June, 1989). The study of this recent dissertation was not possible.
12. *WHICH VERSION NOW?* Sussex, n.d., p.13. For a fuller discussion of these principles see B.M. Metzger, *op. cit.*, pp.149-246.
13. *op. cit.*, p.29.

## SECTION III

# Criteria for Bible-translations and the Method of Translating the Bible

## 1. TRANSLATING IN GENERAL

Translating from one language to another may appear at first glance to be relatively straight forward. The idea is to take what is said in the original and transfer that with equal clarity into another language. Even in our own circles such translating is done. Articles, sermons and even books have been translated from Dutch into English.

But how does one translate? Anyone who has put his hand to translating will know that you cannot simply transfer English words for Dutch words. What you would end up with is a sentence with English words and Dutch word order. Consider the Dutch "ik heb de bal weg gegooit." A word for word translation would read like this: "I have the ball away thrown." Similarly, not all thoughts can be translated literally without printing absurdities. A literal translation of the phrase: "we staan voor beslissende jaren" would be "we stand before crucial years." Although the grammar resulting from a word-for-word translation would in this case be possible in English, the resulting sentence sounds awkward because English does not know this particular expression. And how does one translate the Dutch idiom, "het hangt me de keel uit?" A literal translation, "it hangs me the throat out," is scarcely edifying English.

These basic rules for translation can be accepted by all. Any migrant who has become more or less conversant with English simply does not maintain Dutch sentence-structure and idioms while substituting English words. To speak proper English implies dropping both the Dutch word-order in favour of the English as well as substituting complete phrases as English parallels.

Whether consciously or not then, we realize that there are certain directives to be kept in mind for translating. Two languages do not say things the same way, and if one wishes to be clear one must fully adopt the grammatical rules, syntactical structures and idioms of the language into which one translates.

## 2. TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

The Scriptures were given to men in languages other than English. Since the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible are not commonly used anymore today, it is necessary to translate the Bible into our vernacular. How ought one to do this? Should one use the same principles as those used for translating Dutch works, e.g. W.G. Vandehulst's children-books or K. Schilder's trilogy, into English? To be more precise, should one use a freer approach as for the books of Vandehulst or should one translate very literally as for the works of K. Schilder which involve exact theology? Should the common rules for all translations apply to the Bible?

The mandate of the deputies (see 1987 Acts, art.109) includes the use of the following criteria in assessing the three translations under study:

1. faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.
2. readability and suitability for worship services, for instruction and for memorization.
3. consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures.

Especially the first and third criteria are useful for our purposes at the moment to answer the above-mentioned questions.

## A. TRANSLATING AND VERBAL INSPIRATION

To answer these important questions one must go back to the reformed view about the Bible itself. This takes us to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. In articles 2-9, *Belgic Confession*, we sum up our faith about the Bible. "We confess that this Word of God 'did not come by the impulse of men,' but that 'men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,' as the apostle Peter says" (2 Pet. 1:21). The contents or the message of the Bible therefore comes from God through human spokesmen.

This means that the Bible is the most important book for us. It carries the authority of God Himself. In the Bible God Himself speaks, as is indicated by the often repeated introduction, "thus says the LORD God."

This makes the Bible unique. Its importance is seen in that its message focuses on Jesus Christ our Lord about whom God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). We must listen carefully to the Bible to both hear and to heed it.

And the Bible is not just a COLLECTION OR LIBRARY of (66) individual books written by various men over a span of many centuries. No, it is ONE book, since it has ONE author, the Holy Spirit. Men were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak messages which came from God. As Paul told Timothy in that now classic proof-text, "every Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim.3:16, NIV). This means that every book or scripture in the Bible comes from God. Its message comes from the Holy Spirit who moved men to speak.

## B. TRANSLATING AND ORGANIC INSPIRATION

But can we glean more guidelines for translating the Bible from our understanding of the Bible? Yes, we can and we must. For we have accented the truth that God is the one author of the Bible. This does not mean that the human "mouths" (Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18 & 4:25) or writers, e.g. prophets and apostles, were, to use a modern comparison, mere passive typists whose fingers automatically hit the right keys as God dictated his message to them. To quote H. Bavinck,

*"...the Holy Spirit also patently contradicts any mechanical idea of inspiration. For, although, the prophets were moved, or driven, by the Holy Spirit, they themselves also spoke (2 Peter 1:21). The words which they put into writing are again and again referred to as their words. In several instances, we read that they were prepared for the office, set apart and equipped for it (Jer.1:5; Acts 7:22; Gal.1:15). And, just as they do in receiving the word, so also in writing down the revelation, they remain altogether self-conscious; their own activity is not suppressed by the moving of the Spirit but is lifted up, energized, and purged. They themselves make diligent investigations (Luke 1:3). they recall and reflect upon the revelation which they have received at an earlier date, they make use of historical sources, some of them, the Psalmists, for instance, find the materials for their song in their own experience, and in all the writings of which the Bible is composed the personal disposition of the writer, the peculiar quality of his character, his personal development and education, his own language and style - these all come to expression in each all of the many writers. The study of the Scriptures teaches us not only the one word of God; it acquaints us also with the different persons who wrote them. What a difference there is between the books of the Kings and the Chronicles, between Isaiah and Jeremiah, between Matthew and Luke, between John, and Peter, and Paul!*

*Such a conception of inspiration as is here suggested permits us also to do full justice of the human side of the Holy Scriptures (OUR REASONABLE FAITH, trans. of MAGNALIA DEI by H. Zylstra, Baker, 1956, pp.102-103).*

Bavinck then goes on to point out the growth of the Bible, the various forms of revelation (e.g. history, poetry, prophecy, visions and wisdom literature), the Christ-centered focus of the Bible, and the need to study the background (canonics) of every book to see what place it has in the canon. All this plus the extensive quote above from this trustworthy, reformed dogmatician emphasizes how justice must also be done to what is called "organic inspiration", which acknowledges that God maintained the activity, personality, experiences, background and education of the writers. This reformed and biblical view stands over against "mechanical inspiration" which views the human writers as mere, passive typists. If the latter were true, then we could expect more consistency and less variety in styles, vocabulary, grammar, syntax and idioms. But this is not what we find in the Scriptures. Moreover, organic inspiration does not reduce the wonder of inspiration. Indeed, that God used human mouthpieces and writers, without treating them as "stocks and blocks", and at the same time ensuring that his message was clearly communicated enhances the wonder of inspiration, highlighting the miracle of the inspired Bible. Without nullifying the speaker/writer and his character, language, background, history, and culture God still ensured that the message was clearly from Him and was fully authoritative. One can compare this to the incarnation of our Lord. When He became man, God kept both his humanity and his divinity intact, without reducing either. What an incomprehensible wonder that is! A similar mystery surrounds inspiration.

## 3. TRANSLATIONS AND SUITABILITY

The 1987 Synod also included suitability for use in church and school as one criterion of a good translation. Our attention will focus on this point.

### A. FOR USE IN THE CHURCH

The weekly church services are the highlight of our life as a congregation of Jesus Christ our Lord. We will therefore mention these services first. The use of the Bible is frequent and central in those services. Since the Bible stands so central (cf. the reformed slogan, "sola Scriptura") in the worship services, the translation should be good. What makes a translation suitable?

We need not repeat the two criteria of faithfulness and maintenance of the unity of Scripture. Also, we need not repeat that a translation must keep to the text of the original Hebrew and Greek.

Besides these marks one can refer to the need for CLARITY. Now this point is sometimes contested. Some argue that clarity in a translation is not a high priority. It is the sole task of the Holy Spirit to make the Scriptures clear, it is claimed. Usually reference is then made to a text such as 1 Cor.2:14, "the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." But does this argument not introduce a false dilemma?

It is true that sinful man is blind, ignorant and dead in sin and trespasses. Man cannot and will not come to faith by himself. We confess this especially in the Canons of Dort, chapter III/IV. The Holy Spirit must illumine the darkened mind of man before he sees. Thus far all must agree.

But does this mean that a translation can be obscure or unclear? We do not agree. Reformed dogmaticians have

always stressed the CLARITY of Scripture as one of its hallmarks. This means that "the Bible can be clearly understood in its general contents and basic message, even by children, Matthew 11:25. This does not mean that there are no difficult passages which are 'hard to understand' (2 Peter 3:16) and that there need be no interpreters (Acts 8:31)" (Cl. Stam, EVERYTHING IN CHRIST, p.17). Clarity thus means that the Bible is basically clear, though Scripture itself admits that difficulties exist. Yet in an overall manner God did not speak in unintelligible language but in straightforward language which the people could understand. It is up to the translator to make sure that this clarity remains. A translation should be as clear as the original, not any more nor any less clear. A translation should not try to solve obscurities nor render a clear passage unclear.

For example, Jesus used very simple illustrations from daily life in his parables to teach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Everyone could understand the story itself. The illustrations were simple and straightforward, but only the spiritual ones (believers) understood the message. The Holy Spirit illumined the minds of some to understand these parables. But the Spirit used the clear teachings of our Lord. As the letter to the Ephesians points out, the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit attacks and defends, convicts and convinces, by means of this sword. Would He use a blunt instrument? To quote Callow and Beekman

*In other words, the Scripture is clear and straightforward, and is intended to be understood by anyone who reads or hears it. But the message of the Word of God will not be believed, or acted upon, unless the Spirit of God opens the understanding and brings that same message home to the heart. But if, because of a poor translation, the message is obscure, or even wrong, what then? Is it the Spirit's task to correct it? Surely it is we who are to blame for putting in his hands a blunt sword instead of a sharp two-edged one (TRANSLATING THE WORD OF GOD, p.349).*

We conclude that the Holy Spirit wishes to convert, to regenerate and to build faith by a gospel proclamation which is based on a clear translation.

Moreover, it is rather irksome that the preacher continually has to correct a translation or has to explain some obscurities. If a congregation continually hears from the pulpit words such as "I know that is what it says but actually it means something else" then the members start to feel that only an initiated group of experts can understand the Word of God. This undermines the Scriptures' attribute of CLARITY. Though a preacher/teacher must often give necessary background information to "fill out the picture" of a text since much information was known or left as implicit for the original hearers, it should not be necessary to continually correct or revise a translation. As Callow and Beekman conclude, "to depend on the teacher to make the Word understandable defeats the very purpose of translation which is that everyone should have direct access to God's Word in his own language" (ibid, p.350).

A clear translation will allow the preacher more time to expound and apply the clear message of God's Word to the congregation who must appropriate that Word to themselves. A translation must therefore not be obscure but clear, underlining the clarity of the Scriptures for which they are renowned. This makes a translation suitable for use in church services.

Secondly, the translation must keep to the style of the original. It would be wrong to press for a uniform type of "pulpit language". Some members would then plead for a polished and dignified style; some would like a literary style; while others desire the more colloquial or common language to which they are accustomed everyday. Various tastes would have to be blended. Instead, it is more correct to allow Scripture to dictate the style (cf. what was said under 2.B about organic inspiration). As mentioned above, God used the characters, vocabulary, idioms and backgrounds of the writers and their audiences. Isaiah as a royal prophet wrote stylistic Hebrew. Amos, the farmer from Tekoa, speaks more bluntly but no less forcibly. A similar distinction could be made between the learned apostle Paul and the simple but profound apostle John. A suitable translation must reflect this variety and difference in styles. One uniform style for all the Bible books does not exist and would be an arbitrary invention. One must not try to achieve an arbitrary dignified style for instance even though the writers of the Bible whom the Holy Spirit used very colloquial or idiomatic expressions. In short a suitable translation must reflect the styles of the various authors.

Such a translation will also function well for catechism classes where the Bible is continually used. Children need to learn the whole counsel of God from a faithful and clear translation which speaks their language. They need to learn to speak of the things of God. A clear translation which speaks a language they understand means they can relate to the gospel readily. If a translation does not do so, the danger is great that children pick up the mistaken notion that ecclesiastical language is different from daily language. This will inhibit discussions about matters of faith.

Also, the Bible will be used in the clubs which study the Bible. Again this calls for a precise, faithful and clear translation. Experience tells us that much valuable time is lost in these clubs in discussion about certain words or phrases. One member reads it one way and another member reads it another way. Often a lack of biblical knowledge leads to such trivial discussions. Though no translation will prevent this problem completely, one which strives to render the full message of the original into clear, daily English certainly will serve these clubs most. The gap in history and the difference in language (from Hebrew and Greek) already cause enough hurdles. A suitable translation should minimize difficulties by giving a full and clear translation.

That ignorance often leads to digressions about words and phrases also underlines the need for a clear and simple translation. One should not assume a prolific Bible-knowledge nor gear a translation to the level of theologians. The Bible should speak not only to the one well-versed in the Scriptures but also to the unconverted (even in the church) and to the newcomer to the faith.

Thus we make a plea for a translation, which is not only based on the original text, faithful and accurate but also one which is clear and simple.

## **B. FOR USE IN SCHOOLS**

Technically what has been said about the suitability of a translation for church-use (especially for the catechism classes) will apply to its use in our schools. The Bible is the norm for our schools. Usually it is taught as the first subject. Students often memorize texts from the Bible as well as rhymed psalms. At school teachers show how the Bible is foundation for all true wisdom.

Thus a faithful translation which wins the respect of Bible-believers is necessary. The marks mentioned above for

a suitable translation again apply here. Indeed, seeing that we refer to children who start from age six to read and to memorize Scripture, it is even more imperative that a translation speaks the daily and common language in a simple and clear way.

In summary, besides the criteria already mentioned, i.e. faithfulness to the text of the Bible and maintenance of the unity of the Bible, one must stress the need for both CLARITY and SIMPLICITY. Suitability for use in church and schools requires this.

#### 4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS RE CRITERIA FOR TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

It will be good to outline what has been said above before we proceed to the related topic of the various methods of translating the Bible. The following criteria mentioned thus far can be summarized and grouped as follows:

1. The doctrine of verbal inspiration (see section 2.A) demands:
  - a. Faithfulness. Every word of Scripture must be given its due. No word should be added or subtracted.
  - b. Consistency. The Bible must be treated as a unity, as one book, and not as a collection of 66 separate books.
2. The doctrine of organic inspiration (see section 2.B) demands:
  - a. recognition that God used human speakers/writers without nullifying their characters, backgrounds, history, vocabulary, etc.
  - b. recognition that God used the contemporary, common languages of these writers/speakers.
  - c. recognition that languages change over years and do not stay uniform.
  - d. a grammatical, historical, exegetical and linguistic approach to translation.
  - e. that God not only gave the Scripture (singular) but also the Scriptures (plural).
  - f. recognition of the various types of revelation (e.g. history, poetry or parables).
3. Suitability for Use in Church and School demands:
  - a. Clarity. Though not all parts of the Bible are easy to understand, the language should be clear.
  - b. Simplicity. The translation should be able to reach many ages and a variety of people.
  - c. Preservation of the style of the various writers.

#### 5. VARIOUS METHODS OF TRANSLATING THE BIBLE.

##### A. AN INTRODUCTION TO VARIOUS METHODS

In previous reports of deputies (1970, 1975 and 1983 reports) some attention was paid to two different methods or approaches to translating the Bible. Now that a new mandate to reinvestigate the NIV & NASB and to investigate anew the NKJV has been given this matter resurfaces.

In the past only two methods were studied, i.e. the formal equivalent and the dynamic equivalent methods. Actually one could distinguish more types. Callow and Beekman distinguish four:

1. highly literal
2. modified literal
3. idiomatic
4. unduly free

The first and last are considered unacceptable while the second and third are classified as acceptable. These four "represent a continuum from one extreme to another" (TRANSLATING THE WORD OF GOD, Zondervan, c.1974, 1976, p.21).

A highly literal translation (such as an interlinear) reproduces the linguistic features of the original language (OL), i.e. from the Hebrew and Greek. This is actually a type of formal equivalent method taken to its extreme. It can easily give rise to wrong thoughts and impressions. Since the language, sentence-structure and word-order are not natural to the receptor's/reader's language (RL), it is often awkward, stilted and unclear.

An unduly free translation tries to make the message as relevant and clear as possible. It is actually the dynamic equivalent method taken to its extreme. Instead of distortions arising from literalisms, there are distortions of content. For example, the "Cotton Patch Version" translates for people living around Atlanta, USA. It gives equivalents of ideas, names and classes of people. Read the following examples,

*When John noticed a lot of Protestants and Catholics showing up for his dipping...(Matt.3:7)*

*Nor do people put new tubes in old, bald tires. If they do the tires will blow out, and the tubes will be ruined and the tires will be torn up. But they put new tubes in new tires and both give good mileage (Matt.9:17).*

Obviously, this is what we would call a very free paraphrase, not a translation. It says, in a clear manner, what the OL neither says nor implies. So it too, like the highly literal one, fails to communicate the Bible.

A modified literal translation sees the need to make adjustments required by the RL so that no errors or misconceptions are introduced into the Bible-translations. Even so the OL predominates over the RL so that the grammatical forms found in the Hebrew or Greek are generally used. Terms are rendered uniformly in the same way without regard for context or writer, and word-combinations are awkwardly retained in the RL. Though such versions can be used well by those with high motivation, good Bible-knowledge and good resource material, it is a definite disadvantage to most readers.

An idiomatic translation seeks to convey the full meaning of the OL into the RL by using the grammatical and vocabulary forms of the RL. Its focus is on meaning. It sees language as a "vehicle" to carry the contents to the reader. Suppose a road represents one language and a canal another. To convey passengers down the road a car is needed. To convey the same passengers down the canal a boat is needed. The same is true in conveying meaning.

Different languages use different "vehicles" or forms to convey this communication. These forms are simply a "vehicle" to get a message across to the recipients/readers. One does not transfer parts of the car to the boat when changing passengers from the car to the boat. Likewise, one should not change grammatical and lexical forms from the OL to the RL.

## B. AN EVALUATION

The difference between the modified literal translation and the idiomatic one seems to be one of degrees. Most translations are probably a combination of both methods (formal equivalent and dynamic equivalent). It would therefore be good to look at the principles behind the methods and to evaluate them.

## C. FORMAL EQUIVALENT

As to the formal equivalent approach one appreciates their commitment to verbal inspiration. That God wanted the Scriptures accurately recorded for the generations means they have enduring validity and value. A written word therefore is to be read with precision. As J. van Bruggen writes,

*"...the first task of a translator is to render the written Word of God as accurately as possible. It is a job that requires faith and hard work. It sometimes seems to be a thankless task, for the text is often obscure and difficult..." (J. van Bruggen, THE FUTURE OF THE BIBLE, p.98).*

This description implies that a translator needs to understand the text so that he can translate very precisely. Accuracy in translation requires knowledge of the language, background (canonics), the vocabulary, etc. of the text and book to be translated.

But what makes the formal equivalent method distinctive is that it allows the forms of the biblical text to dominate the translation. A formal equivalent translation pays attention to the forms of the OL. Concerning these forms J. van Bruggen writes further,

*The Bible was composed in certain forms. Some passages were written in the form of prophecies, some songs, some letters and some narratives. There are also various forms within the smaller language units of Scripture: paragraphs, sentences, dependent and independent clauses, and prepositional phrases. By faithfulness to the form it is meant that a reliable translation must render these forms as close to the way they are in the original as possible (THE FUTURE OF THE BIBLE, Nelson, 1978, pp.97-100).*

He rejects versions which substitute your neighbour's car or camper for "ox" or transforming an account of a miraculous healing as a medical bulletin. But he also advocates the maintenance of long, periodical sentences (such as Paul's letters) over against the trend to use more, shorter sentences. One might think that this approach will lead to "Greek-English". However, he stays clear of that extreme as is evident from this quote,

*No doubt there are forms that cannot or must not be translated literally. If a form does not have a particular, substantive value, but is present only because the thought cannot be said differently in that language, then the translator must look for an expression in his own language with a comparable meaning. Faithfulness to the form is not the same as always translating the same words in the same way... In fact, it would not be right to strive after a type of Hebrew-English as some people seem to wish. Thus, this characteristic of a reliable translation is described by the term "faithful to the form" rather than "bound to the language" (ibid, pp.102-103).*

Thus to change the form of the original languages (OL) is warranted only in cases where it is absolutely necessary and where the form is not important. They would thus be concessions to the Receptor Language (RL). This amounts to a concession to the RL and as such is not totally convincing. Neither is the distinction between "faithful to the form" and "bound to the language" very clearcut. The basic question is whether the forms of the OL need to dictate the translation into the RL. To require that the forms of the OL (Hebrew and Greek) predominate, except in certain limited cases, will tend to obscure the Scriptures. For no two languages, even cognate ones such as Hebrew and Aramaic, are the same in their forms. Must we not respect the God who formed the variety in these languages? Or will an attempt be made to have all biblical translations sound like Hebrew and Greek? Will the trumpet then still give a clear sound?

To sum up, the formal equivalent certainly gains the favour of a Bible-believer in that it abides by the exact words of Scripture. That it also tries to keep as much as possible to the forms of the original gives cause for concern.

## D. DYNAMIC EQUIVALENT

Callow and Beekman define a faithful translation, using the idiomatic or dynamic equivalent approach, as follows:

*A TRANSLATION WHICH TRANSFERS THE MEANING AND THE DYNAMICS OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT IS TO BE REGARDED AS A FAITHFUL TRANSLATION (capitalization is ours). The expression, transfers the meaning, means that the translation conveys to the reader or hearer the information that the original conveyed to its readers or hearers. The message is not distorted or changed; it has neither unnecessarily gained nor lost information. The expression, the dynamics, means that (1) the translation makes a natural use of the linguistic structures of the RL and that (2) the recipients of the translation understand the message with ease. The naturalness of the translation and the ease with which it is understood should be comparable to the naturalness of the original and to the ease with which the recipients of the original documents understood them. Such a comparison of the dynamics of the original with that of a translation must bear in mind that the message may have been easier for the original recipients to understand because Greek was the language of both writers and readers, and they shared the same or similar cultures. Also in some cases they had heard the writer speaking. On the other hand, the message was not dependent upon these local advantages since the writers were not penning abstract theses or obscure philosophies but had very a practical aim in view; they wrote to be understood (ibid, pp.33-34).*

This lengthy quote gives a good definition as well as some useful disclaimers.

In being faithful to the original meaning the translator must use all resources available to understand the text first of all. He must know the grammar, vocabulary, style, syntax, etc. used. He must be conversant with the OL and the

text. The value of every word of the text must be understood so that it can be transferred into its equivalent in the RL, using its grammar and vocabulary. Does this mean that the RL predominates over the OL? Callow and Beekman answer as follows:

*The constant emphasis on meaning as over against linguistic form may have given the idea that the translator who translates idiomatically ignores the form of the original entirely. But this is not so. In the translation process, the linguistic form of the original is of primary and basic importance. Only from a careful study of the grammar and the lexicon of the original can a translator arrive at the meaning which he is to communicate in the RL version. This involves the process of exegesis which calls into use commentaries, grammars, lexicons (dictionaries), and other exegetical tools. Once the precise meaning of the original has been determined from the linguistic forms of the text, then the translator is ready to look at the grammar and lexicon of the RL to choose a form which will convey the same meaning. The form is likely to be different, but basic to the form chosen in the RL is the meaning of the original which, in turn, is derived from the form of the original. The linguistic form of the original thus lies at the heart of all translation work (ibid, p.348).*

One can only appreciate the striving after a clear and full understanding of the text which leads to a clear and full translation of the text in which every word of the OL receives its due. This is a lofty aim, worth of the holy Scriptures. As Jerome who translated the Scriptures into Latin (the Vulgate) said, "I could translate only what I had understood." To use a modern example, if we do not understand what K. Schilder wrote, a translation would quickly become a babble of words.

Yet there are questions about the need for ease of understanding. The dynamic equivalent method in some of its more pronounced forms changes idioms, names and technical terms into modern equivalents. For example, instead of the usual Psalm 23 one might have,

*The Lord is my Pilot; I shall not drift.*

*He lighteth me across the dark waters;*

*Surely, sunlight and starlight shall favor me on the voyage I take and I will rest in the port of my God forever (from Callow and Beekman, p.41).*

Callow and Beekman view this type of rendering with disfavour and rightly so, in our view. They also state that *Dynamic fidelity requires that a translation communicate familiar or unfamiliar information meaningfully; it does not generally require that unfamiliar information be recast by substituting concepts already known nor does dynamic fidelity require an answer to all of the questions which might be raised about a topic under discussion (p.41).*

One is happy to hear this. For experience tells one that the dynamic equivalent approach, for the sake of ease in understanding, is at times too prone to interpret rather than simply to translate. Now in certain cases one can understand this. This is quite understandable, for example, in the multitude of cases in which the Scriptures are being translated into languages which have not been moulded by the Bible as English or German have been. People who have not had contact with the Bible before need a clear translation. And the burden of the work of translators today is with such projects. Christ's commission to sow the seed, the Word, into all the world receives much attention. Such translators face a multitude of questions since they cannot take for granted what translators can when rendering into English. Our English language has been fashioned to a considerable extent by English Bible-translations. For our sakes it is questionable if too much interpretation is needed. More footnotes and less interpretation would be preferable.

Does this mean that the whole concept of dynamic equivalent is without value? Certainly not! Prof. B. Holwerda once wrote about the topic of Bible-translations. He did not conclude that vocabulary, the form of the original, etc. compel us to adopt a form equivalent method in translating. He instead concludes

*Still one more remark. I have already let it slip out that I have no objection against a somewhat FREE translation. A literal translation is often literal, but not a translation. And the purpose is to have a good translation (POPULAIRE WETENSCHAPPELIJKE BIJDAGEN, Goes, 1962, p.77, translation is ours).*

Concerning vocabulary, he had much to say. Vocabulary is a subject which needs much knowledge. Our understanding of terms keeps improving with the discovery of more manuscripts, etc. from the past. Context too is very important in determining meanings. Prof. B. Holwerda gives many examples of this (pp.75-78). He pleads for contextual meanings, allowing for different nuances and for sensitivity to shades of meaning. He says "I often begin with leaving the precise value of the term undecided, in order to come to a conclusion at the end (of the study), doing so on the ground of a careful investigation of the context" (p.75). He also concludes "daarom meen ik, dat we niet de eis mogen stellen, dat eenzelfde woord constant door een vaste Nederlandse term zal worden weergegeven" ("therefore I maintain that we may not require that the one term is always translated by the same Dutch term:"). To illustrate this point he uses the Hebrew term 'sane' (usually means 'to hate' in English) as it is used in different contexts to show it can mean "hate", "to disregard", "to neglect" or "to belittle". This is in line with the dynamic equivalent method. It is also in line with what was written above about organic inspiration and its implications for translations of the Bible.

It is interesting to quote B. Holwerda once more (about the new Dutch translation),

*But at certain places this translation, though it wants to be a modern translation, has not freed itself from the Hebrew idiom. This one meets expressions which we do not use. I do not mean to be unfriendly (my respect is great for this translation) but I frequently find it somewhat stilted and antiquated, and a bit purposely dignified and solemn. And I think that without resorting to colloquial or slang expressions one simply could have and even should have used the common language of today somewhat more. It would not only have made the translation easier to read and more clear, but, on final analysis, would even have made it more accurate. THIS IS TRUE BECAUSE A CAREFUL PARAPHRASE IS SOMETIMES MORE ACCURATE THAN A LITERAL TRANSLATION (p. 90, stress is original).*

Again, this is in line with the dynamic equivalent method.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT VARIOUS METHODS OF BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

1. To sum up then, the best points of both approaches should be kept.
  - a. The accent placed on the very words of Scripture, and on giving an accurate, complete and clear translation should be kept from the formal equivalent method.
  - b. The double accent on the meaning of the OL and the transference of that total meaning into the linguistic equivalent of the contemporary RL should be kept from the dynamic equivalent approach.
2. The weaknesses of both methods should be seen and avoided.
  - a. The tendency in the formal equivalent to make the translation depend on the form of original instead of transferring the total meaning from the form of the OL to the form of the RL should be avoided.
  - b. The tendency in the dynamic equivalent to interpret rather than to translate should also be avoided.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, as the saying goes. One will have to scrutinize the translations under study to see how these methods have been applied. Then one can assess what type of method (s) they have employed and how faithful and successful they are.

## SECTION IV

# The Revised Standard Version: 1990 Edition

As one of their tasks, the Deputies for Bible Translation were charged to obtain whatever information was available concerning the new edition of the R.S.V., due to appear in 1990 (henceforth referred to in this section as NRSV).

Some information was received from Prof. Bruce Metzger of the RSV Translation Committee, along with a small number of samples of a draft revision. In the correspondence received, emphasis was placed on the provisional nature of the samples, as well as the fact that the draft translation has not been released for publication.

The information received, and the sample texts studied, lead us to the following (tentative) observations:

1. Regarding the rendering of the Hebrew and Greek texts:

The translators have taken into account manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments which have come to light fairly recently, and have made use of studies of the original languages which have taken place in the last 40 or so years. They have also considered submissions (such as those of our Canadian sister Churches) in arriving at a revision of the 1948/52 and 1971 editions of the RSV. Some changes seem to be improvements, others not. But the information available to us at this time is still too limited for us to be draw any hard-and-fast conclusions.
2. One change which is immediately apparent is the abandonment of the use of "thee", "thou", "thine", etc. when speaking to God, along with the associated verb forms ("hast", "wouldest", "dost", etc). In using "You" and "Your" when addressing God, the NRSV returns to the practice of the King James Version, and falls into line with most other contemporary translations, such as the NIV and NKJV. None of these uses special pronouns when speaking to God. In addition, this change removes the difficulty present in the current RSV edition, which, when addressing our Saviour, makes the arbitrary and rather objectionable distinction between 'Christ as man' - ("you"), and 'Christ as God' - ("thou"). As a return to the usage of the Hebrew and Greek text, this change should probably be regarded as an improvement.
3. Changes have also been made which aim to "improve the accuracy, clarity and euphony = 'pleasing style' of English expression". These changes are readily apparent, and the NRSV gives many better-flowing, more readily understandable, and more contemporary renderings than the previous edition. Whether or not this might be at the expense of a reliable rendering of the original Hebrew and Greek cannot really be assessed on the basis of the limited samples available to us. A few comparative readings might give some indication of what these changes look like. In each case, the first reading is from the current RSV, the second from the draft of the NRSV, and the third is from the NIV (The NIV strongly emphasises clarity and style of English expression, and as such lends itself to comparisons on this point.):

Psalms 1:1

*...stands in the way of sinners," (RSV)*  
*...take the path that sinners tread," (NRSV)*  
*...stand in the way of sinners," (NIV)*

Jonah 1:4

*...mighty tempest..." (RSV); "...mighty storm..." (NRSV); "...violent storm..." (NIV). v.5 :  
"wares" (RSV); "cargo" (NRSV); "cargo" (NIV).*

Jonah 1:5

*"But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship," (RSV)*  
*"Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship..." (NRSV)*

Mark 1:5

*"And there went out to him all the country of Judah..." (RSV)*

*"And people from the whole Judean countryside...went out to him" (NRSV)*

*"The whole Judean countryside...went out to him..." (NIV)*

Mark 1:11

*"Thou art my beloved Son; with thee..." (RSV)*

*"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you..." (NRSV)*

*"You are my Son, whom I love; with you..." (NIV)*

Mark 1:14

*"preaching the gospel" (RSV)*

*"proclaiming the good news" (NRSV)*

*proclaiming the good news" (NIV).*

I John 1:2

*"...the life was made manifest..." (RSV)*

*"...this life was revealed..." (NRSV)*

*"...the life appeared..." (NIV)*

I John 2:5

*"...in him truly love for God is perfected." (RSV)*

*"...truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection." (NRSV)*

*"...God's love is truly made complete in him" (NIV)*

4. Most of the advance publicity surrounding the 1990 edition of the RSV concerns the use of "inclusive" language instead of "male-oriented" terms. As far as Deputies have been able to ascertain, the rule seems to have been to use "gender-neutral" words where "man", "he" or "him" is used in the generic sense (i.e. referring to "mankind", "a human being", "anybody", or the like). The changes are not as extensive as they could have been. (The translators had the mandate not to alter "passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture and of a masculine-orientated society".) Still, they do give cause for concern. There is no doubt that the translators were influenced (directly or indirectly) by the women's-liberation ideology of our time, and have accepted redefinitions of parts of the English language to accommodate this way of thinking. There are indeed sound Scriptural reasons for the generic use of the term "man" and its derivatives. The Churches could do well to remain alert to the shaping of our language by forces which are fundamentally hostile to the norms of Scripture.

In practice, the changes we have seen so far range from innocuous to quite significant. A few examples:

I John 2:4,9,10,11

*RSV: "he who says..."*

*NRSV: "Whoever says..."*

I John 2: 4,10

*RSV: "In him..."*

*NRSV: "In such a person..."*

I John 2: 9

*RSV: "He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still."*

*NRSV: "Whoever says: 'I am in the light', while hating a brother or sister is still in the darkness."*

Mark 1:17

*RSV: "I will make you become fishers of men."*

*NRSV: "I will make you into fishers of people."*

Psalms 1:1

*RSV: "Blessed is the man who walks not..."*

*NRSV: "Blessed are those who do not follow..."*

The rest of the paragraph, to the end of v.3, has been rewritten in the plural to agree with "those". In this case, there is a clear and unsupported change in the sense of the Psalm, in order to make room for an imposed change in language.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Again, we must stress that the small sample available to us does not permit us to make definite conclusions or recommendations. Therefore we will have to suffice with some tentative conclusions.

The modernisation of antiquated language can be seen as an improvement.

The incorporation of "inclusive" language, as limited as it seems to be, shows a drift in an unacceptable direction. Even the norm for retaining male-oriented language (see observation 4, above) has been imposed on Scripture rather than derived from it. If the samples we could study are representative of the proposed revision as a whole, then we may well have to come to the conclusion: The NRSV will be an unacceptable translation of the Scriptures.

It is clear, however, that the 1971 edition of the RSV is being thoroughly revised. In our sample texts, we have noted the following number of differences between the current RSV (1971 edition), and the NRSV:

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Psalms 1:1 - 2:8  
(14 verses): 15 differences;  
Jonah 1:1 - 2:1  
(18 verses): 38 differences;  
Mark 1:1-20  
(20 verses): 32 differences;  
I John 1:1 - 2:13  
(23 verses): 55 differences.

The sheer number of these differences would make it difficult to use the two editions in parallel. In effect, in the NRSV we are looking at a **new translation**. Any evaluation of the NRSV would have to take place with this in mind.

It is also worth noting that the Translation Committee of the RSV has been expanded to give it a broader, more "ecumenical" base. New Committee members have been drawn from the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Churches, and the intention is to produce a "common Bible", so translated as to be acceptable to all persuasions.

## SECTION V

# The New American Standard Bible

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The New American Standard Bible is produced by the Lockman Foundation of the U.S.A., and was presented as a contemporary translation of the Holy Scriptures based on the principles of the American Standard Version of 1901.

It was prepared by 58 anonymous scholars from a variety of different church groups, all of whom subscribed to the inerrancy and Divine authority of the Scriptures.

The NASB has been translated according to the principles of 'formal equivalence', striving to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Bible, in word order, sentence structure and vocabulary.

The New Testament of the NASB was completed in 1963; the complete Bible has been available in this translation since 1971. Since that time subsequent editions have been published containing a small number of minor amendments to the original translation.

### 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The American Standard Version of 1901 was an American edition of the English Revised Version of 1881. These were the first major English Bible translations to appear since the King James. Like its English counterpart, the ASV incorporated much of the (then) recent advances in textual and ancient language studies. The ASV received much acclaim for its scholarship and accuracy of translation, but its language was very stilted and old-fashioned, even for its day.

It also received much criticism for its departure from the manuscript sources on which the KJV was based. The controversy surrounding this matter continues to this day. It was, however, in many respects the forerunner of almost every major English translation of the Scriptures to appear in this century (the only significant exception, to date, being the NKJV).

The translators of the NASB held the ASV in the highest possible regard.<sup>1</sup> They wished to revive an interest in what they saw as a very accurate rendering of the ancient texts. They wished to continue in its tradition, but present it in a more contemporary form, to be useful in worship as well as for study purposes. At the same time, they wished to incorporate the more recent findings in textual and language studies, and to correct what they saw as less-accurate renderings in the ASV.

### 3. TEXT - THE OLD TESTAMENT

For a broad treatment of historical developments relating to the text of the Old Testament, the reader is referred to section II of this report, *The Text of the Bible*.

For the NASB, the Old Testament source is Kittel's 'Biblia Hebraica', 3rd edition, which is based on the traditional Hebrew Masoretic text, with occasional variations derived from one or another of the ancient versions.

In some places, the Masoretic text may seem to translators to be incomplete, inaccurate, or lacking in sense. Especially parts of the books of Samuel, as well as some of the prophets, have a number of such problem areas. Translators will then use material from the ancient versions to 'fill in the gaps'. Alternatively, translators may insert 'conjectural emendations' to reconstruct what, in their view, the text must originally have said.

The current edition of the RSV has been criticised for resorting too often, and without compelling need, to the ancient versions or to reconstructions of its own.

The NASB tends to stick more closely to the Masoretic text than does the RSV, but it does depart from it at some points,<sup>2</sup> eg: Judges 16:13-14; Isaiah 7:11, 14:4.

#### 4. TEXT - THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Greek text used was the 23rd Edition of the Nestle Greek NT. This edition follows a critical text rather than the Majority Text of the NT. Basically, this edition has its roots in the Westcott-Hort Greek NT, with a number of variations based on more recent textual studies. (For a more comprehensive treatment of this matter, the reader is again referred to section II of this report: *The Text of the Bible*).

Where the NASB departs from its primary source (i.e. Nestle, 23rd ed.), it generally does so in the direction of the Majority Text, incorporating in the text some of the passages present in the KJV, but absent from the ASV. Notable examples: Matt 6:13 (the doxology to the Lord's Prayer), 18:11, 23:14; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 22:44, 24:12; John 7:53-8:11. Most of these inclusions are in brackets, indicating some uncertainty on the part of the translators. In this, it is largely in agreement with the current edition of the RSV.

#### 5. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE NASB

The NASB, like the KJV and NKJV, but unlike most contemporary versions, prints each verse as a separate unit. This makes it easy to locate a particular verse, but makes it much more difficult to group the verses as sense paragraphs. Sense paragraph beginnings are indicated by bold verse numbering, but these are easily overlooked. This arrangement also causes problems where sense paragraphs begin in the middle of a verse, or overlap from one chapter to the next. (Examples: Isa 4:1; I Cor 13:1; II Cor 2:1.) In general, the format used does not aid, but tends somewhat to hinder the understanding of the Bible, and since the chapter and verse divisions are not a part of the Scriptures as given by God, this imposition seems to be something of a backward step.

When God is addressed in prayer the NASB uses 'Thee', 'Thy' and 'Thou' (capitalised). Christ is spoken to as 'You' (capitalised) even when no reverence is intended by the speaker (John 10:33), but as 'Thou' in Matt 16:16, Mark 1:11 and 8:29, Luke 3:22 and Acts 9:5. All pronouns referring to the Deity are capitalised.

Throughout the NT, texts quoted from the OT are printed in small capitals.

Throughout the NT, a special effort is made to indicate Greek verb tenses which are not usually a part of the English language. This consistently results in unusual renderings which, though providing useful extra information concerning the Greek, express themselves in very stilted and nonidiomatic English. Some examples:

Mark 4:2-3:

NASB: "And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching: Listen to this!"

RSV: "And He taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: Listen!"

Acts 3:3:

NASB: "He began to give them his attention".

RSV: "And he fixed his attention upon them".

Luke 24:17:

NASB: "What are these words you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?"

RSV: "What is this conversation which you are holding as you are walking?"

In the NT, questions which, by their construction in Greek, invite a 'no' answer are phrased in this way (e.g. Rom 11:1):

NASB: "...God has NOT rejected His people, HAS HE"?

RSV: "...has God rejected his people?"

As in the KJV and NKJV, words which do not actually occur in the Hebrew and Greek, but are essential to understanding in English, are printed in italics. This rule is not consistently applied.<sup>3</sup>

Some editions of the NASB provide chapter headings and marginal notes.

#### 6. EVALUATION

On the basis of criteria set by Synod 1987 of our Churches, an evaluation of the NASB can be made as follows:<sup>4</sup>

##### A. Faithfulness to the Original Languages

As far as textual sources are concerned, the NASB has largely followed contemporary thinking in its choice of text. On the whole, this translation favours the critical text over the Majority Text in its translation of the NT. It does not do so exclusively, and in a number of places it chooses from the Majority Text.

In the OT the Masoretic Text is the prime source, with a very restrained use of ancient versions.

The problem still remains: should a translation of the Scriptures be based on the Majority Text, or on an eclectic use of a critical text? There is no agreement on this point among Reformed scholars, and we refer again to section II of this report.

The existence of such translations as the NASB and NIV is proof that there is a large body of conservative scholars, firmly committed to the Divine authority of Scripture, who are convinced that the critical text is, on the whole, the most accurate available source of what the Holy Spirit inspired His servants to write. Whether this view is correct may be open to debate: but it cannot simply be dismissed. Deputies reporting to Synod 1980 of the Canadian Reformed Churches write:

".. the NASB is a real improvement over the KJV in reaping the benefits of ongoing study of the Bible and its languages."<sup>5</sup>

Leaving aside the question of textual sources, we need to find out how accurate the translators were in their rendering of the original languages. Among Reformed and evangelical scholars the NASB has developed quite a good reputation in this regard.

For instance: In the above-mentioned Report to Synod 1980 of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the following

statements are typical: "As to the NASB, the faithfulness to Scripture and to the text is generally undisputed"; "The NASB is very accurate..."; etc. <sup>6</sup>

The NASB translators support the view that an accurate translation must "adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures" and base this on the conviction that "the words of Scripture, AS ORIGINALLY PENNED IN HEBREW AND GREEK (emphasis ours-Deputies) were inspired by God".<sup>7</sup> Within the framework of the translators' perception of their task, there is no doubt that the NASB is an accurate, reliable translation.

In the above-mentioned Report, Deputies state: "a much more literal translation"; "very accurate and follows the Greek almost slavently"; "praised for its rendering"; etc. <sup>8</sup>

J. Van Bruggen: "(the NASB)...maintains the form that Luke gave to this text" (Luke 9:51-53); "the RSV and NASB are literal in their translation" (John 3:5); "...a literal translation.." (Rom 1:16,17), etc. <sup>9</sup>

Consistent with its aim, the NASB has consistently retained "traditional theological terminology", such as "justification", "sanctification", and "righteousness".<sup>10</sup>

The NASB also refrains from converting Biblical weights, measures, etc., preferring simply to write 'shekel', 'cubit', 'homer', etc., but it does give modern equivalents in the marginal notes.

Every translator has to be on guard against theological bias. At the same time, translators are influenced, when making choices in translation, by their theological stances on various points of doctrine. The NASB was produced by a committee of translators, from a variety of church backgrounds.<sup>11</sup> This tends to moderate, if not remove entirely, translation peculiarities arising from particular doctrinal beliefs. Some examples of incorrect translations, which give support to various errors:

Galatians 6:16: "... and those who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, AND upon the Israel of God". Should read: "...EVEN (or: THAT IS), upon the Israel of God".

The translation supports the premillennialist view in which the 'natural' Israel has a special place. This view is also supported by the renderings of Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1.

"Generation" is alternately noted as "race" (Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32).

I Peter 3:20: baptism is "...an appeal to God for a good conscience..". Should read: "...the pledge of a good conscience towards God..." (NIV).

The NASB wrongly emphasises human action in baptism in this text, and (indirectly) lends support to the doctrine of adult baptism.

Arminian thinking seems to lie behind the marginal note in Eph 2:8 "...it is the gift of God". - notes "i.e. that salvation", and may well have influenced the rendering of II Thess 1:11.

On the whole, however, the theological stance of the translators is sound. See also the appendix at the end of this section.

## B. Maintaining the Unity of the Scriptures

The translators clearly see the person and work of Christ as central to the whole of Scripture, and his divinity is strongly upheld.

In Messianic passages in the OT, attention is drawn to the person of Christ: "Son" is capitalised in Psalm 2 (but not in Isaiah 9:6!); we read "Lord" and "Thy" in Psalm 110, "Servant" in Isaiah 42 and following, etc.

Where different readings are possible, the one with a clear Messianic import is usually chosen. For instance:

Gen 12:3:

NASB: "...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed".

RSV: "...and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves".

Psalm 2:12:

NASB: "Do homage to the Son,..."

RSV: "...with trembling kiss his feet,..."

Isaiah 7:11:

NASB: "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a Son, and she will call His name Immanuel".

RSV: "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel".

As previously noted, OT passages quoted in the NT are printed in small capitals.

As to the Divine nature of Christ, Sheehan has identified five NT texts, where different readings are possible, which are important references: John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1. In all five texts, the NASB "opts for the higher Christology". By comparison, the RSV scores 4 out of 5, and the KJV only(!) 3 out of 5. <sup>12</sup>

## C. Readability and Suitability for Worship Services, for Instruction, and for Memorisation

The NASB Editorial Board set itself a twofold aim:

"to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, and to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage." <sup>13</sup>

While it has largely been successful with its first aim, it has failed to reach the second. It is not fluent; it is difficult to read; it frequently departs from current English usage. The way in which the translators set about reaching the first aim made the second well-nigh impossible to achieve. It would be easy to list a large number of examples. Just a few will have to suffice.

John 1:43:

NASB: "The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip, and Jesus said to him..."

RSV: "The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip, and said to him..."

Hebrews 1:1:

NASB: "...in many portions and in many ways..."

RSV: "... in many and various ways..."

Romans 1:10:

NASB: "always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you".

RSV: "asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you".

The effect is cumulative. The more one reads in this translation, the more one is struck by its shortcomings in terms of clarity and readability. There is no doubt that there are many excellent renderings in the NASB, but its publishers' claim that it is "the literary masterpiece of its generation" <sup>14</sup> is somewhat fanciful.

This translation is very difficult to read at all well out loud, and quite difficult to memorise from. Students at schools, especially at a younger age, would encounter significant, and unnecessary, problems in reading, understanding and working with Scripture if this version was to be their designated source.

Putting it quite simply: the NASB's wooden style, lack of clarity and poor readability are its major drawbacks.

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### A. How does the NASB compare with the RSV?

Textually: Both translations use basically the same text. The NASB tends to be more cautious in its use of the ancient versions of the OT and conjectural emendations, and in the NT is marginally more likely to take up readings from the Majority Text.

As to accuracy of translation: We would have no difficulty in making up a list of texts and passages in which the NASB offers superior renderings to the RSV. We would have just as little difficulty in doing the reverse. But on the whole the Deputies were repeatedly struck by the similarity in translation between the two versions. In a nutshell: In the great majority of cases the NASB says the same thing as the RSV, only the RSV says it more clearly. This conclusion appears or can be inferred in virtually every comparative study available to us. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that the NASB's translators are known to be strong supporters of the Divine authority of the Scriptures. This has always been a doubtful point with the RSV.

As to readability, clarity and style: The RSV is consistently and clearly superior.

### B. Conclusions

The Majority Report of the Deputies, reporting to the 1980 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, came to the following conclusion:

"The New American Standard Bible, though close to the RSV in acknowledging modern research, is not to be preferred above the RSV. The translation of the NASB is often too literal to be lucid and clear, and does not render itself suitable for liturgical use" (p. 232).

And elsewhere:

"...did our study of the NASB ...result in a preference of ...(this translation)...over the RSV? ...On the basis of our comparative study the answer is negative.

...This negative answer is NOT based ... on the notion that the NASB must be qualified as an unscriptural translation and that the RSV would be perfect. The study of the four versions has once more made it clear that something like a perfect or near-perfect translation does not exist." <sup>15</sup>

The Report of Deputies to Synod 1983 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia said very much the same thing. Nothing we have encountered so far would lead us to a substantially different conclusion. <sup>16</sup>

Is the NASB a valuable translation of the Scriptures? The answer must be 'Yes'. But its value lies not in its potential as a family, Church or school Bible. It is a reliable translation which provides valuable information to anyone studying the Scriptures. Its aim of staying close to the Greek and Hebrew provides the attentive student (whether theologian or 'layman') with a wealth of information about original languages, and a useful check on other more idiomatic translations such as the RSV or the NIV. This is where its strength lies.

#### Notes:

1. *New American Standard Version of the Bible*, Nashville, 1977, Preface, p. vii

2. Kubo, S., & Specht, W.F.: *So Many Versions?*, Revised Edition, Grand Rapids, 1983, pp 226,227

3. Lewis, J.P.: *The English Bible: From KJV to NIV*, Grand Rapids, 1984, pp 185-188.

4. *Free Reformed Churches of Australia: Acts of Synod 1987*, Albany, 1987, Art 109, p 67.

5. *Canadian Reformed Churches: Acts of Synod 1980*, Winnipeg, 1980, Appendix VII, p 238.

6. *ibid.*: p 227-230.

7. *N.A.S.B.*, Foreword, p v.

8. *Can. Ref. Ch.: Acts*, 1980, pp 227-230. These remarks refer to specific chapters and verses, but generally do apply to the translation as a whole.

9. Van Bruggen, J.: *The Future of the Bible*, Nashville, 1978, pp 170-192.

10. Lewis, J.P.: *op. cit.* p 179.

11. *ibid.* p 166.
12. Sheehan, B.: *Which Version Now?* Haywards Heath, n.d., p. 24.
13. *N.A.S.B.*, Foreword, p v.
14. quoted in J.P. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p 166.
15. *Can Ref Ch.: Acts*, 1980, p 232.

Synod 1980 did leave the use of the NASB to the freedom of the churches where the acceptance of the RSV would meet with insurmountable objections (Art 111, p.79), but to the knowledge of the Deputies none of the Canadian sister Churches has felt the need to take this course. Occasionally, one will read an NASB Scripture quotation in a magazine article in support of a point of argument, but such use never was prevalent, and is becoming increasingly rare as time goes on.

16. Free Reformed Churches of Australia: *Acts of Synod 1983*, Kelmscott, 1983. Appendix: Report of Deputies for Bible Translation.

#### APPENDIX to Section V: New American Standard Bible:

The Church of Armadale, in its overture to Synod 1987, identified a number of instances where it judged the RSV to have given an unsound translation, and cited these as evidence of liberal influence in the translation. For the record, we have examined the renderings given by the NASB in these places:

1. The Holy Spirit is consistently referred to as "who", in places where the RSV has "which" (Rom 5:5; 8:11; I Cor 2:12; Eph 1:14; I John 3:24).
  2. Gen 11:1: "...the same language and the same words" where the RSV has "...the same language and few words".
  3. Josh 10:12: "O sun, stand still..."; RSV: "Sun, stand thou still...".
  4. Psalm 51:18: "...build the walls..."; RSV: "...rebuild the walls...".
  5. Zech 3:16: "He will be a priest on his throne..."; RSV: "there shall be a priest by his throne...".
  6. Hosea: On 31 occasions the RSV departs from the Hebrew text and applies 'corrections'. A comparative check of these shows that the NASB has adopted the same corrections in 4 cases. In all others it has stayed with the Hebrew text.
  7. Unnecessary inconsistencies cited from the RSV have not been found in the NASB (Gen 9:20: "then Noah began farming..."; Ps 45:6 and Heb 1:8: "Thy throne, O God...").
- It is remarkable that where the RSV in Deut 6:4 has "The Lord our God is one Lord", and in Mark 12:29 it reads "The Lord our God, the Lord is one", the NASB gives almost identical readings, but the other way around. This suggests that perhaps the two readings may simply be used interchangeably, and that no particular significance need be attached to the observed difference.
8. Romans 8:30: The NASB reads "by faith" where the RSV has "on the ground of their faith".
  9. Romans 9:5 NASB: "...the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever", an awkward and ambiguous rendering. RSV: "...according to the flesh, is the Christ. God, who is over all...".
  10. The Lords Prayer: In Matthew 6, the doxology is bracketed, indicating uncertainty as to its authenticity; in Luke 11, the text is identical to that of the RSV.

## SECTION VI

# New King James Version - An Evaluation

"The Scriptures are the uniquely inspired Word of God, free from error in the original autographs".

This was the content of a declaration made in 1975 by 130 U.S. Bible scholars who were commissioned by Thomas Nelson Publishers (Nashville, USA) to undertake a revision of the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

One of the publisher's most important reasons for embarking on this project was the fact that all other modern translations made use of manuscripts not available to the translators of the King James Version some four hundred years ago. The management of Thomas Nelson viewed some of these manuscripts with great suspicion and consequently instructed their scholars not to incorporate changes based on them.

In 1982 the entire translation was completed and 'The New King James Version' was released and announced as "the greatest publishing event since 1611". This translation, claim the publishers who poured \$US 3.5 million into the project, "will unlock the spiritual treasures found uniquely in the Authorised Version (note that they virtually assert that the King James Version was inspired!).

The six or so years since publication have brought little response from the religious press. Even now it is difficult to locate worthwhile reviews, while those which are available are mostly highly critical of the NKJV.

The major criticism concerns first of all the method of translation and the style of language, which strongly reminds of the Jacobean English of the KJV. More important than this for many, however, is the fact that little or no use was made of the textual evidence discovered during the past four hundred years. This, of course, takes us to the core of the difference between this and all other modern translations: the manuscripts used; its reliance on the Textus Receptus in preference to the Critical Text (critically reconstructed text) for the translation of the New Testament. Peacock<sup>1</sup> says that for this reason the NKJV cannot be recognised as the Word of God and laments, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau".

We should not just regard the NKJV as a linguistic update of the KJV, as this may prevent us from an unbiased evaluation. The publishers may well have seen commercial advantage in the name they chose for this translation. However, regardless of claims about an allegiance to an old and (justifiably!!) revered translation, for our part we must judge also this translation on its own accuracy in conveying the original inspired writings as they are accessible to us in preserved manuscripts. In the second place the translation should be judged on its own clarity of expression in the language of the day.

## RELIABILITY

The translators of the NKJV, not satisfied with the path textual criticism has carved out for itself during the past century, deliberately chose to use basically the same text as was used for the KJV. While the Preface refers to additional textual evidence used and consulted for the translation of the Old Testament, and the use of the Textus Receptus or Received Text for the New Testament, the overriding decision was not to make use of the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts and, therefore, not of the eclectic text which underpins other new translations of the Bible. The text used for the NKJV, they claim, is attested to by the majority of available manuscripts. Lewis, however, echoing the thought of many others calls this stance "a literary monument to tradition".<sup>2</sup> Also, the impression made that the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text are identical is misleading.

We need not enter the debate here about the underlying textual evidence and refer for that to section II called 'The Text of the Bible'. We record now only the fact that these translators chose to ignore manuscripts which became available since the publication of the KJV some four hundred years ago. In keeping with our earlier findings we must conclude that this closing of the eyes to additional evidence constitutes a disservice to the reliability of the Scriptures.

Taking the above actuality into account, we must nevertheless proceed to evaluate the reliability of this Bible translation. We note here that the language employed influences also the reliability of a translation. For that reason much of what we mention later under the heading "Readability" affects also what we write here about reliability.

The overture by the consistory of the FRC of Armadale to Synod 1987, calling for a renewed search for a reliable modern translation of the Scriptures, claimed that the RSV "shows evidence of unscriptural influence" and that it "shows the marks of liberal and critical theories". To demonstrate these claims the consistory pointed to ten instances which, in its opinion, "betray its liberal theological direction".

Your deputies, having scrutinised these ten examples can inform that in all cases the NKJV translated the original text correctly:

1. The Holy Spirit is referred to as "who", not as "which" (Rom.5:5;8:11; 1 Cor.2:12; Eph.1:14; 1 John 3:24).
2. Genesis 11:1 does not have "few words" (as in the RSV, suggesting the support of an evolutionary approach to the Scriptures), but "one speech".
3. Joshua 10:12 reads "Sun stand still over Gibeon", rather than "Sun, stand thou still..." as in the RSV.
4. Psalm 51:18b in the NKJV does not use the word "rebuild" as in the RSV (supporting the theory that the majority of the Psalms originate in a time after the exile), but "build", as demanded by the original text.
5. Zech. 6:13 in the RSV reads "and there shall be A priest BY his throne". In keeping with the original text the NKJV translates "and HE shall be a priest ON His throne".
6. Hosea. The so-called corrections to the Hebrew text (emendations) were not made in the NKJV (hence also not the two emendations found warranted in the Report of the Canadian Reformed Committee for the 1974 General Synod).
7. Unnecessary contradictions found in the RSV were avoided by the NKJV. Gen 9:20 reads "And Noah began to be a farmer", not contradicting Gen. 4:2;5:29 as is done by the RSV.  
Also, the examples mentioned where the RSV translates OT quotations differently in the NT, the NKJV translates these in the same way (e.g Ps.45:6 and Hebr.1:8; Deut.6:4 and Mark 12:29).
8. Romans 3:30 reads "who will justify the circumcised BY FAITH" (emphasis is ours) and not "ON THE GROUND OF THEIR FAITH" (our emphasis) as in the RSV.
9. Romans 9:5. The RSV renders "according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all..." The NKJV gives a more natural translation which identifies the Christ as God, "according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God".
10. The longer version of the Lord's prayer, supported by the manuscripts but not given in the RSV, has been maintained in the NKJV.

More examples could be given of instances in which the NKJV translation proves its reliability over against some other modern translations. The liberal tendencies, which Synod 1987 agreed were present in the RSV, are not present in the NKJV. Over against this, however, there are cases in which the NKJV translators have spoiled their work and betray an apparent allegiance to dispensationalism and its related chiliasm in the translation.

To substantiate this we point to the instances in which the NKJV uses the word "dispensation" rather than other words demanded by the Greek of the original text. We refer here to Eph.1:10; 3:2; Col.1:25, while the same word in 1 Cor.9:17 is translated (correctly) as 'stewardship'. Further, Gal.6:16 is translated 'peace and mercy be upon them, AND upon the Israel of God' (emphasis is ours) leading to the belief that two different groups of people are indicated, as dispensationalists would have us believe. In 2 Tim.2:15, instead of rendering 'rightly HANDLING (or: who correctly HANDLES the word of truth', the NKJV has 'rightly DIVIDING the word of truth' (emphasis is ours), a choice which cannot be justified and a favoured expression in dispensational circles. Further, some of the headings above passages in the Book of Revelations could also be interpreted as favouring dispensationalist thinking.

To this we must add that the policies adopted regarding the original text and the over-valuation of the KJV have led to the inclusion of texts and words which Bible scholars have long known that they should be deleted. We refer here to 1 John 5:7 but also to the many times the deity of Christ is confirmed in a manner unwarranted by the original text. As examples of the latter we mention here Acts 7:59 and 1 Tim.3:16.

Lastly, reliability of the translation was also adversely affected by the policy (discussed more broadly under 'Readability') to capitalise pronouns referring to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The policy often leads to interpretation, if not guessing, such as in 2 Thess.2:7, but also in the many Psalms which by this practice have been made directly Messianic, whereas primarily they did not have that intent.

## READABILITY

The NKJV is attractively presented in a most readable type. Each paragraph beginning is indicated by a boldly printed capital number. Very long sentences are appropriately broken up. Direct speech is indicated by quotation marks. Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are shown in oblique typeface. Poetry is printed in strophic form (poetic lines). Some footnotes are added to show variant readings, but not nearly as many as in other modern translations (this may please some, whereas others would prefer to be informed about variant readings). The Christological headings of some earlier KJV editions, such as to the Song of Solomon, to some of the Psalms, and to some chapters of Isaiah, have been replaced with other headings.

As to language, one of the major difficulties experienced in the churches with the KJV was its archaic words and expressions which no longer conveyed the true meaning of the original text to today's readers: language changes over time. The NKJV translators have modernised, in most cases creditably, what had become badly outdated in the KJV.

Whether or not one finds the NKJV a readable translation will depend on the extent he is at ease with a formal, somewhat lyrical style, such as that of the KJV. With all the changes, the translators have certainly retained a language with a 'hallowed flavour'. We doubt that any church member would find the NKJV a translation which is 'impossible to read'.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the NKJV is linguistically sound. The translators have chosen to use many words which also today are no longer in common use. Some examples of this are: aright, maidens, morsels, fainthearted, tarry, supplication, serpents, phylacteries, pitchers, assuredly, and manifest. There are also words which have gained recognition in the churches, but which new readers of the Bible would find impossible to understand; words such as righteousness, justification, propitiation, tabernacle, unclean, dispensation, predestined, sanctify, etc., need explanation if they are to be understood. While the retention of the doctrinal words in the latter list carry our approval, it should be conceded that the use of such words should be limited to where they are technically necessary in order to prevent the Bible from becoming a Book only for those initiated into its peculiar language.

One of the disturbing features of this translation is that each verse has been treated as a separate unit. This practice disrupts the flow of the sentences and thoughts, while giving the impression that the original text was constructed in this manner. The structure of the sentences themselves appear stilted and they read, also because of the word usage, as an awkward mixture of Jacobean and modern English. The whole gives an initial impression of soundness, but closer inspection and daily reading of the translation reveal the narrow minded base from which the translators have set out to do their task.

One of the most striking (and in light of earlier comments about style somewhat surprising!) changes is the discontinuation of the pronouns 'thee', 'thou', and 'ye'. These pronouns also are no longer in common use and have been replaced by the simple 'you'. This is a feature also of the NIV, whereas the current RSV and the NASB use 'thee' and 'thou' when referring to God the Father, but 'you' where Jesus is addressed. This matter, which needs consideration, was already discussed in the submission on the '1990 RSV'. The difference here, however, is that the translators have opted to capitalise the pronouns 'You', 'Your', and 'Yours' (but not the relative pronouns 'who' and 'whom') when referring to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They made this distinction in order to indicate reverence.

We note that the capitalisation policy was extended also to nouns such as 'Son' (Isai.7:14, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son; also Luke 2:7); 'Boy' (Luke 2:43); 'Shepherd' (Matth.26:31); Seed (Gen.3:15; Gal.3:16); 'Head' (Col.2:19); 'Promise' (referring to the Holy Spirit, Luke 24:49); etc.

This policy was generally not followed by the KJV and certainly cannot be backed up with reference to the original text. Further, as Lewis points out,<sup>3</sup> reverence is not always intended in direct speech recorded in Scripture. The rendering of John 10:33 shows that the policy leads to absurdity: "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make yourself God".

A false impression can also sometimes be created, such as in John 4:19, where the Samaritan woman says, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet". Another example of this we find in 2 Thess.2:7 where the NKJV reads "only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way".

Apart from this, there are also inconsistencies in the practice where 'cornerstone' (Eph.2:20); 'head' (Eph.4:15); 'law' (Matth.5:18) are left uncapitalised, the latter in contrast to the previous verse, Matth.5:17.

It appears that the translators tried to create a virtue where one did not previously exist, and then became slaves to that virtue. If modern usage is preferred, modern rules must be applied with precision and consistency.

Modern word usage has allowed for the elimination of obsolete verb endings (as in 'dost', 'workest', 'knoweth'). Psalm 44, for instance, has become much easier to read than from the KJV, or from the RSV, for that matter.

Other changes include:

1. The mythical dragons (e.g Psalm 148:7; Job 30:29; Jer.51:34) have become more real sea creatures, jackals, or monsters. Unicorns (Psalm 22:21, etc) were changed into wild oxen, and cockatrices (Isai.11:8, etc.) into vipers.
2. Passages such as 1 Sam.25:22,34; 1 Kings 14:10, 16:11; 2 Kings 18:27; etc, which describe functions of the human body have been recast to be more suitable for public reading.
3. Old Testament characters referred to in the New Testament have been spelled consistent with their original name (Elijah, not Elias, etc).
4. As improvements some count changes such as 'murder' in stead of 'kill' (Exo.20:13), 'anxieties' for 'thoughts' (Ps.139:23), 'friend' for 'such an one' (Ruth 4:1), and 'Saul, your grandfather' for 'Saul thy father'. The question must be raised, however, whether these changes are permissible, where they appear to be based on interpretation rather than on a reading of the original text.

The NKJV, like the KJV, contains many words (other than direct speech) printed in italics. They are intended to show that they needed to be added in order to make the translation into proper English. While this supposedly is part

of the word for word (literal or equivalent) method of translation, the impression created that these were the only words needed to make the original language into grammatically correct English is misleading. The task of translation is not that simplistic. For a full discussion we refer to our previous article on the Methods of Translation. Apart from this, many may well regard these italicised words as words of emphasis, which would distort meaning.

Overall, we cannot be as outspokenly supportive of the readability of this translation as one favourable critic who regards it as highly successful and writes that it is one which "preserves the rhythms, meaning and beauty of the original 1611 version"<sup>4</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Our task was to test this new translation for its faithfulness to the original text, its readability and its consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures.

Regarding reliability, we appreciate the fact that the NKJV has not followed the RSV in that translation's apparent surrender to liberal influences. However, the objections outlined above, particularly about the textual choices, the submission to dispensationalist thoughts, and the confusing policy to capitalise pronouns referring to the Godhead, negatively affect the reliability of this translation and constitute a formidable stumbling block to our acceptance of the NKJV as a viable alternative to the RSV.

We have no complaints about the maintenance of the unity of the Scriptures in the NKJV.

As to readability, the editions we have seen are attractively presented and at first inspection give the appearance of a translation which is cogent and convincing. After closer examination, however, we must record critical notes about the method of translation, the mixed word usage, and the stilted sentence structure which together make us conclude that it can hardly be called a modern translation.

Summing up, your deputies cannot recommend the New King James Version for use in the church services.

## Bibliography

The following books and articles (other than those referred to in notes following other sections of this report) were read and/or consulted by us and are recommended to those who wish to acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the subject matter discussed in this section.

### Notes

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  2. Lewis, Jack P., (1984), *The English Bible from KJV to NIV*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, p. 321.
- Note: the chapter on the NKJV may have been added after the first printing of this book in 1982. That would account for the title, an erroneous one in 1984.
3. *ibid.*, p.334
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1. Geertsema, J., "After 350 years - which Bible translation?", in *Clarion*,
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## SECTION VII

# The NIV in comparison with the RSV

### Abbreviations

All quotes are from works listed in the selected bibliography; only page numbers of quotes are given. The following abbreviations are given for reference works.

- CT - work #1 listed under 'Books'
- JL - work #4 listed under 'Books'
- KS - work #3 listed under 'Books'
- MT - work #1 listed under 'Texts'
- N/A - work #3 listed under 'Texts'
- TC - work #2 listed under 'Texts'
- UBS - work #5 listed under 'Texts'

### 1. MANDATE

The mandate with respect to the NIV from the 1987 Synod was "to investigate once more the NIV...to see if (this) translation would be better than the RSV. The reports of the previous deputies and the reports of deputies of our Canadian sister-churches can be consulted and used for this investigation. To use as criteria:

1. Faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.
2. Readability and suitability for worship services, for instruction and memorisation.
3. Consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures.

### 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE NIV

The history of the NIV goes back to the 1954 General Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America where the RSV was rejected as an approved version for public worship. The 1956 Synod of the same churches therefore appointed a committee to study the possibility of sponsoring the production of a new translation in cooperation with other conservative churches. This committee held conferences with the Educational Division of the National Association of Evangelicals and in 1965 a Committee of Fifteen was formed to oversee the work of a new translation. This committee enlisted the services of competent, evangelical scholars.

More than 110 such scholars took part in this translation, among whom are noted men as R.K. Harrison, W. Hendriksen, E.M. Blaikock, W. Lane, Leon Morris, R.M. Longenecker, Edmund Clowney, Meredith G. Kline, F. Derek Kidner, and R.L. Harris. It is an international team of scholars who all subscribed to the full inerrancy of the Bible. These men were divided into twenty teams (translators, consultants and an English stylist in each team). These teams prepared trial translations of their respective books of the Bible. Two editorial committees (an intermediate and a general one) then screened and edited these drafts. The translations were given to literary consultants for clarity and idiom. The committee on Bible translation then made final examination and approval.

The NIV Study Bible with its low, discounted price is a very attractive study-Bible, considering all the commentary, aids, maps, concordances, etc. which it offers from a conservative and evangelical viewpoint. Overall, the NIV is not expensive as far as the Bibles go, but retails at a very reasonable price in a variety of editions and formats.

The following principles guided the translators in their work:

1. Begin with and be faithful to the original text in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic languages.
2. Clearly reflect the unity and harmony of the Spirit-inspired Writings.
3. Retain only what the original languages say - not inject additional elements of unwarranted paraphrasing.
4. Communicate God's revelation in the language of the people - to do for our time what the KJV did for its day.
5. Be equally effective for public worship (pulpit and pew), for private study and devotional reading.
6. Establish universal acceptance by creating an ecclesiastical team of 100 scholars who hold to a high view of Scriptures as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Belgic Confession, and the Statement of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals.

This is a truly monumental and worthwhile goal, one which deserves our full approval. These principles agree wholly with the criteria which the 1987 Synod gave for evaluating the four translations. The question is whether the New International Version has attained its goal.

The preface of the NIV tells us that all the translators were "united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form." It is gratifying to note this very important fact. For critics of the RSV have long pointed out that the liberal views of the translators have manifested themselves in renderings favourable to their views (cf. J.H. Skilton, 258; R. Laird Harris, 10-13).

Given that the submission of the church at Armadale to the 1987 Synod cited ten such translations exposing the liberal bias of the RSV, it is a positive sign that the NIV deliberately upholds the authority and infallibility of the Bible. This will create better trust and respect for the Bible, whereas the RSV has evoked unrest in our midst and uncertainty about the Bible.

### 3. FORMAT

The mechanical part of publishing this translation has been well done. The book is manageable, the paper is good quality. The text is printed in two columns (most editions) making it easier to take in a line; the use of poetic structure is frequent and effective. The text is divided into sections with headings given for each section, though the psalms do not have headings. The division into paragraphs rather than individual verses is very helpful in following the text. The KJV, NKJV and NASB are set in verses and not in paragraphs, making it more difficult to follow the text thematically.

Meticulous attention was paid to punctuation. Following the NT there are tables of weights and measures, along with maps. Of course, a variety of editions of the NIV are available, giving a variety of extra helps.

Notes are added copiously (more than in the RSV but less than in the NASB) for the following purposes:

1. For textual matters such as alternate textual variants from manuscripts and ancient versions.
2. For explanation of personal names, technical terms, weights and measures.
3. For giving commentary on certain renderings so that the reader will understand the text.
4. For specifying the quotation made or giving cross-references.

As far as these notes go, some have complained that there are not enough textual notes. The preface promises that "where there was uncertainty about what the original text was" footnotes would be given. The report of the Christian Reformed Churches complains that this promise was not honoured sufficiently (with examples given from Rev.15:3; 22:12, and Jude 22-23, p.255). However, that apparent deficiency has been covered by the addition of 105 footnotes in the second edition of the NT. These numerous notes should be sufficient, although there will always be debate about the exclusion and/or inclusion of notes. We will examine some footnotes later on in this report.

Another feature of the format is the use of half brackets (e.g. Nahum 1:8,11,12,14). Where there is a possible question about words or phrases not represented in the original text but which are supplied (forty-four times of JL, 295, though J. Lewis, 296, cites some more instances where words are supplied but no brackets are used) by the translators for clarification as required by the context, these half brackets are used. When one remembers that the principles of the dynamic equivalent method of translating feel no need to indicate every word not represented in the original, then this number shows two things, i.e. its determination to adhere to the original text, and that it does not adopt wholesale the principles of the dynamic equivalent method.

Capitalisation occurs frequently in the NIV. All proper names are capitalised, often making proper names out of what have previously been common nouns, e.g. "Desert of Sin", "Desert of Sinai", "Year of Jubilee", "Palace of the Forest", "Ulai Canal", etc. Expressions such as "Tent of Meeting", "Book of the Covenant", "The Holy Mountain", etc. are interpreted as titles and capitalised. All terms (not pronouns) for divinity, the Spirit, and the Messiah have capitals. This last point is of course contentious and does involve the translators in difficulties, especially in prophetic passages (see section 7 of this report). JL notes that there is no consistency in capitalising messianic terms (297). To be consistent one would have to capitalise "prophet", "priest", "servant", and "king" which too are all messianic terms. But the better approach in our view is as JL says, "it would probably have been better not to capitalize messianic terms in the OT" (297).

Another feature is seen in the translation of terms dealing with time, measures, money, weight and distance. Sometimes a modern equivalent is given, e.g. "eight month's wages" (for 200 denarii in John 6:7), while in others the ancient (transliterated) term is used, e.g. "ten thousand talents" and "a hundred denarii" in Matthew 18:24, 28, where footnotes explain these respectively as "millions of dollars" and "a few dollars". The "Table of Weights and Measures" offered in the NIV does prove helpful.

Overall the format is pleasing, very professional, scholarly, and helpful.

### 4. TEXT - THE OLD TESTAMENT

The preface to the NIV tells us that "for the OT the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text (MT) as published in the latest editions of BIBLIA HEBRAICA, was used throughout". As KS conclude, "in this regard, as in the matter of translation it is a conservative version, revealing extreme care and caution in modifying the traditional text", and again, "the translators of the NIV treated the Hebrew text with great respect, and kept all changes to a minimum" (257,258). The Dead Sea Scrolls, which represents an earlier stage (200 B.C.-100 A.D.) of the Hebrew text than the MT (900 A.D.) has vindicated the choice for the MT.

However, there is no unbending, slavish following of the MT. Where the ancient versions (translations of the OT), the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient scribal traditions, Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Targums throw more light on the ancient text of the OT, and where the MT is unclear or uncertain, the NIV uses this material. Especially the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew made from 250 B.C.-100 B.C.) is often valuable in sections where the Hebrew text has suffered in transmission over the centuries.

That the NIV keeps these to a minimum can be demonstrated by a comparative study with the RSV. For example, some evangelicals protested the RSV's treatment of the text of Isaiah. About thirty conjectural textual alterations are footnoted in the RSV (as "cn" or correction of the Hebrew). Twenty-six had been suggested in Kittel's third edition of BIBLIA HEBRAICA, which often has a critical slant. We now have the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah, which has been published, to check the Hebrew text. It is interesting that none of these thirty scholastic conjectures is supported by the Isaiah scroll (dated about 150 B.C.), though possibly a few are justified. A scholarship critical of the MT did injustice to the MT in favour of an easier and smoother reading (cf. Harris, 10,12). One looks in vain for anything labeled a conjecture in the NIV-Isaiah. In twenty-seven of the cases the NIV rendered the MT (cf. JL, 302). Thus the NIV has followed the MT much more closely than the RSV has, and does not show the tendency quickly to follow versions or conjectures.

The criticisms of the RSV in Armadale's submission to the 1987 Synod were checked against the NIV. In Gen. 11:1 where the RSV has "and few words", favouring the evolutionary approach to Scripture, the NIV has "a common speech" which is correct, also in the context. In Josh.10:12 the NIV deletes "thou" which the RSV included,

implying that Joshua and Israel looked on the sun and moon as deities. Psalm 51:18b reads "rebuild the walls of Jerusalem", intimating that the psalm, as others according to critical theories, is post-exilic when the walls needed to be rebuilt. The NIV simply reads "build". In Zech.6:13 the RSV reads, "and there shall be a priest BY his throne" while the MT reads ON his throne, in fulfilment of the prophecy of the priest-king of Psalm 110. Critical scholars think that this combination arose later and so chose the reading of the RSV. But the text is clear. The NIV does read "ON his throne". One remark might be made of the NIV in Zech. 6:14, the next verse, where the MT has "crowns" and not "crown" as in the NIV. This term, referring to an ornamental crown made up of many crowns, deserves special attention as B. Holwerda made clear ("De Priester-Koning in het Oude Testament" in his .....BEGONNEN HEBBENDE VAN MOZES...., Kampen, 1974, 49-77, esp. 66-68). In Gen.9:20 the RSV says Noah "was the first tiller of the soil" whereas Gen.4:2; 5:29 contradict this. The NIV reads Noah was "a man of the soil", while it gives the other reading in a footnote. In all these cases it is obvious that the NIV is preferred above the RSV.

The submission of Armadale to the 1987 Synod mentioned the 31 conjectural emendations which the RSV has in Hosea (cf. the report of the committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches to the 1974 Synod). Also, in this prophecy of Hosea the RSV reverted to readings in the versions in favour of the MT.

Your deputies have checked all these emendations of the RSV, comparing them with what the NIV (and NASB) did. Simply checking the NIV, one finds emendations listed at 4:7 (follows an ancient scribal tradition); 5:11 (follows ancient versions); and 10:6. One can compare this to the NASB which has four emendations. Indeed, a close check did not reveal any more unlisted emendations in the NIV (or NASB). If one remembers the conclusion of the 1974 report of the Canadian committee that "2 corrections were definitely warranted, and 5 were possibly warranted," then the approach of the NIV (and NASB) is both cautious and commendable. Only the NIV's emendation at 10:6 could be questioned (the commentary, COMMENTAAR OP HET OUDE TESTAMENT, by Van Gelderen and Gispén, ad loc., say that it is not necessary).

Another matter concerns the use of the versions rather than the MT at difficult points. In Hosea the NIV and NASB both read the versions rather than the MT at 10:5; 11:3; and 14:2, while the NIV alone reads the versions at 11:2 and the NASB at 7:6. This is a modest use of the versions (Van Gelderen and Gispén favoured the same readings from the versions at most points). In comparison with the RSV which lists 26 (excluding the readings listed as corrections of the Hebrew) cases where the versions were preferred above the MT, the NIV and NASB used the versions only minimally.

Admittedly, the Hebrew text of Hosea is one of the most difficult. Yet this comparative study does show the great difference between the RSV and the NIV in their adherence to the MT.

## 5. TEXT - THE NEW TESTAMENT

Concerning the text of the NT the preface to the NIV states:

*The Greek text used in translating the NT was an eclectic one. No other piece of ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the NT. Where existing manuscripts differ, the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of NT textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where there was uncertainty about what the original text was. The best current printed texts of the Greek NT were used."*

So the NIV-translators selected the best text out of the hundreds of available manuscripts. Reference here is made to the section of this report about this subject of the text of the NT.

In general this means that the modern text such as N/A & UBS have been followed. What are considered harmonisations or conflations, i.e. the tendency, e.g., to harmonise one gospel passage with a parallel passage from another gospel (see section on the NT text, note 11) are deleted but noted (Mt.5:44; 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; Mk.9:44; 11:26; Lk.9:54-56; 23:17). Readings regarded as of later origin (John 5:3-4; Acts 8:37 and 1 John 5:7-8) are also deleted but not noted. The longer passages, Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53- 8:11 are included in the same print but have notes stating that many manuscripts do not have them.

These deletions trouble many. However, it is good to recall that the Bible forbids us BOTH TO ADD OR TO SUBTRACT FROM the inspired text. One sometimes stresses the sin of alleged deletion, but one should at the same time beware of additions. Others believe that this stance is a capitulation to the theories of Westcott and Hort. For example, an article in the Trinitarian Bible Society quarterly says,

*"although the NIV professes to be an evangelical translation, the Greek text on which it is mainly based was not prepared by evangelical scholars but by the editors of the UBS' Greek NT. The UBS editors included several who deny the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, working in cooperation with a RC Cardinal, Carlo Martini" (11)*

To corroborate this they quote three texts (Mt.1:25; 5:22 and 1 Tim.3:16). In each case there is a good case for the change (a conflation, a preference for the harder reading, and paleography respectively) from the 'textus receptus' which the TBS defends. Then there is the charge of surrendering to and adopting uncritically the theories of editors who are critical of the Bible. That the NIV-translators did not simply adopt the text of N/A or UBS is quite evident from the facts. First of all, many evangelical scholars such as J.H. Skilton (the NIV "is based on a good Greek text", 265) and Gordon D. Fee defend an eclectic text (cf., both his articles). The NIV does not just uncritically take over the text presented by N/A and UBS. It is also interesting to see how Fee defends the reading of 'He' instead of 'God' in 1 Tim.3:16 ("The Majority Text...", 117-118). All (early) Latin vulgate manuscripts (more than a 1000), all other early versions, and all early church fathers before the last part of the fourth century read 'He'.

Secondly, it is evident that the NIV does not slavishly follow the N/A and UBS text, but often departs from the UBS (which rates the variant readings on a scale from A to D). KS (246) cites numerous passages where it deviates from the UBS (cf. JL, 305- 306). Even readings which are given D ratings are included by the NIV. So it is not true that it blindly follows the UBS and N/A without sifting the evidence for itself.

We are told (JL, 304) that in 45 cases readings carried in the Textus Receptus were relegated to the margin in the NIV. Deputies looked at over 30 of these cases. Most of them are considered to be conflations (scribes added read-

ings from one gospel to another gospel, for instance). In other cases the evidence from the manuscripts strongly favours the readings of the earlier manuscripts. Some variants should definitely be reconsidered by the NIV-translators, e.g. (Mt.14:30; 20:16; 27:24; 27:35 and Mark 7:16). In many cases no footnotes were given to indicate that such important variants (e.g. Mt.1:25; 5:44; 9:13; 13:51; 14:30, 20:16; 20:22; 23:8; 25:13; and 27:24) existed. The NIV-translators should be asked to include such footnotes as well as to reconsider some of the above textual choices.

Indeed, it is worthwhile to pay attention to this matter somewhat more closely, by comparing textual choices in the RSV, NIV and NASB. The following texts or parts of them have been disputed by scholars.

Mt.12:47 - omitted by RSV; included by NASB without note

Mt.21:44 - omitted by RSV; included by NASB without note

Mk.3:14 - omitted by RSV; omitted by NASB

Eph.1:1 - omitted by RSV; included by NASB

Lk.22:19,22 - included by both RSV & NASB and noted

Lk.22:43,44 - omitted by RSV; included by NASB

They are all included in the text by NIV. This shows that the NIV shows greater caution in deleting readings which have much manuscript support than the NASB which in turn is more cautious than the RSV.

This comes to light especially when the matter of the nine (Mt.27:49; Lk.22:19b-20; 24:3,6,9,12,36,40,51,52) "Western noninterpolations" (cf. TC,191-193) are considered. Basically codex Bezae (D), which generally has a fuller text, has shorter readings in these texts. Westcott and Hort and even many other manuscripts from the western text-type included them. With the acquisition of the evidence of papyri (which predate D by 200 years) we see even more that the oddities of tone unusual manuscript should not be followed (cf. TC,192 where this is conceded). Yet in all these texts except Lk.22:19b-20 the RSV has omitted these readings relegating them to footnotes. The NASB included Lk.22:19b-20; 24:3,6,12 (bracketed) but omitted the remaining five readings. The NIV has included them all. As JL says, "in these cases the NIV represents a more current view of textual questions than the NASB does" (306). It is certainly a great improvement over the RSV in these cases. This does not mean that more improvements could and should take place in future editions. The NIV should seriously consider the inclusion of the doxology and "amen" in the Lord's prayer in Mt.6 as well as the longer version of the Lord's prayer in Lk.11 (cf. J. van Bruggen, "Abba, Vader!" in DE BIDDENDE KERK, Vuurbaak, 1979, 9-42; other literature and articles abound on the subject).

In conclusion it must be said that the NIV is an improvement over the RSV (and NASB) as far as choice of NT text it translated. Textually it is to be preferred above the RSV (and NASB).

## 6. METHOD OF TRANSLATING

Concerning the principles to be applied in this section reference is made to section III dealing specifically with this matter.

*"The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translating and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers.... At the same time, they have striven for more than a word-for-word translation. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modification in a sentence structure and constant regard of the contextual meanings of words.... Concern for clear and natural English - that the NIV should be idiomatic but not idiosyncratic, contemporary but not dated - motivated the translators and consultants"*.

Thus accuracy came first and clarity with literary quality second. It must also be "suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use" (preface). In our report about methods of translating these were the aims and principles we underlined. It now remains to see whether the NIV lived up to them.

In order to test the NIV deputies used the translation at home to get a 'feel' of the version. One enjoys its freshness along with its modern and contemporary English. It speaks our language. Its freshness sometimes made one feel as though one was reading the Bible for the first time.

### A. Dynamic equivalent or formal equivalent?

What type of translation is it? Some say that it is based on the methods of dynamic equivalence. However, this would be an inaccurate statement. JL says,

*"The NIV has attempted to steer a middle course between the excessive literalness of the NASB on the one hand and the excessive paraphrases of Philips, the NEB, and Taylor on the other. Loyalty to the text has been defined in terms of a compromise between the dynamic equivalence principle and literalness..."* (320)

Others chime in with that assessment. The Report of Christian Reformed Churches (257), Blanchard (7, citing its translation of the definition of faith in Hebr.11:1 as illustration), and Carson (24, who likes its avoidance of both unwarranted paraphrasing and mechanical literalism) praise it for its balance. Lasor states categorically that the NIV "is not a dynamic equivalent translation, and in this respect is not a 'modern' translation" and praises it for that fact (19). Linton, an English literature professor, praises the NIV style because there is "no straining after catchy colloquialism, shirt-sleeve casualness, or perky slang" (41).

On the negative side, Bratcher finds it too cautious, too painfully literal at times and too closely tied in form to the underlying Hebrew and Greek structures (350). A very telling review is given by Newman who is a UBS translation research associate. We expect him to advocate full-blown dynamic equivalence which he does. Those who wish to have a Bible in modern English but with a traditional flavour will be well served with the NIV he says, tongue in cheek, "but we are convinced that they need a dynamic equivalence translation to use alongside, in order to capture more of the details and richness of the original meaning" (325). Though it is reliable, it suffers in the area of readability, he claims. And a runner needs TWO good legs (336)! He offers twenty interesting problem-areas in readability (326- 334). Ryken (16) along with Skilton (259-265) lament the deficiency in literary quality; it tuned its lyre too low! They find the KJV has more grandeur and eloquence.

This sampling of reviews reveals much. It confirms that the NIV is a cross between a literal and a free translation. As KS state,

*"The NIV is a middle-of-the-road version in which a high degree of "formal correspondence" is combined with renderings that are "dynamically equivalent (259)"*".

In our report about the method of translating we concluded that the strengths of both the formal equivalent and the dynamic equivalent methods should be kept and their weaknesses avoided. Much sympathy and understanding of dynamic equivalence was shown (cf. the quote from B. Holwerda). Thus this combination of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence in the NIV speaks in its favour, in our view.

## B. Accuracy

Accuracy means that the translators wrestled with the original text - grammar, syntax, vocabulary, context, canonicity, etc. - to determine accurately what the text says. Then they transferred that full meaning into modern English. There is accuracy in keeping to the style and flavour of the writer's time. It uses "cloaks", not "coats"; and "sandals" instead of "shoes". Also, it tries to keep the style of the individual writers of the Bible. Differing writers have differing styles and use terms differently. The NIV reflects this. It uses traditional forms ("shadow of death" in Ps 23 and even "hallowed" in the Lord's prayer!) and terms (justification, saint, sanctifying, and blood, cf. its translation of 1 Cor.1:30) along with new ones ("fellowship offering" for "peace offering", "teraphim" becomes translated to "household gods", "mercy seat" becomes "the atonement cover" or "the place of atonement", "the breastplate of judgment" becomes the breastpiece for making decisions, "afflict your souls" becomes "deny yourselves", and "leprosy" becomes "an infectious skin disease" when it is a disease of mankind, except that an actual victim is said to have leprosy). These new translations show much interaction with the text and scholarship on these important terms. Since "vanity" today denotes parading one's virtues or conceit instead of the concept of something which is empty and worthless, the NIV translates the thematic text of the Preacher (now the "Teacher"), "'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless'". The sense is correct, the rhythm fits and only nostalgia mourns the loss of "vanity".

One area in which the NIV receives criticism is that it too often interprets instead of translates. This is apparent in texts which are ambiguous, allowing more than one explanation. Obviously, the translator must make up his mind what the text means to say. Inevitably some will dispute his decision. Carson cites cases in Mk.15:1 (came to a decision); 2 Cor.3:13 (the end of what was fading away); 2 Cor.5:17 (he is a new creation; 1 Cor.12:1 (spiritual gifts). He concludes that "by and large, the NIV translators have, in my opinion, exercised good judgment" (25).

Sometimes the NIV tends to try to settle the matter by giving an interpretive rendering (cf. Report of Committee to 1980 Gen. Synod of Can. Ref. Churches, 231-232-234). Yet in other cases it keeps the rendering deliberately ambiguous. An example of this is Haggai 2:7 - "and the desired of all nations will come". The NIV - Study Bible points out that "desired" can refer to individuals and thus have messianic significance in that all the nations desired Christ (think of the classic choral piece, "Jesu, joy of man's desiring"). But the same word also refers to articles of value. Since the NIV stresses contextual meanings it is strange that here it does not choose a rendering such as "treasures" (RSV) which fits the context in which God promises to fill his house with gold and silver from the nations which He will shake.

One can thus conclude that the judgments which the NIV makes are the ones which would be favoured; that judgments often need to be made since translating is interpreting; and nevertheless, that the NIV tends to be too interpretive. One representative example is how it renders "ships of Tarshish" which translation is retained in Ps.48:7; Isa.32:1,14; 60:9; Ezek.27:25. But where trade on the Mediterranean Sea is suggested, it renders, "trading ships" (1 Kings 10:22; 22:48; 2 Chron.9:21; 20:36; Isa.2:16, but note the problem at 2 Chron.20:37). It would have been better to keep to "ships of Tarshish" and supply an explanatory note where needed.

We have also criticised the RSV for renderings which favour the liberal and critical school of theology (cf. the submission from Armadale on the NT). The following points should be noted about the points raised in this submission:

1. The Holy Spirit is referred to as "who" and not "which" in Rom.5:5; 8:11, 1 Cor.2:12; and Eph.1:14. This is an improvement.
2. Rom.3:30 reads "who will justify the circumcised BY faith...." instead of "ON THE GROUND OF their faith" (RSV, with contested part capitalised). The NIV keeps to the reformed, not the arminian or RC (as in the RSV), stance. It is also a proper translation of the Greek, which the RSV is not.
3. Rom.9:5 in the NIV reads "the Christ, who is God over all...." in contradistinction to the RSV. It identifies Christ as God, whereas the RSV decided not to do so.
4. The NIV takes the same textual approach for the Lord's prayer as the RSV does. The only improvement is that at Luke 11 the NIV gives footnotes indicating that "some manuscripts" add the longer text, whereas the RSV does not even footnote it. We have mentioned this textual question previously and now only note that the NIV does not improve on the RSV here.

One thus finds that in the NT texts mentioned above the NIV corrects the RSV in three out of four cases, while in the last case both versions are to be challenged.

Another area in which to test accuracy is the rendering of certain important, biblical terms and phrases. YHWH, the Hebrew name of the God of the covenant, is rendered traditionally, LORD. This has come about because the Jews thought this name was secret and was not allowed to be pronounced. They used the other title for God (Adonai) instead. English versions have followed suit by translating it as 'Lord' ('Adonai'), but distinguished it by capitalising it - 'LORD'. One laments this capitulation to Jewish impiety, and would have hoped that the NIV would break new ground by translating the term or by transliterating it as 'Yahweh' ('He is', as favoured by K.L. Barker, "YHWH SABAOTH: 'THE LORD ALMIGHTY,'" CT, 144). Connected with this is the rendering of both ' (YHWH) Sabaoth (LORD of hosts)' and 'Shaddai' as '(LORD) Almighty'. This rendering does convey that God is sovereign over the hosts or armies of heaven (stars, etc. and angels) and earth (armies of Israel). It is true that the Greek translation of

the OT does commonly render both 'sabaoth' and 'shaddai' by 'pantokrator' (almighty) and the NT translates them accordingly as well in 2 Cor.6:18; Rev.4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6,15; and 21:22 (op. cit., 146-149). Yet one senses that the aspect of the 'hosts' or 'armies' as well as the distinction between 'sabaoth' and 'shaddai' are lost in this more general term. Also, 'Adonai' (which means Master or Sovereign) in combination with YHWH becomes 'Sovereign LORD' (over 250 times in Ezekiel). Again, this may give the proper sense, but one still prefers something more accurate like 'the Lord YAHWEH', for instance.

The NIV often inserts 'dear' in front of 'friends' or 'brothers' or 'woman' in order to show the christian bond of affection in the relationship. One wonders whether this dynamic equivalent is warranted and necessary. The cases of 'dear woman' in John 2:4; 19:26 are very suspect, since Jesus here tries to teach his own mother the proper attitude He must bear to her and she to him.

'Propitiation' is deleted in the RSV in favour of 'expiation'. This reduces the teaching of God's wrath against the sin of man. In the NIV 'hilasmos' and 'hilasterion' respectively become 'atoning sacrifice for our sins' and 'sacrifice of atonement' Rom.3:25; Heb.2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). The footnote offered with these texts says, "turn aside his wrath" and the commentary in the NIV-Study Bible says it is "a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God. Without this appeasement all people are justly destined for eternal punishment". This rendering definitely is an improvement over the RSV, but one wonders why the footnote could not be adopted (Blanchard, 7).

'Sheol', as is 'Hades' often, is regularly rendered as "grave" (cf. "Why Hebrew 'Sheol' was translated 'Grave'", in CT, 75-92). Seeing that the NIV loves variety and contextual meanings, one wonders how every context and every text can have that exact shade of meaning. Surely a translation should show more nuances of this important theological term.

'Monogenes' ("only-begotten" in KJV; "only" in RSV) as it describes Jesus as an important, credal term for us. The rendering of the RSV was inadequate and the reversion to "only-begotten" in our creeds shows that. The NIV uses "one and only" which points out more emphatically than the RSV how a one and only son is most loved ('loved' and 'one and only' are related, cf. Gen.22:2,12). The NIV translates "one and only Son" to show that Jesus is divine (Son) and unique (one and only) (cf. Longenecker, "The One and only Son", CT, 164-175). Van Bruggen writes

*"When the Bible calls Jesus the 'monogenes' Son of God, it means that he alone is the natural Son of God. He is distinguished from believers as natural children are distinguished from adopted ones" (134-135).*

He therefore would like to keep the concept of 'generation' (begotten). Longenecker refutes the idea that 'genes' as generation stands central (ibid.). And indeed, the idea of 'begetting' does not seem dominant, and may even undermine the fact that Jesus is eternal. A case parallel to Jesus as 'monogenes' is that of Isaac, the one and only, natural son of promise of Abraham and Sarah. Hebrews 11:17 also calls him 'monogenes'. Here the stress seems to be on the fact that Isaac is 'one of a kind', and not that he was the only son, since he was not. Isaac was special and unique. So is Jesus. One appreciates the attempt by the NIV to translate this important term, but again asks whether other renderings might not catch more of its flavour.

One could deal with other important terms such as 'psuche' (soul or life), 'sarx' (flesh), which are rendered variously in the NIV according to the needs of the context. One applauds such a fresh and contextual approach.

That the NIV is both accurate and conservative in its theology is seen throughout the translation. It has been noted by C. Van Dam that at Exod.21:22-25 the NIV is more accurate than the RSV and shows greater respect for life ("Is the unborn life human?" CLARION, Vol.36, No.19).

Overall, these examples show that in general the NIV improves on the RSV, but could still stand improvement.

### C. Clarity

The NIV is clear and idiomatic. The pronouns 'thou,' 'thee,' 'thy,' and 'thine' together with the archaic verbal endings are abandoned in addressing God, because this is not contemporary. "Neither Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek uses special pronouns for the persons of the Godhead" (preface to NIV). The latter statement is true. However, those who have been raised in European languages where a distinction is made, may lament this development as a loss of reverence for God. It is hard for them to adjust to a language where this distinction does not hold. On the other hand, many use 'you' in addressing God without trying to sound trendy or irreverent. The RSV will switch to this as has the NKJV. Thus we need to prepare ourselves for a transition in this matter. Since it is more a matter of personal taste and feeling than biblical principles, one hopes there will be an understanding by and for both sides.

The NIV wants to be idiomatic but not idiosyncratic (having one's own personal style), contemporary but not dated. Its language is clear, simple and dignified. Its style is terse, using economy of words, and simple, using longer words infrequently (cf. the comparison made by Skilton, 261-262). As has been quoted, it is not the colloquial street-talk of some paraphrases or modern versions. Yet it does not avoid colloquialisms in dialogue. In modern English dialogue (the way we speak) differs from literary English (the way we write). The NIV reflects this (cf. JL, 318 for examples).

When one compares the NIV to the RSV, one is struck by the fact that the RSV still retains many outdated terms and phrases as 'raiment,' 'brethren' 'such an one,' 'begone,' 'smote' 'made haste,' and 'took his journey.' It comes across as out of date and as 'Bible-English.' Many terms were left untranslated - teraphim, sheol, azazel (cf. his interesting comment on this and charge against the RSV by R.L. Harris), Abaddon, Hades, etc. The NIV improves on the English and on the translations of these Hebrew and Greek terms. Its language is more clear and fresh. It is easier to understand, while it retains dignity and literary quality. It certainly would be very suitable for teaching the youth and for memorisation by youth. In schools the NIV's simplicity would improve the understanding of the Bible by the students. Its drawback is that sometimes it interprets rather than translates.

### D. Conclusions

Since the NIV is continuously improving itself by new editions (five year assessments are made), and since they are very open to suggestions, it would be advisable that any and all criticisms and suggestions for improvement be

sent to the Committee for Translation, even as this was done by the committee of our Canadian sister-churches with the RSV.

Overall, the NIV thus presents an improvement over the RSV as far as clarity goes. Both are generally accurate and reliable. The NIV is more readable.

Many praise it for its clarity and style. Others say it follows the KJV too much. Still others lament the departure from the perceived eloquence of the KJV. Evaluation will always involve a good deal of subjectivism.

## 7. UNITY OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The mandate stated that "consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures" was one criterion for evaluating translations. How a translation deals with quotations of the OT in the NT is especially noteworthy.

Harris has severely criticised the RSV for creating conflicts and inconsistency between the two testaments by not translating direct quotes of the OT with the same wording (10). He refers to the quotes of Psalm 45:6 in Hebrews 1:8, Psalm 16:19 in Acts 2:29-31; 13:36,37 and Isaiah 7:14 in Mt.1:23 which are all translated differently in the NT than in the OT, though they are presented as direct quotes (12-13). Overagainst this Hardwick replies very persuasively that a reliable translation need not have OT quotes rendered exactly the same in the NT, since prophecy especially is fulfilled in stages (11, 14-15). He finds that "the RSV has too long been spanked like a naughty boy". In turn he deals with the same passages, including the quote of Gen.12:3; 22:18 in Gal.3:8, 16. His argument is that the OT passages need to be understood in their own contexts, while the NT texts must be accurately rendered, keeping the element of fulfilment and typology in mind. He thus finds that Isaiah 7:14 should be accurately rendered by "a young woman shall conceive.....", while Matthew 1:23 should use "virgin". It is indeed true that in messianic prophecies one must remember that probably only Psalm 110 is direct, while others point first to an historical event and person at the time of the prophecy (such as Isaiah 7:14). Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that wherever possible and allowable, there should be consistency.

One sees this consistency very strongly in the NIV. Its rendering of Psalm 2, 4, and 45 are just some examples (cf. Waltke, "Translation problems in Psalm 2 and 4", CT, 117-126). In fact the NIV capitalises many messianic titles (Anointed One, Son, King, Holy One, and Branch) in the OT and NT. One questions the propriety of this procedure, for it makes those prophecies directly messianic and does not do justice to their primary, historical application. To overcome this problem is easy - eliminate the capitals! This would make the NIV both consistent and redemptive-historical.

One place where the NIV failed to conform the OT and NT is at Deut.32:43 where the NIV has not added the reading "and let all the angels worship him", which is the source for Heb.1:6. And in Psalm 8:5 it renders 'elohim' as "heavenly beings" in order to harmonise it with Heb.2:7 which reads "angels". It would have been more honest to note at Heb.2:7 that the quote is from the Greek translation of Psalm 8 and not from the Hebrew.

Overall the NIV is keenly eager to have both testaments read consistently where there are direct quotes. In this one sees a marked improvement over the RSV which often seems to drive a wedge between the two testaments. However, one must temper this statement by saying that the NIV goes too far in its harmonising.

## 8. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Having sifted through the various aspects of the NIV in comparison with the RSV the following conclusions are now summarised:

1. The NIV is much better than the RSV as far as the choice of the OT text from which to translate goes.
2. The NIV is better than the RSV as far as the choice of the NT text from which to translate goes.
3. The NIV and RSV both are generally accurate in translation; both have strengths and faults.
4. The NIV has greater clarity and readability than the RSV.
5. The NIV adheres much more strongly to the unity between the two testaments than the RSV.
6. Thus, on the basis of the above points, the NIV is more suitable for worship, instruction, and memorisation.

On the basis of these findings the conclusion is clear that the NIV is better than the RSV.

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## SECTION VIII

# Final Recommendations

Having made a preliminary examination of the planned 1990 edition of the RSV, the Deputies conclude that this version holds little promise for a real improvement on the current edition of the RSV. The main objections to the 1971 edition are still present. As to clarity and readability, the 1990 edition has gained. Over against that, the incorporation of inclusive language is a major step in the wrong direction. There may be some value in a further evaluation of the 1990 edition of the RSV when it appears, but the deputies consider it highly unlikely that RSV/1990 will ever be recommended for use in the Churches.

It has been clear from the previous reports that the deputies can only recommend one translation as being better than the RSV, namely the New International Version. However, before this is recommended, one has to look at the consequences. There is the inconvenience and expense of changing to another translation. Also, another change after the churches have only recently adopted the RSV may cause unrest. Seeing that the matter of translations, beside their use in the church services, instruction classes, and Bible-study clubs, has many consequences such as

1. its use in confessions, liturgical forms, prayers, psalms and hymns;
2. cooperation with the sister-churches in Canada for one common Book of Praise; and
3. its use in school classrooms;

it would be good to stand still and consider these repercussions before changing quickly to another translation.

As far as cooperation with Canada on one common BOOK OF PRAISE is concerned, we can only expect that their present committee on Bible translations (which has a mandate only to keep an eye on the RSV and on general development) will be able to present a proposal to the next Synod in 1992, and that any action would have to wait at least till 1995 Synod, DV. One should also keep in mind that one can use the present BOOK OF PRAISE on its own merits, even if one stops using the RSV, which was used for Scripture selections. Another possibility, though

not too desirable is the obtaining of the rights to print our own version of the BOOK OF PRAISE. But this matter of the BOOK OF PRAISE should not hinder the use of a different Bible translation.

It would be good to phase in the use of another translation in order to give not only deputies and consistories a good look at the translation, but also to give the church members an opportunity to test it. One possible manner to do this is to introduce its use in school and in church functions, excluding the worship services, as well as at home. By using it, one can truly test it.

The deputies have discussed all these points and come with the following recommendations:

1. to discharge the deputies;
2. to keep the archives that have been started;
3. to declare at this time already that the NIV is deemed better than the RSV for use within the church;
4. to recommend to the churches that the NIV be used for study, instruction, and family purposes;
5. to withhold final endorsement of the NIV in the church services till a subsequent Synod;
6. to ask the new deputies to send all relevant suggestions and improvement to the Committee on Bible translation of the NIV;
7. to await and evaluate any replies on these;
8. to consult with the sister-churches about this matter to see whether a common approach can be reached, with a view to the use of a common BOOK OF PRAISE;
9. to appoint new deputies with a mandate:
  - a. see No.6, 7, and 8 above;
  - b. to watch for new developments in the RSV and NIV;
  - c. to solicit and evaluate comments from the churches about the NIV;
  - d. to maintain and keep the archives of its work and findings;
  - e. to report to the churches about its progress or findings;
  - f. to make a final recommendation about the NIV to a subsequent Synod.

Deputies for Bible translation,

W. Huizinga, convener  
A. Plug, secretary  
C. Bouwman  
P. 't Hart

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA  
SYNOD TREASURY  
c/o 24 Chamberlain Way,  
ARMADALE. W.A. 6112

## SYNOD TREASURERS REPORT TO THE 1989 SYNOD

Esteemed Brothers,

In line with Articles 73, 117 and 118 of the Acts of Synod 1987 we hereby submit our report.

For convenience we set up the Synod Treasury to be operated from a separate Bank account in the name of the Free Reformed Church of Bedforddale, Synod Account.

As none of the Churches would have been able to meet their full share of the Synod costs immediately (November 1987), two separate accounts were to be forwarded to the Churches to spread the impact. As it turned out, the demand on finances was quite high early on, so the second account was sent in March 1988, instead of midyear. A further account was sent in September 1988 to meet unforeseen costs as detailed below.

The commitment from each Church to the total Synod budget was divided in accordance with the cost sharing percentage detailed in Art 118 of the 1987 Acts of Synod. As the Free Reformed Church of Bedforddale was instituted in December 1987, the first account for Kelmscott was in accordance with the percentages. Subsequent accounts were equally divided between Kelmscott and Bedforddale.

The attached statements of receipts and payments represents transactions up to the close of business 14 July 1989. The accounts have been audited by the brothers W. Posthuma and H. Schoof of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott and have been found to be correct and in good order.

We draw your attention to a number of aspects reflected in the financial statement.

- A. The total expenditure exceeded the budget estimates by \$10,587.  
This was brought about by two main factors:
- a. inadequate provision for some of the activities undertaken.
  - b. receipt of a number of substantial accounts relating to activities from the 1985 Synod.
- This additional expenditure necessitated additional revenue which was requested from the Churches in September 1988. This imposed a burden on some of the Churches because they had not expected the extra account and there was no provision in their respective budgets for an extra amount at that time. A consequence of this was that on two occasions we had to subsidize the Synod Treasury with funds from the Bedforddale Church because of delays in receiving funds from some Churches. At close of business the Synod Treasury still has an outstanding liability of \$1000 to the Bedforddale Church.
- B. Article 117 of the 1987 Acts of Synod was not entirely specific in what was included in the budget categories for the next two years. This made it difficult to monitor expenditure against various deputies. In order to improve the efficiency and the operation of the Synod Treasury we propose that the Synod consider the following suggestions when drawing up the next budget:
1. Allow for cost incurred prior to 1989 Synod.  
Outstanding liability to Bedforddale Church \$1,000  
Printing reports 1989 Synod (as per previous budget) \$ 800
  2. Make provision for costs of 1989 Synod:
    - a. Catering.
    - b. Stationery.
    - c. Equipment.
    - d. Traveling costs to Synod 1989.
    - e. Printing Acts of Synod 1989.
    - f. Loss of income of delegates.
    - g. Other / unforeseen.
  3. Make provision for the period till next Synod:
    - a. Administration costs.
    - b. Reports to next Synod.
    - c. Pulpit exchange and Church visits.
    - d. Costs to be incurred by various deputies appointed by Synod. A separate amount should be nominated to each task so that deputies know what has been allocated to their specific function so they can monitor their own expenditure. These costs have been difficult to control in the past. Budget allowance should make provision for loss of income of deputies if applicable.
    - e. Other / unforeseen.
  4. Make provision of a contingency amount within the fund to allow the Treasury to continue to operate during the transition period between the convening of the Synod and the receipt of funds. This should be a once only item and an amount of \$4,000 is suggested.

With Christian Greetings,

Treasurers of Synod

A. Hordyk

J. Deman

19 July, 1989.

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

**SYNOD TREASURY**

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS.**

(For period pre 1987 Synod to 14 July 1989)

**RECEIPTS:**

|                            | BUDGET        | ACTUAL        | VARIATION     |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                            | \$            | \$            | \$            |
| F. R. C. Albany            | 4,540         | 6,540         | 2,000         |
| F. R. C. Armadale          | 5,675         | 8,175         | 2,500         |
| F. R. C. Bedfordale        | 1,419         | 2,669         | 1,250         |
| F. R. C. Byford            | 2,270         | 3,270         | 1,000         |
| F. R. C. Kelmscott         | 4,256         | 5,506         | 1,250         |
| F. R. C. Launceston        | 4,540         | 6,540         | 2,000         |
| Interest                   |               | 143           | 143           |
| F. R. C. Bedfordale (loan) |               | 1,000         | 1,000         |
| <b>TOTALS</b>              | <b>22,700</b> | <b>33,843</b> | <b>11,143</b> |

**PAYMENTS:**

|                                   | BUDGET        | ACTUAL        | VARIATION     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                   | \$            | \$            | \$            |
| Printing of Reports               | 800           | 904           | 104           |
| Travelling costs to meetings      | 250           | 255           | 5             |
| Food and drink                    | 700           | 1,526         | 826           |
| Hire of microphone system         | 200           | 245           | 45            |
| Parts and repairs - photocopier   | 550           | 474           | (76)          |
| Travelling costs to & from Synod  | 2,000         | 3,678         | 1,678         |
| Printing of Acts of Synod         | 2,500         | 3,232         | 732           |
| Loss of income by delegates       | 1,700         | 1,900         | 200           |
| Administration and miscellaneous  | 400           | 3,025         | 2,625         |
| Reports to next Synod             | 800           | 100           | (700)         |
| Travel to meetings                | 1,000         | 882           | (118)         |
| Travel to other churches          | 8,200         | 11,739        | 3,539         |
| Pulpit exchange and church visits | 3,600         | 5,327         | 1,727         |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                     | <b>22,700</b> | <b>33,287</b> | <b>10,587</b> |
| <br>                              |               |               |               |
| BALANCE OF ACCOUNT                |               | 556           |               |

# Report of Deputies for Contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to Synod Armadale 1989

## A. MANDATE

According to Art 115 of the Acts of Synod Albany, Deputies for Contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia were charged with the following mandate:

- "3. Synod instructs new deputies to work further towards reaching sister relations with the PCEA. Rules for such sister relations should be mutually discussed and accepted before the establishment of sister relations.
4. Synod instructs deputies to continue, for the mutual benefit of both federations of churches, the discussion about areas of concern mentioned in Consideration 8, eg,
  - a. the fencing of the Lord's table
  - b. pulpit exchanges
  - c. children in the covenant
  - d. the problem of adherents
5. Synod instructs deputies to issue press releases for the benefit of the churches concerning progress made.
6. Synod instruct deputies to report to the churches three months before the convening of the next synod as well as to report to the next Synod.

## B. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- (i) RE mandates 3 and 4: In carrying out these mandates, we have had a total of twenty-one meetings. Further, representatives from our committee went twice to Melbourne, and representatives from the PCEA came once to the greater Armadale area for discussions with us.
  - a. Rev Bouwman spent some time in Melbourne (20 and 21 November, 1987) on his way to Launceston for the 1987 pulpit exchange. The occasion was used to become acquainted on a personal level with Rev Ward and provide opportunity for our convenor to familiarise himself with the PCEA.
  - b. Revs WP Gadsby and RS Ward were our guests in the West from 2 to 7 November, 1988. Their time in the West was used for intensive discussions between ourselves as deputies, as well as for a meeting with the general Free Reformed public of the greater Armadale area. Our PCEA guests also had (and used) the opportunity to establish personal contacts in homes and visit the schools.
  - c. Rev Bouwman and br J Bruning were in Melbourne on 19 and 20 May, 1989. The time in Melbourne was used for further discussions. In attendance at these discussions were Revs Ward and Leggott on Friday night, accompanied on Saturday morning by Rev W Mackay and Mr J Loudon (the latter two being officers in the Melbourne congregation). Regrettably, Rev Gadsby was not able to come to Melbourne. Br Bruning stayed the Sunday with Rev Ward as well.

*Note re finances: Because Rev Bouwman's first trip to Melbourne was combined with his trip to Launceston for pulpit exchange, this stop over did not cost the churches anything extra. Rev Bouwman's second trip to Melbourne, though also made en route to Tasmania for the regular pulpit exchange, required a change in flight plans, resulting in a cost of \$142.00. Br Bruning's trip to Melbourne was privately financed. The flight costs of the two PCEA representatives to the West were borne by our churches. In offering them a trip to the West we considered not only that we (more than they) felt further discussions to be imperative; we considered too that our churches in the West would be better served by having them visit us instead of ourselves visiting them (their presence in the West providing opportunity for our people to meet with them and ask whatever questions they might have). Given also their small size and large overhead (more than a dozen ministers supported by just over 600 members), we thought it only proper that we finance their trip.*

- (ii) RE mandate 5: we may report that we published six reports in Una Sancta concerning our work. These reports appeared on the following dates: 6 February 1988, 2 April 1988, 1 October 1988, 24 December 1988, 18 February 1989 and 22 July 1989. We also took it upon ourselves to publish in Una Sancta two addresses from Rev WP Gadsby (10 December 1988, 9 July 1989), as well as responses from our side (18 February 1989, 4 March 1989, 18 March 1989, 22 July 1989).
- (iii) RE mandate 6: we have submitted this report to the churches by 1 August 1989, and hereby report to "the next Synod".

We report further that we have extended Christian greetings on behalf of the FRCA to the 1988 and 1989 Synods of the PCEA, committing the brothers at Synod and in the PCEA in general to the care of the Lord.

## C. Areas of Concern

### (i) FENCING AND PULPIT EXCHANGE (ie, The Doctrine of the Church).

Synod Albany instructed Deputies to discuss four areas of concern with the PCEA. Before we felt confident to discuss these four individual areas of concern, we thought it proper to study these four areas ourselves so as to have a good handle on the subject.

In the course of studying these areas of concern, it came to our attention that these areas of concern might possibly all flow out of one root. Specifically, we wondered whether these four areas of concern might perchance be the logical consequence of laying too much stress on the subject of election. If this were so, we saw little merit in discussing the four areas of concern as isolated subjects; we thought it to be much more beneficial (and therefore correct) to discuss a possible cause for these areas of concern. Consequently, we wrote a letter to our counterparts in the PCEA, indicating to them our thoughts (cf Appendix 1).

We received in due time a response to the above mentioned letter (cf Appendix 2).

With this response from the PCEA deputies we were somewhat disappointed. We had hoped that they would react to our thought that possibly the areas of concern all flowed from a common denominator. They chose not to do so, indicating instead that the four areas of concern had - they felt - been thoroughly discussed by the former deputies, both 'sides' seeing that 'there is very substantial agreement among us on these points'.

Despite these sentiments on the part of the PCEA representatives (and previous FRCA deputies), we had a mandate from Synod to discuss further. After due deliberation on our part, we thought that another face to face meeting with their deputies would be most beneficial. That meeting took place in the West in November 1988.

In the time that Revs Gadsby and Ward were with us, we discussed with them extensively our letter of 8.3.1988. It was their conviction that we were incorrect in seeing election as a common denominator from which stemmed the four areas of concern delineated by Synod Albany. We, consequently, set aside the possibility of election being a common denominator to the four areas of concern.

Yet from the discussions it became evident that two of the four areas of concern indeed did arise out of a common root. Their manner of fencing the Lord's Supper table, as well as their practice of inviting ministers from other churches onto their pulpits, both flow out of their concept of church. Instead of seeing the church in terms of true/false, they prefer to think in categories of more/less pure. Consequently, the PCEA will not deny the title 'church' to any 'denomination' holding the central truth of Jesus Christ crucified (justification by faith), even though that church may stray on various other points. Each such 'relatively pure' church is considered to be a manifestation of the one church of Jesus Christ. A 'summary' of the discussions was approved as accurate by all present at the meeting, and is appended to this report as Appendix 3. For our part, we held before them that the Belgic Confession, by speaking about the church in terms of true/false, implies that membership of a false church (which would be seen as a 'less pure' church by the PCEA) is contrary to, or disobedience to, God's will, as God calls all to join the true Church. FRCA deputies pointed out that on account of such disobedience it would be incorrect to allow members of such other churches to attend Holy Supper in our churches or allow ministers on our pulpits.

Given that the matter of fencing and pulpit exchange were - by admission of the PCEA representatives - both rooted in a distinct concept of the church, we as deputies were the more convinced that it would make no sense to discuss these two areas of concern in isolation from the doctrine of the church. Although the doctrine of the church was not mentioned in so many words in the mandate we received (though it could be inferred from the fact that the four areas of concern were not absolute; witness the "eg" preceding the four listed areas), we felt that we could carry out our mandate properly by discussing with the PCEA not simply the individual 'symptoms' (in isolation from each other), but rather the cause underlying these 'symptoms'. We were convinced that in this way full justice would ultimately be done to these two areas of concern.

Accordingly, we made it our business to delineate, from Scripture and confession, not only what we believe about the church, but also to point out where their understanding of the church may be deficient. The excursus below is a summary of our contribution to the discussion.

#### **EXCURSES ON THE CHURCH**

*The Biblical concept of the Church is rich and varied, and cannot be captured in any one word. This truth, however, does not detract from the need to evaluate whether the Scriptures characterise the church primarily in terms of it being a gathering of God's people, or of it being the sum total of God's own. Which characterisation predominates?*

*The word 'church' in our Bibles is a translation of the Greek term ekklesia. This word ekklesia was well known to the early Christians from two sources. To begin with, the word was used in the every day talk of the Greeks to refer to a meeting of the citizens of a given town. The term is used in this fashion in Acts 19, where the town clerk advises the rioting Ephesians that any complaint they have may be brought before the ekklesia. Most major translations render the word ekklesia as 'assembly', indicating that the term denotes a gathering. A further source which made the word wellknown to the*

early Christians was the OT. Early Christians were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures, be it through the translation of the Hebrew OT into Greek (called the Septuagint and denoted by the letters LXX). In fact, the vocabulary used in the LXX has to a large extent determined the content of numerous words used in the NT. So it is to the OT that we are to go in our pursuit of the meaning of the term *ekklesia*.

The term *ekklesia* occurs some 80 times in the LXX, always as a translation of the Hebrew word *qahal* (though *qahal* is not always translated by the word *ekklesia*). The verb *qahal* conveys the idea of assembling without regard to purpose. As such, it is used to denote the gathering of an army (I Sam 17:47), for the coming together of an unruly and potentially dangerous crowd (Ps 26:5), for a gathering to ask for idols (Ex 32:1), for anointing Aaron (Lev 8:4), for worship (II Chr 20:26), for the coming together of the people to hear the Word of the Lord (Dt 4:10; 9:10). As a noun, the word *qahal* indicates that which is assembled (again without regard to purpose), and may as such be translated as assembly, congregation. Most frequently, the term is used to denote assembling together for religious purposes. So the meeting at Mt Sinai is referred to as "the day of the assembly" (Dt 9:10; 10:4; 18:16).

What is unequivocally clear, then, is that the term *qahal* is used in the OT to refer to a gathering, particularly a gathering of the people of God. That in turn implies that a *qahal* is not the people of God; *qahal* is the gathering of the people of God, and may therefore also designate a gathering made up of not all of the people of God (cf II Chr 20:5; 30:25; Neh 5:13; Joel 2:15f). This meaning is conveyed rather well if we translate literally the LXX translation of Dt 4:10: "the day of the church when the Lord said to me, 'Form the people into a church before Me'" (RSV: "on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me'"). In sum, the Hebrew term *qahal* denotes "an assembly or gathering of people; it does not designate an 'organization' or 'society'." The term *ekklesia* in the NT is loaded with the meaning of its parallel term in the OT. When Jesus in Mt 16 speaks of building His *ekklesia* (church) on (the confession of) Peter, the Lord's meaning was clear to the hearers in so far as it pertained to the word *ekklesia*. The Lord evidently spoke of constituting a gathering, building an assembly on the foundation of this confession. But this gathering would be distinct from some other gathering, for it would be "MY *ekklesia*, MY gathering, MY church."

Similarly, when the apostle Paul addresses his first letter to the Thessalonians with the words "to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," he employs the term church in the way his readers were used to it from daily society and from the OT; Paul addresses a gathering of the citizens of Thessalonica. But this particular gathering of Thessalonians is distinguished from any secular gatherings of Thessalonians by the addition of the words "in God the Father," and it is distinguished from the regular synagogue meetings by the use of the additional phrase "in the Lord Jesus Christ". As such, it is evident that Paul has in mind an actual gathering of the Thessalonian Christians. Yet the closing remarks of the letter betray that not all the Christians of Thessalonica were present, for the apostle instructs that "this letter be read to all the brethren" (I Thess 5:27).

Elsewhere the apostle employs the term in the plural to denote more than one church. So reference is made to "the churches in Galatia" (Gal 1:2; I Cor 16:1), "the churches of Asia" (I Cor 16:19), "the churches in Macedonia" (II Cor 8:1), and "the churches of Judea" (Gal 1:22). The reference is to various gatherings in a particular region. That *ekklesia* refers specifically to a meeting or an assembly is further pointed up I Cor 11-14 where expressions as "when you assemble in church" (11:18) and "to speak in church" (14:35) turn up.

Regardless of what one would wish to say about Paul's use of the word 'church' in his later writings (particularly Colossians and Ephesians; cf Col.1:18, 24; Eph.1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23ff), it is - given the use of the term elsewhere in Scripture - beyond the acceptable to suggest that the apostle would alter the meaning of the term church from 'gathering' to 'the body of the elect'.

In sum: *ekklesia* in the NT does not denote the sum total of the NT Israel any more than the OT term *qahal* denoted the sum total of the OT Israel. Basic to the term as used in the NT is the concept of the gathering of (some of) the believers in any given community.

This conclusion does not deny that the church is rooted in God's election (cf Eph.1). It does illustrate, however, that in our description of church the concept of gathering is to feature more prominently than the concept of election.

This Scriptural understanding of 'church' as the gathering of the believers is echoed in the Belgic Confession. Art 27 circumscribes the church as follows: "We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of true Christian believers, expecting all their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit" (Art 27).

The Westminster Confession also presents a characterisation of the church. It reads as follows: "The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one...." And further: "The visible church, which is only catholic or universal under the gospel.....consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation" (Art 25.1,2).

It may be noted that in the Westminster Confession description of the church the concept of gathering does not feature as prominently as it does in the Belgic Confession. Whereas in the Belgic Confession, the church is characterised as a congregation, an assembly (ie, a gathering), the church in the Westminster Confession is characterised as the sum total of the elect, be it that these elect are gathered at some time or another. As such, the Scriptural designation of church as 'gathering' is made

*subject to the designation that church is the sum total of the elect. That observation in turn prompts the question whether the Scriptural designation of church as 'gathering' is accurately echoed in the Westminster Confession.*

In agreement with a conclusion reached at the November meeting, we used *Una Sancta* as the medium to discuss with them on the matter of the church. Under the name of our convenor, we published two articles on the subject (cf 4 March, 1989, 18th March, 1989), soliciting responses from the PCEA.

In (partial) response to these articles on the doctrine of the church, Rev WP Gadsby, as designated moderator of the PCEA Synod (held 28-31 March 1989), prepared a Moderatorial Address entitled "Church Unity in An Ecumenical Age" (subsequently printed in *Una Sancta*, 8 and 22 July, 1989). Although Rev Gadsby interreacted somewhat with what we had written, we felt that what we had said on the doctrine of the church was not fully understood in the PCEA (cf our response to this moderatorial address in *Una Sancta* under the name of our convenor, 22 July, 1989).

Consequently, when the opportunity presented itself for two of our committee members to be in Melbourne in May 1989, we arranged to talk further with members of the PCEA. We wanted to ensure not only that we properly understood them, but that they properly understood us, understood particularly why we had concerns about their doctrine of the church and therefore about their practices with regards to pulpit exchange and fencing of the Lord's table.

For the FRCA representatives, this encounter in Melbourne was somewhat disappointing. The impression was received that what had been said on our part about the church was not taken all that seriously. Not only were our delegates repeatedly told that the Westminster Standards on the one hand and the Three Forms of Unity on the other were harmonious on the church; the brothers of the PCEA present at the meeting had not, we felt, extended to us the courtesy of studying what had been written on the subject of the church. We realise that one's schedule in the ministry is busy, and cannot be dictated by the whims of others. But we recall also that the PCEA puts itself out as being serious in its desire to seek and achieve the unity there is to be amongst God's own. Delegates from the PCEA, however, agreed that more study should be made on the matter of church gathering, and they would themselves prepare a paper in the near future.

Despite the disappointment of the Melbourne meeting, however, your deputies do not think that the contacts we have had with the PCEA brethren in the last two years were fruitless. We flatter ourselves with thinking that the brethren in the PCEA understand better why we have questions about their practices vis a vis pulpit exchanges and fencing of the Lord's table. It seems to us that more contact and exchange of thoughts will be needed to challenge and deepen each other's insights into that which God has revealed in His Word about His Church, and what the implications of this revelation might be. We have no reason to assume that the brethren in the PCEA would in the future be unwilling to bow with us over the Word of God concerning this subject.

(ii) ADHERENTS

In the Byford/Armadale meetings of November 1988, the question about the adherents was raised. The PCEA brethren assured us that the existence of adherents was minimal in the PCEA; adherents is more of a problem in the Highlands of Scotland. Indeed, in the PCEA adherents are challenged to full responsibility, ie, they are challenged and admonished to join the church. An adherent exists only when a person who attends faithfully yet refuses to join the church formally. Though pastoral concerns could theoretically provide an exception to an accepted rule, such a person is permitted neither to present his/her child for baptism nor to attend the table of the Lord. This answer on the part of the PCEA satisfied your deputies so that we are of the opinion that the subject of adherents be no longer considered a problem in our contacts with the PCEA.

(iii) CHILDREN IN THE COVENANT

In the Byford/Armadale meetings, discussions on the subject of the covenant were commenced. The result of these discussions was that the subject would be studied by both parties. Yet as it turned out, neither party was able to do any work on the matter of the covenant in the span of time given to us by Synod Albany. It seems best to us that new deputies receive the mandate to discuss this area in coming years.

## D. RULES FOR SISTER RELATIONS

Synod Albany gave to Deputies the mandate to discuss rules for sister relations concurrently with the discussions on the area of concern. We, accordingly, initiated a discussion with the PCEA on the subject by sending to them a copy of our current Rules for Correspondence with Sister Churches as printed in the Acts of Synod 1970 (Art 26), and requesting their response.

The matter was subsequently discussed at our November meeting. The PCEA delegates indicated that they felt more comfortable with the Dutch proposals they received. A copy of this proposal forms Appendix 4 to this report. The PCEA delegates preferred the Dutch Rule No 1 to our Rule No 1 because they felt that the term "pay heed to" implied less interference in the other church than the term "take care for". As such, the Dutch proposal was less intrusive and does greater justice to the independence of churches. The suggestion was also voiced from their side that rules for relations between the FRCA and the PCEA be reformulated and revised as the relation between the two bonds of churches grows.

Beyond the discussions outlined above, your deputies have not come further with the PCEA on the matter of rules for sister relations. The reason was primarily that our time and energies were taken up by research and discussion on the question of the church.

## **E. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PCEA**

Since previous deputies reported to Synod Albany in September 1987, the PCEA has had two synods. Your deputies have received the Committee Reports submitted to these synods, as well as their respective minutes. We have studied these documents, and report to your assembly that these documents contain nothing that would detract from the conclusions of Synod Albany, viz, "that.....the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia....desire(s) to serve God according to His Word".

With respect to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the PCEA Synod of 1988 as well as that of 1989 decided as follows: that discussions with the FRCA be continued with a view to clarifying further the points of difference or confusion which have been raised".

We draw your attention also to the developments between the PCEA and De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt). The Dutch churches in their recent Synod Spakenburg-Noord (1987) decided as follows:

Decision:

1. To enter into contact with The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.
2. To have these contacts taken place with the knowledge of and, if possible with the cooperation of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

## **F. ANALYSIS**

Synod Albany instructed us to discuss further on a number of areas of concern. As a result of these discussions, both sides, we feel, did come to a greater understanding of each other's position. but greater understanding does not necessarily mean greater unanimity. In fact, the greater understanding we have achieved has pointed up that the concerns expressed by previous Synod about the fencing of the Lord's table and pulpit exchanges were most warranted. As such, we cannot testify that progress was made in the last two years in our efforts to come to full unity. In considering this evaluation, we recall also the decision of the churches in Synod Launceston 1985: "our recognition of another Church as being 'true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ' 1. means that both our churches, and that recognized church, stand on the foundations as expressed in Articles 27 and 32 of the Belgic Confession" (Art 67).

We would have liked to recommend to Synod Armadale that all the areas of concern had been cleared away, so that the FRCA could in good conscience before the Lord, on the basis of Arts 27-29 of the Belgic Confession, recognise the PCEA as a true and faithful church of the Lord, and so enter into full sister relations with this church.

The circumstances however, are not so. On the contrary, the differences, particularly on the doctrine of the church and its consequences, have come into sharper focus.

## **G. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Deputies appointed by Synod Albany recommend to Synod Armadale that

- a. Synod express its thankfulness to the Lord that the PCEA gives continued evidence of desiring to serve God according to His Word.
- b. Synod express to the PCEA its appreciation for the fact that their deputies for relations with other churches have taken time to study and discuss matters with the deputies from the FRCA.
- c. Synod not extend sister relations to the PCEA at this time, but instruct deputies to work further toward this goal. Rules for such sister relations should be mutually discussed and accepted before the establishment of sister relations.
- d. Synod discharge deputies appointed by Synod Albany for contact with the PCEA.
- f. Synod appoint new deputies with instructions to study and discuss further with the PCEA the areas of concern, e.g., the doctrines of church (including fencing of the Lord's table and pulpit exchange) and covenant.

With brotherly greetings,

Deputies for Contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,

C Bouwman (Convenor)

J Bruning

M Eikelboom

PO Posthuma

## Appendix 1

### Deputies for Contact with the PCEA

8.3.1988

Rev WP Gadsby  
Convenor, Inter-Church Relations Committee  
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia  
69 Galloway Street  
ARMIDALE, NSW 2350

Dear Rev Gadsby,

*In your communication to us dated 11.11.1987, you expressed the desire that we put down in writing exactly what are the concerns which we in the FRCA have with regards to the PCEA. You place also a query involving the ICRC.*

*We thank you for your good suggestion to put these concerns into writing. Herewith we have endeavoured to do so. We have also recorded our thoughts with regards to our relations with churches in the ICRC not yet recognized by us as true churches.*

*In order to facilitate the understanding of our position and queries, we have included a short expose of the doctrine of the Church.*

*We hope and pray that these thoughts will be beneficial in promoting further discussion and so coming to a fuller understanding of each other. May our God and Saviour use these efforts to speed the day when there can be full unity between the PCEA and the FRCA.*

*In the Three Forms of Unity, the confessional standards of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the subject of the church is found particularly in Art 27-32 of the Belgic Confession and LD 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism.*

*The doctrine of the Church, as any other doctrine, is an item of faith. Important, therefore, is not what one sees; important is only what God has revealed about the Church. Thus it follows also that the truths which God has revealed about the church are the standards to which our thinking and practices must measure.*

*The Church is described in Art 27 as "a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers." These true Christian believers are in turn described as those "who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit." These true Christian believers, in other words, are the justified and sanctified. Thus is the church the assembly, the gathering of those justified and sanctified.*

*Of this assembly of true Christian believers, we confess its catholicity. It has been from the beginning of the world and will be to the end. Although it is attacked and persecuted to the point of appearing at times to be non-existent, it yet, by the power and grace of God, survives. Further, this church is not limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is rather gathered from every tribe and tongue and nation. This confession does not mean that the church is always everywhere, for there remain tribes and peoples who have to date not heard the Word of God. That is implied in the Canons of Dort where confession is made of the fact that God sends His messengers when and where He wills. This Church, this assembly of true Christian believers, although it is spread all over the earth, yet enjoys unity, for the one Holy Spirit worked one faith in the redeeming work of the one Lord.*

*Of this catholic church, one may speak of it having invisible aspects. Some possibilities come to mind. God only knows those who are His; no mortal can determine definitively who are the elect. Further, no mortal can determine the precise way in which God works faith in the hearts of the chosen. Again, no mortal can see the entire catholic church at any one time. Yet we affirm that it is Scripturally incorrect to define the church in terms of invisibility (cf Murray, "The Church", rpt in Collected Writings, I, 231ff). Nor is definition of the church made in such fashion in the Three Forms of Unity. In this the FRCA is on common ground with the PCEA (witness the paper presented by WP Gadsby to the Melbourne meeting, March 3, 4, 1987).*

*The Church is a gathering of believers. LD 21 testifies that it is the Son of God who gathers this church "by His Spirit and Word." It has pleased the ascended Christ to give to His church office bearers so that through them His gospel might be proclaimed (Art 30f, Belgic Confession). It is through the preaching of the Word by the office bearers appointed by the Head of the Church that the Spirit works faith (LD 25). That in turn implies that salvation is available not in sects or clubs but in the church; the church is the 'workshop' of the Spirit of Christ.*

*This is not to say that the Spirit is restricted to the church with its preaching, as if He could work faith only there where the full gospel is proclaimed. The Holy Spirit, being God, is almighty. But we are concerned here not with that which God has revealed about His ability, but rather with that which God has revealed as norms. The norm God has revealed to us is that He works faith through the preaching in Church. Consequently, any one who is serious about salvation must join the Church of Christ where it assembles according to His norms (cf Belg Conf, Art 28). Again, this does not mean that outside the assembly of believers there are none who will be saved. Undoubtedly, there are. The point is rather that salvation is not available 'out there'. So it is necessary that all who would be saved are to come to and join the church of Jesus Christ.*

*Where is it that Christ would have His people gather? Christ calls His own there where He is acknowledged as the Head, ie, where all things are done "according to the pure Word of God," where "all things contrary*

to it" are rejected (Belg Conf, Art 29). One can discern whether indeed Christ is acknowledged as the Head by applying the three marks of the Church, viz, it practises the pure preaching of the gospel, it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments and it exercises church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. From these marks one can discern easily whether a church indeed does govern itself according to the pure Word of God or not, whether a church is true or false, genuine or counterfeit, real or imitation. And it will be evident that there are no degrees of genuineness or counterfeitness. Either something is authentic or it is not.

From the above discussion, there arises a question of crucial importance. In how far does the aspect of election determine your approach to the Church? Ought one's election determine such practical matters as deciding which church to join or determining who shall be permitted to the Lord's Table? We feel that in your circles more than proper stress is laid on the matter of election, with as result that insufficient accent is laid on the matter of obedience to God's norms. We wonder whether the four areas of concern (delineated by Synod Albany for further discussion and clarification) are in fact suggestive of stressing election at the cost of norms.

a. From the "Notes of the Meeting of Deputies of the FRCA and PCEA, Melbourne 3/4-3-87" we learn that "in the PCEA the (Holy Supper) table is open to members in good standing of other Christian churches but the supervision is commonly (not always) delegated to the minister through the fencing of the table - thus ultimately the conscience of the individual unless something is known against the person. The PCEA delegates thought a more careful discipline is spreading in the PCEA."

For the last sentence we are especially thankful. Still, the fact that a more careful discipline is spreading in the PCEA does not take away from the fact that you permit to your table persons of other churches. Our concern is this: does welcoming others not imply a measure of condoning their current church allegiance? Does the practice in the PCEA to permit non-PCEA persons to the table not take away from one's responsibility to join that church where the voice of the Shepherd is heard - that voice by which God also works and strengthens faith? This approach is based on adherence to the norm of God instead of working with the (presumed) election of possible guests.

We query further whether it is proper that the table be guarded by the "conscience of the individual" instead of by the church (through its officebearers).

b. From the Deputies' Report to Synod 1985 we understand that ministers from other churches are invited on occasion to preach from your pulpits. We are convinced that you would not invite a minister whose biblical stance you questioned; you desire for your pulpits only faithful preachers. Yet, by inviting a minister from another church, do you not implicitly condone his disobedience to the norm God set? And do you not give a measure of recognition to the church of which that pastor is a minister? But what has happened then to the command to join the true church? Are you not indicating that what is important is that a Christian go wherever there is a good pastor?

c. We understand that you find adherents in any one of a number of groups within the gathered assembly (as Rev Cromarty put it in his paper on the Concept of an Adherent, prepared for the Melbourne meeting of March, 1987). These include (as summarized by our Synod, Acts Art 115, B,7,e):

1. Baptized young people who do not profess the faith but remain under the supervision of the session;
2. 'outsiders' who are not baptized but who attend church regularly and who welcome further contact by the elders;
3. those who have evidently made a credible profession of faith, who attend church regularly, but who, for a variety of reasons, have scruples about joining the church.

We note that Rev Cromarty writes in his paper that "session should work toward the resolution of all those matters which constitute a barrier to full communicant membership." This movement has resulted in the fact that adherents are not referred to in the second draft of the booklet on Practice and Procedure of the PCEA (Deputies report to Synod Albany, p 12).

Thankful as we are for this development, we nevertheless remain concerned. As we see it, the PCEA, while on the one hand encouraging adherents to become communicant members, yet on the other hand tolerates them. They are tolerated even to the point of the last category of adherents being admitted to the Table of the Lord (be it that this occurrence - in the words of Rev Cromarty - is "not to be an indefinite arrangement"). How does this (indefinite) tolerance square with the obligation of all believers to join the true church? Does allowing to the table a person who has made a credible profession of faith and attends church regularly but yet does not join the church not undermine the need for obedience to God's norms?

d. The Larger Catechism states in Answer 31: "the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed." We read this to mean that the covenant is really made with all the elect and with the elect only. Yet from Scripture we gather that the covenant was made with Abraham and his seed, including both Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. That in turn suggest that the covenant is made with more than with the elect.

With regard to the place of children in the covenant, the "Notes of the Meeting..." of 3/4-3-1987 record that "there is a difference in emphasis and approach in the two churches but the same substance." Given the information which we have, we are unclear how you see the place of children in the covenant. Are all covenant children elect? We wonder whether it would be more scriptural to separate 'covenant' from 'election' as two distinct (though related) subjects.

In your communication dated 11-11-87, you express an interest "to know what is your Churches" current at-

*titude to the International Conference of Reformed Churches..... How do you view your relationship with churches in the ICRC which, so far, you have not recognized as being 'true'?"*

*We feel that with this question you touch a crucial point. Would we in the FRCA not be guilty of measuring with two standards? How can we on the one hand accept a church in the ICRC (which has as basis "the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (...) and the Westminster Standards (...)") and as purpose, a.o., "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ") while on the other hand we cannot consider them as true and faithful churches?*

*The fact that a church is received into the ICRC does not mean that all the other member churches are now to consider this church to be a true church as per Art 29, Belg Conf. That a church is received into the ICRC implies that the Conference as a whole considers this newly admitted church to "adhere" and be "faithful to the confessional standards" (Constitution of the ICRC, Art 4.1.a). As such, the Conference in assembly indicates its judgment that there is a unity of faith in Christ between this new member and the other churches already members of ICRC (Art 3.1). This conclusion of the Conference has advisory character. Member churches are urged to receive such a decision (Art 5). This in turn constitutes an encouragement to member churches to work towards the establishing of fullest ecclesiastical fellowship with the (new) member church (Art 3.2). This encouragement means, with respect to our relation with others, that we are obliged to investigate whether or not we can call any other church a true church. We are convinced that we may not accept another as a true church simply on the grounds of it being admitted to the ICRC.*

*We would kindly request you to provide an answer to our queries in written format as soon as possible. Once we have received (and digested) your reply, we wish to complete plans to invite (a number of) your deputies to Western Australia so that we could talk further if the need for that exists. We would also request that you meet and address our church membership to give them more information about yourselves and possibly answer some questions from them.*

*We look forward to your response.*

*Yours sincerely in Christ the Lord,  
C Bouwman, Convenor*

## **Appendix 2**

*Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia  
Inter-Church Relations Committee*

*10 August 1988*

*The Deputies for Contact with the PCEA  
Cl- P Posthuma  
65 Banyard Avenue  
KELMSCOTT W.A.6111*

*Dear Brothers,*

*I am writing in response to your letter of 8 March 1988, and further to a short telephone conversation with Clarence Bouwman on 2 August.*

*Please find enclosed three copies of the Standing Committee Reports to, and the Minutes of, the recent meeting of the Synod of Eastern Australia. Note that the Reports should be read in the light of the Minutes of Synod, as not all deliverances proposed by Committees are adopted.*

*If I may attempt to reflect the consensus of our Committee in response to your earlier letter, I would say that it is generally felt that the issues of concern you raise are all matters which were thoroughly discussed with us by the former group of deputies. The outcome of those discussions last year was that both "sides" say that there is very substantial agreement among us on these points, even if there are differences in emphasis and terminology. Some members of the Committee wondered what could be gained by going over this same ground all over again. Maybe more could be gained by another face-to-face meeting, if this could be arranged, but I have to say that Synod informally expressed the view that we should not commit ourselves to the considerable expenditure which would be involved in a trip for several members to W.A.*

*As I mentioned to Mr Bouwman on the telephone, I shall, the Lord willing, be traveling to the International Conference in June 1989. Perhaps at that time, I could have discussions with Rev. Veldman, and the other man who is representing your churches.*

*Coming briefly to the matters you raise in your letter, we have to say again that we hold to the doctrine of the Church as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, especially chapter 25. While we may decline to define the Church in terms of invisible/visible, we still hold that the distinction is a valid one. The eternally elect are not co-extensive with the membership of the visible church. Accordingly, we confess that "the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error..." We would for this reason, as well as our own imperfection, not be so certain that "one can discern easily" whether a particular church is true. We do not think in terms of true/false so much as pure/impure. WE are not prepared to "write off" other professing, though less pure, Christian churches as false churches, and their members as false Christians,*

*but extend the judgment of charity while maintaining our own convictions. We would, for example, be prepared to open our pulpits to a man who preached the Gospel while not believing that only the inspired Psalms should be sung in public worship. Our pulpits, both in Scotland and in Australia, have in the past been opened to men such as C. H. Spurgeon, Dr Albert N. Martin, and The Rt. Rev. Sir Marcus Loane.*

*As for "adherents," we tolerate them, to use your expression, even as you "tolerate" baptized members who decline to make profession of faith, or those who regularly worship and identify with your churches without becoming full members.*

*Finally, on the ICRC, we found your explanation of the apparent anomaly somewhat hard to understand from your point of view. We, of course, have no problem with such an association, as we do not normally try to classify other churches as either true or false. We are happy to affiliate and cooperate in such a Reformed Conference with brothers, and their churches, who confess with us the central truth of the Reformation in their own creedal documents, without wanting to impose our Confession upon them as a condition. Sure, this is less than ideal, but we do not expect the ideal to be attained until glory. We would be happy to sit down at the Lord's Table with brethren from other ICRC churches, expressing our oneness in Christ, but it concerns us that others do not feel the same way.*

*In writing this way, we do not wish to offend you, but believe that we should set before you clearly at least some indication of your thinking that will form the basis for, we hope, more fruitful further discussions in the future.*

*Yours sincerely in the One Lord Jesus Christ,*

*W Peter Gadsby*

*Convener*

### **Appendix 3**

**SUMMARY of PCEA position as presented in Byford/Armadale, November 1988. This document has been approved as accurate by all delegates present.**

Much of the position of the PCEA re church revolves around the concept of "pure/less pure" church. Ie: there are degrees from "most pure" 'down' to the point where a 'church' ceases to be a church of Jesus Christ and becomes a synagogue of Satan (WCF 25.5).

Because of this position, the PCEA will not deny the title 'church' to any 'denomination' holding the central truth of Jesus Christ crucified (justification by faith) even though that church may stray on various other points. Any 'denomination' is 'church' if it confesses this central doctrine of the Bible and is more or less pure depending on the extent to which it holds correctly to the various other dogmas revealed in Scripture. The PCEA sees in each such 'relatively pure' church a manifestation of the one church of Jesus Christ.

The PCEA is aware of the desire expressed by the Lord Jesus in JN 17 that "they may all be one." For that reason the PCEA is disturbed by the fact that there are some 15 'denominations' in Australia of a reformed slant, each going their separate way.

The separateness of the various churches is a result of the presence of sin. Although all churches who confess the heart of the Scripture (justification by faith in Christ) ought to be one, the sad reality is that they are divided. Yet all have a unity in Christ, each being a manifestation of the one church. That inherent unity can receive expression by pulpit exchanges and receiving Christians (ie, members in good standing) from other evangelical churches at one's Lord's Supper table.

As such, the PCEA does not mind its ministers preaching in pulpits of other 'relatively pure' churches and inviting their ministers onto PCEA pulpits. Not that this happens regularly; yet the PCEA recognizes that such can happen and so occasionally it does.

Similarly, the table is not closed to people who belong to God by faith in Jesus Christ and demonstrate their faith in God by belonging to a church which preaches justification through faith in Christ alone (ie, another evangelical church which would be rather pure). Not that the PCEA would permit such a person to the table without speaking to him; the elders and/or minister do speak to prospective attendees and /or utter a warning from the pulpit not to eat and drink unworthily. It should be noted, however, that this speaking is not done in each congregation, ie, not in every church is each visitor intercepted on the days when Lord's Supper is celebrated. In those congregations where a visitor is not intercepted, there is a stronger emphasis from the pulpit re the qualifications for attendance at the Table.

RE relations between churches: despite Christ's desire for unity, churches are divided and go their own separate ways. That is intolerable, and therefore unity is to be pursued. How can it be done? Seeing that we are all more or less pure manifestations of the one church of Christ, we ought to recognize each other as churches of Jesus Christ (be it with various imperfections), and on the basis of that recognition talk further. After all, partial unity is better than no unity. Instead of accenting the differences between churches, we ought to accent what we have in common (Jesus Christ crucified), accept each other in love and correct each other whenever possible so that in due time (as we become 'more pure') we grow closer together and increase the extent of unity.

As to adherents, the brethren assured us that the existence of adherents was minimal in the PCEA; adherents is more of a problem in the Highlands of Scotland. In the PCEA, adherents are challenged to full responsibility, ie, they are challenged and admonished to join the church. An adherent exists only when a person who attends faithfully yet refuses to join the church formally. Though pastoral concerns could theoretically provide an exception to an accepted rule, such a person is not permitted to attend the table of the Lord.

RE covenant: the brethren indicated that Answer 31 of the Larger Catechism does not fully express their position on covenant; the Larger Catechism must be understood in the light of the Westminster Confession. The question is raised what 'elect' means in Answer 31. Does 'elect' here refer to those chosen to eternal life? Or does the term refer to those whom God has chosen into His covenant? The latter sense of the term occurs in Scripture, too. The proof-texts mentioned in Answer 31 indicate that this answer is based on Gal 3:16 (where Christ is referred to as being the offspring of Abraham with whom the promises were ultimately made). What is the actual meaning of this text, and how does Gal 3:16 function in Answer 31? Further study on this matter is required by the delegates from both churches.

As to the PCEA position on the covenant, it was unequivocally stated that the covenant was not made with the elect (those chosen to eternal life) but with Abraham and his seed, ie, with the believers and their seed (cf Acts 2:39). On this basis the children of believers are baptized. As such, the child has very rich promises; he is part of the family of God, God claims him to be His. Yet the child is obligated to respond to the demands of the covenant, on penalty of becoming a covenant breaker.

Because of the child's status as a covenant child are parents obligated to raise their children in the fear of the Lord. In the PCEA children are not presumed to be regenerated, and for that reason they are appropriately "evangelized" (ie, they are addressed and instructed as covenant children on the basis of the promises they have). The PCEA would love to start their own schools for their covenant youth, but cannot do it because of a lack of capital.

## Appendix 4

On basis of the foregoing, deputies have formulated the following rules.

1. The churches will pay heed to each other's doctrine, church- government, discipline and liturgy.
2. The churches will receive one another's representatives at their Assemblies/General Synods and invite them to serve as advisers.
3. The churches will inform one another of the decisions taken at these Assemblies/General Synods by exchanging Minutes/Acts or at least by forwarding those decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned.
4. In case of changes in or additions to confessions, church order or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature, the church concerned will lay these changes before the corresponding churches, so that consultations can take place, if considered necessary.
5. The churches accept each other's letters of testimony and consequently admit members of the churches concerned to the sacraments on presentation of such letters.
6. The churches admit, in principle, one another's ministers into the pulpit, taking into account rules which have already been agreed upon in the churches concerned.
7. The churches will inform each other regarding new relationships with third parties.

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

Deputies for contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Address for correspondence:

65 Banyard Avenue,  
KELMSCOTT W A 6111

**Report to Synod Armadale, 1989**

July, 1989

Esteemed Brethren,

In accordance with the mandate given to us concerning contact with the E.P.C.A., we respectfully submit our report.

Synod Albany, 1987 gave us the following mandate as contained in Article 20 of the Acts of the Synod:

1. To comply with the request from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia for information on our churches' policy on contact with other reformed churches and
2. If the E.P.C.A. seeks membership in the I.C.R.C., to investigate the E.P.C.A. and provide the deputies responsible for the I.C.R.C. with information about these churches.

In response to their letter of July 28, 1987, addressed to Synod Albany, 1987, we have informed them about our churches' policy on contact with other Reformed Churches and provided them with relevant information about the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. (cf Appendix 1)

We further requested them to provide us with information about their churches in the event that they would apply for membership in the I.C.R.C.

In reply to our letter they informed us that the information about our churches would be placed before their Synod which was due to meet in September, 1988. An 'unofficial paper' about their denomination was enclosed.

With brotherly greetings,

Deputies P.C.E.A. and E.P.C.A.

C. Bouwman (Convener)

J. Bruning

M. Eikelboom

P. Posthuma

Encl.

## APPENDIX 1

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

*Deputies for contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia*

*Address for correspondence: 19 Abbey Road, ARMADALE WA 6112*

*24 October 1987*

*The Reverend C. Coleborn*

*53 Aberfeldy Street*

*KENMORE QLD. 4069*

*Dear Reverend Coleborn,*

*Synod Albany, 1987 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia acknowledges your letter of July 28th, 1987, and has instructed us to reply to this.*

*We thank you for your Christian greetings and wish to express our gratitude for the initiative you have taken in writing to us, expressing your desire to have more contact with our churches. We also thank you for the information contained in your letter relating to the official contacts that you have with other churches.*

*Synod has instructed us to provide you with the requested details on our churches' policy on contact with Reformed Churches.*

*With sister churches, contact is established and maintained under the following rules:*

- a. To take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline do not deviate from the Reformed confession.*
- b. To send each other the Agendum and Decisions (Acts) of the General Synods and the receiving of subsequent delegates from these churches as advisors.*
- c. To consult each other previous to making any amendments or additions to confessional standards, church orders or liturgical forms.*
- d. To accept each other's attestations and admit each other's ministers of the Word to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments.*
- e. To be responsible to each other concerning correspondence with third parties.*

*Our recognition of another church as a sister-church must stand on the foundation as expressed in articles 27 - 32 of the Belgic Confession of Faith. This is established through extensive and active contact.*

*If a church can be recognized as true and faithful, according to articles 27 - 32, this has as a direct consequence that a sister-church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realization of unity.*

*In view of the fact that you are considering applying to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches (I.C.R.C.), we would be glad to receive further information from you about your churches. This will also enable us to provide our deputies responsible for the I.C.R.C. with information about you.*

*We enclose a booklet "The Free Reformed Churches of Australia and what they stand for" which will serve to introduce the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to you.*

*With Christian greetings,  
on behalf of the deputies,*

*Reverend C. Bouwman  
Chairman*

*M. Eikelboom  
Secretary*

*encl.*

# ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNODS

*Synod Armadale 1989*  
*Clo FRC Armadale*  
*P.O. Box 213*  
*Armadale W.A. 6112*

*1st August, 1989*

*Esteemed Brothers,*

*As Church appointed for the archives and library of Synod we herewith submit our report together with a comprehensive list of contents.*

*The report as well as the list of contents are contained in the accompanying disk.*

*You will note that the report also includes three recommendations.*

*With brotherly greetings*

*For the Consistory*

REV. C. BOSCH  
(Chairman)  
L. SCHOOF  
(Secretary)

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*29 July 1989*

*Consistory*

*Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott*

*P O Box 186*

*Kelmscott 6111*

*Esteemed Brothers,*

*Soon after the 1987 Synod, you reappointed me librarian for the archives and library of synod. I hereby submit my report:*

## **1. LOANS**

Since previous synod a number of synod deputies have borrowed various items from the archives and library relating to the particular subjects for which they were deputies. In most cases these were returned. The exceptions were the Acts of Synod Smithville 1980 and Cloverdale 1983 which were reported by the borrower to have been lost. However, I have managed to procure new ones from Canada to replace them. The only item presently outstanding is the Subscription Form (book) for Ministers of the Word which was borrowed by Br M Eikelboom for the Colloquium Doctum of Rev Bosch.

## **2. INSTRUCTIONS - MISSING MINUTES**

Synod 1987 (Art 42.D.4) instructed deputies to continue the search for the missing minutes of closed sessions of Synods 1964- 1980. You may recall that these disappeared en route from Br J VanderRos, Launceston, to Rev K Bruning, Armadale. Br VanderRos could not recall with whom he had sent the parcel and Rev Bruning could not recall receiving it. Despite further investigations, the missing minutes have not been located and there seems to be no benefit in continuing efforts to locate them. The secret archives do, however, contain the confidential documents undoubtedly covered by the missing minutes.

## **3. INSTRUCTIONS - INDEPENDENT ACCESSION REGISTER**

Synod 1987 (Art 43.D.2) instructed deputies "to draw up an independent accession register for the contents of archives and library." This has been done. I enlisted the aid of Sr M DeVos to type the contents onto computer (IBM compatible - file name "libdata"). Moreover, in the process we took the liberty to translate the tables of contents for each synod into English (contents lists for the years 1954 through 1972 were in dutch). A complete printout, as well as the computer disk, are enclosed herewith. The disk also contains a copy of this report (file name "archives.rpt").

## **4. CONSIDERATIONS**

- a. Every synod appoints deputies to check the synod's archives. To do this reasonably thoroughly takes two men several hours. This task can be speeded up considerably if the deputies appointed for this task were to place each synod's documents into large, labeled envelopes and to put their seal on them. Future deputies would then only need to check the contents of those envelopes which had been opened subsequent to the seal having been placed on them.

- b. A number of the documents, particularly those on flimsy paper, written in ink or pencil and of earlier years, are becoming tattered and some are barely legible. It may be worth investigating the cost of putting the archives' documents onto microfilm. This would have the additional advantage of safeguarding the archives in case of fire, or vandalism through a "break and entry".
- c. At the moment, when items on a particular subject are requested, the tables of contents are searched to try to find the relevant items. This takes time. More importantly, tables of contents give a very limited outline of the actual contents. As the files of progressive synods are becoming larger it would be advantageous to compile a subject/keyword index of the contents and to update this with each successive synod. The cost would be minimal because it can be done on "PCF", a public domain database file (IBM compatible).

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That synod 1989 decides:

- A. to declare the "missing" minutes for Synods 1964-80 as lost and to discontinue efforts at finding them;
- B. to instruct the deputies appointed for the inspection of the archives and library of synods:
  - 1. to insert the archives' documents in large, appropriately labeled envelopes and to seal them after having inspected the archives;
- C. to instruct deputies appointed for the care and supervision of the archives and library of synods:
  - 1. to investigate the cost of putting the archives' documents onto microfilm and of buying a microfilm projector;
  - 2. to compile a subject/keyword index of the archives' contents.

*With brotherly greetings*

*J Numan*

*11 Angorra Road*

*Armadale 6112*

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  - 62.31 Report of Albany - checking Archives.
  - 62.32 Report of Armadale - scattered members.
  - 62.33 Report of Launceston - scattered members.
  - 62.34 Acts of Synod.
  - 62.35 Brief report of Synod.
  - 62.36 Closing speech.
  - 62.37 Financial report of treasurer.

### SYNOD - 1954

- 54.1 Attendance list.
- 54.2 Opening by Rev Pels on behalf of the convening Church - Armadale.
- 54.3 Credentials - FRC of Armadale.
- 54.4 Credentials - FRC of Launceston.
- 54.5 Credentials - FRC of Albany (for 1 delegate)
- 54.6 Credentials - FRC of (for 2 delegates)
- 54.7 Letter from delegate C.Plug about his replacement delegate.
- 54.8 Agenda.
- 54.9 Letter from FRC Albany - 5 points for the agenda.
- 54.10 Letter from FRC A'dale - 14 points for the agenda.
- 54.11 Letter from FRC L'ton - 5 points for the agenda.
- 54.12 Letter from FRC P.v.d.Steen, Albany - complaint about holding Synod.
- 54.13 Synod's reply to P.v.d.Steen.
- 54.14 Instructions for Mission deputies.
- 54.15 Instructions for deputies for correspondence with the Government.
- 54.16 Instructions for deputies - Art.49 & 79 C.O.
- 54.17 Instructions for deputies - Churches abroad.
- 54.18 Instructions for deputies - English Bible Translation.
- 54.19 Instr. for dep. - English Psalms & transl. of Three Forms of Unity.
- 54.20 Synods letter to distributors of some Australian publications.
- 54.21 Synods press report sent to some Austr. newspapers.
- 54.22 Letter from 1st clerk to the FRC at Alb.,Arm.,L'ton, accompanying the Acts of Synod.
- 54.23 Letter accompanying the press reports sent to "Ger.Gezinsblad and "de Reformatie".
- 54.24 Subscription form signed by ministers of the Word.
- 54.25 Financial report of Treasurer (34 items).SYNOD - 1956
- 56.1.1 Attendance list.
- 56.1.2 Opening by Rev.van Gulp.
- 56.1.3 Credentials - FRC. of Albany.
- 56.1.4 Credentials - FRC. of Armadale.
- 56.1.5 Credentials - FRC. of Launceston.
- 56.1.6 Agenda.
- 56.1.7 Rules for Synod.
- 56.1.8 Letter from Ref.Church at Hollandia (New Guinea)

- 56.1.9 Letter from Ref.Church at Hollandia (New Guinea)
- 56.1.10 Letter from Ref.Church at Hollandia (New Guinea)
- 56.1.11 Letter from W.L.Dekker of Bayswater.
- 56.1.12 Letter from W.L.Dekker of Bayswater.
- 56.1.13 Letter from J.vander Ros of Legana.
- 56.1.14 Letter from J.vander Ros of Legana repeating previous letter.
- 56.1.15 Letter from P.Bulthuis of Byford.
- 56.1.16 Letter from FRC of Albany with 3 proposals.
- 56.1.17 Letter from FRC of A'dale with 5 proposals
- 56.1.18 Letter from FRC of A'dale with 1 proposals
- 56.1.19 Letter from FRC of Wol'gong with request add item 18(above)to agenda.
- 56.1.20 Letter from FRC of L'ton with 5 proposals.
- 56.1.21 Report of deputies for Mission.
- 56.1.22 Letter from Ref.Ch.at Hollandia (New Guinea) about Mission.
- 56.1.23 Report of deputies - Art.49 & 79 C.O.
- 56.1.24 Report of deputies - English Bible translation.
- 56.1.25 Report of deputies - English Psalms & Three Forms of Unity.
- 56.1.26 Minority report of J.v.d.Ros - English Psalms.
- 56.1.27 Report of deputies for correspondence with Churches abroad.
- 56.1.28 Letter of Synod Enschede - rules of correspondence.
- 56.1.29 Letter of Synod Homewood - rules of correspondence.
- 56.1.30 Report of FRC Albany - scattered members.
- 56.1.31 Report of FRC A'dale - scattered members.
- 56.1.32 Report of FRC L'ton - scattered members.
- 56.1.33 Rules for Church visitation (proposed)
- 56.1.34 Rules for Church visitation (adopted)
- 56.1.35 Church visitation report - Albany.
- 56.1.36 Church visitation report - A'dale.
- 56.1.37 Church visitation report - L'ton.
- 56.1.38 Report of deputies - correspondence with the Government.
- 56.1.39 Report of FRC A'dale - Archives.
- 56.1.40 Report of FRC Albany - approbation of call to Rev.van Gulp.
- 56.1.41 Report of FRC L'ton - approbation of call to Rev.van Gulp.
- 56.1.42 Yearbook.
- 56.1.43 Letter to Synod treasurer - J.Brouwer.
- 56.1.44 Letter to deputies - Art.49 & 79 C.O.
- 56.1.45 Letter to deputies - English Psalms and Three forms of Unity.
- 56.1.46 Letter to deputies - correspondence with Churches abroad.
- 56.1.47 Letter to deputies - correspondence with the Government.
- 56.1.48 Letter to FRC at Wol'gong about her non-attendance at Synod.
- 56.1.49 Letter to FRC at Wol'gong about her non-attendance at Synod.
- 56.1.50 Letter-J.Reitsema (Wol'gong)to C.Plug (Alb) about items 48&49 (above)
- 56.1.51 Letter from C.Plug (Alb) to J.Reitsema (Wol'gong) in reply to item 50
- 56.1.52 Financial report of treasurer (24 items)

### SYNOD - 1959 - CORRESPONDENCE

#### INCOMING

- 59.2.1 The Free Ref.Church of Capetown.
- 59.2.2 Deputies for correspondence with Ch.abroad appointed by the Synod of the FRC of Pretoria.
- 59.2.3 Can.Ref.Ch. of Hamilton.

- 59.2.4 Canadian deputies for correspondence with Ch.abroad.
- 59.2.5 Ref.Ch. at Monte Alegro.
- 59.2.6 Deputies for correspondence with Ch.abroad appointed by Synod Homewood - Carman 1958 - in duplicate.
- 59.2.7 FRC of L'ton.
- 59.2.8 Synod Armadale 1956.
- 59.2.9 Synod Armadale 1956 in duplicate.
- 59.2.10 FRC of L'ton.

**OUTGOING - 1959**

- 59.2.11 Concepts of letters of various Churches.
- 59.2.12 Synod - Pretoria 1957.
- 59.2.13 Ref.Church of Dutch New Guinea - in duplicate.
- 59.2.14 2 letters from J.van Dyk.
- 59.2.15 Ref.Church at Monte Alegro.
- 59.2.16 Deputies for corresp. with Ch.abr.app'ted by Synod Enschede 1955.
- 59.2.17 Deputies for corresp. with Ch.abr.app'ted by Synod Homewood 1954.

**SYNOD - 1959**

- 59.1.1 Credentials - FRC of Albany
- 59.1.2 Credentials - FRC of A'dale (plus instruction)
- 59.1.3 Credentials - FRC of L'ton.
- 59.1.4 Attendance list.
- 59.1.5 Draft agenda (plus appendix) from Synod Albany.
- 59.1.6 Letter from Br.J.Kroeze - L'ton.
- 59.1.7 Letter from deputies - Ref.Ch.of Australia.
- 59.1.8 Objection from FRC of A'dale.
- 59.1.9 Objection from Br.W.Dekker - Bayswater & appendix & 2 replies.
- 59.1.10 Report - Church Book - in the English language.
- 59.1.11 Report - Archives from Rev.Pels to FRC of A'dale.
- 59.1.12 Report from the Church where the Archives were kept.
- 59.1.13 Report from deputies for correspondence with Ch.abroad.
- 59.1.14 Report from FRC of Albany - checking Archives.
- 59.1.15 Report - scattered members - Albany.
- 59.1.16 Report - scattered members - A'dale.
- 59.1.17 Report - scattered members - L'ton.
- 59.1.18 Report from deputies - Art.49 & 79 C.O.
- 59.1.19 Rules - Church visitation.
- 59.1.20 Report - Ch.visitation - Albany.

**ITEMS 21-30 TRANSFERRED TO CLOSED SESSION.**

- 59.1.31 Summary in English of Three forms of Unity from Br.J.Kroeze - L'ton in duplicate.
- 59.1.32 Letter from FRC of L'ton to Albany, A'dale & Melbourne.
- 59.1.33 Letter from FRC of Albany to L'ton with proposal.
- 59.1.34 Letter from FRC of A'dale to L'ton.
- 59.1.35 Letter from FRC of Albany to L'ton.
- 59.1.36 Letter from Melbourne to L'ton.
- 59.1.37 Letter from FRC of A'dale to L'ton.
- 59.1.38 Letter from FRC L'ton to the Free Ref.Ch. of Austr.
- 59.1.39 Letter from FRC A'dale to L'ton.
- 59.1.40 Same from March 1958.
- 59.1.41 Letter from Rev.van Rongen to A.v.d.Schoor.
- 59.1.42 Letter from A.v.d.Schoor to Rev.van Rongen.
- 59.1.43 Letter from Rev.van Rongen to Prof.Dr.K.Runia. & vice versa.

- 59.1.44 Letter from L'ton to the Free Ref.Churches of Australia.
- 59.1.45 Letter from L'ton to A'dale & Albany respectively.
- 59.1.46 Letter from A'dale to L'ton.
- 59.1.47 Church visitation - A'dale.  
a Report - Church visitation - A'dale.
- 59.1.48 Church visitation - Albany.
- 59.1.49 Church visitation - L'ton.
- 59.1.50 Minutes - committee - general (vertrouwelyk)

**LETTERS TO SYNOD - 1983**

- 83.3.1 Letter from Rev.Joosse - Church visitation.
- 83.3.2 Letter from Rev.Joosse - Contact Reformed Churches.
- 83.3.3 Letter from Rev.Joosse - Acts of Synod 1980.
- 83.3.4 Letter from Rev.Joosse - Special Ecclesiastical meeting of FRC.Aust.
- 83.3.5 Letter and Acts of special Ecclesiastical meeting of FRC.of Aust.
- 83.3.6 Letter from W.Dekker - Contact Reformed Churches.
- 83.3.7 Letter from Br.& Sr.Braam - Contact Reformed Churches.
- 83.3.8 Letter from R.Vermeulen - Contact Reformed Churches.
- 83.3.9 Letter from P'tHart - Future Mission Task.
- 83.3.10 Letter from J.Eikelboom - International Conference.
- 83.3.11 Letter from Ch.of K'scott - Postponement of a decision as membership of International Conference.
- 83.3.12 Letter from Ch.of K'scott - Appointment of deputies.  
a Dated 23.2.83 - Acts.  
b Dated 23.2.83 - Borderlines.
- 83.3.13 Letter Ch.of Albany - Disputing decision of A'dale to cease Mission activities.  
a Letter 19.10.81 - mission matters  
b Letter 20.10.81 - comment on Acts of Synod  
c Letter 3.11.81 - classis churches

**ITEM 14 TRANSFERRED TO CLOSED SESSION**

- 83.3.15 Letter from Rev.K.Jonker - Ecclesiastical certificate.
- 83.3.16 Letter from Reformed Churches.
- 83.3.17 Church visitation - L'ton.
- 83.3.18 Church visitation FRC.of Australia.

**SYNOD - 1956 - CORRESPONDENCE - DEPUTIES FOR CHURCHES ABROAD**

- 56.2.1 Letter from deputies to the Churches of Pretoria & Capetown.
- 56.2.2 Letter from deputies to the Churches of Djakarta & Semarang.
- 56.2.3 Letter from deputies to the Canadian Ref.Churches.
- 56.2.4 Letter from the deputies to the Churches of Holland.
- 56.2.5 Letter from Church of A'dale to the deputies.
- 56.2.6 Letter from deputies to the Ch. of A'dale.
- 56.2.7 Letter from Church of L'ton to the deputies.
- 56.2.8 Letter from Rev.Pels of A'dale to the deputies.
- 56.2.9 Letter from Synod Homewood - to the Ref.Ch.in Aust. original in 56.1.29
- 56.2.10 Letter from deputies to the Australian Churches.
- 56.2.11 Letter from Sth.Africa deputies to Austr. deputies.
- 56.2.12 Letter from Ch. of Djakarta to the deputies.
- 56.2.13 Letter from Ch. of L'ton to the deputies.

- 56.2.14 Letter from deputies to Canadian Homewood Synod deputies.  
 56.2.15 Acts of the Synod - Pretoria Sth.Africa.  
 56.2.16 Letter from the deputies to the Sth.African Pretoria Synod deputies.  
 56.2.17 Letter from the deputies to the deputies for correspondence in:  
     Holland  
     Sth.Africa  
     Djakarta  
     Canada  
 56.2.18 Report from deputies to the Synod of A'dale.

### CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ARMADALE 1956 SYNOD DEPUTIES FOR CH.ABROAD.

- 56.2.19 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies.12.10.54  
 56.2.20 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 1.11.54  
 56.2.21 Letter from C.Plug to J.v.d.Ros. 6.11.54  
 56.2.22 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to W.Dekker. 9.11.54  
 56.2.23 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 15.11.54  
 56.2.24 Letter from P.Bulthuis to J.v.d.Ros. 11.12.54  
 56.2.25 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to W.Dekker. 7.12.54  
 56.2.26 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 16.12.54  
 56.2.27 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies. 4.1.55  
 56.2.28 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies. 17.5.55  
 56.2.29 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 1.7.55  
 56.2.30 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies. 3.8.55  
 56.2.31 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 8.8.55  
 56.2.32 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies. 6.9.55  
 56.2.33 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 16.9.55  
 56.2.34 Letter from C.Plug to J.v.d.Ros. 20.9.55  
 56.2.35 Letter from P.Bulthuis to J.v.d.Ros. 26.9.55  
 56.2.36 Letter from P.Bulthuis to J.v.d.Ros. 26.9.55  
 56.2.37 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies. 23.9.55  
 56.2.38 Letter from J.v.d.Ros to fellow deputies. 1.11.55  
 56.2.39 Letter from W.Dekker to J.v.d.Ros. 3.12.55

### SYNOD - 1987

- 87.1 FRC of Albany - Art. 50 - Acts of the Synod 1985.  
 87.2 FRC of Albany - Art. 32 - Acts of the Synod 1985.  
 87.3 FRC of A'dale - the transfer of mission assets to the Ch.of Albany - see Art. 107 - Acts of the Synod 1983.  
 87.4 FRC of A'dale - extending pulpit exchange arrangements.  
 87.5 FRC of Byford - Art. 74 - Acts of the Synod 1985.  
 87.6 FRC of Byford - Appointment of deputies.  
 87.7 FRC of Byford - dates of Synod.  
 87.8 FRC of K'scott - Art. 45 & 46 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 87.9 FRC of L'ton - Art. 67 - Acts of Synod 1985.  
 87.10 Rev. Huizinga - Hymn section of Book of Praise.  
 87.11 Br. K.Wieske - Art. 89 - Acts of Synod 1985.  
 87.12 Br & Sr L.Woonings (snr) - Bible Translation.  
 87.13 Br & Sr R.Evans - Bible Translation.  
 87.14 FRC of A'dale - Bible Translation.  
 87.15 Evangelical Presbyterian Ch.of Australia - relations.

- 87.16 FRC of K'scott - proposed institution of B'dale Church.  
 87.17 Rev.van Rongen - booklet about Synod decisions.  
 87.18 Colloquium Doctum Rev.Bouwman.  
 87.19 FRC of L'ton - dismissal Rev.Dr.S.G.Hur.  
 87.20 FRC of L'ton - advice on pastoral procedure.  
 87.21 FRC of A'dale - task of classis Church (booklet appended)  
 87.22 FRC of L'ton - Rules for Synods.  
 87.23 FRC of Albany - Rules for Synods.  
 87.24 FRC of A'dale - Rules for Synods.  
 87.25 FRC of K'scott - Rules for Synods.  
 87.26 FRC of L'ton - Rules for Synods.  
 87.27 Deputies - Rules for Synods.  
 87.28 Deputies - Rules for Synods.  
 87.29 Deputies - Relations with Ch. abroad (letter).  
 87.30 Deputies - Relations with Ch. abroad (letter).  
 87.31 Deputies - Relations with Ch. abroad (supplementary report)  
 87.32 Deputies - PCEA (report).  
 87.33 Deputies - Church Book.  
 87.34 Deputies - Bible translation (letter).  
 87.35 Deputies - Training for the Ministry (report).  
 87.36 Deputies - Art. 26 C.O. Evangelism.  
 87.37 Deputies - Auditors report.  
 87.38 Canadian Ref. Churches - greetings.  
 87.39 Credentials - FRC of Albany,  
 87.40 Delegation explanation.  
 87.41 Credentials - FRC of A'dale.  
 87.42 Credentials - FRC of K'scott.  
 87.43 Credentials - FRC of L'ton.  
 87.44 Credentials - FRC of Byford.  
 87.45 Attendance list.  
 87.46 Dutch sister churches - greetings.  
 87.47 VGK Sth. Africa - greetings.  
 87.48 FRC of K'scott - librarian & archivist reports.  
 87.49 FRC of Byford - linguistic revision of C.O.  
 87.50 Rev.G.van Rongen - ICRC creeds.  
 87.51 FRC of L'ton - Dep. Art. 66.  
 87.52 FRC of K'scott - Colloquium Doctum : Rev.Huizinga.  
 87.53 P.W.Dekker - PCEA.  
 87.54 J.Numan - PCEA.  
 87.55 FRC of Albany - items for agenda.  
 87.56 FRC of Albany - items for agenda.

### CORRESPONDENCE OUTWARD - SYNOD 1987

- 87.57 Request - Art. 67 - Acts of Synod 1985.  
 87.58 FRC of Sth. Africa - fraternal greetings.  
 87.59 Appointment - Art. 119 (19)  
 87.60 Appointment - Art. 32.  
 87.61 Appointment - councillor for K'scott.  
 87.62 Appointment - auditors Art. 18 & 19 C.O.  
 87.63 Appointment - Art. 66 C.O.  
 87.64 Appointment - Art. 48, 76 C.O.  
 87.65 Appointment - Church visitation.  
 87.66 Appointment - Church visitation.  
 87.67 Appointment - Church Book - Hymns.  
 87.68 Appointment - Church Book - Hymns.  
 87.69 Appointment - Linguistic revision of C.O. & Eccl. Ordinances.  
 87.70 Appointment - Linguistic revision of C.O. & Eccl. Ordinances.  
 87.71 Appointment - Training for the Ministry.  
 87.72 Appointment - Training for the Ministry.  
 87.73 Appointment - Bible Translation.  
 87.74 Appointment - Bible Translation.

- 87.75 Appointment - Contact PCEA and EPCA.  
 87.76 Appointment - Contact PCEA and EPCA.  
 87.77 Appointment - Relations Churches Abroad.  
 87.78 Appointment - Relations Churches Abroad.  
 87.79 Appointment - Auditors for Synod treasury.  
 87.80 Appointment - Deputy for Synod treasury.  
 87.81 Appointment - Supervision of Archives & library of.  
 87.82 Appointment - Supervision of Archives & library of Synod.  
 87.83 Appointment - Publishing of the Acts.  
 87.84 Appointment - Training for the Ministry.  
 87.85 Appointment - Church Book.  
 87.86 Appointment - PCEA.  
 87.87 Rev. van Rongen - Appeal.  
 87.88 Release - Publishing decisions of Classis Church.  
 87.89 Release - Relations Churches Abroad.  
 87.90 Release - Bible Translation.  
 87.91 Release - Revision rules of Synod.  
 87.92 Release - Art. 48 & 78 C.O.  
 87.93 Release - Church visitation.  
 87.94 Response to overture Bible Translation.  
 87.95 Response to proposal/letter Bible Translation.  
 87.96 Release - Art. 26 C.O. on evangelism.  
 87.97 Release - Audit books of Synod treasurer & Art. 18,19 C.O.  
 87.98 Release - Synod Treasurer.  
 87.99 Response to appeal and requests - deleted hymns.  
 87.100 Response to proposal : appointment deputies.  
 87.101 Response to proposal : timing of Synods and Art. 74 - Acts of Synod 85  
 87.102 Response to proposal : linguistic revision of C.O.  
 87.103 Response to proposal : pulpit exchange.  
 87.104 Response to Letter : copyright of C.O. publication.  
 87.105 Letter of greeting to Free Ref. Theological College, Kampen.  
 87.106 Response to request : Art. 50 - Acts of Synod 1985.  
 87.107 Response to letter : institution of new congregation.

### CORRESPONDENCE OUTWARD - SYNOD 1983

- 83.4.1 Synod Cloverdale - greetings.  
 83.4.2 FRC of K'scott - decisions Art. 54 & 55 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.3 FRC of K'scott - decisions Art. 57 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.4 FRC of Albany - decisions Art. 56 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.5 FRC of K'scott - decisions Art. 58 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.6 FRC's of Aust. - decisions J.Zuidema.  
 83.4.7 J.Eikelboom - decisions ICRC.  
 83.4.8 FRC of Albany - decisions Art. 88 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.9 FRC of Albany - decisions Art. 94 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.10 FRC of Albany - decisions Art. 95 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.11 FRC of Albany - decisions Art.100 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.12 FRC of Albany - decisions Art.100 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.13 M.Vermeulen - decisions Art.103 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.14 W.L.Dekker - decisions Art.104 - Acts of

- Synod 1983.  
 83.4.15 L.Braam - decisions Art.104 - Acts of Synod 1983.  
 83.4.16 FRC of Albany - decisions Art.111 pt.2,13 - of Acts '83.  
 83.4.17 FRC of A'dale - decisions Art.111 pt.11,14 - of Acts '83.  
 83.4.18 FRC of K'scott - decisions Art.111 pt.1,16 - of Acts '83.  
 83.4.19 FRC of L'ton - decisions Art.111 pt.3,17,19,21 - of Acts '83.  
 83.4.20 J.Kroeze - appointment.  
 83.4.21 F.Streefland - appointment.  
 83.4.22 P.Dingemans - appointment.  
 83.4.23 K.Bruning - appointment.  
 83.4.24 J.L.van Burgel - appointment.  
 83.4.25 G.van Rongen - appointment.  
 83.4.26 J.v.d.Ros - appointment.  
 83.4.27 G.Groenewold - appointment.  
 83.4.28 G.Brouwer - appointment.  
 83.4.29 J.Numan - appointment.  
 83.4.30 A.Plug - appointment.  
 83.4.31 K.Salomons - appointment.  
 83.4.32 L.'tHart - appointment.  
 83.4.33 W.Fokkema - appointment.  
 83.4.34 A.Terpstra - appointment.  
 83.4.35 J.Plug - appointment.  
 83.4.36 W.Posthuma - appointment.  
 83.4.37 A.Hidding - appointment.  
 83.4.38 J.Bonker - discharged with thanks.  
 83.4.39 J.Bruning - discharged with thanks.  
 83.4.40 G.Numan - discharged with thanks.  
 83.4.41 H.Terpstra - discharged with thanks.  
 83.4.42 A.M.van Dongen - discharged with thanks.  
 83.4.43 M.Vermeulen - discharged with thanks.  
 83.4.44 P.O.Posthuma - appointment.  
 83.4.45 P.'tHart - mission.  
 83.4.46 To whom it may concern - reference for P.'tHart.

### REV. L.J. JOOSSE

1. Letter verifying call to Rev.Joosse.
2. Act of discharging Rev.Joosse from the Church at Ijmuiden.
3. Letter discharging Rev.Joosse from classis Amsterdam - Haarlem.
4. Letter from FRC of Albany giving promises to Rev.Joosse.
5. Letter of first call to Rev.Joosse by FRC of Albany.
6. Letter of second call to Rev.Joosse by FRC of Albany.
7. Letter of discharge of Rev.Joosse from Church at Ijmuiden.
8. Declaration of Rev.Joosse's ordination.
9. Letter indicating financial responsibility of FRC of Albany towards Rev.Joosse.
10. Letter of Rev.Joosse accepting call to Albany.

### SYNOD 1970 - LAUNCESTON

- 70.1 Letter of FRC. L'ton - calling Albany & A'dale to Synod.  
 70.2 Letter of FRC. A'dale - points for agenda.  
 70.3 Letter of FRC. L'ton - date of Synod.  
 70.4 Letter of FRC. A'dale - proposals for Synod.  
 70.5 Letter of FRC. L'ton - delegates.  
 70.6 Letter of FRC. Albany - delagates.  
 70.7 Letter of FRC. A'dale - delagates.  
 70.8 Attendance list.  
 70.9 Credentials - FRC of Albany.  
 70.10 Credentials - FRC of A'dale.

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| 70.11 | Credentials - FRC of L'ton.                              |
| 70.12 | Preliminary agenda.                                      |
| 70.13 | Opening address.   |
| 70.14 | Report - Church visitation - A'dale.                     |
| 70.15 | Report - Church visitation - Albany.                     |
| 70.16 | Report - Church visitation - L'ton.                      |
| 70.17 | Report - Archives.                                       |
| 70.18 | Report - Archives control.                               |
| 70.19 | Report - Presbyterian Reformed Churches.                 |
| 70.20 | Report - Mission, A'dale.                                |
| 70.21 | Report - Mission, Albany.                                |
| 70.22 | Report - military service.                               |
| 70.23 | Report - Churches abroad.                                |
| 70.24 | Report - English Church Book.                            |
| 70.25 | Report - Training for the Ministry.                      |
| 70.26 | Report - A'dale - scattered members.                     |
| 70.27 | Report - L'ton - scattered members.                      |
| 70.28 | Report - English Bible translation.                      |
| 70.29 | Letter from P.van Gulp on behalf of Churches in Holland. |
| 70.30 | Telegram from J.v.Rongen & Fam.Bruning.                  |

### CORRESPONDENCE OF DEPUTIES FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH SISTER-CHURCHES ABROAD.

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 70.31 | Letter to Synod FRC. Netherlands - salutation.                         |
| 70.32 | Letter to Dutch deputies for correspondence with Churches abroad.      |
| 70.33 | Letter to Canadian deputies for correspondence with Churches abroad.   |
| 70.34 | Letter to Sth.Afr. deputies for correspondence with Churches abroad.   |
| 70.35 | Letter to Church at Monte Alegre, Brazil.                              |
| 70.36 | Letter to Church at Curacao.   |
| 70.37 | Letter to Presbyterian Church in Korea.                                |
| 70.38 | Letter from Canadian deputies.   |
| 70.39 | Letter from P.v.Gulp with copy of letter from Presb.Ch. of Korea.      |
| 70.40 | Letter from P.v.Gulp about Presb.Ch. of Korea.                         |
| 70.41 | Report of Canadian deputies to Synod Orangeville '68.                  |
| 70.42 | Letter from FRC. Albany - collection Hamilton College.                 |
| 70.43 | Letter from P.v.Gulp - various matters.                                |
| 70.44 | Letter from P.v.Gulp to Presb.Ch. of Korea.                            |
| 70.45 | Letter from Korean Ch. to Rev.v.Gulp.                                  |
| 70.46 | Proposed agenda of Synod Hooegeveen '69.                               |
| 70.47 | Report of Dutch deputies to Synod Hooegeveen '69.                      |
| 70.48 | Letter of Synod Hooegeveen to Australian dep. about Presb.Ch.of Korea. |
| 70.49 | Letter from Canadian deputies - salutation.                            |

### APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTIES BY SYNOD L'TON - 1970

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 70.50 | FRC of A'dale - Archives; Presbyterian Reformed Churches. |
| 70.51 | FRC of L'ton - pastoral care military servicemen.         |
| 70.52 | FRC of Albany - control archives; mission.                |
| 70.53 | Deputies for Sth. Africa.                                 |
| 70.54 | Deputies for Churches abroad.                             |
| 70.55 | Deputies for Training for the Ministry.                   |
| 70.56 | Appointment Synod treasurer.                              |
| 70.57 | Deputies - Church Book in the English language.           |

### EXTRA-ORDINARY SYNOD 1988

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 88.1  | Proposed agenda   |
| 88.2  | Attendance list   |
| 88.3  | Credentials of delegates: FRC Albany                          |
| 88.4  | Credentials of delegates: FRC Armadale                        |
| 88.5  | Credentials of delegates: FRC Bedfordale                      |
| 88.6  | Credentials of delegates: FRC Byford                          |
| 88.7  | Credentials of delegates: FRC Kelmscott                       |
| 88.8  | Credentials of delegates: FRC Launceston                      |
| 88.9  | Copy of letter of call by FRC Albany to Rev Koelewijn         |
| 88.10 | List of Peremptory Examination Assignments for br J Koelewijn |
| 88.11 | Certificate - J Koelewijn by Classis Kampen                   |
| 88.12 | Certificate - J Koelewijn by Gereformeerde Kerk, Kampen       |
| 88.13 | Letter of J Koelewijn accepting Albany's call                 |

### DOCUMENTS RELATING TO COLLOQUIUM FOR REV C BOSCH, 7 JUNE 1989

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1.  | Copy of letter from Launceston requesting Byford to function as Classis Church. |
| 2.  | Copy of agenda for classis.   |
| 3.  | Letter of (second) call (including appendix re monetary arrangements.           |
| 4.  | Letter from classis church approving second call.                               |
| 5.  | Letter of acceptance.   |
| 6.  | Approval of call from Kelmscott congregation.                                   |
| 7.  | Act of release from Smithville.   |
| 8.  | Act of release from Classis Ontario South.                                      |
| 9.  | Letter affirming responsibility.  |
| 10. | Acts of Classis Byford.   |

### SECRET ARCHIVES

#### 1954 CLOSED SESSIONS

Minutes book

#### 1956-1959-1962 CLOSED SESSIONS

Minutes book

#### 1966 CLOSED SESSIONS

Minutes book

#### 1959 CLOSED SESSIONS

Church Visitation Reports:

|     |                 |
|-----|-----------------|
| 1.  | Albany 1957     |
| 2.  | Albany 1958     |
| 3.  | Albany 1958     |
| 4.  | Launceston 1959 |
| 5.  | Launceston 1957 |
| 6.  | Launceston 1958 |
| 7.  | Armadale 1959   |
| 8.  | Armadale 1957   |
| 9.  | Armadale 1957   |
| 10. | Armadale 1958   |

#### 1964 CLOSED SESSIONS

Church Visitation Reports:

|    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|
| 1. | Albany 1961              |
| 2. | Armadale 1961            |
| 3. | Launceston 1962          |
| 4. | Albany 1961 (and letter) |
| 5. | Armadale 1961 (Dec)      |
| 6. | Launceston 1961 (Nov)    |

#### 1966 CLOSED SESSIONS

Church Visitation Reports:

|    |                      |
|----|----------------------|
| 1. | Albany Apr. 1965     |
| 2. | Albany Mar. 1966     |
| 3. | Albany Mar. 1966     |
| 4. | Armadale Apr. 1966   |
| 5. | Launceston Dec. 1964 |

6. Launceston Apr. 1966

### 1983 CLOSED SESSIONS

1. Church Visitation Reports:  
A Launceston 1981 and 1982 combined  
B Armadale 1981  
C Kelmscott 1981  
D Albany 1981
2. Letter from J. Zuidema ( re conduct of fellow deputy for correspondence abroad )
3. Minutes of Closed Session 1983

### 1985 CLOSED SESSIONS

#### - CHURCH VISITATION REPORTS:

1. Armadale 1983 (Nov)
2. Armadale 1984 (Nov)
3. Kelmscott 1983 (Nov)
4. Albany 1983 (Dec)
5. Albany 1984 (Nov)
6. Launceston 1984 (May)
7. Launceston 1985 (Jun)
8. Kelmscott 1984 (Nov)

#### - OTHER MATTERS

9. Letter to Mr H.G. Bosveld
10. Letter to Br W.L. Dekker
11. Minutes of the closed sessions

### 1987 CLOSED SESSIONS

#### A.- CHURCH VISITATION REPORTS:

1. Albany 15-11-85
2. Albany 05-12-86
3. Armadale 19-11-85
4. Armadale 27-11-86
5. Byford 29-11-85
6. Byford 28-11-86
7. Kelmscott 28-11-85
8. Kelmscott 28-11-85
9. Launceston 29-09-86

#### B.- OTHER

10. Appeal of Rev G VanRongen - procedure used in readmission

## ACTS OF SYNODS OF SISTER CHURCHES

### THE NETHERLANDS

- Bunschoten-Spakenburg 1958-59
- Assen 1961
- Rotterdam 1964-65
- Amersfoort 1966-67
- Hoogeveen 1969-70 (2 copies)
- Hatterem 1972-73
- Kampen 1975
- Groningen-Zuid 1978
- Arnhem 1979-81
- Heemse 1984-85 (part 1)
- Heese 1984-85 (part 2)

### AUSTRALIA

- Two copies of each of the following years:  
1954, 1956, 1959, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970,  
1972, 1975, 1978, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1987.

### CANADA

- Hamilton 1962 (2 copies)
- Edmonton 1965
- Orangeville 1968
- New Westminster 1971
- Toronto 1974
- Coaldale 1977 (2 copies)
- Smithville 1980
- Cloverdale 1983
- Smithville 1986

### SOUTH AFRICA

- Pretoria 1963
- Pretoria 1966
- Kaapstad 1968
- Pretoria 1969
- Pretoria 1971 (2 copies)
- Kaapstad 1972 (2 copies)
- Pretoria 1972 (2 copies)
- Kaapstad 1974
- Pretoria 1975
- Pretoria 1976 (2 copies)
- Pretoria 1977
- Kaapstad 1978 (2 copies)

# REPORT TO SYNOD ARMADALE 1989

## Hymn Section of the Book of Praise

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Esteemed Brothers,

Synod Albany 1987 made the following decisions regarding the Book of Praise:

1. "to introduce the probationary use of the deleted hymns by the churches till the next synod.
2. "to appoint deputies with the following mandate:
  - a) to solicit submissions from the churches;
  - b) to compile a report evaluating the received submissions and prepare a recommendation whether to accept the complete hymn section for use in the worship services;
  - c) to maintain contact with the CRC concerning the matter of any revision or changes to the Psalms or Hymns in the Book of Praise;
  - d) to report to the following synod."

In accordance with this mandate, several requests for submissions were made to the councils of our churches and to church members via letters and notices in church bulletins and the *Una Sancta*. We also sent a letter to the Canadian deputies for the Book of Praise informing them of our activities and requesting information regarding 2(c) of our mandate.

Initially we set 31 December, 1988 as the deadline for submissions. These initial requests resulted in one submission from an individual within the churches. A further request was sent to the Church Councils and through them to the church members and a new deadline set at 21 April, 1989. This resulted in further submissions from four Church Councils and two church members. Altogether a most disappointing and unsatisfactory result.

It is quite clear that the matter of the Hymn section of our Book of Praise is not an issue that rates highly amongst the majority of our people.

### 2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS

#### 2.1 Submissions have been received from:

##### 2.1.1 The Free Reformed Churches of:

- 1) Albany;
- 2) Byford;
- 3) Bedforddale;
- 4) Launceston.

##### 2.1.2 From the following individual church members:

- 1) Rev. G. van Rongen, of Kelmscott;
- 2) Br. G. Groenewold, of Legana;
- 3) Br. J. VanderRos, of Launceston.

#### 2.2 Summary of Submissions

##### 2.2.1 Submissions received from the churches

Of the four submissions received from the churches, two, namely from Albany and Byford, informed us that they have no objections to the "use of the complete Hymn section of the B.O.P. in the worship services". No further information was given.

The Church of Bedforddale submitted "for consideration and evaluation all previous reports from deputies for the church book".

The Church of Launceston submitted "that the period for evaluation of the probationary Hymns be extended". They were unable to evaluate the probationary Hymns within the practical period of one year due to the consistory's heavy workload.

##### 2.2.2 Submissions received from individuals

The three submissions from the above named church members all object to the possible acceptance of the complete Hymn section of the B.O.P. These brothers have all been involved as deputies for the church book in the past and therefore have a wealth of experience so their submissions are valuable.

All three submissions strongly emphasize the years of study and evaluation undertaken in the past by deputies. These have resulted in the decisions by many synods cautioning churches against the danger of moving in the direction of a "Hymnbook". They feel that Synod 1987 deviated from this course.

Further, all three submissions refers to contents and/or musical aspects to show why they feel many of the probationary Hymns are unsuitable.

In addition, one submission attempts to point out that the decision taken by Synod 1987 is "in conflict with the accepted Church Order" and thus in his opinion "illegal". The submitter draws attention to decisions of previous synods which he states "refers to directives and conclusions of the deputies concerned, to which our churches through their synods have bound themselves". Furthermore, he claims that "a formal request for revision of these decisions" has not been made "to a subsequent synod, let alone acceded to".

### 3. DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF SUBMISSIONS

#### 3.1 Submissions received from the churches

The submissions from Albany and Byford simply informed us that they would be happy to use the complete Hymn section in the worship services. As no grounds were given, further evaluation by us was not necessary.

The submission from Launceston contained no remarks or opinions about the Hymns. Instead Launceston asks for an extension of the evaluation period. It is not within our mandate to accede to this. Furthermore, we felt that this should not prevent us from continuing our evaluation.

We also regarded the submission from Bedfordale (that we consider and evaluate all previous reports) as being outside our mandate. We have studied all the reports from previous deputies because as deputies we should be well informed, especially regarding the historical aspects of this matter. Nevertheless we felt that if Synod Albany 1987 wanted us to evaluate the old reports it would have included that within our mandate.

#### 3.2 Submissions received from individuals

##### 3.2.1 References to previous Synodical decisions

As earlier stated, all three submissions strongly emphasized the years of study by previous deputies and thus their submissions are used in conjunction with previous reports of deputies and the Acts of previous synods. A study of the Acts and associated reports of the deputies, shows that two important considerations have been taken into account while working towards a church book.

1. Synod 1962 made a declaration that "in accordance with Synod 1959 it is the aim for the present to be content with the book of Psalms plus other songs from Scripture" (Art. 40, point 7). This declaration was in line with that of Synod 1958 of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Shortly after, Canada released a probationary B.O.P. containing fifteen Hymns. According to the deputies of 1962 only three of the Hymns were proper "Songs of Scripture" and could be sung in the worship services. However, because this leaves the churches with only three Hymns, four other Hymns were 'cautiously' recommended for temporary use, on the ground of "Dutch tradition". Furthermore, stated the deputies, this would avoid a discrepancy between the English and the Dutch song book (Deputies Report to Synod 1964, p. 11).

Synod 1964 accepted the B.O.P. for probationary use and urged the churches to test it according to the guidelines given by Synod 1959.

Thus, although Synod 1962 decided to use only Psalms plus other "Songs of Scripture", Synod 1964, on the recommendation of the deputies, deviated from this course to avoid a discrepancy between the Dutch and English song books. This is understandable, but is it not so that for the same reason, namely to avoid a discrepancy with Canada, all fifteen Hymns should have been accepted. After all, already in 1954, Synod Armadale stated that, concerning the matter of a Church Book, there should be as much uniformity as possible amongst the Sister Churches of the English speaking countries (Acts 1954, Art. 17). This declaration was repeated during Synod 1966 (Acts 1966, Art. 46).

2. The deputies appointed by Synod 1964 also requested Synod 1966 to declare again "that in the preparation of a church book to use during church services in the English language, care must be taken not to move in a direction which may lead to a Hymn book in the spirit of the Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church of the U.S.A.". This statement was also repeated at other synods. Also, other reports from past deputies have strongly implied that the number and use of Hymns for the church services should be kept to a "minimum".

From the above it is apparent that two considerations are important:

1. Uniformity with the Sister Churches is highly desirable;
2. The number of Hymns should be kept to a "minimum" to avoid the direction which the Christian Reformed Church of U.S.A. has undertaken.

In our opinion both considerations should be taken into account when making decisions concerning the B.O.P.

##### 3.2.2 An illegal decision?

Although it is not our task to decide whether the decision of Synod 1987 was "illegal" we can make a few comments.

1. We refer firstly to the two considerations outlined above (3.2.1), both of which, we concluded, are important.  
Therefore Synod 1987 has not ignored previous synodical decisions. See also Acts 1987, Art. 99, C.2 p. 54.
2. The remark that the matter has never been raised at a subsequent synod is incorrect. See Acts of Synod 1985, Art. 59.

### 3.2.3 Discussion of remarks on the contents

#### 1. Duplication

All three submissions refer to examples of duplication in the Hymn book. It is claimed that: *"a song should add something to what we already have, otherwise it should be eliminated"*; *"we sing in our worship services to glorify God and not to satisfy, let alone entertain, ourselves. Many of these Hymns are a pleasure to sing but we may not for that reason be seduced into including them in our liturgy."*

It is true that there is some duplication of the contents of the Psalms or Hymns. Nevertheless it is also fair to say that many examples put forward by our brothers contain new elements. For example, it is claimed that Hymns 3, 4 and 5 repeat the contents of Hymn 2. However, although the reference to the Trinity is repeated in all the Hymns, each Hymn is unique. Attention is also drawn to Hymns 36 and 37. But here too there are significant differences between the Hymns. Indeed, it seems that in many of the examples our brothers have listed, the attention has been focussed on duplications in the text, while the differences have been overlooked.

#### 2. Hymn 12

A brother raises several concerns regarding the text of Hymn 12.

*"What is meant by 'Israel'? Of which coming of the Lord does it sing; of the first one or the second one? The repeated use of the name 'Immanuel' suggests His first coming. However, confusion is created when in verse 3 we hear about hell and grave from which He will save, and in verse 4 about 'the gloomy clouds of night' (what is meant by this?) and 'deaths dark shadow'. I wonder whether this Hymn can be called a scriptural one."*

This is the first time objections have been raised against the text of this Hymn. Deputies in their interim report to the "Councils of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia", dated July 1982, made the following comment:

*"No objections to text, tune would be very hard on any congregation, in particular the three note syllables in verse 3 and 5."*

We too have no objections to the text. We feel the Hymn clearly refers to the first coming of our Lord. In that context the phrases to which this brother draws our attention are certainly not unscriptural.

#### 3. Hymns 36 and 37

A brother finds the contents of Hymns 36 and 37 "theologically dubious". The Bible teaches us to direct all our praise to Christ and not to the Holy Spirit, he writes. Furthermore, scripture does not "command or indicate that we should address our petitions to the Holy Spirit". This is pushing "Christ aside from the centre of attention." Such "Pentecostal tendencies" should be resisted. Comments:

a) Hymn 36 has been accepted by Synod 1983.

b) Re Hymn 37:

Deputies appointed by Synod 1980 had no objections to the text (see their Interim Report, July 1982). They did not recommend the Hymn firstly, because they found the tune unsuitable and, secondly, because they found much "duplication in the text".

c) From its very beginning the New Testament church has sung its praises to the Holy Spirit. An example is the Hymn "Veni Creator Spiritus". This is good. After all if we can praise the Spirit in the Trinity then we can also address the person of the Spirit. By doing this we are not automatically pushing Christ aside from the centre of attention. Furthermore, the scriptural references given, clearly show this is not the case.

#### 4. Hymn 45

*"A good specimen of a children's song in archaic language; our worship services require a more mature style .. this one is quite O.K. for the nursery."*

So writes one of the brothers. Another writes:

*"The melody is as trite as the words."*

Though the melody and words may be weak the words cannot be regarded as unscriptural.

#### 5. Hymn 48

It is stated:

*"church members are addressing one another here. A good example of subjective influences. But we are expected to address the Lord in our worship!"*

And:

*a Hymn "... in which the pious fortify each other with good advice, may be very true, but has not place in a church service."*

Indeed church members are addressing one another, but we also address one another in a number of Psalms, e.g. Ps. 46 and 81. Furthermore the song is as much a confession of faith as a song of encouragement.

#### 6. Hymn 60

*"The language ... is archaic. Why did our churches do away with the King James Version while this archaic language is maintained in our Hymn book?"*

*"... the text strains the Reformed ear beyond measure; what to think of expressions like 'the King of creation', 'He is thy health', 'to His temple'. Scriptural language?"*

Thus far the comments of the two brothers regarding this Hymn.

Remarks:

- a) Yes, the language is somewhat archaic.
- b) Just because these phrases are not found in scripture it does not mean they are unscriptural. After all, Revelation 21:22 clearly shows that the "Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are the temple in the new Jerusalem. Also it cannot be denied that Christ is our "spiritual health". As 1 John 5:12 states: "he who has not the Son of God has not life."

### 3.2.3 Discussion of remarks on Musical aspects

In all submissions reference is made to the "inferior, or otherwise mediocre quality" of some tunes. In particular the Hymns with the Common Metre melodies are regarded as weak. "Does not the Bible teach us that we have to offer the best quality to our God?" adds a brother.

Furthermore, another brother refers to the history and special character of the Genevan tunes. He feels that:

*"some Hymn tunes are completely out of character with our Psalter. The Genevan melodies form an artistic whole."*

Hymn 52 is regarded as unsuitable for the worship services because of its difficult (octave) intervals.

Of Hymn 55 a brother writes:

*"tune in 3/4 time is perfect for a Vienna waltz, but decidedly unworthy of the Scriptural text. Can we offer the Lord something that's clearly linked to man's expertise and experiences in the ballroom?"*

Comments:

- a) We agree that a number of Hymn tunes are inferior to the Psalms;
- b) In our experience, the large intervals in Hymn 52 have not been a problem in our congregational singing. Furthermore no Church has reported difficulty with this Hymn.
- c) Re Hymn 55 - only one comment: the tune is credited to William Croft and is dated 1708. This is well before Johan Strauss and the ballroom floor.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

We consider the following:

The deputies during the past thirty years undertook a tremendous amount of work and study in order to arrive at their recommendations. We fully agree with the conclusion that a number of Hymns are not indispensable since they tend to "double up" on the Psalms or other Hymns. We also agree that many of the Hymn tunes are inferior to the Genevan tunes and it would be ideal to have the Psalms and Hymns forming a whole as to musical characteristics.

Canada, however, chose to include a large number of Hymns (65) in the B.O.P., in comparison with our Sister Churches in the Netherlands who have only 41 Hymns. It seems then that we are faced with a dilemma. Do we follow Canada and thus ensure uniformity, or do we choose only a small number of Hymns for inclusion in the B.O.P. at the cost of uniformity?

Since studies concerning the church book have begun there must have been differing opinions as to what constitutes the ideal or the "minimum" number of Hymns. Though in 1962 it was deemed suitable to have only "Songs from Scripture" in the Hymn section, recommendations from deputies since 1972 also included other scriptural Hymns, though admittedly only a few. Nevertheless, by diverting from the 1959 guidelines, the definition of "minimum number of Hymns" became open to subjectivity. Are sixty five Hymns too many, and, by adopting so many Hymns, are we really in danger of going in the direction of a Hymn book in the style of the Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church with its one hundred and forty (140) Hymns and its many incomplete rhymed Psalms? This point is certainly worthy of consideration. It would be a sign of deterioration if the Psalms would be removed from "their position of eminence in our worship services" (Interim Report of Deputies, July 1982) by an abundance of Hymns. Against this we must stay alert! However, although there are more Hymns in our B.O.P. than originally planned or expected, they are as, a whole and on average, well selected, scriptural and free from the subjectivism of so many other man centred Hymns.

Furthermore, although we agree that a number of Hymn tunes have inferior melodies, this does not mean they may not be sung in the worship services.

**Recommendation:**

In view of these points we recommend that Synod decides to accept the complete Hymn section of the Book of Praise for use in the worship services, so that in accordance with the decision of Synod Armadale 1954, there should be as much uniformity as possible amongst the Sister Churches of the English speaking world concerning the matter of a church book (Acts Art. 17).

## 5. CONTACT WITH CANADA

In accordance with our mandate we also established contact with Canada. In our letter to the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise, we reported on the decisions of our Synod 1987 regarding the use of the Hymns and the wording of the Apostles Creed. Further we asked them to keep us informed regarding revision or changes to the Psalms or Hymns in the B.O.P.

In reply we received, early this year, a copy of Report 3 to the General Synod 1989 of the Canadian Reformed Churches and a Supplementary Report on the Church Order. Report 3 dealt with the B.O.P. (The other reports dealt with the Creeds and the Church Order.)

Report 3, on the B.O.P., dealt with the following points:

1. Publication and distribution.
2. Corporate status and financial matters.
3. Hymn 1A.

Synod 1986 of the Canadian Reformed Churches instructed the committee "to insert the word 'Christian' in the Hymn version of the Apostle's Creed, if this is possible (Art. 101, D.2.a)".

Though the Standing Committee tried to do this they were unable and recommended to their Synod "that Hymn 1A be left as it is" (Report 3, page 39).

Synod 1986 also passed on to the deputies the "alternative melody composed for Hymn 1A by D. Zwart, Jr." so they could consider if it was useful. The deputies reported that they found it unsuitable.

4. Further recommendations.

Thus there are no changes or revision to the Psalms or Hymns to bring to Synod's attention.

The contents of the Supplementary Report on the Church Order, did not relate to our mandate.

Yours in Christ's service

J. PLUG (Convenor)

J. DIEK

L.A. SCHOOF

# RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

## A. Mandate

Instructions to Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, as given by Synod Albany 1987.

### 1. RULES for permanent relations

To renew the mandate that the deputies, after consultation with the sister-churches is finished, draft rules for relations with churches abroad. A49-D-2 page 20.

### 2. RULES for temporary relations

To renew the mandate that the deputies, after their consultation with sister-churches is finished, draft rules for temporary contact with churches abroad, keeping Art 74.II, Acts 1985 in mind. A49-D-3 page 20.

Art 74.II 1985 reads :

*"as there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister-churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of sister-church relationship.*

**GROUND**

*It is essential that Rules for temporary contact embody this principle (see Acts 1985, Article 67)"*

### 3. DECLARATIONS for visiting ministers

To instruct the deputies to stress and to clarify to the churches the requirement of declarations for visiting ministers. A49-D-4 page 20.

### 4. RELATIONS with sister-churches

To continue the relations as sister-churches with:

- the Canadian Reformed Churches. A50-D-1 page 21.
- de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, in accordance with the adopted rules. A51-D-2 page 22.
- the Presbyterian Church in Korea, according to the adopted rules. A52-D-5 page 22.
- die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. A53-D-2 page 23.
- the Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu according to the adopted rules. A54-D-3 page 24.

### 5. RELATIONS with other Churches

#### 5.1 KOREA

Regarding the Presbyterian Church in Korea :

to urge deputies to make every possible effort to make the relations with the PCK fruitful so that we can adhere to the adopted rules for sister-church relations. A52-D-2 page 22;

to make arrangements with the PCK that the minutes of their general assemblies be sent in an english summary. A52-D-3 page 22;

to renew the mandate to the deputies that they evaluate the two additional chapters of the Westminster Confession of the PCK. A52-D-4 page 22.

#### 5.2 SUMBA/SAVU

Regarding the Reformed Churches of Sumba/Savu :

to instruct deputies to do everything possible to ensure that the exercise of these relations according to the adopted rules is fruitful (see considerations 2 and 3). A54-D-2 page 24;

The reference to considerations 2 and 3 should probably read "considerations 1 and 2".

These mention that the report of deputies is short and scanty. Acts of their 1985 Synod still had not been received. One could expect a better exercise of these relations. Deputies should request a summary of the Acts in the language used in correspondence.

to authorize deputies to send two delegates to the 1987 Synod of these churches. A54-D-4 page 24.

#### 5.3 IRELAND

Regarding the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland :

to send two delegates to the EPCI for a visit. This could be done in conjunction with the 1989 ICRC. A79-D-5 page 40

Note: Synod's decision regarding an offer of temporary contact with the EPCI does not expressly instruct deputies. A79-D-3 page 39.

Such instructions may be implied however from the rules for such temporary contact given by the decision.

#### 5.4 SCOTLAND

Regarding the Free Church of Scotland :

- to move in the direction of becoming sister-churches with the FCS. A82-D-3 page 43;
- not to implement sister-church relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon. A82-D-4 page 43;
- to authorize deputies to send delegates to visit the FCS to help implement the above mentioned decisions. A82-D-6 page 44.

Note: Synod's decision regarding an offer of temporary contact with the FCS does not expressly instruct deputies. A82-D-5 page 44.

Such instructions may be implied however from the rules for such temporary contact given by the decision.

#### 5.5 TAIWAN

Regarding the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (2nd P) :

- to carry out a more detailed investigation of the RPCT with regard to the marks of the true church and church polity ; to establish a good base for correspondence in english with the RPCT and so improve the contacts with them ; to investigate and evaluate the division in the presbyteries there. A91-D-3 page 49.

#### 5.6 Regarding Sri Lanka, Uganda, Japan :

- to renew the mandate with respect to the Reformed Church of Japan and the Presbyterian Church in Uganda. A92-D-3 page 50;
- the mandate referred to reads : "to investigate whether or not the RCJ, the PCU and the DRCSL can be recognized as true and faithful churches according to Art 29, BC with a view to the possible establishment of relations as sister-churches ; to urge the RCJ to break the ties with the RES" . A92-B-1 page 49.

#### 5.7 NEW ZEALAND

Regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand :

- to continue contact with the RCNZ and specifically to call their attention to relations with other churches with which we have broken all ties. A105-D-3 page 59.
- it is not clear whether Synod expected deputies to carry out the decision recorded in A105-D-2 page 59, which reads :  
*"to convey its thanks to the RCNZ that it has terminated all ties with the GKN(syn) and that it has decided to oppose very strongly the membership of the GKN(syn) in the RES as well as withdraw from the RES if the GKN(syn) is not expelled"*.

#### 5.8 SINGAPORE

Regarding the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore :

- to investigate thoroughly this church to discern whether or not this church is a true church according to art 29, BC. Special attention is to be given to the distinctives of Protestant Reformed doctrines (viz. covenant and free offer of the gospel) and to report to next synod. A106-D-2 page 60;
- to investigate and evaluate the influence of the Protestant Reformed Church in the ERCS. A106-D-3 page 60;
- to authorize deputies to send delegates to visit these churches en route to the EPCI and the FCS. A106-D-4 page 60.

#### 6. ICRC

Regarding the ICRC :

- to send two members of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad as delegates to the next meeting of the conference to be held on June 19-23, 1989 in Vancouver (Cloverdale), Canada.
- to submit to the secretary of the ICRC the following proposals for amendment of the Constitution. A110-D-2 page 68
  - a to add to Art. IV after (d)  
(e) show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country; (Art. 84 the Acts of the 1983 Synod);
  - b a stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members;
  - c that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC;
  - d that "CONSTITUTION Art. V - Authority" be amended to read "The conclusion of the conference

shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation;"

- e that "REGULATIONS Art. II" be amended to read: "Each conference shall elect the following officers: a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary." (Amendment underlined);
- f that "REGULATIONS Art. II, 4.b,iv" be amended to read: "to forward to the churches materials, reports or other publications as authorised by the Conference." (Amendments underlined)

to ask the next meeting of the conference:

- a to give matters related to the constitution priority;
- b to place on the agenda once again the issue of inter-church relations and if possible to come with recommendations to the member churches;
- c to make a clear statement about the position of the observers and advisers, and furthermore which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church;
- d to reconsider the decision taken by the previous conference regarding traveling expenses of delegates in line with the following proposal: "Traveling expenses should be borne by the member churches on the same basis as the ordinary costs of the conference." GROUND: Without accepting this proposal the member churches which are bigger in number are privileged compared to member churches smaller in number;
- e to place the matter of Bible translations on the agenda of the next conference;
- f to draw conclusions on matters discussed.

## B. Meetings of Deputies

- 1.1 Deputies have met 9 times since Synod Albany. All deputies were present at each meeting except for Rev. Bruning who was absent either in Port Moresby or Launceston on 4 occasions and br. J. Swarts who was absent due to work commitments on 1 occasion.
- 1.2 A combined meeting with deputies for contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia was held to discuss matters of mutual concern.

## C. General Activities

### 1. Declarations

- 1.1 Deputies were requested to supply letters for Revs. Bruning, Veldman and Koelewijn stating that they were ministers in good standing in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- 1.2 The Churches in Australia and abroad have been informed of Synod's instructions to deputies to stress and to clarify to the churches, the requirement of declarations for visiting ministers.

### 2. Rules for Correspondence

- 2.1 Deputies have continued to study the matter of rules for relations with churches abroad. The Deputies for relations with churches abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN Lib.) have continued their work on revision of the rules for correspondence. The following proposal was received for comment.

#### *"II. Basic Considerations*

*Deputies would like to re-emphasise a few remarks made in their earlier letter.*

- 1. *Rules for inter-church relations should be both completely justified in the eyes of the Lord and profitable to parties concerned.*
- 2. *Such rules should serve to help one another to adhere to the true confession of the Word of God and to be true witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world.*
- 3. *Such rules can only function satisfactorily if there is mutual trust and love.*

*In this connection deputies also refer to the considerations of our 1978 Synod of Groningen-Zuid (Appendix I).*

#### *III. Character of inter-church relations*

*According to article 47 of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (see Appendix II) and the above mentioned considerations of the 1978 Synod Groningen-Zuid, a relationship with a church abroad should be to the effect of recognising one another as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ (as defined in the Reformed Confessions) and of practising ecclesiastical fellowship accordingly.*

#### **IV. Entering into relations**

*Relations with churches abroad will only be entered into, when after a period of getting acquainted, primarily through the work of deputies, the General Synod is convinced not only, that these churches have accepted officially the Reformed Confession of the Word of God, but also that they live up to their standards in doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy.*

*In this respect, the following considerations play a very important role.*

- a *Our Lord Jesus Christ gathers His Church among many different peoples, which have their own special geographical situation, their own history and culture; the entering into relations therefore should not be rejected because of minor differences in the way churches abroad have expressed themselves in their confessions, or because of certain differences in liturgy, church order or ecclesiastical practice.*
- b *If a church abroad maintains relations with third parties, careful attention will have to be given to the question as to what these relations mean to the church concerned.*  
*Deputies are fully aware of the fact, that the subject of third party relationships is of a rather complicated nature. At the same time they are convinced that this subject cannot be excluded from the preliminary discussions, because it has to be ascertained whether or not a certain relationship does form an obstacle in arriving at a sister church relationship.*
- c *Deputies have taken note of the fact, that in certain countries more than one group of churches exist, that have been recognised as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the possibility of a relationship with more than one group of churches in a certain country cannot be ruled out. In the light of Christ's commandment of unity among his people, such a situation of "double correspondence" may not be acquiesced in, but should remain a point of discussion.*

#### **V Rules for sister-church relations**

*On basis of the foregoing, deputies have formulated the following rules:*

- 1 *The churches will pay heed to each other's doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy.*
- 2 *The churches will receive one another's representatives at their Assemblies/General Synods and invite them to serve as advisers in matters concerning relations.*
- 3 *The churches will inform one another of the decisions taken at these Assemblies/General Synods by exchanging Minutes/Acts or at least by forwarding those decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned.*
- 4 *In case of changes in or additions to confessions, church order or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature, the church concerned will lay these changes before the corresponding churches, so that consultations can take place, if considered necessary.*
- 5 *The churches accept each other's letters of testimony and consequently admit members of the churches concerned to the sacraments on presentation of such letters.*
- 6 *The churches admit, in principle, one another's ministers into the pulpit, taking into account rules which have already been agreed upon in the churches concerned.*
- 7 *The churches will inform each other regarding new relationships with third parties*

*In the opinion of deputies, the rules as formulated above are scriptural rules and essential in sister church relationships. They would like nothing better than that these rules could be agreed upon by all those churches, which are true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ and between whom obstructions to come to a sister church relationship without reserve, do no longer exist.*

*Besides, deputies are of the opinion that they can expect such an offer of sister church relationship to be accepted, unless the church concerned considers reasons to be present not (not yet) to be able to come to such a relationship. In that case deputies think that there will be the willingness to discuss the points of difference.*

#### **VI Fraternal Relations**

*Deputies are also of the opinion that in every case every effort should be made to set up a sister church relationship as described in V. In this relationship these churches will - in full mutual recognition of the basis - leave each other free in their own character and value with due observance of the differences which are the result of a geographical situation, a historical background, difference in a language, difference in a culture etc.*

*The unity in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Ghost is so deep, that the differences mentioned ought not encroach upon and should in no way constitute interference. Experience of many years however has taught that the factors last mentioned are still regarded as an interference to the beginning of such a sister church relation in churches in other parts of the world for several reasons. People would like to recognise and acknowledge the church of the other country as a true and fully fledged church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but sometimes people do not see the urgency of such a stringent bond (which in that case will be considered oppressive) or they are afraid of objections possibly clinging on them (e.g. the practise of such a close contact is beyond their own strength or means limited) or people do even see risks (the loss of own historical and national identity).*

*If therefore in some cases it should appear that after mutual testing and considering of all the arguments supplied no agreement about the opinion that a relationship of "fraternal relations" can be proposed on basis of rules further to be agreed.*

*These rules will not need to be the same for all the churches. This point of view results from the conviction of deputies that, if there is a talk of true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ and our joint status in a world,*

which is more and more drifting apart from the Lord, his Word and the Saviour, also the churches in The Netherlands have to do all that is possible in such circumstances to be helping each other as churches in a material and spiritual way. Deputies think that in this way our churches will be able to fulfil their ecumenical task.

#### **VII Temporary relation on ecclesiastical contact**

It will be clear from the above that if our General Synod would accept the proposals as contained in this letter, the qualification of "temporary relation of ecclesiastical contact" would cease to exist as far as new relationships are concerned. Agreements, which have already been entered into on a basis of that relationship, will have to be further discussed with the churches concerned.

#### **APPENDIX I**

The considerations on inter-church relations of the 1978 Synod of Groningen-Zuid read as follows:

- a According to the Word of God (John 17:11, 17, 20, 21; Eph. 3:14 - 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:15, 16) and the confession (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21; Belgic Confession, Art 27-29) the Church of Christ is scattered all over the world, yet it is united in one Spirit, in the unity of the true faith, by adhering to the true doctrine, liturgy and discipline according to the ordinances of Jesus Christ as its only Head.
- b According to the Word of God and the Confession, true believers and true churches in every place and in every country are called to establish ecclesiastical unity with those who confess the same faith and adhere to it in preaching, service, church government and discipline, by living together as a church at a certain place or as churches in a certain country; and if geographical distance, language barriers or other causes make this impossible, by correspondence.
- c True believers and churches are called to distinguish from the Word of God, which is the true church, in order to have fellowship with that church, while rejecting fellowship with churches which depart from the doctrine and ordinances of the Word of God, or which have separated themselves schismatically from the true church.
- d In fulfilling this call the churches should take into account:
  - that our Lord Jesus Christ gathers his church among many different nations, and that his church among these nations has its own history of persecution and fighting against error, and of reformation;
  - that these different histories may have led to differences in the way in which these churches confess God's truth, as well as in the way in which church government and liturgy have been arranged, yet being one in confessing the Word of God, adhering to true doctrine and the administration of the sacraments and keeping to the ordinances of Jesus Christ as the only Head of His church (cf Belgic Confession, Art. 32 and Church Order 88).
- e In considering a relationship with churches abroad, which themselves have fellowship with churches with which the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands do not have fellowship, both c. and d. above should be taken into account.

#### **APPENDIX II**

Article 47 of the Church Order reads:

General Synod decides concerning relations with Churches abroad.

With foreign Churches of Reformed Confession an ecclesiastical fellowship shall be maintained as much as possible.

On minor points of Church Order or ecclesiastical practice Churches abroad shall not be rejected.

#### **2.2 The Australian deputies have written a reply to the Dutch deputies as follows:**

"In answering your letter we refer to:

- i) our previous letter on this topic dated March 1987;
- ii) Acts, Synod Launceston 1985, Articles 67 and 74;
- iii) Acts, Synod Albany 1987, Article 82 consideration 8.

Rule (1) of the rules for correspondence currently reads:

"to take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline do not deviate from the Reformed confession."

This has been replaced by rule (1):

"the churches will pay heed to each other's doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy."

In our letter of March 1987 we already commented to "pay heed" was a weakening of to "take care". This is particularly relevant now that you have omitted 3(d) of the previous minimum rules:

"if an unhopd for deviation from the Reformed standards should become apparent, in doctrine, liturgy or discipline, that church concerned will have to be spoken to ... etc".

We consider that the new rules do not allow for a proper functioning of a sister relationship which may require the admonition of a church which begins to deviate from its Reformed doctrine and confessions.

In the exercise of ecclesiastical relations we would also point to Article 67 of Acts, Synod Launceston 1985 which states:

*"Synod declares that our recognition of another Church as being "true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ":*

*1. means that both our churches, and that recognised church, stand on the foundations as expressed in Articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;*

*2. has as a direct consequence that a sister-Church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity;*

*3. and that our church members must join that church and vice versa, in the case that such church is their nearest church, in accordance with Article 28 of the Belgic Confession."*

*Further Article 74 of the same Acts states:*

*"Synod decides:*

*as there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister-Churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of sister-Church relationship."*

*These two decisions make clear the direction which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia wish to follow in the practice of ecclesiastical relations. Note also the application of these decisions in Acts of Synod Albany 1987 consideration 8:*

*"Since the FCS has troubles accepting the rules for correspondence, we cannot expect them to accept a sister-Church relationship on the basis of these rules. It is thus best to offer a temporary ecclesiastical relationship which shows them our sincerity in recognising them, which requires official correspondence and discussion of items of mutual concern such as the rules for correspondence and the position of adherents and which demonstrates unity of like faith and practice.*

*Art. 67 of the 1985 Acts stipulated that recognition of another church as true and faithful means that an offer to them to become sister-Churches can be made.*

*This same decision acknowledges that there may be historical developments which form an obstacle to becoming sister-Churches immediately. Art. 74 of the 1985 Acts allows for a formal relation of ecclesiastical contact as long as this relation does not become permanent and as long as it is actively used to come to relations as sister-Churches."*

*With regard to your proposal on fraternal relations, we are concerned as to which churches you intend to offer fraternal relations. We would expect you not to apply the relation to churches with which you are on the road to becoming sister-Churches.*

*Our understanding is that fraternal relations would only be adopted where language barriers, geographic locations etc, make the exercise of sister-Church relations very difficult. For example we could understand such a relationship between say the South African sister-Churches and the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Deputies do not consider that striving for sister-Church relationship should be abandoned in favour of fraternal relations where difficulties such as divergencies in doctrine or practice cannot be removed or where the rules are not accepted or understood.*

*Our committee will discuss the matter of ecclesiastical relations further, following the report of delegates to the ICRC, re the workshop on inter-church relations."*

2.3 The workshop on Ecclesiastical Relations held at the ICRC in Vancouver did not resolve any issues although there was a frank and open dialogue among the Presbyterian and Reformed representatives.

Following comments made by the Free Church of Scotland delegates, that they objected to the rule which states "to take care for each other that the doctrine, church government, and discipline do not deviate from the Reformed Confession", the Australian delegates again stressed to the Dutch deputies the importance of maintaining this rule which they have now omitted. (See also report on the ICRC.)

Deputies propose to Synod to renew their mandate to consult with Sister Churches abroad regarding proposed changes to rules for ecclesiastical relations.

### 3 RECOMMENDATION

Synod discharges deputies appointed by Synod Albany and appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

- a to consult with sister churches abroad regarding proposed changes to rules for ecclesiastical relations;
- b to adhere to the rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact and continue the study of these rules in consultation with sister churches.

# D. Canada

## 1. CORRESPONDENCE

- 1.1 Copies of the Acts of the 1987 Synod of Albany were sent to the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC). We received copies of the Acts of their 1986 General Synod of Burlington, upon which a report was given to the last synod.
- 1.2 We received an invitation to attend their 1989 General Synod of Winnipeg. Since no mandate had been received for us to attend and since no one could be found to attend for us, a letter of brotherly greetings was sent.
- 1.3 We received copies of the provisional agenda for their 1989 General Synod of Winnipeg, along with copies of the report of their CRCA for synod and copies of the revised translation of the Canons of Dort.
- 1.4 One of the clerks of synod sent us copies of some (the most relevant articles for us) of the Acts of the 1989 General Synod. The official Press Release as published in CLARION gave considerable detail. We still await the official publication of the Acts.

## 2. THE 1989 GENERAL SYNOD OF WINNIPEG (April 18 - May 5, 1989)

### 2.1 THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

- 2.1.1 Synod gratefully acknowledged the faithful labours of Dr. J. Faber as professor of Dogmatology and principal at the Theological College since his appointment in 1968. Prof. J. Faber and his wife were invited to come and attend the synod where they were officially thanked and also given a farewell present - a trip to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia! Synod also gratefully acknowledged the faithful labours of Dr. K. Deddens as professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology since his appointment since 1983. Also acknowledged was the promotion of Prof. C. Van Dam to "Doctor Theologiae." The work of the Women's Saving Action was gratefully remembered.
- 2.1.2 Synod appointed Dr. N.H. Gootjes of Pusan, Republic of Korea, as professor of Dogmatology to replace Dr. J. Faber as per September 1st, 1989, and Drs. J. de Jong of Burlington-South as professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology to replace Dr. K. Deddens as per May 1st, 1989. Both accepted their appointments.
- 2.1.3 Synod thanked the churches, including the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, for their faithful support of the Theological College.

### 2.2 BOOK OF PRAISE

- 2.2.1 Synod spent much time on this subject in order to come to a finalised version of the BOOK OF PRAISE. Many of the decisions involved details of (linguistic) revision (Athanasian Creed, Church Order, and Canons of Dort especially). Instead of noting them all, deputies would ask the synod to have deputies appointed to examine these revisions to see whether the FRCA can approve and adopt them. This will be necessary since a new edition of the BOOK OF PRAISE with all these revisions is to come out. The following decisions can be noted:
  1. to thank the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise for its report and for the work done, and to reduce (on its recommendation [M.V.]) the number of members of the Standing Committee to four, while keeping in mind that continuity would be desirable;
  2. that the Standing Committee be given the mandate:
    - a. to see to it that the Book of Praise remains available to the churches at a reasonable price;
    - b. to make the necessary arrangements with printers and others for the production and distribution of the Book of Praise;
    - c. to maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters concerning the Book of Praise;
    - d. to implement all Synod decisions regarding the contents of the Book of Praise;
    - e. to foster an increased awareness of the existence of the Book of Praise among others;
    - f. to stimulate the publication of a book of harmonizations of the melodies in the Book of Praise for use in the English-speaking world;
    - g. to serve as the address to which any correspondence regarding the Book of Praise can be directed;
    - h. to complete the committee mandate of Synod 1986 concerning the Nicene Creed (i.e., to see to its linguistic revision);
    - i. to insert the final version of the Creeds, Confessions and Church Order, as adopted by this Synod and to add the proposed Scripture references to the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Liturgical Forms;
    - j. to make the new melody with the "new text" by Br. D. Zwart available to the churches and evaluate any response from the churches (see General Synod 1986, Acts, Art. 189, Cons. 2);
    - k. to serve the following General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months before the beginning of Synod.

## 2.3 RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

### 2.3.1 Relations with Sister Churches. Synod decided:

1. to thank the Committee for the work done since 1986;
2. to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in accordance with the adopted rules;
3. to charge the Committee to send an invitation to our sister churches abroad to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening Church, and to have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible;
4. to renew the mandate of the Committee as given by Synod 1986 concerning the following points:
  - a. to request the Churches abroad that in the matter of relationship or contacts with third parties "there be consultation and coordination between sister Churches."
  - b. to request the Churches abroad that contacts in countries where sister Churches are already established be made not independently but in consultation with these sister Churches;
  - c. to continue to address the sister-churches on the matter of church-relations, setting forth the decisions and concerns of the Canadian Reformed Churches, as outlined by the General Synods of Smithville (Acts, Art. 154 D 1 2) and Cloverdale (Acts, Art. 110 D 1);
  - d. to evaluate the reactions of the sister Churches in these matters with respect to a possible common approach;
  - e. to report to the next General Synod with suitable recommendations (Acts 1986, Art. 177 D 2).

### 2.3.2 I.C.R.C. Synod decided as follows:

Concerning the ICRC Synod learned that:

1. preparations are underway for the Canadian Reformed Churches to host a meeting of the ICRC in Vancouver on June 19-29;
2. the following delegates have been appointed to represent our churches at this meeting:  
Rev. C.I. Stam - voting delegate  
Dr. J. Visscher - voting delegate  
Dr. J. Faber - adviser  
Dr. C. Van Dam - adviser
3. the committee has also proposed that the topic of inter-church relations be added to the agenda of the ICRC, and be dealt with in a workshop format.

Synod decided:

1. to thank the committee for the work done in regards to the ICRC;
2. that the committee overtures the ICRC to make discussion of the Constitution a matter of high priority;
3. that the mandate as expressed by Synod 1986 (Acts, Art. 175 D, 2, a, b, c) be maintained;
4. that the delegates keep the churches informed regarding the activities of the Conference by means of press releases.

2.3.3 **Korea.** Concerning the synod again had to conclude that communication with the Presbyterian Church of Korea is still very poor. Since a proper line of communication is needed before sister relations can be reached, synod asked the Committee to be diligent regarding this matter. Thus still no recognition of the PCK and no official relation exists between the CRC and the PCK.

2.3.4 **Scotland.** The Committee gave an extensive report (in which our previous report was well used) about the Free Church of Scotland (FCS). Synod decided:

1. to thank the Committee for the work done;
2. to renew its mandate give by Synod 1986 (Acts, Art. 178, Rec. 2, a, b), and to charge the Committee to come to Synod 1992 with a report of its findings and recommendations;
3. to inform the FCS that it is our desire to do full justice the Scriptural call for church unity by putting this unity to practice and be united in the same federation of churches with all the faithful congregations in Canada and the U.S.A.;
4. to keep the current sister churches informed of all progress made in this regard, and to work in cooperation with them;
5. to inform the churches concerning the affiliated churches of the FCS in Canada and the U.S.A.;
6. to keep the churches informed of progress made.

The church at Carman approached Synod with the request that in the renewed mandate of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad it be made clear that we desire to do full justice to the Scriptural call for church unity and how this should be put into practice. Having expressed this already in point 3 of the above-mentioned decision, Synod further decided in answer to Carman's letter:

*"that the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad take into account in its discussions with the FCS the relationship of local Canadian Reformed Churches and local congregations of the FCS in Canada with respect to expressing full unity of faith."*

## 2.4 ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The temporary ecclesiastical contact with the OPC took up much time of synod. The report of the committee and various submissions from churches were dealt with. Synod decided:

1. to thank the committee for its work and to continue the temporary relationship of "ecclesiastical contact" in the understanding that encouraging indications for progress are present;
  2. to acknowledge gratefully the Scriptural witness which the OPC delegates have given within the RES - especially with respect to the apostasy in the synodical Reformed churches in the Netherlands - and the clear way in which they have terminated the membership of the RES;
  3. to convey this acknowledgment to the ICRC and to recommend to the ICRC that before admitting the OPC for membership, if so requested, it evaluate the relationship of the OPC to the Christian Reformed Church;
  4. to remind the Dutch sister churches to work in such a way that as sister churches in our contact with the OPC we may continue to present a unified testimony;
  5. to continue the Committee for Contact with the OPC with the specific mandate:
    - a. to maintain the contact with the OPC, taking into account the rules for ecclesiastical contact, with the understanding that the temporary relationship of "ecclesiastical contact" is designed to come to a full sister church relationship in the unity of the true faith and is not intended to continue indefinitely, or become a relationship of permanent status;
    - b. to include in the "continued discussions" on "issues of mutual concern" (Acts, Synod 1977, p. 42) the statement on Biblical Principles of Church Unity;
    - c. to be diligent to continue the discussion on and evaluation of the divergencies, such as the doctrine of the covenant, visible and invisible church, the assurance of faith, the observance of the law, the fencing of the Lord's Table, confessional membership, church-political differences, and the contact with the Christian Reformed Church;
    - d. to coordinate the discussion of the divergencies with the discussion concerning the Biblical Principles on the Unity of the Church;
    - e. to serve the following General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months before the beginning of this Synod;
    - f. to keep the churches informed concerning its activities by means of interim reports and press releases.
- 2.5 **Bible Translation.** Synod considered that further scrutiny of the forthcoming New RSV edition is desirable and therefore gave the committee the mandate to check it for its faithfulness in translation, particularly in regard to the use of so-called inclusive language.

## 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 We can declare that in the Acts received and in the official Press Release concerned we have not found anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and as practised in the Church Order. The deputies thankfully conclude that the Canadian Reformed Churches have remained faithful to God's Word and thus recommend to the 1989 Synod of Armadale to continue the sister-relation with these churches in accordance with the adopted rules.
- 3.2 The deputies would ask synod to instruct the new deputies to examine the revisions in the BOOK OF PRAISE, excluding those made to the Church Order and the Hymns section (for both of which there are presently other appointed deputies), and to report to the next synod.

# E. Korea

1. Synod Albany, 1987 made the following decisions regarding the Presbyterian Church in Korea:
  - i) expressed disappointment that the relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) have been frustrated by the lack of information and by language barriers;
  - ii) urged deputies to make every possible effort to make the relations with the PCK fruitful so that we can adhere to the adopted rules for sister relations;
  - iii) to instruct deputies to make arrangements with the PCK that the minutes of their general assemblies be sent in an English summary;
  - iv) renewed the mandate to deputies that they evaluate the two additional chapters of the Westminster Confession of the PCK;
  - v) to continue the relations with the PCK as sister churches, according to the adopted rules.
2. Deputies sent three copies of the Acts of Synod Albany, 1987 as soon as they became available. Deputies also wrote to the PCK outlining Synod's concerns and decisions.
3. In July, 1988 an invitation was received to attend the 38th General Assembly of the PCK to be held in Seoul commencing September 5th, 1988. Deputies declined the invitation but sent a letter of fraternal greetings plus some information on recent developments within the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
4. The Fraternal Relations Committee advised us promptly of some of the decisions made at the 38th Assembly. They included the following:
  - i) A decision was made to separate the College and the Theological Seminary.
  - ii) A Standing Committee for Missions was set up with the view to increased involvement in overseas mission work.
  - iii) A committee was appointed to investigate the movement to traditional customs and aspects of culture which could have a serious effect on the church.
  - iv) The matter of unification on the Korean Peninsula and the matter of sects was to be investigated.
5. Deputies have not received copies of the Acts of the General Assembly since 1985. Despite requests an abridged English translation has not been made available.
6. Rev. Dr. S. Hur, as president of the Korea Theological Seminary, provided information about activities within the seminary. This information was also sent to all the Free Reformed Churches.
7. Deputies responded to the information from the PCK about their expanded missionary work by writing to them for more information. In particular we referred to their work in Indonesia.
8. Report on Chapter XXXIV and XXXV added to the Westminster Confession by the Presbyterian Church in Korea in the Year 1983:

## 8.2 The Mandate

- a. In the Year 1903 the Westminster Confession underwent a limited revision in The Presbyterian Church North in the United States of America. Two chapters dealing with the Holy Spirit, and the love of God and Mission were added to the existing Confession. The Presbyterian Church in Korea followed that example, and officially adopted both chapters in 1983.
- b. The 1983 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches (and Synod, Launceston 1985) instructed its deputies according to the rules of correspondence with the Presbyterian Church in Korea to investigate and report on the new chapters in the Westminster Confession.

## 8.3 Considerations I

1. The official edition of the Westminster Confession of Faith did not contain a separate chapter about the Holy Spirit. The addition of chapter XXXIV can be considered as an important improvement of the Confession. This chapter reads as follows:

### *"OF THE HOLY SPIRIT*

- I. The Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, of the same substance and equal in power and glory, is, together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, loved, obeyed, and worshipped throughout all ages.*
- II. He is the Lord and Giver of life, everywhere present in nature, and is the source of all good thoughts, pure desires, and holy counsels in men. By Him the Prophets were moved to speak the Word of God, and all writers of the Holy Scriptures inspired to record infallibly the mind and will of God. the dispensation of the Gospel is especially committed to Him. He prepares the way for it, accompanies it with His persuasive power, and urges its message upon the reason and conscience of men, so that they who reject its merciful offer are not only without excuse, but are also guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit.*
- III. The Holy Spirit, who the Father is ever willing to give to all who ask Him, is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption. He convicts men of sin, moves to repentance, regenerates them by His grace, and persuades and enables them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith. He unite all believers to Christ, dwells in them as their Comforter and Sanctifier, gives to them the spirit of Adoption and Prayer, and performs all those gracious offices by which they are sanctified and sealed unto the day of redemption.*
- IV. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ, who is the*

*Head, are thus united one to another in the Church, which is His body. He calls and anoints ministers for their holy office, qualifies all other officers in the Church for their special work, and imparts various gifts and graces to its members. He gives efficacy to the Word, and to the ordinances of the Gospel. By Him the Church will be preserved, increased until it shall cover the earth, purified, and at last made perfectly holy in the presence of God.*

2. The new chapter XXXIV comprises the following distinct parts:
  - a. the Person of the Holy Spirit;
  - b. the Holy Spirit as Lord and Giver of life;
  - c. the Holy Spirit as the only efficient agent in the application of redemption;
  - d. the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church to preserve, increase and perfect her.
3. Chapter XXXIV confesses about the  
**Person of the Holy Spirit:**  
as third Person in the Trinity, He proceeds from the Father and the Son;  
is of the same substance with Them;  
receives the same Divine glory and honour; and  
is together with the Father and the Son to be believed in, loved, obeyed and worshipped.  
**Holy Spirit as Lord and Giver of life:**  
He is the source of men's good thoughts, desires and counsels; He is the inspiration of the prophets and all the Bible writers; He prepares the way for Gospel and accompanies it by His persuasive power;  
they who reject the Gospel are guilty of resisting Him;  
**Holy Spirit as the only efficient agent in the application of redemption:**  
convicts men of sin;  
works repentance and conversion;  
makes them to embrace Jesus Christ;  
unites all believers in Christ; and  
is their Comforter and Sanctifier unto the day of redemption.  
**Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church to preserve, increase and perfect her:**  
the Holy Spirit unites the believers one to another in the Church;  
makes the officebearers capable to serve the Lord  
imparts various gifts and graces to the members of the Church.  
In this he gives efficacy to the Word and to the ordinances of the Gospel.

#### Conclusions

- a. The Scriptural content of this chapter XXXIV is clear from the following points:
  - I The Holy Spirit is a Person; as third Person in the Trinity, He is equal with the Father and the Son; of the same essence, majesty and glory;
  - II The Holy Spirit is the source of life for the creation and the activities of man; especially as an inspiration for the prophets and Bible writers; He is the persuasive power of the Gospel; its dispensation is especially committed to Him;
  - III The Holy Spirit works all the gifts of faith; and of regeneration;
  - IV The Holy Spirit works the unity in the Church, and equips all the members to be active for the Lord.
- b. Chapter XXXIV gives wider attention to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit than happens in Article 11 of the Belgic Confession. This chapter can be seen as an enrichment of the Westminster Standard of Faith.

#### 8.4 Considerations II

1. The new chapter XXXV has as theme: **OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND MISSIONS**. This addition to The Westminster Confession may be explained by the fact that The Presbyterian Church in Korea is strongly missionminded, and has developed intensive activities in that field. This chapter reads as follows:

##### *"OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND MISSIONS*

- I. *God, in infinite and perfect love, having provided in the covenant of grace, through the mediation and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, a way of life and salvation sufficient for and adapted to the whole lost race of man, doth freely offer this salvation to all men in the Gospel.*
- II. *In the Gospel God declares His love for the world and His desire that all men should be saved, reveals fully and clearly the only way of salvation; promises eternal life to all who truly repent and believe in Christ; invites and commands all to embrace the offered mercy; and by His Spirit accompanying the Word pleads with men to accept His gracious invitation.*
- III. *It is the duty and privilege of everyone who hears the Gospel immediately to accept its merciful provisions; and they who continue in impenitence and unbelief incur aggravated guilt and perish by their own fault.*
- IV. *Since there is no other way of salvation than that revealed in the Gospel, and since in the*

*divinely established and ordinary method of grace faith cometh by hearing the Word of God, Christ hath commissioned His Church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations. All believers are, therefore, under obligation to sustain the ordinances of religion where they are already established, and to contribute by their prayers, gifts and personal efforts, to the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout the whole earth."*

2. The chapter contains the following four paragraphs:
  - a. in His infinite and perfect love God provided in the covenant of grace through Jesus Christ, a way of salvation sufficient for and adapted to the whole lost race of man;
  - b. the Gospel reveals fully and clearly the only way of salvation. The same Gospel promises eternal life and invites and commands all men to embrace the offered mercy and to accept His gracious invitation;
  - c. everyone who hears the Gospel has the duty and privilege to immediately accept it. Impenitence and unbelief leads to aggravated guilt and perdition by own fault;
  - d. Christ has commissioned His church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations as faith comes by hearing the Word of God.  
All believers are obliged to sustain the ordinances of religion and contribute to the extension of the kingdom of Christ in the world.

#### **Conclusions**

- a. Chapter XXXV correctly states that the mission-mandate to the Church is fruit of the love of God revealed in His decision to provide a way of life and salvation in Jesus Christ: John 3:16.
- b. It correctly states that the only way of salvation is revealed in the Gospel of grace.
- c. It correctly states that the hearers of this Gospel are commanded to accept and embrace the offered mercy with repentance and faith.
- d. It correctly states that this Gospel must be preached because faith comes only by hearing.
- e. The mission-mandate defined and confessed in chapter XXXV of The Westminster Confession has a strong Scriptural foundation.

## **9. Recommendations**

Deputies propose to Synod Armadale that:

- i) it renews the mandate for new deputies to intensify efforts to improve the exchange of information between our Churches;
- ii) Synod decide to continue the sister relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea under the established rules;
- iii) the Synod recognises the Scriptural content of Chapter XXXIV and Chapter XXXV of the Westminster Confession and inform the Presbyterian Church in Korea accordingly.

## F. The Netherlands

1. The sister relations were continued in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. Two of our members met with Deputies of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (BBK) during their visit to the Netherlands in February 1988.

Discussions centered on:

- (a) rules for contacts - voicing concerns about the developments in this regard within the Dutch Churches, with specific misgivings about the so called 'double correspondence', and the emergence of a more relaxed attitude towards RES (now REC) membership;
  - (b) the mutual relationships with the Irish and Scottish Churches; and
  - (c) contacts with PCEA, matters pertaining to the ICRC and developments in the RCNZ.
3. A letter was received (relevant parts printed in Section C 2.1) from Deputies BBK on the subject of forms of, and rules for relations with Churches abroad, setting out their revised proposals, and requesting a reply before January 1989 if possible.

Basically, Deputies BBK are continuing on the path of changing the rules for practical reasons. This course was set out by them in their January 1987 letter, to which we replied in March 1987 saying that though agreeing with the general thrust, reservations were held about some of the proposals, referring in particular to the suggestion that there could be different rules for different Churches, the weakened formulation of the rule dealing with doctrinal integrity, the relationships with third parties, and the possible establishment of 'double correspondence'.

Regarding the Deputies of the BBK's earlier proposal to do away with the form of contact known as "temporary ecclesiastical contact", this is now being supplemented with the proposal to create a form of contact known as "fraternal relations".

4. From the Acts of Synod Spakenburg-Noord 1987:
  - 4.1 Appeals against Synod Heemse's (1984-85) decisions in the case of Rev. J. Hoorn of Grootegast were rejected. Synod confirmed Heemse's findings, albeit with correction to its supporting grounds.
  - 4.2 The Theologische Hogeschool at Kampen (now: 'Theologische Universiteit'), the departure of Professors Lettinga and Kamphuis, and the appointment of new lecturers required considerable attention and effort. The overall outcome was gratifying.
  - 4.3 Synod appointed new Deputies for contact with the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken and gave them the explicit instruction to urge their (CGK) Deputies that their Churches should come to a Scriptural decision in the matters raised by Synod Heemse 1984/85.
  - 4.4 Synod decided to uphold the decision of Heemse 1984/85 "not to give an affirmative answer to the question whether an elder leading a church service is authorised to proclaim the Salutation and Benediction."
  - 4.5 Synod adopted Rules for the Gereformeerde Missiologische Opleiding of the Churches, as well as a Form of Subscription for Deputies (governors) of this Institute and various other Instructions.
  - 4.6 Concerning foreign churches, Synod decided (to instruct Deputies):
    - (a) **Gereformeerde Kerken in Sumba, Savu and Timor** - to continue the relationship; to continue financial assistance but on a gradually reducing scale.
    - (b) **The Presbyterian Church in Korea** - to continue the relationship; to visit the sister churches in Korea once every four years, preferably midway between ICRC meetings; to continue in the efforts to try and find out which changes the PCK made in its Confession and Church Order; to consult with PCK regarding the continuation of the work of the missionary professors; to continue financial assistance for the benefit of the Library of PCK's Seminary; to consult with PCK in matters regarding other Churches in Korea.
    - (c) **Reformed Church of Japan** - to continue for the time being the offer of a temporary ecclesiastical relationship; instruct Deputies to humbly point out to RCJ its duty towards church communities which she maintains contact with, insofar these have deviated from the Reformed 'track' (van het Gereformeerde spoor zijn afgeweken); to await RCJ's decision in the matter of the RES (now: REC); and to observe closely the developments in RCJ's contact with the Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken.
    - (d) **Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (2nd Presbytery)** - to continue the temporary relationship; to keep in touch with the RPCT (1st Presbytery), also for the purpose to promote, if possible, the unification of the two presbyteries; to divert funds reserved for assistance to RPCT to other purposes.
    - (e) **Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka** - to approve Deputies action in giving financial assistance; to continue the temporary ecclesiastical relationship; to maintain contact through correspondence and if necessary a visit, and give christian encouragement and advice and to continue in pointing out to DRCSL the dangers associated with her existing ecclesiastical relationships; to give further financial assistance.
    - (f) **Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore** - to continue the established contact.
    - (g) **Christian Brethren at Negros in the Phillipines** - to gather more information about the developments in this church community.

- (h) **Canadian Reformed Churches** - to continue the sister relations.
- (i) **Free Reformed Churches of Australia** - to continue the sister relations.
- (j) **Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia** - to seek contacts with this Church; to do this in consultation with and, if possible, with the co-operation of the FRCA.
- (k) **Reformed Churches of New Zealand** - to continue contacts with the RCNZ; to pay special attention to the relationships maintained by RCNZ with other Churches; to point out to RCNZ that an eventual sister relations with NGK will exclude a similar relationship with GKN; to keep in touch with FRCA on the developments in their relationship with RCNZ.
- (l) **Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand** - to terminate contacts with this Church.
- (m) **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland** - to continue the sister relations; to further examine the difficulties this church has with the rules for ecclesiastical relationships, and if possible, arrive at a solution.
- (n) **Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland** - to continue the contacts; to maintain these contacts as much as possible in consultation with the EPCI; to discuss with the RPCI the whole matter of the functioning of the different forms of ecclesiastical relationships and their rules.
- (o) **Free Church of Scotland** - to continue the temporary ecclesiastical relationship; to involve the FCS in the ongoing consultations on the whole matter of the functioning of the different forms of ecclesiastical relationships and their rules; to report to the next Synod on their findings and if possible submit new proposals regarding this Church.
- (p) **Presbyterian Church in America** - to no longer seek contact with this Church.
- (q) **Orthodox Presbyterian Church** - for the time being not intensify the contacts with the OPC but first await the result of the discussion between this church and the PCA; to report about this to the next Synod; to keep in touch with the OPC.
- (r) **Reformed Church in the United States** - to continue contact with this Church and keep in touch with CanRC regarding developments in this matter.
- (s) **Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika** - to send a letter to these Churches containing a strong appeal in the matter of their establishing of a sister relations with the NGK; to discuss with GKSA deputies the obstacles to closer contact; to keep in touch with VGKSA deputies regarding this matter.
- (t) **Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika** - to continue the sister relations; to keep in close touch with VGKSA as regards the matter of contact with GKSA; in the activities and approaches, one line to be drawn if possible, by the sister churches in the Netherlands and in South Africa.
- (u) **Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika** - to continue the contacts in a critically inquiring manner; to keep in close touch with VGKSA in this matter.
- (v) **Zaire** - to continue stimulating the church reforming work in Zaire and observe further developments.
- (w) **Nigeria** - to authorise Deputies to continue to seek contact with the Church of Christ in Sudan below the Niv in Nigeria.
- (x) **France** - to watch further developments within the Eglises Reformees Evangeliques Independantes de France.
- (y) **St Martini Gemeinde and Dr. G. Huntemann** - to observe further developments (via the Church of Groningen-Oost).
- (z) **Greek Evangelical Church** - to continue contacts and point out the dangers issuing from the World Council of Churches, WARC and the RES (now REC); to authorise Deputies to assist the translation work on Calvin's Institutes to an amount of 2000 guilders; to help the GEC, if possible, with Reformed reading matter in English, for example concerning infant baptism, the ecumene and the government of the Church, and to give ongoing advice in the matter of training for the Ministry.
- (aa) **Spain** - to pay ongoing attention to aspects of protestant church life in Spain, in consultation with the Church of Bussum; to have two Deputies' members visit the Iglesia Presbiteriana congregations in order to gather further relevant information; to continue financial help but on a gradually reducing scale.

4.7 Regarding the ICRC, Deputies were instructed to delegate two of their members, (and eventually advisers) to the 1989 Meeting at Cloverdale, who should:

- (a) continue to promote the view that delegates express their agreement with the Basis of the Conference;
- (b) be diligent in the matters of appointment of a successor to the late Rev. M.K. Drost as member of the Missions Committee; and of appointment of alternates;
- (c) be diligent in respect of the question whether the Missions Committee ought to, or should be made to, concern itself with:  
the way in which member churches are engaged in spreading of the gospel among the Jews; giving advice to member churches in the matter of selection of mission territories; indicating possibilities of co-ordinating charitable work in the missions of member churches;
- (d) ensure that the adopted rules are honoured;
- (e) with regard to the 1989 Conference;

support Deputies' proposal that a Conference decision to deal with any matter not on the agenda require a 75% majority vote;  
not to agree with the FCS proposal to mutually recognise other member churches' membership, ministry and sacraments;  
not to agree with the CanRC proposal to insert the stipulation that delegates subscribe only to the Confessional standards of their own churches;  
not to agree with the CanRC proposal that membership of the RES (REC) is an impediment to membership of the ICRC.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

Deputies propose to Synod Armadale that it decides to continue the sister-Church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Lib.) in accordance with the adopted rules.

# G. Sumba-Savu (Indonesia)

## Report on the visit of The Reformed Churches in Sumba-Savu, Indonesia

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Synod of The Free Reformed Churches in Australia - 1987 decided to visit the sister churches of Sumba-Savu, two of the Indonesian islands east of Java, where the waters of the Indian Ocean of the Savu Sea meet each other.

The fact that the Churches in Sumba-Savu had convoked their second Synod to be held during the first week of November 1987, was a good reason to organize the visit in that particular week. A Synod meeting is an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with the well and woe of the Bond of Churches, to make personal contact with the delegates who represent the congregations and to have discussions with church members during the intervals of the sessions.

In spite of some booking problems at short notice, br C. de Man and I were able to have a seat on a Garuda flight to Bali from where further arrangements were made with the local airline BOURAQ INDONESIA to cover the distance between Bali's airport Den-Pasar and East Sumba's terminal of the capital city Waingapu. The last leg of the flight had its special fascination. A small plane on a moderate altitude took us quietly along the coastlines of the Islands Lombok, Sumbawa and Flores to our final aim where we were welcomed by Rev. J.A. Boersema who is a lecturer at the Theological College of the Sumba-Savu Churches.

### 2. ORIENTATION

There is a striking and almost essential difference between the living conditions in Sumba and our modern society. That place in the far East is still in a more or less primitive position and isolated situation. Industrial activities hardly exist. Farmers are not familiar with the conveniences and technical possibilities of the modern world. A few little shops offer not more than some basic items. Good functioning phone-connections are not available. The roads are rough and dangerous, especially in the mountains with their narrow hairpin bends and yawning abysses.

East Sumba is a dry country. The fields which we saw were black and brown because of an unrestricted sunshine. The trees, shrubs, road and the people were covered by fine, grey dust. The total picture causes feelings of melancholy. The cattle along the roads suffer from lack of food. In such a dry season the people of Sumba-East come into a stage of famine. That means for most of the families: one meal per day, not more than a portion of rice and/or some turnips from the bush. The tokens of such a famine were evident.

### 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the Reformed Churches in Sumba-Savu is closely related to our Dutch sister Churches and their mission-activities in many places of Indonesia.

In his publication "Ontwikkelingswerk in Oost Sumba" (Development work in east Sumba), br. P.R. Boersema (who worked for "De Verre Naasten" in agricultural projects) writes that the contacts between the Reformed Churches in Sumba-Savu and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands started already in the beginning of this century.

In 1881 the missionary Van Alphen came to Sumba (Melolo) to preach the gospel to the people of Sumba and Savu. In 1916 the first congregation was instituted, the church of Kambaniru. From that moment the contacts between the Churches in Sumba and the Netherlands have been maintained. Initially it was a mother-daughter relationship which has lasted for a considerable time.

Boersema's publication of 184 pages mainly deals with the social and cultural aspects of the Development work during the years 1978 - 1984. The informative material which he gives is very instructive in gaining a better understanding of the living conditions of the sister churches in Sumba-Savu. Much of that material shows us that the aspects of social, cultural, climatologic and political nature have had and still have a strong and tenacious influence on the spiritual lives and religious customs of the church people. This report, however, does not have the task to make study of those aspects; but a few of them will be included in the discussion because they are directly related to the agenda of the Synod and the well and woe of the churches.

### 4. THE BOND OF THE SUMBA-SAVU CHURCHES

The Australian delegates spent most of their time at the sessions of the Synod in Mau Maru. The advantage was that the items which had to be discussed, and the decisions which had to be taken reflected the most important characteristics and activities of the local churches.

The Indonesian language was the official vehicle of the meetings. the assistance of the ministers Klamer and Boersema, however, was of great help to understand the matters which were raised.

The members of the Synod represented the churches of two classis, with a total of about 40 congregations; and 2000 members. However, that number of 40 congregations needs further explanation. The situation is that not more than 20 local churches have an own consistory, while the rest are wards belonging to one of

the instituted congregations. The idea is that those wards function more or less autonomously, and are situated not too far from the central congregation.

One classis includes the congregations along the coast, North East of the area; the second classis is in the South East of the region, with the congregations in the mountains.

The spiritual and material care for the congregations is generally speaking, a difficult task. Concerning the ministry, the number of ministers is insufficient to fill the vacancies. A few ministers have had the opportunity to visit the Netherlands and to enjoy some training for the ministry in a Reformed church. One of the older ones showed us the complete edition of the *Korte Verklaring*, which was donated to him by a Dutch congregation wherein that time one of the authors of this report was the shepherd and pastor. He saw with his own eyes that the books had been frequently used!

Some other ministers have missed the opportunity of a complete theological education. This situation gives an extra burden to their ministerial task and responsibility. It is not always easy to select suitable people for the offices of elders and deacons. Not many educated members are available, and the training of office-bearers has not yet reached a full development.

The work of the deacons has to face its own problems. The poverty of the country, the lack of employment, insufficient markets for agricultural products, and last but not least a regular return of drought and famine conditions confront the Churches and the deacons with often serious difficulties.

The worship services are conducted by brothers in various functions. Apart from the local ministers some evangelists and third year students of the College are allowed to deliver their sermons. The ministers Klamer and Boersema assist whenever they are needed.

We attended two Church services in Wai Marangu, the village where the Theological College is situated. The small church building, opposite the house of Rev. Boersema, shares the premises with the hall and living quarters of the College. Both services were attended by about 50 brothers and sisters who listened quietly to the preaching of the gospel and who watched with interest the baptism of a young child of the congregation. We felt at home in the worship services in spite of the foreign language in the preaching and the baptism ceremony. The whole liturgy had an outspoken reformed character.

The churches still enjoy the presence and assistance of the ministers Klamer and Boersema.

They are no missionaries in the traditional sense of the word. The Indonesian Government does not permit missionaries to enter into the country; the initiatives to convert people to christianity are not allowed either. So Rev. Klamer gives general assistance and guidance to the churches, while Rev. Boersema is the main lecturer at the Theological College. Rev. Klamer expects to finish his task in 1990, and Rev. Boersema will be replaced by Dr. Pol in 1988.

## 5. THE SYNOD IN MAU MARU

The convening Church of the Synod was the congregation in Mau Maru. The opening of the first session was done by the secretary of the Mau Maru consistory. The singing, Bible reading and prayer were concentrated on God's work of salvation and the gathering of His Church in the world. In the opening address special attention was given to the preaching of the Word as the power of the Lord to change His people.

The chairman of the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches welcomed the guests. He stressed the point that this Synod would deal with contacts which had been established with churches in other countries. The speaker especially mentioned the Australian sister churches, and the so called Musyafir Churches of Kupang in Timor, whose representative Rev. Fangidae attended the Synod.

This speech was followed by an address from the curator-president of the Theological College. After this the first delegate from Australia received the floor to speak a few words on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches.

The second guest speaker was Rev. Fangidae. He gave some information about the Musyafir Churches in Timor, see pages 80 and 81.

The agenda of the Synod contained several items which will receive attention in the following part of this report.

## 6. INTERNAL LIFE OF THE SUMBA-SAVU CHURCHES

### A. Adat Problems

The history of the Sumba-Savu Churches covers a period of many years. Official church life started in the beginning of this century. However, this does not mean that all the traces from the distant past and ages have disappeared from the community of the churches. Some influences and cultural customs which have their origin and roots in the superstition of the heathen religion of the island population are sometimes the cause of strife and confusion among the people of the congregations. Especially the so called Adat confronts the churches with problems which are not easily solved.

Adat is an Indonesian word which summarises all sorts of traditions, cultural customs and religious methods of an often un-Biblical nature.

We mention a few examples as illustrations:

When a funeral takes place, an animal is killed at the moment when the deceased person is carried out of the house. This custom means that in this way the dead person is welcomed in the circle of the forefathers.

Another custom is to build a sort of roof of rocks on the graves. The story is that the person who passed away receives a good place to stay.

The payment of the bride price is a very persistent custom in many parts of Indonesia. The reasons behind this tradition may differ; but the custom often has far reaching and harmful consequences for the relationship between husband and wife, for a normal family life and for the fellowship with other relatives.

The opinions about Adat differ in the churches.

Some people and leaders reject the background and original meaning of certain customs, but are willing to maintain their practical use as an innocent tradition and as an effort not to disturb the relationship with non-believing members of the tribe. Others reject these customs completely, on the basis that a christian has to show that his life has changed and that he should not have any communion with those customs which are related to unbelief and superstition and to a worshipping of idols. They call the Adat the real enemy of the church.

The churches have not yet succeeded in reaching a common conclusion about this important issue. It is however, a good point that the matter is in discussion, and that Scriptural understanding is wanted to find a responsible solution. The next Synod will deal with the matter of the Adat again.

#### **B. The Holy Supper**

The Synod had to discuss a few questions about the celebration of the Holy Supper. One point was whether visitors from outside the country and from non sister churches could be admitted to the table of the Lord on certain conditions. Another matter that was raised was the question whether church members could temporarily join another Indonesian Church if they have to stay away from home for a long period of time. Young people are sometimes obliged to leave the island for study reasons, and are looking for pastoral care and christian fellowship in the strange environment. The meeting asked our opinion on these matters and we had the opportunity to inform the brothers about our principles and Church policy.

#### **C. The Relationship with the Government**

The Indonesian Government is strongly influenced by the military forces and the police has the task to exercise control over practically all sections of life. Church organisations are included in this policy. Traveling outside the country or in the country from island to island, is registered by the police force. Visa for mission people from other countries cannot be given without consent from the military authorities. Visiting guests have to report to the police, except in centres of much tourism. The churches are sometimes confronted with official regulations which are not in accordance with their christian principles.

We mention two examples which were on the agenda of the Synod:

The Churches are obliged to raise the Indonesian flag every Sunday morning. Several church people however, are of the opinion that such activities clash with the character of the Sabbath Day. However, a refusal of this practice might have serious consequences. The remark was made that the raising of flag also means that the church organisation and its worship services are under the protection of the Government.

We must mention another more serious point. It regards the so called Pancasila, the Constitution of the Indonesian nation. The Government demands from the churches to attach their signature to this document. However, certain statements in the Pancasila are not in agreement with the confession of the churches. A failure to sign this paper may lead to serious problems with the Government, even a cancellation of the registration of the churches.

In the meantime, the deputies for contact with the Government are in discussion with the authorities to find a satisfactory solution.

#### **D. Reformed Liturgy**

The church services have an outspoken Reformed character. The preaching of the gospel and the sacraments have a central place in the worship services. The forms which are read are familiar to us. They are an accurate translation of the Dutch forms. It was not difficult for the Australian delegates to be convinced of the Scriptural and Reformed character and content of the preaching and administration of the sacraments. From discussions with office bearers it became clear that church discipline is maintained and exercised in a faithful manner. The marks of the true church are evident in this Bond of Churches.

The congregation make use of an old Psalm and Hymn book. It is the same edition which is used in other Reformed mission fields, and in the Reformed Church of Papua New Guinea. The Hymn section contains a large number of various songs which are not always suitable for the worship services. The Sumba-Savu Churches decided to investigate the Hymn section and to select only those songs which can be accepted for the Church services.

#### **E. The Theological College**

The Theological College has an important place in the Sumba churches. It is a school of the churches. The principal lecturer is (was) Rev. Dr. J.A. Boersema, assisted by the ministers Dara Hae Doko and Wai Marangu.

The students are from various congregations; a few of them are from the Musyafir Church of Kupang, Timor. The students have accommodation on the premises of the College; they are supported by the churches and have some income from gardening.

The study plan is on a moderate level. (See Appendix I, II)

The course is spread over a period of three years. When the students have completed this course,

they have to serve the churches as evangelists for at least two years before they are eligible for the ministry .

Last year there were 9 students for the first, 3 for the second and 6 for the third year.

In the past, several pastors became ministers via Article 8 of the Church Order. That situation changes now that the College begins to supply candidates for the ministry. The building up of the College is not easy. One of the problems is still that several students have never had secondary education.

**F. Famine Problems**

The regular drought periods in Sumba cause a lot of hardship among the population of the island. They also affect the functioning of church life. Church members are away from home to look for food so that church activities are handicapped. Many people become dependent on imported food; but the high prices exceed the budget of an average family. Such periods of drought mean a difficult time especially for the brothers and sisters who live in the mountains.

The Australian delegates discussed this matter with the Dutch ministers and with Br. Stoel of the Yakerssun organisation. The result was that the brotherhood in Australia could be encouraged to offer some assistance to the brothers and sisters of Sumba to relieve the burden of the famine. This offer would also emphasise the reality of the communion of saints between neighbouring sister churches. The refusal of co-operation was based on formal grounds.

## **7. ECCLESIASTICAL CONTACTS**

The more or less isolated position of the Sumba churches does not mean that contacts with other churches are neglected. On the contrary there is a growing interest in Reformed sister churches.

**A. Indonesian Sister Churches**

The Indonesian sister churches do not belong to one Bond of Churches. Practical objections make it inadvisable to work into that direction. The large distances and lines of communications, the costs and the great variety of items for agenda (e.g. appeals) would have a negative effect on the finances, time and workload of the churches and the delegates. A Conference with representatives from Kalimantan, Sumba and Irian Jaya was organised in June 1987. Topics of common interest and importance were discussed.

**B. The Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands**

The relationship with these Churches is still strong and fruitful. The presence of Rev. Klamer and Dr. Boersema means a stimulating assistance for the development and Theological education of the churches. However, it is obvious that the nature of this help does not undermine the autonomous position of the Sumba-Savu churches. On the contrary, these churches are fully independent from outside interference. The churches are also responsible for their financial commitments.

In this context it can be pointed out that the Dutch organisation 'De Verre Naasten' (Distant Neighbours) gives economic and agricultural assistance. This help however, is implemented via the Yakerssun foundation, an autonomous organisation within the realm of the Sumba-Savu churches.

**C. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia**

The presence of the Australian representatives was really appreciated by the Synod. The question was raised in which way the co-operation between the churches can be realised, and what sort of questions could be asked. An important point was that we know from each other that our churches are faithful to the Lord and His Word, and show the marks of the true church. The exchange of the Synod Acts may be a good help in this. However, the language problem is a handicap to fully understand the matters which are reported in the Acts. In the present circumstances it is not yet possible to be supplied with an English version of the Synod Acts. The best solution for the time being seems to be that the mutual deputies for correspondence take care for a good translation of the Acts which they receive.

One of the delegates at the Synod raised the question of the Apartheid policy of South Africa, and wanted to be informed about the opinion of the Australian churches. We had to answer that our churches have not officially dealt with this problem. It is not an easy matter either because of the complicated political facets. However, we assured the meeting that our churches would not be in favour of an apartheid policy among the believers of the same faith and the same Church of the Lord.

In one of the sessions, the advice of the Australian brothers was asked about the Holy Supper.

**D. Other Churches**

The Sumba-Savu churches seek and maintain contact with other faithful Churches of the Lord. Apart from fellowship with the Reformed (Mission) Churches in Indonesia, there is a relationship with the Church in Singapore, in South Africa and via the ICRC with churches in different places.

**E. The so called Goossen Churches**

There is another group of Reformed Churches in Sumba; the so-called Goossens Churches. Serious troubles in the 1960's have caused a split in the Mission-Churches in Sumba-Savu. In spite of several efforts the rupture has never been healed. The latest correspondence by our sister churches has not been answered.

**F. General Contacts**

It is important to make a few remarks about the general contacts. We already mentioned the name of Rev. Fangidae and his Musyafir Church in Timor. (Official name: Gereja Masehi Musyafir).

The history of this church goes back to the time of the East-Indian Company in 1616. In the 1950's a group of people separated from the official (big) church in Timor (can be compared with the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands).

One of the most urgent reasons was, according to the minister, the hierarchy in the church. The membership list of the separated church contains the names of approximately 4000 - 5000 people. The churches live in a more or less isolated position. The aim is to be Reformed and to adhere to the Reformed Standards of Faith. However, not many people have sufficient knowledge of the Reformed Confession, and its Calvinistic background. Rev. Fangidae explained that his church made contact with the Reformed Church in Kupang (Timor) = a congregation that belongs to the Bond of Sumba Churches - to become more familiar with the Reformed heritage and the pure doctrine of the Scriptures.

In some congregations the preaching of the catechism has started, and catechism-classes receive teachings from a shortened version of John Calvin's Institution. Two Theological students were sent to the Theological College of the Sumba-Savu Churches, to prepare themselves for the ministry on a Reformed basis. Rev. Fangidae who speaks the Malayan, English and Dutch languages fluently, hopes to receive a favourable answer from the Synod to his request for co-operation between the Sumba-Savu churches and his church in Timor.

In a later session the Synod decided favourably to the requested co-operation; especially in connection with the Theological College for students from Timor, and a further training of ministers. It was also decided to organise a special course at the College in Waimarangu for about 15 ministers and evangelists from the Musyafir Churches. The College lecturers will organise a two week course in January 1988.

1. The agenda of the Synod-Conference was 2 days of instructive lectures from various speakers; one of them was Rev. Klamer. The third day was for matters of organisational nature.
2. The Synod was attended by 40 delegates sent by Churches in Kupang and from some islands. Two ministers from the USA were visitors, also some members of the "old" official church (they belonged to a group of concerned members on the other side), and four students from their Church, who study at our college in Sumba, were there as well.
3. After about 40 years this was the 2nd Synod to be held. Rev. Fangidae is more or less the motor behind these church activities and the agenda of the meeting.
4. The topics that were discussed during the meeting had the following contents: homevisits, worship services in the N.T., respectful dealing with the Bible, edification of the congregation, offices in the church, practical Bible-reading, Need for Creeds (Standards of faith) and the Catechism (introduced by Rev. Klamer).

The topics enjoyed the interest of the meeting, and much discussion followed.

5. The concerned members of the official Church from which the Musyafir Church in Kupang has separated, try to work to a new Reformation, they say. A sort of liberation may follow. One of the concerned ministers had already decided to leave the old church, and will be ordained as a colleague of Rev. Fangidae. The impression is that the concerned members want to avoid too much publicity because the government watches them, and do not want public church troubles as has happened previously.
6. The Musyafir Church does not have official relations with other churches; although they have expressed the desire to have a growing contact with true Reformed Churches, especially in Indonesia (like Sumba) and Australia. Assistance would be helpful and appreciated.
7. Arrangements may be made for Rev. Fangidae to attend the ICRC in Vancouver to bring him in closer contact with faithful churches of the Reformation.

We had fruitful discussions with Rev. Fangidae and were able to give him broad information about the position of our churches in Australia. We even received an invitation to visit him and his people in Timor. We recommend close contact with this Timor Church. A visit there may increase a better knowledge and understanding of that Bond of Churches. It may be beneficial for Churches as well!

#### **G. Reformed Movement in Indonesia**

A few remarks should be added to this part of the report. We were informed about a movement and activities to introduce (again) the Reformed Confession into Indonesia. In 1986 the Evangelical Reformed Institution for Indonesia was established to propagate the Reformed Confession. Its departments in Jakarta and Surabaya are visited by some hundreds of students. One of the prominent leaders and lecturers is Dr. Stephen Tong. He has studied at the Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, U.S.A. In Jakarta Dr. Tong gives lectures on the Canons of Dort. He is a fervent defender of the Reformed doctrine. A serious danger is the error of Remonstrantism which is, according to Dr. Tong, a direct attack against the true faith. Dr. Tong was fully informed about the modernism of the Synodical Reformed Church in the Netherlands. He saw two serious threats for the Indonesian Churches, the modernism of the Dutch Churches, and the influence of the Charismatic movements.

Dr. Tong is also in contact with the Church in Singapore, in Sumba-Savu, and with our Korean brothers who are missionaries in Indonesia.

It is advisable for the Australian Churches to closely follow the development of the Reformed Activities in Indonesia. The institution of a Reformed Church in this neighbour country may have a significant meaning for our church life in Australia.

## 8. CONCLUSION

At the end of this report the deputies give the following recommendations:

- a. To continue the sister relations with the churches of Sumba-Savu in accordance with the adopted rules;
- b. To intensify the contact with the Churches of Sumba-Savu by correspondence and visits;
- c. To seek contact with Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church of Kupang, on Timor;
- d. To gather information about the progress of the Reformed activities of the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia (Address Balikpapan 27 Jakarta, Indonesia, Phone 340174).

### STUDY AND INFORMATION MATERIAL:

P.R. Boersema, Ontwikkelingswerk in Oost Sumba;  
Acts of Synod in Mau Maru, 1987;  
Dr. J.A. Boersema, Report Theological College, 1987;  
Article Ned. Dagblad, Adat, the enemy of the church?;  
Article Ned. Dagblad, Reformed Confession in Indonesia;  
Summarised report on Reformed Church work in Kupang, in Timor.

# H. South Africa

## DIE VRIJE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID AFRICA

1. Our deputies reported to Synod Albany 1987 about the VGKSA Synod Pretoria 1986, see Acts page A-9. Items reported on were:
  - the Church Service book (choice of Bible version, liturgical forms, adoption of metrical versions of Scripture texts, singing of the Apostles' Creed, order of the Church service);
  - several internal matters (church visitation reports, supervision over members who live far away from the Church, local mission work);
  - contact with other Churches in South Africa (the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika, and the Free Church in Southern Africa);
  - and Foreign Churches (decision to apply for membership of the ICRC - Synod accepted the basis of the ICRC in this sense that the VGKSA within the ICRC wants to co-operate with churches that adhere to the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards as their confessions and take them seriously in their church life); the Westminster Standards; correspondence with FRCA, CRC and GKN; contact with Reformed Churches of Sumba/Savu and the PC in Korea, and Rules for Correspondence.
2. Since our 1987 Synod of Albany a supplementary Report to the Synod of Johannesburg 1988 was received from VGKSA Deputies, dated May 1988. From it may be deduced that the 1987 Synod of Johannesburg was adjourned to May 1988.

The supplementary report deals with two subjects:

  - (i) Correspondence:
    - This part deals with some routine matters in the VGKSA's correspondence with FRCA, CRC, GKN and the ICRC.
  - (ii) Proposals to amend the Constitution and Regulations of the ICRC:
    - Synod of Johannesburg 1987 emphatically instructed its deputies to thoroughly study the Sister churches' proposals for amendments to the Constitution of the ICRC.
    - These proposals for amendment of the Constitution are (briefly) as follows - see also Acts Albany 1987:
      - (a) add a stipulation that delegates subscribe only to their own Confessional Standards; (FRCA, CRC);
      - (b) membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC; (FRCA, CRC)
      - (c) churches must show willingness to strive for unity with ICRC- member churches in their own country; (FRCA)
      - (d) the conclusion of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation; (FRCA, CRC)
      - (e) ICRC-member churches to accept each others attestations, office bearers and administration of the sacraments; (FCS)
    - VGKSA Deputies argue to:
      - not support proposals (a), (b), (c), (e)
      - support proposal (d). They report that FCS is also likely to support this proposal.
3. Further, concerning a series of sister church proposals to amend the ICRC Regulations, the VGKSA report presents a summary of considerations and conclusions.
4. VGKSA Deputies propose to Synod Johannesburg that its ICRC delegates:
  - (i) support the VGKSA application for admission;
  - (ii) prepare an information paper about the VGKSA, for the benefit of the member churches;
  - (iii) seek support for the VGKSA view on the ICRC as a conference of Reformed Churches, rather than an international Synod;
  - (iv) in the matter of the proposed amendments to the Constitution, adopt the position as recommended by Deputies;
  - (v) actively participate in the discussions of Rules for Correspondence between sister churches, and promote their acceptance by the sister churches;
  - (vi) thoroughly examine all materials for the Conference, make up their mind and discuss this with Deputies;
  - (vii) collect further information on the ICRC member churches;
  - (viii) acquaint themselves with the report of Deputies for examination of the Westminster Standards (1986) and in all humbleness seek to discuss certain formulations therein about which questions have arisen, and examine the possibility of ecclesiastical contact between VGKSA and member churches.

## **5. Contact with Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika**

Synod met in early session (from 9-13 October 1987), to permit contact to be made with the Synod of 'Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika', expressing the hope that their (GKSA) reply could be tabled during the final session of Synod, scheduled for May 1988.

The letter to GKSA, referring to the scriptural injunction to seek unity (John 17, articles 27-29 BC) - records the VGKSA/GKSA beliefs and convictions held in common - Holy Scripture, the Creeds and Confession (Three Forms of Unity), Church Order, Form of subscription for office-bearers; explains and defends the institution of the VGKSA some 40 years back; expresses thankfulness for the GKSA's breaking ties with the GKN (syn) in 1976 and regret that VGKSA did not appropriately react on that at the time; observes that since then a new stumbling block has emerged on the road towards church unity in the form of GKSA's correspondence with the NGK (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken), and implores GKSA to re-assess that situation with the aim to make room for closer contact with VGKSA. If that should happen, VGKSA propose to mutually discuss some specific divisive issues such as: membership of RES, problems concerning the Gereformeerde Kerke 'die Kandelaar', and the practical application of church discipline in the congregation of Christ.

Article 59 of the Acts records that by May 1988 no official reply had been received from GKSA. It was known however that GKSA had rejected the request of VGKSA concerning their correspondence with NGK. This led to the conclusion that there would be no sense in further talk at this moment of church unity with GKSA.

## **6. Other major matters dealt with:**

### **6.1 ICRC**

Synod decided to send two delegates to the 1989 Conference; to request admission as member, with the proviso that the Constitution of the ICRC is interpreted to mean that the VGKSA is willing to cooperate within the ICRC with Churches who have the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards, and uphold these in their church life; to support one of the five proposed amendments to the Constitution (Conference decisions should be advisory in character), with the proviso that delegates should seek support for VGKSA's view that the ICRC is a Conference of Reformed Churches, rather than an international Synod; to support all proposed amendments to the Regulations of the Conference, except those made by the PCEA as their wording is too vague for a precise understanding of their meaning.

### **6.2 Church Service Book**

Synod decided that of the Liturgical Forms as they appear in the 1987 'Kerkboek' some are unacceptable on principle, and of the remainder some completely acceptable, while others - though acceptable - clearly lack much of the richness embodied in the English and Dutch Forms. Consequently, an own Church Service Book including Liturgical Forms will have to be published. Deputies were instructed accordingly.

### **6.3 Salutation in the Reading Services**

Synod decided to recommend to the Churches that also in the church services led by an authorised person other than a minister of the Word, the Votum, Salutation and Benediction be spoken in their original form. The question whether the elder leading the service should then also lift up the hands when giving the blessing was answered in the affirmative on the grounds that the gesture is an accentuating part of the blessing and there is no reason to yet again construct a difference at this point between the officiating minister or elder.

### **6.4 Mission work**

The Church of Kaapstad reported good progress in the mission work at Belhar. Synod promised to support an eventual request by Kaapstad to the Dutch sister churches for assistance.

The mission work at Mamelodi is being transferred from the Church of Drachten to the Church of Pretoria. Synod decided to ask the Dutch Churches to remain somehow directly involved in the work, rather than accept their proposal to hand over completely except for financial assistance.

## **7. Other Matters**

Deputies for Bible translation were instructed to continue their work;

Synod appointed Deputies to examine the new (1987 Kerkboek) translations of the Ecumenical Creeds and of the Confessions (Three Forms of Unity) as regards their contents, and report to next Synod;

In the matter of Solemnization of Marriages, mentioned earlier in our report to Synod Albany 1987 no further real progress was made;

Synod adopted new Rules for Church visitation.

## **8. Recommendation**

Deputies propose to Synod Armadale that it decides to continue the sister relations with die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika (the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa) in accordance with the adopted rules.

# I. Ireland - EPCI

## 1. MANDATE

The 1987 Synod of Albany gave deputies the following mandate:

2. Synod decides to re-confirm the decision of the 1983 Synod that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland are faithful churches of our Lord.
3. Synod decides to offer the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland the relation of temporary contact with the following rules:
  - i) to invite delegates to each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly or Synod but no vote.
  - ii) to exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, and to solicit comments on these documents.
  - iii) to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching full correspondence.
4. Synod decides that this temporary relation will be reassessed at the 1989 Synod.
5. Synod decides to instruct the deputies to send two delegates to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland for a visit. This could be done in conjunction with the 1989 ICRC.

## 2. PROGRESS

Two delegates, Revs. A. Veldman and W. Huizinga, paid a visit to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland in the beginning of 1988. A report of their visit has appeared in UNA SANCTA, CLARION & NEDERLANDS DAGBLAD. Instead of repeating this information in this report a copy is attached to the official report and attention is drawn to the UNA SANCTA, Vol 35, Nos. 13,14 (April 30/88, May 14/88).

Much progress was made by means of such a visit. First hand information and impressions could be gained. We learned in a first hand manner about their church services, the preaching, the churches and their church life, their outreach programs, the training for the ministry, etc.

In response to our report on the visit the EPCI offered the following:

1. They do not regard their relations as sister churches with the GKN-Lib. as occurring prematurely. They insisted that they understood the rules for church correspondence. Though they "*practise their inter-church relations in a somewhat more informal manner this does not mean that they are unprincipled in this area.*"  
In our reply to them we stated that in our previous report to the 1987 Synod we have made their principled stand concerning other churches and organisations very clear. We certainly did not suggest that they were unprincipled in this matter. But more pinpointed rules might help them to maintain their principles in this regard.
2. We stood corrected about their official relations with the RPCI and rejoiced to hear this. We had definitely had the impression that issues such as the "purity of worship" had been obstacles to such official ties. As we now understand the situation, there are official fraternal relations, but the efforts towards organic union must first overcome obstacles such as the "purity of worship"?
3. We accepted their statement about the position of the children in the covenant. They wrote that "*there is nothing peculiar about our position on covenant children. We do not presume regeneration. We believe in covenant evangelism: consider Nicodemus.*" It will be good to exchange views about this important issue so that we do not misunderstand each other and do not misrepresent each other. We too believe and say that "*we and our children are conceived and born in sin and are therefore by nature children of wrath, so that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again (Form for Baptism of Infants).*" We too stress that God requires regeneration WITHIN the covenant. We too require the parents to instruct their children in the gospel and to have them instructed therein to the utmost of their power. We were glad to read in this correspondence with them that they do not teach the presumptive regeneration of infants.
4. We could understand their two points regarding our attitude towards Presbyterian churches. To quote them, we must show "*a respect for and acceptance of certain ideas which are common to the Westminster tradition. In this context we are thinking especially of the evangelism of covenant children which is a practice perfectly compatible with the Westminster Confession and normal practice in Presbyterian churches.*" We indeed have recognised the Westminster Confession as a reformed confession, and we do recognise that practices stemming from the Westminster tradition have developed from a different history than our practices have. However, sister relations should not mean we quietly pass over any differences nor that we ignore the opportunity to cross-fertilize each other with our different practices. Our toes should not be of the proverbially long variety.

We were happy to hear from them that they have accepted our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact. With them we too look forward towards the closer relation of sister relations.

This visit (and subsequent correspondence) have caused the two delegates to return with the definite recommendation to the other deputies to recommend to the 1989 Synod the offer of sister relations with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

### 3. ACTS AND MINUTES

Besides receiving their monthly magazine, EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN, which one deputy assigned to pay closer attention to this inter-church relation, we also sent to them copies of our Acts of the 1987 Synod of Albany and received from them Minutes of the 1987 Presbytery Reports.

The latter contained statistics on all the churches within their one presbytery. Since they have only one presbytery, they do not hold a general assembly (as yet). Their broadest assembly is thus the presbytery. In addition the reports included:

1. Training for the Ministry.
2. Young People's Association.
3. Public Morals Committee.
4. Home and Foreign Missions.
5. Church Extension Committee.
6. Inter-church Relations Committee.

At the beginning of 1988 the presbytery consisted of 28 members (7 serving and 2 retired ministers, 16 regular and 3 assessor commissioners). Two men were being trained for the ministry (one in Belfast at the Theological College of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and one in Edinburgh). More ministers were keenly needed.

The 1987 conference where delegates from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Free Church of Scotland met to discuss matters of mutual concern was mentioned. All three churches are members of the ICRC. We read in the report:

The conference proved to be an excellent opportunity for fellowship with like minded brethren and for the discussion of important issues. Striking advances in co-operation and communication between the three churches involved have not, as yet, resulted from the conference. However, all involved are agreed that it was a worthwhile exercise, which has led to a greater appreciation of each others situations.

The visit of our two delegates was gratefully mentioned in the report.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The FRCA in 1983 acknowledged the EPCI as a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ and in 1987 reconfirmed that decision. The difficulty which followed this decision was how to give it visible form. The 1987 Synod of Albany decided to use a temporary relation with some simple rules. A visit to these churches allowed us to assess these decisions on a first-hand manner. The visit was a very positive one. Though the deputies had been somewhat apprehensive about it beforehand, it proved to be a very valuable, positive and satisfying visit. All the impressions by the visitors were favourable (please consult the report), though we (the visitors) attempted to remain objective and though we certainly probed into various aspects of doctrine and church life about which questions had been asked in our midst.

### 5. CONSIDERATION

Considering the relationship of temporary contact was established to enable the FRCA and the EPCI to get to know each other better and to be diligent by means of discussions with the purpose of reaching full correspondence, and since the relationship has only recently been in force, it is considered the relationship should be maintained for a further period. Although the report of the visit by deputies was positive, deputies would advise to move cautiously, especially since in other relations with Presbyterian churches several divergencies and impediments have become evident. The establishment of sister relations, although it should be strived for, is at this stage premature.

### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Synod discharges deputies appointed by Synod Albany, 1987.
- b) Synod decide to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
  - i) To express thankfulness to the EPCI for their acceptance of the relationship of temporary ecclesiastical contact;
  - ii) To use this contact to intensify discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other with the aim eventually to be able to come to a recommendation to synod to establish full sister relations;
  - iii) to allow the deputies to invite a delegate from the EPCI, with our financial assistance, if necessary, to visit our churches.

# J. Ireland - Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As has been mentioned in the report of the visitors to Ireland, the RPCI is a member of the ICRC. That there are two federations of churches within Ireland who both belong to the ICRC compels these federations to seek measures which will bring unity. This is happening, as the report indicated.

However, we are now also faced with a complicated situation. We too met the RPCI at the ICRC, which urges us to become better acquainted with them and to see whether we should not recognise them as true churches. Seeing this fact, the two visitors to Ireland brought a visit to the Theological Hall (as it is called) of the RPCI. Rev. McCollum introduced us to the four presbyteries of the RPCI, gave an overview of their church-life and answered questions we had about their stance towards "purity of worship", political non-involvement by members, covenanting, and relations with other churches. Unfortunately, our visit to Ireland was primarily to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. This prevented us from attending church services of the RPCI, and from becoming better acquainted in a first-hand manner. However, books and booklets were given to us in which their position on the above-mentioned matters are clearly stated. One of the deputies has started to scrutinise this literature.

We should also mention that their monthly church magazine, COVENANTER WITNESS, is sent to us regularly, and they received the UNA SANCTA from us. Much information about their churches, e.g. their strong anti-Roman Catholic stand and their desire to remain totally biblical, can be garnered from their magazine. Three copies of their theological journal, REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL, edited for and by the faculty of the Reformed Theological College were also given to us. One realises from this that they are well established and have a long history in their country (as well as in others).

## 2. HISTORY OF THE RPCI

A book was given to the visitors entitled, THE COVENANTERS IN IRELAND, by Adam Loughridge (Printed by "Outlook Press" in N. Ireland, c.1984, 1987), available from the Covenanter Bookshop, Cameron House, 98 Lisburn Road, Belfast, N.Ireland. He is a Professor of Homiletics at their Theological Hall in Belfast. It is a book of some 151 pages and thus contains much information about the history of these churches. It is wholeheartedly recommended for reading by our church-members so that knowledge of Christ's church gathering work also in this land becomes better known.

Basically, when the nation and the church in general set aside the National Covenant of Scotland of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, a steadfast minority in 1690 determined to retain them as the basis for a continuing distinctive testimony. This determination was true not only in Scotland but also in N.Ireland.

The RPCI accepts the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, believing it to be in accordance with the Scriptures, and thus stands for the doctrines of the reformers. It repudiates modernistic and ritualistic teaching (i.e. Roman Catholic teachings), has no affiliation with the World Council of Churches, has membership in the ICRC, and seeks to witness unflinchingly for historic and reformed christianity and to proclaim the gospel.

It is presbyterian in church government. Besides many local sessions or churches, mostly rural, it has four presbyteries and a synod. Being reformed in doctrine and presbyterian in church government, has given rise to their name, Reformed Presbyterian.

## 3. RECOMMENDATION

Deputies recommend to synod that:

1. A mandate be given to the deputies to investigate the RPCI to see whether it should be recognised as a federation of churches which is true and faithful, as that is confessed in the Belgic Confession (Arts. 27-29) and the Heidelberg Catechism (L.D. 21).

### Grounds:

- a. We have pledged by our membership in the ICRC to seek closer contact and (further) unity with member-churches (this holds true if the synod continues our membership in the ICRC).
  - b. The RPCI is a member church of the ICRC.
  - c. The RPCI has the Westminster standards and a presbyterian form of church government, both of which we have recognised previously, and both of which the EPCI, whom we have recognised, also has.
  - d. The initial contact is promising.
2. To report to the churches about progress made.
  3. To give a report, including a recommendation, to the next synod, if possible, about the RPCI.

# APPENDIX

## Report of the visit to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church Of Ireland

### THE DECISION OF THE 1987 SYNOD OF ALBANY

The 1987 Synod of Albany had to deal with the report of its deputies about the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI). It might be good to quote the relevant decision of the said synod:

2. Synod decides to reconfirm the decision of the 1983 Synod that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland are faithful churches of our Lord.
3. Synod decides to offer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland the relation of temporary ecclesiastical contact with the following rules:
  - a. to invite delegates to each other's general assemblies/synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly or synod but no vote.
  - b. to exchange minutes and acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, and to solicit comments on these documents.
  - c. to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching full correspondence.
4. Synod decides that this temporary relation will be reassessed at the 1989 Synod.
5. Synod decides to instruct the deputies to send two delegates to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland for a visit.

It was upon these instructions that the deputies acted when they sent two of their members, the Revs. A. Veldman and W. Huizinga, to Ireland to visit the EPCI. The visit was made in February 5-9, 1988.

### The Itinerary

The Rev. A. Veldman was vacationing in the Netherlands with (part of) his family in January, 1988. This prompted the visit to be made in the cold of winter when the North Sea spreads its frosty chill in one's nostrils.

There in the Netherlands the two visitors met in Kampen in the home of Prof. & Mrs. H.M. Ohmann. One had already acclimatized to the cold, while the other still adjusted from temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius to those around the freezing mark. We had winter coats on. But it was warm inside the home of our host.

### A meeting with Dutch Deputies

The occasion was a meeting between the two visitors from Australia and the deputies of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) who were responsible for the relations with English-speaking churches.

Before we left for Ireland and Scotland a meeting with the Dutch deputies had been organised so that we together could share thoughts and plans about the rules for relations with presbyterian churches. Also, the role of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) with respect to such relations was also a topic of discussion. At that meeting the Prof. H.M. Ohmann, the Revs. J DeGelder, H. Van-Veen and Br. W. van Wijnen were present along with the two deputies from Australia. The meeting lasted from 2 to 5 p.m. and proved fruitful in clarifying our respective positions and plans.

### To Belfast

The next day, February 5, we left from Amsterdam to Belfast with a stopover in Leeds. In Belfast the Rev. G. Burke, and elders A. Johnston and D. Watson welcomed us to Nor-

thern Ireland. Rev. A. Veldman stayed at the home of elder E. Brown who is the present moderator of their presbytery. The undersigned reporter enjoyed the hospitality and fellowship of the Alex Johnston family, who live on Island Magee, which is about a half hour outside of Belfast. Mr. Alex Johnston is a deacon (now an elder) in one the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches.

### A Presbytery Prayer Meeting

The next day, a Saturday, we attended a prayer meeting of the presbytery. One often hears of prayer-meetings on Wednesday evening in presbyterian churches. These are held for the local churches. We will report on some of them (in Scotland). But this prayer-meeting, held annually, was for the presbytery, which is composed of the teaching and ruling elders (ministers and elders, in reformed terms).

It was a very remarkable meeting for us. For these men were in prayer from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The reader might ask what kept them in prayer for so long. The question is understandable. In reformed churches the "long prayer" in which we include much (see the form prayer for the needs of all christendom) is often long according to our standards, but it certainly does not take hours! How could these men remain so long in prayer? We will try to explain.

The meeting was divided into four sections. At the start of each section the matters for prayer were outlined by certain men who were well acquainted with the various needs. The concerns of each local congregation (one by one), of the ministerial families, of the presbytery, of the youth work, of the mission projects, of their evangelistic outreach, of the theological training of men as ministers, of the bookstore, as well as the needs of men in their troubled country and of their governments were all brought before the throne of grace. Different men would participate in prayer for the various sections, though the same man could pray more than once. The prayers were noted for their moving praise of the majestic and sovereign God, for their humility, and for their throbbing concern for the needs of the body of Christ. Mind you, the two sober Dutchmen who prayed along, sometimes thought that if the need was expressed once, it was unnecessary that another repeated it. But in the minds of these presbyterian brothers the Bible informs us that the believers prayed for the release of Peter from prison, and it is most unlikely that they made that request only once. Also, Matthew 7:7 tells us to keep on asking. So in their minds it is not unusual. Otherwise we were moved by these prayers. And they gave us a wonderful introduction to the needs and joys of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Some of these matters raised in prayer will return in this report.

### In the Homes

Afterwards we enjoyed some discussions with the elders and ministers. We enjoyed an afternoon at the home of the moderator, Ernst Brown. In the evening we enjoyed tea (that is, supper) at the home of Rev. Gareth Burke. Our host's wife is the daughter of Prof. A.C. Boyd in Edinburgh. Apparently Gareth studied in Edinburgh and so met his wife. This personal note is given to illustrate the close, personal connections between the EPCI and the Free Church of Scotland (FCS). During these visits to the homes of the leaders of the EPCI we could discuss various aspects of church life.

Also, both of us being fathers, we enjoyed the home-life. To see little children playing and enjoying their food was a pleasure. To see them make a mess was no surprise. In fact the little ones gave us opportunities to talk about the position of the children in the church and in the covenant.

### Sunday

On February 7, Sunday, we attended four different churches

for worship. In addition we attended Sunday schools where that was possible. We attended church in Stranmillis (Rev. Derek Thomas), Finaghy (Rev. Samuel Watson), Somerton Road (Rev. Gareth Burke), and Ballyclare (Rev. Robert Beckett). Attendance was not big. On the average there would be about 50-75 people at these worship services. The buildings are not large either, but practical. They sang both psalms and hymns in the EPCI, and there are musical instruments in their church buildings.

The church-services are noted for their simplicity, as are ours. God's Word stands as central as the pulpits in their buildings. Then there are the administration of the sacraments, prayers and offerings besides the lusty (with the full Irish brogue!) singing which we mentioned. Since we did not know as yet what the presbytery would do with our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact (fraternal relations, in their eyes), the undersigned reporter did not participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Ballyclare EPCI. Hopefully that can be done next time, D.V., to celebrate the official unity between sister-churches.

The sermons were true expositions of God's Word. We heard the Word of God set forth in its potent truthfulness and applied to the hearts of the listeners. There were a few notes of exemplarism, but generally the Word of God was delivered forthrightly and faithfully.

One detects the strong influence of the puritan and reformed writers from England in the minds of the ministers and leaders. This influence, on the one hand, is heard in the reverent attitude towards the Bible. That is much appreciated. On the other hand, the puritan divines tended to be exemplary in their piety. The Bible became a set of examples for us to follow. They also loved to diverge on a doctrinal or spiritual truth at quite some lengths. This influence is not always beneficial.

At the same time the reformed influence from continental Europe is audible as well. Hopefully, the rebirth of redemptive-historical preaching in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Lib.), as that took place during the 1930's, will also be brought to the UK through the ecclesiastical contacts and exchanges. For it is this approach to the Scriptures that awakened reformation in the Dutch sister-churches. We report this because ecclesiastical contact should mean that we help one another. If God has enriched the reformed churches who originate from the Netherlands with a keen insight into biblical hermeneutics (method of explaining the Bible), then they should be prepared, in humility, to share it. Conversely, we should be open for enrichment by the EPCI. As Paul told the Romans, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." (1:11,12)

Even though one (especially ministers who have a responsible task) must always strive for improvement, let it be repeated that we rejoiced at the sound preaching. The ministers have been taught to explain the Bible in its context, and to apply it specifically to the hearers.

During the worship services the visitors were introduced and offered the opportunity of bringing greetings. We also introduced the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to every church we visited (in Ireland and Scotland).

### The Peace Line

While Sunday School was finishing, the Rev. Robert Beckett gave the undersigned a tour of the so-called "peace line". It is a mere corrugated fence which physically divides the loyalists or royalists (those who wish to remain loyal to the royal house of England) from the republicans (those who wish to join the Republic of Ireland to the south). Large and beautiful murals, covering those walls, depicted scenes such as King William of Orange (a liberator of Ireland) in the typical colours of royalty (red, white and blue). Rev. Beckett works in these turbulent areas where there are build-ups of paramilitary groups on both sides. These groups often foment hostility and bitterness instead of merely protecting their people. The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defense Association, two paramilitary groups of royalists, enforce vindictive justice. For example, if some republican fellows decide to cross the peace line and to break windows in a dozen homes after 2 a.m., then these

royalists fellows must answer back and retaliate. Such skirmishes do occur.

On the republican side, the murals with the green, gold and white are very visible as well. The paramilitary men do not want association with those loyal to the royal house. Thus they do not even allow them to participate in such English sports as rugby, cricket or soccer. They have their own 'Irish' sports.

In this embittered climate the Irish Republican Army targets the policemen as victims. Many police commit suicide. In addition, the bombs of the IRA damage buildings as well as cause death and destruction. And the government must pay for the repairs. We saw one area where an Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland was located right next to a police-station. The IRA had planted a van with a large bomb in it outside the police-station. Ten minutes warning was given. No one died, but the station and the church building next door were demolished. Windows in the area were blown out and much damage done. And the government pays the bills.

One could only admire the christian courage of the minister and the congregation who served people torn by this hatred and violence (on both sides). Over against this revolutionary and violent lifestyle they brought the Gospel as the only solution. They refuse to become embroiled in political (it is not a holy and religious warfare as the press often suggests) partisanship. Instead, they offer the gospel of the Prince of Peace. His blood must break down the dividing wall of hostility as it did between Jew and Greek. And the brotherhood in the EPCI does not shirk its christian responsibility towards its neighbours. They even have a new congregation in Dublin (the capital of the Republic of Ireland).

### An Icy Monday and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland

My chauffeur for Monday, Rev. Gareth Burke, battled icy conditions and traffic snarls to pick me up from Island Magee. So we were late. That gave my host, Mr Alex Johnston, an opportunity to outline the political background to their present troubles as seen the day before along the peace line.

After a short tour of Belfast we visited a representative of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland (RPCI). They are also known as the covenanters. In the middle of the Queen's University in Belfast they have a bookshop and a theological college. There we met the Rev. Prof. Robert L.W. McCollum, professor of pastoral theology. He was one of four/five of their (regular) ministers who teaches one day per week at their theological college.

Though we spent only an hour or two here, it was filled with a worthwhile exchange of information. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and thus we meet each other there every four years. Moreover, the constitution of the ICRC obliges us to seek closer contact with the RPCI.

Rev. McCollum gave us a tour (with a map) of the four presbyteries (East, West, North and South) of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Most of them are rural congregations, in contradistinction to the urban cities of the EPCI. Some of the churches lie across the border in the Republic of Ireland. These churches practise the so-called principle of "purity of worship" which involves no use of musical instruments in worship services. Also, they sing no hymns but only psalms. Politically, they do not vote or engage in other political activity. They have sister-relations only with those, e.g. the Free Church of Scotland, who hold the same principle of "purity of worship".

We received a tour of their college and were provided with a bag full of brochures and books about their churches. This was much appreciated.

### Relations between the EPCI & RPCI

Since both the EPCI and RPCI are members of the ICRC, and since both live in the same country, this obliges them to seek closer contacts and even unity. At the present time this is taking place in the form of a yearly conference. The last conference had been fruitful, whetting the appetite for more such meetings. Unfortunately, the matter of "purity of wor-

ship" (no instruments and hymns in the church-services), to which the RPCI adheres strictly and to which the EPCI does not subscribe, seems an insurmountable barrier to union between the two federation of churches.

At present the relations, which are friendly and casual, have become official. Ministers of the RPCI & EPCI do on occasion offer pulpit supply upon request for one another. Since the EPCI do not have enough ministers (many ministers serve two congregations), the ministers from the RPCI sometimes come to help. In addition, some theological students attend the theological hall of the RPCI. So the relations, in practical terms, are not only friendly but even beneficial. Unfortunately, the RPCI does not want to cement the official relations further as yet to bring the two churches into union. This is due to such issues as the "purity of worship".

### Monday Night - Meeting with the Presbytery

On our last evening we met with five men (of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland) who are responsible for relations with other churches. They told us that presbytery meets monthly and that they saw little problems with the acceptance of our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact with the three rules (see above).

As far as rules for sister-relations go, these rules are not too well known, though the church-leaders are aware of them. They have enjoyed sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Lib.) for quite some time, and thus have had time to acquaint themselves with these rules. They tend to treat these ecclesiastical relations in a principled way but with more flexibility. If the friendship is close and cordial, then the relations reflect that. Indeed, they have no rules for their relations with the FCS & RPCI. We treat these relations in a more consistently, principled manner, treating all sister-relations alike. For their benefit we read and explained the rules for correspondence to them. Since these rules are under review by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, we told them that input into these rules is possible.

A lengthy discussion took place concerning the International Conference of Reformed Churches. They had decided not to send delegates to the next ICRC. Their reasons concerned both expenses (smaller churches have a harder time absorbing travel costs) and the irrelevance of the ICRC. We pleaded with them to change their minds and to send delegates. Financially, we too believe that travel costs should be borne on a more equitable basis, and a proposal has been sent to the ICRC about that. As far as the topics at the ICRC go, we agreed that more practical subjects such as Bible translations (which all English-speaking churches struggle with, it seems), the principle of the "purity of worship" and the redemptive-historical approach to the Scriptures, should be given. Otherwise, it is true, as the EP brothers put it, one can learn just as much at a good, reformed conference on the local level. The subjects should be tailored for the member-churches. But it would be not be wise to remain absent from this young organisation which is trying to find its feet. Instead one should contribute to its healthy development, and also be ready to receive churches if the RES falters and falls apart with its internal struggles about the membership of the synodical Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

We left one another after thanking our God for the good days together and after committing Christ's churches in Ireland and in Australia to His word of grace.

### Return to Amsterdam and on to Scotland

The next day we arrived early at the airport, wondering whether the unusually high winds (75 to 100 miles an hour in places) would delay our trip. But the pilot jovially told us that in a few moments we would clear the turbulence and be on our way, and so we were! After a stopover in Birmingham we arrived back at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. My colleague's nose pressed hard against the glass to peak at his beloved birthplace. After our passports received some more stamps (impressive!), we waited for a few hours. Then we flew via Aberdeen to Edinburgh, Scotland. But that trip is the responsibility of my colleague. I will not wear the kilt for him.

### OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPCI

After this itinerary it might be good to pay closer attention to some highlights from our visit as far as characteristics of the EPCI are concerned. We will not repeat what has been previously reported, e.g. by the deputies who reported to the 1987 Synod of Albany about the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

### Evangelical Outreach

At the prayer-meeting of the presbytery, in the church-services, and in the Sunday-school classes the evangelistic outreach was very audible and visible. These churches feel under obligation to their neighbour. It is their desire to love their neighbour by sharing the gospel of Christ with them. They do this in a variety of ways. Church-members speak to their neighbours to invite them to church. The youth of the neighbourhood around the church building are invited to the youth programs and Sunday-schools. Ministers know the area in which the church is located, and speak to the neighbours. The bookshop, which is downtown in a prominent place, offers good literature and is used to disseminate the reformed faith. Basically, there is a grassroots desire to have others come with them to worship the one God.

Another related point is their "Public Morals Committee". For the benefit of their members and friends they publish brochures about moral topics as abortion and human fertilisation. They help the members and friends to take their stand on ethical issues of the day. In this way the members can also be helped in reaching out to others. Others may also read these booklets.

### Size and Complexion of the Churches

Most of the churches are very small in comparison to the average church in the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. As stated above they average from 50-75 members. Our churches, which are admittedly oversized, are much larger. But it means that every member is needed and appreciated. For example, the hosts of the undersigned reporter, which consisted of a family of four, all taught classes in the church on Sundays. They were needed. the needs and concerns are also seen and met much better in these small churches. A lively communion of saints ensues.

Most of those attending church were adults. Many of the adults were older. In addition there were some young people, more in some churches than others. There were children in the church, though not as many as we are used to. The families tend to be smaller. During discussions with the leaders we asked why this was so. Though no general answer could be offered, as one can appreciate, yet one was left with the definite impression that the parents wanted to have everything possible for their children, and that a larger family was seen as preventing this.

### Children

Another important point was the position of the children in the church and covenant. Are baptised children God's children? What must be done with the children? The visitors received a two-pronged answer. On the one hand the children are children of the covenant, and should be looked on as belonging to Christ and God. On the other hand, these children must be led to Christ. They must be faced with the demand to repent and to believe.

These two foci in some cases seemed opposites to them, as though the children only become real members of Christ when they profess the faith. You can understand that the visitors took the opportunity to discuss the position of the children in the covenant. As a result, some good discussions ensued about this matter. It was made clear to us that they do not presume the regeneration of their children. Instead they believe in covenantal evangelism of the children, passing on the good news to the children of the covenant so that they will walk in these teachings of the gospel. They point to the encounter of Christ with Nicodemus in which our Lord stressed the need for rebirth by the Spirit.

### Covenantal Education

In our churches we stress the need for covenantal education of our children, which education begins in the home and

which remains the responsibility of the parents. We were thus happy to hear and read about "Covenant Christian School," an independent, parent-controlled, christian school with no official links with the EPCI. A brochure about this school informs us that it is the first parent-controlled school in Northern Ireland. From discussions we learned that they receive much help from brothers in our sister-churches in the Netherlands. And help they need since they started this school in 1982 only and are still very small. In discussions we found that not all agreed with the concept of a christian school. One leader told us this school is still too disorganised. Also, in Ireland many teachers espouse the christian faith, teach the Bible and religion, and have the students memorise texts and psalms. Ireland is still very conservative, e.g. they oppose Sunday shopping. So the need for christian schools was not felt by this leader. Hopefully, the brothers and sisters will grow in understanding of covenantal education, and see the need for a school as has been started.

### Mission

The EPCI cooperates with the Free Church of Scotland in mission work. they cooperate in the mission work done in Southern Africa, India, Israel (Mission to the Jews) and Peru. During the prayer meeting we heard the progress of the work in these areas. It brought home to us how the work of mission proceeds on a world-wide basis, and that we should use the ICRC to help each other in this vital work. The churches in the EPCI do not just support this work but they also send workers. One of the ministers, Rev. Derek Thomas, was scheduled to make a tour of the mission posts in India to help instruct and encourage the workers there. Hopefully, these added sections help to give an impression of the life of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

### CONCLUSIONS

The visit was brought as a consequence of our recognition of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland as true and faithful churches. We wanted to cement a relationship with a personal visit. At the same time we hoped to discuss topics of mutual concern and the possibility of sister-relations on a personal level. For this temporary relation should lead to the permanent relation as sister churches.

Our visit exceeded our expectations. We say that in all honesty. The lack of time for preparations did not give us optimism about the results of the visit. But we were pleasantly surprised.

We can report and conclude that the decision to acknowledge the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland was a good and timely one. The offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact will probably be readily accepted.

We do not hesitate to recommend that sister-relations be offered by the 1989 synod. No problems about essentials were encountered. Areas of concern were openly discussed, hopefully for mutual benefit. And that is what sister - or fraternal - relations should be all about. As far as rules go, our rules pose no problem. They should be applied in a practical and flexible manner, even as our sister-churches in the Netherlands do.

May God bless the visit brought and the future contacts we may enjoy with one another. His church is "one, holy and catholic". It is one in faith and hope. It is holy in Christ. And Christ gathers and defends it in every land and people, all over the globe.

Humbly submitted by the visitors,

Rev. A. Veldman of Albany

Rev. W. Huizinga of Armadale - reporter.

## K. Scotland

1. According to Art. 82 of the Acts of Synod Albany, Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad were charged with the following mandate with respect to the Free Church of Scotland (FCS):
  3. Synod instructs Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to move in the direction of becoming sister-Churches with FCS.
  4. Synod instructs its deputies not to implement sister-Church relation until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon.
  5. In the meantime, Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact is to be established with the FCS, with the following rules:
    - a. to invite delegates to each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly or synod but no vote;
    - b. to exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, specially, the problem about the adherents, and to solicit comments on these documents;
    - c. to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching a relation as sister churches, specifically, to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations as sister churches.
  6. Synod authorises the deputies to send delegates to visit the FCS to help implement the above-mentioned decisions.
2. From February 9-15, 1988 two delegates, the Revs. W. Huizinga and A. Veldman, paid a visit to the Free Church of Scotland. A copy of the report on this visit is attached to this official report. It was also published in UNA SANCTA and CLARION, whilst NEDERLANDS DAGBLAD gave a summary of it. As to UNA SANCTA we asked for comments and/or queries regarding this report. In response we received three letters. The senders were informed that their reactions would be taken into account in the official report to Synod.
3. The visit brought by the delegates has given a better understanding of church-life within the FCS. Except from some contact during the first meeting of the ICRC in September 1985, there had been no personal contact at all. During the visit paid in February 1988 first hand information could be obtained, whilst matters of mutual concern could be discussed, e.g. the position of children in the covenant, the position of the adherents, and the purity of the worship service. As to the problem of adherents, explicitly mentioned in the mandate

given by Synod Albany, it can be reported that within the FCS there is a growing understanding of the commitment which these adherents are to make.

4. From the visit it became evident that the Free Church of Scotland is a church that governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head. Sometimes they use different terminology and different practices, but in line with Art. 46 C.O. there is no reason to condemn the FCS for it. We must take into account that every church has its own particular history, and as a result of it has given own expression to its confession of faith.

The matter of pulpit exchange with Reformed Baptists was something new to us. Yet this is no common practice within the FCS and should therefore be no obstacle in recognising them as sister-Churches, though this is surely a matter of concern that should be addressed in our contacts with the FCS.

5. The delegates who attended the ICRC in Vancouver, reported that statements made by representatives from the FCS on the matter of pulpit exchange, fencing of the Lord's Table and on their understanding of the meaning of the Church, all caused the Australian delegates concern as they appeared to be at variance with our Confession and Church Order. The ICRC delegates recommend that these matters be raised in a discussion with the FCS.

6. Regarding the rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact the following can be reported:

- a. A letter has been sent to the FCS inviting them to delegate some representatives to Synod Armadale, 1989.

- b. The Acts of Synod Albany, 1987, were sent to the FCS with a covering letter in which Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact was offered to them. Unfortunately this letter has never arrived, of which deputies were informed in the beginning of 1989. In April 1989 a copy of the original letter was sent to which we have not yet received any answer.

Deputies received from the FCS the Acts of the General Assembly of 1988. In these Acts no mention is made of the contacts with the FRCA. The only reference is in the context of a motion regarding the ICRC in which it was expressed "that closer relations between participating churches will result."

- c. At the time the delegates visited the FCS they met with two representatives of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations. In this meeting the decision taken by Synod Albany, 1987, was explained. Yet after that there hasn't been any progress in working out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations with sister churches.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Deputies appointed by Synod Albany recommend to Synod Armadale that:

- a. Synod express its disappointment about the lack of communication from the FCS, especially on our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact;
- b. Synod decides that efforts should continue in order to receive a response from the FCS on our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact;
- c. Synod discharges Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad appointed by the 1987 Synod of Albany;
- d. Synod appoint new deputies with the instructions that, if and when the FCS accepts the offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact:
  - i. to use the rules of temporary ecclesiastical contact to discuss issues of concern as mentioned in this report;
  - ii. to move in the directions of becoming sister churches with the FCS;
  - iii. to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister relations.

# APPENDIX

## Report on the visit to the Free Church of Scotland from February 9-15, 1988, brought by the Revs. W. Huizinga and A. Veldman.

### 1. The Aim of the Visit.

Synod Albany, 1987, re-affirmed the statement made by the 1983 Synod that the FCS is a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the basis of this recognition the FRCA offered the FCS a temporary ecclesiastical relationship. Synod also instructed deputies to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS, but not to implement sister church relation until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon.

During this visit we had to address this issue of mutually acceptable rules as well as other issues of mutual concern, specifically the problem of the adherents. Until now most of the information about the FCS was gathered from report of the deputies of the Dutch sister churches. Except from some contact during the ICRC, held from September 2-10, 1985,

in Edinburgh, there had been no personal contact at all. Therefore the visit was also meant to get to know each other better.

### 2. Prayer meetings and Worship Services

2.1 We were able to attend two prayer meetings, namely one in Perth and one in Inverness. These prayer meetings are held during the week. The local minister delivers a short meditation, whilst in addition the needs of the congregation are brought before the Lord. Usually these prayer meetings are well attended, even by some younger people.

2.2 Being represented with two deputies, we were able to attend four worship services during the Sunday: two in Edinburgh itself, one in Leith and one in

Livingstone. As far as these worship services are concerned, the liturgy is slightly different to the liturgy we are used to in the FRCA. They don't read the ten commandments in the morning service, nor do they read the Apostles' Creed in the evening service. Yet for the rest it is more or less the same with Scripture reading, public prayer and Psalm singing. The sermons which we heard were really Scriptural and Reformed. The ministers of the FCS are not used to giving a theme and division. Nevertheless they showed a good exegesis of the text and applied it to the congregation in a proper manner.

- 2.3 It seems that occasionally ministers of the FCS don't hesitate to fill the pulpit in a Reformed Baptist Church, e.g. in case of sickness of the local minister. This information was conveyed to us just before we left. So we had no chance to discuss this issue further.
- 2.4 The Lord's Day is observed as a real day of rest within the circle of the family. In some places the youth come together in the evening to discuss a certain topic.

### 3. Sacraments

- 3.1 Holy Supper is only celebrated twice a year. In some churches, especially in the highlands, the preparation starts already on the Monday before. In services held throughout the week the nature of the supper is extensively dealt with as well as the admission to the supper and the consequences of partaking with a regenerated heart.

Some ministers indeed see that in this way the administration of Holy Supper is over accentuated. One of the deputies has extensively spoken about the issue with a minister in Inverness.

- 3.2 As regards Holy Baptism, the children of communicant members are baptised, while in some cases baptised adherents may also let their children be baptised. With respect to the latter, however, there is difference of opinion with the FCS. For there are also ministers who gave as their viewpoint that first these adherents must make public profession of their faith. At present this issue is even discussed at assembly level. We experienced a growing tendency towards not baptising children of adherents.

- 3.3 With several ministers we spoke at length about the position of covenant children within the church. It seems that some have difficulties to consider a baptised child as a child of the Lord. The problem in this context is that the expression means you are privileged with certain rights, but you are not yet regenerated. Yet, they surely consider a baptised child as a member of the covenant community. God's promises are sealed and assured to this child. The parents have the obligation of giving their children precise instruction regarding why they were baptised and the need for them to be baptised in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately the FCS has no formal instruction of the youth by way of catechism instruction, except from one year prior to their public profession on faith. Upon public profession of faith one should be able to testify at least about a certain period in his life during which he became converted. This is probably one of the reasons why there are so many adherents, especially in the highlands where this thought about regeneration is quite prominent. Nevertheless the number of adherents is diminishing.

### 4. Purity of Worship

In the FCS they do not sing uninspired hymns, nor is instrumental music included in the congregational praise.

As regards the uninspired hymns they teach:

- a) There is no warrant in Scripture for the use of uninspired human compositions in the singing of God's praise in public worship.
- b) There is explicit authority for the use of inspired songs.
- c) The songs of divine worship must therefore be limited to the songs of Scripture, for they alone are inspired.
- d) The Book of Psalms has provided us with the kind of compositions for which we have the authority of Scripture.
- e) We are therefore certain of divine sanction and approval in the singing of the Psalms.
- f) We are not certain that other inspired songs were intended to be sung in the worship of God, even though the use of other inspired songs does not violate the fundamental principle in which Scripture authorization is explicit, namely, the use of inspired songs.
- g) In view of the uncertainty with respect to the use of other inspired songs we should confine ourselves to the Book of Psalms.

As regards the practice of instrumental music they teach:

- a) Instrumental music considered as an element in religious worship was: - instituted by divine commandment;
  - practiced as a branch of Levitical service in the tabernacle and temple;
  - performed by the Levitical order exclusively.
- b) But the distinctive features of the Levitical system, the type giving place in Gospel times to the correlative anti-type, have been abolished.
- c) Instrumental music, being strictly a part of the self same system of worship has also, therefore, now been abolished.
- d) No New Testament prescription, effectively restoring instrumental music again to church's worship, can be distinguished.
- e) The practice has no legitimate place, accordingly, in the worship of the Christian Church.

These conclusions are based on the principle that nothing is to be admitted in the worship of God, but what is prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

We have spoken with several ministers about this issue, addressing them with the redemptive historical approach towards Scripture which makes us sing the great deeds of God from both Old and New Testament, accompanied by an organ as God loves 'whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and gracious' (Phil. 4:8).

### 5. The Free Church College

- 5.1 In a nice prospectus about this college it reads:  
*"The Free Church College is Reformed, Evangelical and Presbyterian. Its aim is to produce a fully equipped ministry, prepared in all the disciplines of the Reformed tradition. Doctrinally, the College is committed to an unswerving loyalty to the inspired Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments and an unqualified acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Academically, it seeks to maintain a high standard, generally comparable to that of the Universities, in its teaching, curriculum and examinations."*

- 5.2 The Free Church College is open to three categories of students.

Firstly, Free Church students who are admitted in accordance with the regulations laid down from time to time by the Free Church General Assembly. Secondly, students studying for the ministry of other churches. Such students must be approved by their churches and recommended by them as suitable for theological training.

Thirdly, private students who wish to engage in theological study for other reasons.

All students who enter the College are understood to profess faith in Christ and obedience to Him, and the cultivation of the devotional life is high priority.

- 5.3 The core curriculum is: Apologetics, Junior and Senior Hebrew and Old Testament Literature, Junior and Senior Greek and New Testament Literature, Junior and Senior Systematic Theology, Junior and Senior Church History and Principles, and Pastoral Theology.

The core curriculum also requires that candidates must demonstrate in each academic session that they have an adequate working knowledge of the contents of the set portions of the Bible in English.

Prior to entering the Free Church College all students are required to pass the Entrance Examination in Scripture and at least one of the language Entrance Examinations.

- 5.4 As deputies we have also attended a few lectures, namely,
- a) A lecture of Prof. A.C. Boyd about the parable of the sower, as it is recorded in Mark 4.
  - b) A lecture of Prof. D. MacLeod about the doctrine of reprobation, as it is recorded in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter III.
  - c) A lecture of Prof. J.D. MacMillan about the visible and the invisible church.

We were quite impressed by the high standard of these lectures, as well as by the Reformed sound of them.

- 5.5 One of the deputies also attended a special lecture given by Mr. Peter Morrison, Headmaster of Woodside Secondary School in Glasgow, about "The role of the school chaplain".

This headmaster took the stand that there was no reason why the FCS should have its own schools. For on the one hand this would create a hot house situation whilst on the other hand the FCS would deny its calling to be the salt of the earth. As church we must use the opportunities given by the government to fill the place of chaplain in nondenominational schools.

In a talk later on with the Rev. J. Harding of Glasgow it appeared that this voice was surely not representative for the whole Free Church of Scotland. There are also members of the church who would love to have their own schools. Yet, until now no initiative has been taken towards this direction.

## 6. Discussion with representatives of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations

- 6.1 Unfortunately we could not meet with the Committee on Ecumenical Relations in full, but only with two representatives of it, namely, Prof. D. MacLeod and Prof. J.D. MacMillan. In this meeting we have explained the decision of the 1987 Synod to offer a temporary ecclesiastical contact to the FCS. It was difficult for them to understand that the FRCA only go one step at a time, and therefore did not yet offer them a full sister church relation. The FCS has a different concept about sister church relation. They reason more or less as follows: "Either you are one in faith or you are not one in faith. If you are indeed one in faith, there should be no impediments to preach in each others pulpit and to participate in the celebration of Holy Supper. Since the FRCA have acknowledged the FCS to be a faithful church of the Lord, why then is it still necessary to wait with full sister church relation?"

In addition the FCS doesn't see the need for fixed rules with respect to such a sister church relation.

Despite different concepts the discussion has surely clarified certain viewpoints, which in the future may help for a better mutual understanding.

As regards the FCS there are surely no impediments to establish a full sister church relation with the FRCA.

- 6.2 In the meeting with representatives of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations we also addressed the issue of the ICRC. The FCS has proposed to the next conference of the ICRC that its Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognise the membership, ministry, and sacraments of the other member churches.

We have voiced our concern about this proposal, due to the fact that the FRCA have not yet full sister church relations with all the member churches of the ICRC. The problem which we face here is closely connected with what has been written under 6.1.

As regards the conference itself the FCS wholeheartedly agrees that if possible the ICRC should come with clear recommendations to the member churches, as well as that more practical issues should be discussed. In this context we have referred to our suggestion, namely, to place the matter of Bible translations on the agenda of the next conference.

Humbly submitted by the visitors,

Rev A. Veldman of Albany (reporter)  
Rev. W Huizinga of Armadale

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## L. Taiwan

Deputies have written (13 March, 1989) to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan to obtain more detailed information, to establish a good base of communication and to pass on information regarding our Churches. No further contact has taken place.

The Dutch deputies are investigating those churches as well as the divisions between the presbyteries. It would be wise to consult with them and to await their report, so that we do not duplicate our efforts

### Recommendation

Deputies recommend to Synod Armadale that it renews the mandate of deputies given by Synod, Albany viz:

*"to carry out a more detailed investigation of the RPCT with regard to the marks of the true church and church polity; to establish a good base for correspondence in English with the RPCT and so improve the contacts with them; to investigate and evaluate the divisions in the presbyteries there."*

# M. Report on Japan

Deputies received no response to their letter of 21 August, 1986 requesting information from the Reformed Church in Japan. A follow up letter was sent in May 1989. If this elicits no response deputies propose to cease attempts at further contact.

# N. Report on Uganda

There has been no contact with Uganda.

# O. Reformed Churches of New Zealand

## 1. MANDATE

The 1987 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. Synod decides to convey its thanks to the RCNZ that it has terminated all ties with the GKN (Syn) and that it has decided to oppose very strongly the membership of the GKN (Syn) in the RES as well as to withdraw from the RES if the GKN (Syn) is not expelled.
- b. Synod decides to instruct deputies to continue the contact with the RCNZ and specifically to call their attention to relations with other churches with which we have broken all ties.

## 2. CORRESPONDENCE

- 2.1 Besides a regular letter containing the Acts and decisions of the 1987 Synod, a letter, dated October 20th, 1987, was sent to the RCNZ to convey more information on the decisions of the 1987 Synod. We renewed the contact, made arrangements for the mutual sharing of church magazines (theirs is a monthly called FAITH IN FOCUS) and explained the decision of the 1987 Synod. We quote the relevant part of this letter to the RCNZ:

*"We would like to clarify our past and present actions. The 1985 Synod decided to cease contacts, owing to your second level of correspondence with the GKN (Synodical) and your sister-relations with the Reformed Churches of Australia. We informed our sister-churches in the Netherlands about this. They were perplexed about our actions since they saw positive developments in your churches, i.e. your membership in the RES was used in a reformed way to admonish the GKN (Syn.), in 1986 your synod made a strong statement against the membership of the GKN (Syn.) in the RES, and you have severed ties of correspondence with the GKN (Syn.). At our last synod all this was reviewed as you can tell from the enclosed decision. These developments heartened us. We would like to keep in contact with you about developments within the RCNZ and keep the channels of communication open with each other, especially since you wish to be reformed churches who share the same rich, reformed heritage and confessions. If it is true that we can have good and close relations with presbyterian churches whose background and confessions differ from our, then we should certainly not forget reformed churches who share our history and confessions. This is all the more true because numbers of our liberated, reformed brothers and sisters immigrated into New Zealand and joined your reformed churches. At the same time historical developments in the churches cannot be overlooked. As was conveyed to you after our 1985 Synod of Launceston, your continuing and strong relations with the RCA with whom we do not have any contact at all will continue to be an impediment for sister-relations with you, the RCNZ. Your report to the 1986 Synod and the synodical decision about the contacts with our Dutch sister-churches correctly underlined this concern.*

*We greet you in the name of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

- 2.2 A letter was received from the RCNZ in response to the above mentioned letter. It included much information and it queried our stance about their sister-relation with the RCA, which we view to be an impediment to sister-relations with the RCNZ. We quote this letter (deleting a few non-essentials):

*March 20, 1988*

*"First we like to acknowledge your letters of October 20, 1987 and December 30, 1987 which was posted on 23/2/88 due to unforeseen circumstances. Thank you kindly!*

*We discussed your correspondence at a recent meeting of our committee and are able now to respond to its contents.*

*We appreciate your willingness and good intentions to enter into correspondence with us with the expressed hope of a closer relationship which may develop out of this 'contact'.*

*I shall first respond to your letter of October 20, 1987:*

*(par. 4)*

*We are not represented at the I.C.R.C. in Edinburgh as observers or otherwise. I remembers that some mem-*

bers of our churches intended to visit the Conference and I do know that Rev. Andrew Young of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church with whom we have a close contact, attended the meetings in Edinburgh. But otherwise there was no official delegation from us.

(par. 5)

It is good to notice your willingness to keep the lines of communications open with us and it is correct for you say that if you can good and close relations with presbyterian churches whose background and confessions differ from yours, then you should certainly not forget reformed churches who do share your history and confessions. And on that common basis of understanding we ought to continue our contact with one another.

Certain actions on our part in connection with the GKN and the RES, as referred to you in this paragraph, have reassured you that there is a way open for communication.

You raise one particular stumbling-block which appears to be an impediment or obstacle in making progress towards a closer relationship between both our denomination and that is our sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches of Australia. This has been mentioned before, also by some of the other churches in their search for a meaningful relationship with us.

This needs clarification!

Could you please explain what you mean when you say that our relationship with the RCA is an impediment. An impediment or obstacle can only be overcome when it is being scrutinised, diagnosed and dealt with in such a way that the impediment can be either removed or overcome.

This is certainly one good point we could focus our correspondence on as we clear the road before us towards a better sought relationship.

It is our desire to seek the fellowship of like-minded brethren and share our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This 'correspondence' may be a long one but we, like you also, seek to do the will of God and honour His glorious Name in all we do to further His Kingdom.

With brotherly greetings,

D.G. Vander Pyl

- 2.3 It took your deputies quite some time to answer this letter properly. The deputy responsible for this contact, W. Huizinga, had to go through all the past, official correspondence from the archives on our relations with the RCA. In a letter dated April, 1989 we answered as follows:

April, 1989

Reformed Churches in New Zealand

D.G. Vanderpyl - Stated Clerk

62 Newcastle Road., Dinsdale

HAMILTON, NEW ZEALAND

Dear brothers in Christ,

Thank you for your letter dated 29 March 1988 in which you responded to our letters of October 20, 1987 and December 30, 1987. Your letter raised some questions which caused some research. The deputy, Rev. W. Huizinga, responsible for maintaining contact with you has arrived in Australia only in 1986. Since you asked why your sister-relation with the Reformed Churches of Australia was a hindrance to us to come to the same sister-relations with you, he had to research our dealings with the RCA. This took some time, especially since other work pressed as well. So we offer our apologies for the late answer.

Before we go into details about the above-mentioned question, we would first of all express our sincere thanks for your courageous and resolute stand for the truth of the Scriptures and holiness of the church by withdrawing from the RES after the meeting of the RES in Harare chose not to deal decisively with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Synodical) for its unScriptural doctrines and practices. We applaud your decision, though we understand that it caused pain in that relations with other federations with whom you enjoyed fellowship there has also been terminated. We would seriously request you to consider sending observers to the 1989 ICRC to be held on June 20, 1989 in Vancouver, Canada (details are included). In this way you could explore the possibility of true reformed, ecumenical relations.

We would now like to answer your question about your sister-relation with the RCA. We will try to offer an overview so that the answer does not become lost in a forest of details.

First of all, our rules for sister-relations demands that we give an account of sister-relations with third parties. If one "sister" has correspondence with A but the other "sister" does not, then something should occur. Either both should work towards sister-relations with A or both should not have those sister-relations with A. From the brochure about the Reformed Churches in New Zealand which you sent to us (thanks!) we note that you have such sister-relations with four churches. We have no such sister-relations with any of them (though our sister-churches in S.Africa have contacts with the GKSA and our sister-churches in Canada have an official relation with the OPC and talks between our sister-churches in the Netherlands and the CGKN occur)! Also, you have a relation of "Churches in Correspondence" with the CRC in USA and Canada, while our sister-churches there had to terminate all contacts with them and send them an appeal to amend their way (copy included). So you see that although we mentioned only your sister-relation with the RCA, other points need discussion as well. Our major problems concern your relations with the RCA & CRC/USA & Canada. In both these cases there is much background history to be remembered.

Basically the issue comes down to the point that choices were made at the beginning of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia which cast the die for time to come. A refor-

mation had occurred in the Netherlands in the 1930's in which there was a revitalisation of preaching the full riches of the covenant of God. But the synodical actions in 1942 imposed binding doctrinal statements on members and leaders alike which negated this reformational movement. That action led to the Liberation in which there was a return to the solid, reformed doctrine (only the Three Forms of Unity) and a liberation from a hierachical form of church-government. This was no small brotherly dispute but involved 100,000 members as well as the truth of the Bible.

When our members arrived here and set up church life, contacts were made with the Reformed Churches of Australia. However, these churches decided to continue correspondence with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodical) and not with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (liberated). Though they did not wish to choose sides, they had done so by this act! Many repercussions would result from this action. It would determine whose attestations to accept, whose ministers to call, whose help and input to receive and whose friendship to cultivate. The history of the Reformed Churches of Australia reflects this tremendous influence of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodical) on the life of the Reformed Churches of Australia. Looking back we can say that, as is the case (all the more) with the CRC (USA/Canada), the trend in those churches (RCA & CRC respectively) followed/follows that of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodical), though the deformational process is not as quick. It therefore was not just a technicality that we stated categorically that their correspondence with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodical) formed an obstacle for sister-relations with them. To say that they (RCA) did not have the same binding statements and that they did not want to import the same doctrinal controversy to the new land could not appease the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. It was a matter of taking sides, choosing friends and alliances and determining in a Scriptural manner who was the continuation of the faithful church in the Netherlands. This was an important decision. For your choice of friends determines your future path. History has shown that.

The Reformed Churches of Australia have meanwhile terminated its sister-relation with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodical). In 1982 it decided "on account of the divergence of theological thought it is no longer true to speak of a sister church relationship between them and our churches" (1982 Acts, III-173) and therefore terminated it. Instead it wished to "maintain a close correspondence relationship with the GKN to continue the discussion on issues which have caused the GKN and our churches to part ways" (1982 Acts, III-173). When in 1985 the type of relations were changed to "Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (CEF) it was stated that "the situation in the GKN does not warrant a change in our relationship in terms of our new CEF" (1985 Acts, I-30). So though the 1982 decision to terminate sister-relations was subject to review, the Reformed Churches of Australia did not revert to sister-relations with them, but only keep corresponding about those issues of concern. We have learned that the 1989 Synod of the RCA decided to terminate its membership in the REC if the GKN were allowed to remain as member at the next REC.

We have noted that the last synod of the RCA has again decided to contact our churches. It could very well be that the developments of the last years will indeed lead to discussions with them, now that the sister-relation with the GKN is out of the way and their membership in the REC is being handled decisively. Even then one must still face the fact that much development has occurred over the past 35 years, changing the complexion of the churches.

These then are the historical reasons for not entering a sister-relation with the RCA. They form the reasons why we repeatedly requested them to reconsider seriously the decision they had made to acknowledge the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodical) and so to approve of its actions during 1942-45. By not acknowledging the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (liberated) as the faithful churches with whom to take up a sister-relation, they rejected the Liberation as an act of reformation. This had repercussions when the RES formed. For at its formative meeting the GKN asked the RES to approve statements of doctrine and church-government both of which gave explicit approval for its actions of 1942-45. Many of the churches attending that RES did not understand the implications of this approval they gave. Yet it implicitly prevented us from becoming members, for the very teachings and hierarchy which we rejected and threw off had now received endorsement!

Hopefully we have explained the history of our actions with regard to the Reformed Churches of Australia. We pray that 35 years later these obstacles may as yet be addressed from a retrospective view. But as it stands, as churches we have not come to the removal of the obstacles between us.

With regards to you, the same concern as that towards the RCA (re its sister-relation with the GKN and its rejection of the Liberation) was held. With gladness we have witnessed how you too have terminated the sister-relation with the GKN and your membership in the RES. Those actions continue to gladden us.

If you have good reasons to question the wisdom of our actions, or if you have arguments to the contrary to offer, we would ask you to convey them.

At the present we have contacts again. We do not know all that much about each other. Visitors from you to us and from us to you have brought reports to us. This is good. We need to become better acquainted. In our view we also need to discuss our relations with third parties.

We note from FAITH IN FOCUS that your next synod is in August 1989. Ours starts on November 6, 1989 in Armadale, W.A. (part of Perth). We would invite you to send an observer to our synod, if you are able. Also, if anyone of your deputies or leaders is in our area (Perth, W.A.), please let him/them use the opportunity to meet with us. On our part we must sadly inform you that, though we would like to send an observer to your synod, we cannot. Our commitments in the past two years have seen visits made to Ireland, Scotland, Netherlands, Singapore and Sumba with two delegates going to Vancouver for the 1989 ICRC. So our small federation is not able to send an observer this time.

Hopefully we have answered your letter.

With brotherly greetings,  
On behalf of the deputies.

- 2.4 With this correspondence both parts of the mandate have been complied with. We have not as yet received a response from the RCNZ to this last letter of ours.

### 3. DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1 **Growing Contacts.** Visitors have increased the contacts between the two federations. The Stoltes (he is an elder in one of their congregations), former members of the GKN (Lib.), paid a visit to our churches and strongly requested closer contacts with us. Br. & Sr. H. Olde from Albany visited a number of churches while on vacation there. Br. Olde was so kind as to provide the deputies with a report. Your deputies appreciate this type of input from the church members. Through such contacts we learn to know one another better.

- 3.2 **RES.** Our letter dated April, 1989 mentioned the withdrawal of the RCNZ from the RES (now REC). A report (printed in TROWEL AND SWORD, August, 1988) by one of their delegates, Dick van Garderen, reports the following:

*"What went wrong after that? It all had to do with the question of the place of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands (GKN) in the RES. An advisory committee had spent more than three days considering the GKN's new method of interpreting the Bible (see its booklet "God with us" and the Sequel). The application of the method of interpreting the Bible is the way in which this denomination has dealt with the question of homosexual practice. Officially at least, the GKN has steadfastly maintained that since some individuals ARE homosexual without wanting to be, we should not condemn but rather love them. We all agreed there. However, the GKN goes beyond this. They maintain that there is ultimately no difference between the inclination and the deed. Thus it becomes possible and acceptable to enter into a homosexual relationship AS A CHRISTIAN with a clear conscience before God, provided that such relationship is permanent, based on true love and fidelity. One may be an officebearer within the GKN as a practicing CHRISTIAN homosexual. In 1980, and again in 1984 the RES has responded by stating that "All homosexual practice is sin". The GKN has been urged to reconsider and to rescind the pastoral advice given on this question. The GKN responded negatively claiming that the RES was not qualified to give this advice because it had not studied the matters itself.*

*In 1988 when, in the minds of many, the discussion had gone on too long already, the RES had published its own report on the question of homosexuality. It upheld the concept that homosexual practice is sin but qualified it by pointing out that the responsibility for its presence in the life of an individual was also corporate. A person is shaped by the circumstances and environment in which he or she is raised. BUT, the practice remains sin. The Dutch, in a provisional response, maintained their own position and disagreed with the RES report. They continued to do so at the meeting itself.*

*In terms of their new hermeneutics (way of interpreting the Bible) and its application of it in the case of homosexual practice, the GKN continues to be totally isolated from the rest of the RES community. but how to DEAL with this? A split within the advisory committee produced two sets of options. The first (majority) was to ask the GKN to recognise that its teaching on homosexual practice placed it in a position where it ought to withdraw its membership within 6 to 12 months. The second option (minority) was essentially a call for further study and an evaluation and recommendation to come before the 1992 meeting of the RES. This would ensure GKN membership within the RES for another four years at least.*

*Synod debated this for 3 long sessions. The quality of the debate expressing a real depth of feeling, remained superb. But the vote had to be taken. The synod, 22 against and 34 in favour, voted for the SECOND, further study option. It chose NOT to deal with the continued demonstrated unfaithfulness of the GKN in this matter. For many this amounted to an implicit tolerance of the GKN's position by many RES member churches. Once more the RES voted to delay a negative vote on GKN action in this area. This in its turn was interpreted as a failure on the RES to live up to its own stated basis and purpose.*

*"Farewell Reformed Ecumenical Synod ... we look to better times ahead." said Mr Dick Vanderpyl on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. His words came immediately on the heels of those of the Rev. J. Westerink of the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (CGKN) announcing that the membership of that denomination from the RES was now suspended. Minutes later the representative of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church USA arose asking that their delegation be given permission to retire from the meeting in order to prepare a statement. The Christian Reformed Church in South Africa (GKSA), one of the three founding churches of the RES, said that they would make a similar statement the next morning.*

*And the GKN itself? Its reactions? To date it has to be admitted that there has been a deafening silence. Individual members have spoken privately, but the views expressed have been contradictory! The RES itself? I personally doubt that most folks fully appreciated the import of the decision to accept the recommendations of the minority report. Neither, I think, did the GKN itself realise the consequences of its continued refusal to budge from its position. That is dawning now and will continue to do so for some little time into the future."*

- 3.3 **Theological Training.** Usually the RCNZ, seeing its sister-relation with RCA, sends its theological students to Geelong. However, one theological student from the RCNZ church at Silverstream, went to Hamilton to our Theological College there. That has improved the contacts. It may be that others will follow.

- 3.4 **General Synod.** The RCNZ will hold their next synod August 1989 in Silverstream. Through the FAITH IN FOCUS we have been able to read about the various reports and proposals which that synod will have to deal with. Some of them are about theonomy, fraternal delegate to the 1988 Synod of the RCA, Church Order, Home Missions, new provisional form for baptism, deputies to the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, the 1988 RES, divorce and re-marriage, radio ministry, proposed ties with the Free Church of Scotland, mission to the Jews, guest participation in the Lord's supper, congregational singing, and worship and liturgy.

This list is given to indicate which issues live in the RCNZ at present. For we need to acquaint ourselves with what lives in the RCNZ at present as well as clear up impediments from the past.

- 3.5 A very interesting proposal which will serve at the 1989 Synod of the RCNZ is Overture No. 12 which is summarised in FAITH IN FOCUS (June 1989) as follows:

As it is our duty to maintain the unity of the body of Christ, we are required to seek our and join with all churches which are faithful to His Word, as interpreted by our confessional standards. This is the reason Wellington Presbytery has given for asking to explore improved contacts with our brothers and sisters of the FRCA.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 On the basis of this report it can be seen that progress has been made in the following areas:
- a. the withdrawal of the RCNZ from the RES (REC).
  - b. the desire on the part of at least some of their churches to draw into closer contact with us.
  - c. the use of the Theological College in Hamilton by one of their students.
  - d. better understanding and contact with them.
- 4.2 A remaining obstacle towards recognition and sister-relations is the sister-relation which the RCNZ has with the RCA. This needs to be discussed further.
- 4.3 The deputies therefore recommend:
- a. to discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies;
  - b. to continue the contacts with the RCNZ at the present level of contact between synodical deputies;
  - c. to express our thanks that the RCNZ have withdrawn from the REC;
  - d. to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties, especially with the RCA, with whom we do not have any official relations;
  - e. to indicate our willingness to have more direct contacts in order to improve the contacts;
  - f. to consult with the Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts with the RCNZ;
  - g. to keep the churches posted about any progress.
  - h. to report to the next synod.

## P. Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

### 1. SYNOD DECISION (Acts 1987, Art. 106, Page 60).

The Deputies' Report to Synod 1987 included an informative section on the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (page 22 of Appendix A of Acts 87) which resulted in Synod making the following decisions:

*"... to instruct the deputies to investigate this church thoroughly to discern whether or not this church is a true church according to Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession. Special attention is to be given to the distinctives of the Protestant Reformed doctrines (viz. covenant and free offer of the gospel) and to report to the next Synod.*

*... to investigate and evaluate the influence of the Protestant Reformed Church in the ERCS.*

*... to inform the church membership about this congregation in Singapore.*

*... to authorise the deputies to send delegates to visit these churches en route to the EPCI and the FCS."*

### 2. VISIT BY DEPUTIES

The idea that deputies visit THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE in combination with proposed visits to Scotland and Ireland in January 1988 proved impracticable for the deputies concerned. It was, however, possible to arrange a visit coinciding with Rev. and Sr. K. Brunings' return from Europe to Australia in September and Br. J.A. Swarts joined Rev. Bruning at that time for a five day visit to these churches. The Deputies were welcomed by many church members on arrival at the airport and were looked after superbly throughout the visit. We were also given every possible assistance in carrying out our instructions. In fact, it was made quite plain to us that the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore very much appreciated the interest shown by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in their decision to send deputies.

In short, it was good to be there. We share not only the name but also the desire to uphold the Reformed Truth. For this reason we could have and enjoy fellowship together. There are also differences. It is the task of future contact to define and resolve these differences in order that together we may more fully serve the Lord as one.

### 3. PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES OF AMERICA

Synod 1987 directed that special attention be given to the distinctives of PROTESTANT REFORMED DOCTRINES and the influence of the PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH in THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE.

### 3.1 SISTER RELATIONS

The ERCS has full sister relations with the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. The reason for this is mainly historical (refer to section 4 of this report).

The ERCS is ecclesiastically independent from the PRCA but, understandably, values its sister relations with that Church, just as the FRCA are independent from the Reformed Church (Lib) in the Netherlands but have, and do, value its sister relations with these churches.

### 3.2 HISTORY OF THE PRC

The PRC split from the Christian Reformed Churches in America in 1924 when the Synod of Kalamazoo made a statement consisting of three points. We now quote Rev. W. Pouwelse who writes in CLARION (Vol. 33, No. 16, August 10, 1984, page 338):

*"These statements of Kalamazoo meant a full acceptance of the "common grace" concept of Dr. A. Kuyper. It is understandable that it gave rise to many protests, frictions and opposition within the Christian Reformed Churches. The Rev. H. Hoeksema was suspended from office and the consistory of the Church of Grand Rapids, where he was a pastor, was deprived by Synod "of all rights and privileges connected with the ecclesiastical connection of a Consistory with the Christian Reformed Church."*

*In this way the so called Protestant Reformed Churches came into existence. That was 20 years before the liberation in The Netherlands, but it was basically because of the same matters."*

### 3.3 HOW DO WE SEE THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

Neither the FRCA nor the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain any formal relationship with the PRC. For this reason we will again quote Rev. W. Pouwelse who himself refers to Rev. W.W.J. VanOene's book titled "Inheritance Preserved".

*"In the early fifties the great wave of Dutch immigrants began. When they arrived in this part of the world they had to make a decision with respect to church membership. It is certainly not so that they right away established their "own" Canadian Reformed Churches as a branch of the "Liberated" Churches in The Netherlands. The late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, one of the most prominent persons in the so called "Liberated" Churches, was strongly in favour of joining the Protestant Reformed Churches. Although he did not agree with everything going on in these churches, he was convinced that this was the only church where our people would feel at home right away and where they should go. However, in 1950 the Protestant Reformed Churches changed their direction, and again the influence of the theory of Dr. A. Kuyper crept in. This time not in the first place with respect to his "common grace" concept but now more specifically his doctrine about "presumptive regeneration".*

*In 1950 the Protestant Reformed Churches drew up the so called "Declaration of Principles".*

*Again we quote a summary of this "Declaration of Principles" from Rev. VanOene's book:*

*"1. Protestant Reformed Churches reject the errors of The Three Points of Kalamazoo and maintain that the grace of God is only for the elect.*

*2. They teach that the promise of God is unconditional only for the elect.*

*3. They reject the doctrine that the promise of the covenant is for all who were baptised."*

*"What was the meaning of "Declaration"? On the one hand they rejected the theory of "Common grace". But at the same time they introduced in the points two and three a theory of two kinds of "covenants". One for the elect and one for "all who are baptised". They introduced two types of promises. Some "unconditionally" only for the elect and some other, (apparently conditionally) for "all baptised".*

*According to these points the sacrament of baptism does not sign and seal the covenant of God and His indubitable promises. The real covenant was only for the elect and people could not do anything else than "presume" and "hope" that the child to be baptised belonged to the elect.*

*No wonder that the immigrants coming from The Netherlands, after what they had experienced during the Liberation in 1944, had little choice. This was exactly what they had fought against in the "Old Country". First different churches appealed and fought against this "Declaration" but without any result. In 1951 the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches adopted definitely the "Declaration of Principles".*

*The late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, in spite of some objections he had against the Protestant Reformed Churches, always had advised the emigrants to join these churches. However, when the Protestant Reformed Churches adopted the "Declaration of Principles", Prof. Schilder exclaimed: "it's all over". In this way the Canadian Reformed Churches were born. There was no choice. The Protestant Reformed Churches had gone back to the doctrine of Dr. Kuyper and had officially accepted the theory of "presumptive regeneration".*

### 3.4 THE DISTINCTIVES OF PROTESTANT REFORMED DOCTRINE

The Protestant Reformed Churches of America hold to a particular view of the covenant. According to this view the covenant promises are for the elect only and not for all who are baptised. On the basis of this view one cannot say that that covenant children who die in infancy are saved. Article 17 of the First Head of the Canons of Dort, they say, is not a statement that such children are saved but an instruction to God fearing parents not to doubt. (Refer "Believers and their Seed", Herman Hoeksema, Chapter 11)

One thing about the so called distinctives is that they are not all that distinct. It is often difficult to define exact differences. In his extensive writings against the "Declaration of Principles" in the "DE REFOR-

MATIE" (Vol. 26, 1950) the late Prof. K. Schilder often lamented the lack of preciseness in the formulation and included this in his arguments against adoption of the then proposed Principles.

From Prof. H.C. Hoeksema's response to the articles of W. Pouwelse (Refer to CLARION 33:16, 1984 and 34:2,3,4, 1985) it is clear that there is room for improvement in coming to an understanding of one another's viewpoint. The book "An Everlasting Covenant", Prof. J. Kamphuis, deals with many of the issues but the English translation is such that it too fails to provide real clarity.

#### 4. EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE (EPCS)

A small booklet published when the ERCS was instituted gives quite a detailed account of how the church came to be established. It is introduced as "a story of the Sovereign leading of God of a people who were once not a people but are now the people of God ..."

The introduction refers to "many struggles, hardships and joys" ... "many misunderstandings" ... "strife" ... "dangers" ... causing many to leave. But it concludes ... "it is God who leads".

By paying some attention to their history and background we can gain a better understanding of these Reformed Churches. For this reason we include the following abstract from the aforementioned booklet.

##### 4.1 BEGINNING 1962 - 1968

The ERCS started as a Bible class at the Monk's Hill Public High School. A Christian teacher, named Gog Seng Fong, spoke to his students about the Lord and many flocked to the Bible class gatherings he conducted before and after school as well as during recess. This was in 1962.

As the group grew, she was brought under the wing of "Youth for Christ" and became known as the "Monk's Hill Youth for Christ". By this time the short daily school meetings were proving to be inadequate and Saturday meetings were introduced. These were held at the nearby Newton Life Presbyterian Church.

In 1967 Mr Goh exhorted the older students, who by then were the leaders of the "Monk's Hill Youth for Christ", to join him in attending the Sunday Worship Services at the Gilstead Life Bible Presbyterian Church.

##### 4.2 THE FIRST SPLIT 1967 - 1968

The minister of the Gilstead Life Bible Presbyterian Church (GLPC), Rev. T. Tow, had close ties with a local Baptist minister who often invited the student leaders of the "Monk's Hill Youth for Christ" to his home. This Baptist minister frequently preached by invitation at the Saturday meetings held at the Newton Life Presbyterian Church (NLPC) and so he gradually influenced these young leaders with his different beliefs concerning baptism. In the end, many of the leaders left to join the Baptist minister. Only a few remained.

##### 4.3 BREAK WITH "YOUTH FOR CHRIST" 1968 - 1972

During 1968/69 for group began to see the errors of the "Youth for Christ", particularly its inclination to tolerate worldliness and also its support for neo-evangelicals like Billy Graham. For this reason the group broke away from the movement and continued its Saturday meetings at GLPC under the new name of Monk's Hill Bible Club.

As Mr Goh at this time was very much involved with the "Jesus Saves Mission", the young leaders of the Monk's Hill Bible Club were sort of left to fend for themselves. A "Gospel Letters and Tracts Department" was set up within the Monk's Hill Bible Club and later the Club changed its name to "Gospel letters and Tracts Department" as part of a planned merger with the GLPC Sunday school. However, the planned merger never materialised and the group remained independent save for the use of the GLPC facilities and the friendly counsel of that church's minister, the Rev. T. Tow.

Attendances, however, dwindled to a mere eleven persons.

##### 4.4 NEW GROWTH 1972-75

Much work was done to rebuild the group and slowly but surely the numbers grew again. One of the turning points was the conducting the first annual Bible Camp in December 1972. After the camp, students from schools other than Monk's Hill High School came to the Saturday meetings where attendances rose to 30. By 1975 they reached 70.

At about this time the executive committee responsible for the running of the "Gospel Letters and Tracts Department", by which name the group were still known, began to realise that the group ought to become a church. However, the idea of church formation prompted sharp dissension and division because of differences about which direction to go.

##### 4.5 FIRST CONTACT WITH REFORMED FAITH 1975

When Prof. H. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanks of the Protestant Church of America visited Singapore in 1975, a Mr Ong, who had been a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch, New Zealand, tried to persuade the GLPC to organise a series of lectures by the visiting ministers. It was suggested to Mr Ong that he should ask the "Gospel Letters and Tracts Department" to host the lectures and this was what happened. As a result Br. Lau (who first joined the group during his student days back in 1965 and who now is pastor of the First Evangelical Reformed Church) came to know Br. Ong and through the lecture series was introduced to the Reformed faith.

##### 4.6 RIVER VALLEY OUTREACH AND SUNDAY MEETINGS

In March 1976, the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department rented part of an old kampong house along River

Valley Road for the purpose of setting up an outreach, which became known as the River Valley Outreach. At first the building was used only for Sunday Fellowship meetings introduced earlier to cater for the many who had left school and therefore were no longer able to attend the Saturday morning meetings. These Sunday Fellowship meetings were held in the afternoon. A number of the members were also members of the GLPC and would attend the Gilstead Life Worship Services in the morning and in the afternoon go to the River Valley Outreach. This is how the Sunday worship began. The rent for the meagre building stretched the financial means of the group but increasing numbers and a growing desire to set up an autonomous church forced the group to acquire and join adjacent rooms.

#### 4.7 BREAKTHROUGH OF REFORMED FAITH - 1976

All this time Br. Lau had been busy studying the "Reformed Truth" and around the middle of 1976 he began to teach the Heidelberg Catechism at the Saturday morning meetings conducted in the Gilstead Life Church. Br. Lau's initiative met with considerable opposition and, we now quote, "it was not until the end of that year that some of the brethren began to hold the same truth of Sovereign Grace which he loved".

#### 4.8 THE REFORMED FAITH CHALLENGED - Early 1977

The Christian teacher who started the group in 1962 left for the United States of America in 1972 for training in the ministry. The Gospel Letters and Tracts Department collected \$800 from its members to help Mr. Goh to finance his trip to America where he attended a Baptist College. In December 1976 Mr. Goh returned to Singapore as a missionary pastor sent by his church in the United States. He at once began to work in the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department and, we quote, "being anabaptist by persuasion, he tried to bring his teachings to the group, which regarded him with much respect. He taught the group the Congregational form of church government, opposed the gospel of the universal catholic church and tried to propagate his view that persons baptised by sprinkling were unbaptised. Br. Lau participated in forum debates against Rev. Goh before the entire congregation. It was a time of conflict and confusion." The Church institution booklet goes on to say, "It was surely by grace, that Br. Lau, being untrained, managed to hold his ground."

Rev. Goh left the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department, taking some members with him. Others, confused and discouraged, also left. It was a time of grief.

Even after the departure of Rev. Goh the Reformed Truth continued to face much opposition and discouragement from various factions within the group. One of the brothers made contact with Prof. Hoeksema of the Protestant Reformed Church of America for advice and help in the issues confronting the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department. Later, in 1978, the group asked the Protestant Reformed Church for help and Rev. J. Slopsema and elder Engelsma came to investigate how such help could best be given. It appears that Rev. Slopsema and elder Engelsma did not have an easy time.

*"... they bore the brunt of the attack on the faith. Those holding the Arminian position then assailed them at the public meetings. Neither did those believing the Reformed Faith support them at these meetings for they saw in the emissaries an invaluable avenue to answer the many questions heaped on them. There was also the majority who desired to know the truth of the Word, who sat silently considering what was said. It must have appeared at those meetings that the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department was rank Arminian."*

#### 4.9 GROWING COMMITMENT TO THE REFORMED FAITH

After the visit of Rev. Slopsema and elder Engelsma tapes and doctrinal literature were sent from America. A commission of ten members was set up to study the material and the distinction between Armenianism and the Reformed Faith became increasingly clear. Many came to know and love the Reformed Faith. Many others rejected the truth and left.

In 1979 the group was officially registered under the amended name of "Gospel Literature and Tracts Society" and later that same year it welcomed a second Protestant Reformed Church delegation of emissaries, namely, elder Engelsma accompanied this time by Rev. Kamps. The new emissaries were able to observe the growing commitment to the Reformed Faith and at the time of their departure they took with them the group's unanimous request in response to the unanimous recommendation of the study commission that the Protestant Reformed Church of America send a missionary.

After the emissaries had left the group gave serious consideration to the advice that the administration of the Lord's Supper be discontinued until such time as it was possible to proceed with church institution and the proper ordination of elders. After much study the administration of the sacrament was discontinued.

#### 4.10 PREPARING FOR CHURCH INSTITUTION

The Protestant Reformed Church granted the request for a missionary and Rev. den Hartog arrived in February 1980. By this time the Gospel Literature and Tracts Society was firmly committed to the Reformed Faith and it was not long before the Protestant Reformed Church received the request that Rev. den Hartog be authorised to organise her as a church. This request was granted on the condition that the Society first subscribe to the Three forms of Unity.

Before this condition could be met it was necessary to study the creeds which were still unfamiliar to most of the leaders. Church institution therefore had to wait. A commission was set up of four would be elders and two deacons elect to study the creeds. Before long further elections were held to enlarge the commission and instead of meeting weekly the commission pursued her studies three nights weekly until November 1981 when the work was completed. Then all the members and regular worshippers were visited to prepare them spiritually for membership of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Note: Br. Lau, "on whose shoulders had fallen the awesome responsibility of leading the saints in the gospel Letters and Tracts Society through many difficult years", departed for America in September 1980 to complete his ministerial training at the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

#### 4.11 INSTITUTION - January 1982

THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH of SINGAPORE was instituted on the 24th January 1982, with 102 founder members.

After institution Rev. den Hartog stayed on as missionary pastor. He returned to the United States in 1986.

### 5. THE PRESENT DAY EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH

At present there are two congregations, namely, the one instituted in January 1982 which is now known as the "First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore" and a second congregation instituted on 6th September, 1987, known as the "Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church".

The First Evangelical Reformed Church (FERC) still conducts its Sunday worship services at the old, tin roofed River Valley Road kampong house. As the needs of the congregation have grown so more walls have been removed to accommodate the congregation of more than 200 members. On Sundays the place is a hive of activity. There are Bible classes for young people, a Sunday school, a special class for people who require instruction in Chinese and after the worship service the choir practises for the annual remembrance of Reformation Day when a special effort is made to invite relatives and friends to a series of two lectures presented by one of the ministers. It is not known how long the congregation can continue to make use of the River Valley Road facility as very soon it may have to make way for high rise block of flats. The congregation did purchase a townhouse building for \$300 000 back in 1982 but, to date, the Government has rejected applications to permit the building to be used as a church. Land is scarce and buildings are very expensive in Singapore and are subject to the most stringent regulations.

Since its institution the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) has been holding its worship services in the auditorium of the American School. However, in October 1988 it was able to move into its own church building; a double storey townhouse acquired and fully restored to original (pre-war) design in compliance with government decree, for a total cost of \$300 000. The building is smallish by our standards but is quite adequate for the congregation which presently counts some 60 members. Even allowing for the fact that the value of the Singapore dollar is less than the Australian dollar the cost obviously represents a very significant sum and the members clearly know what it means to be thankful and joyful givers.

At the time of our visit the new church building was nearing completion and there was much excitement and last minute planning to have all ready for the opening in two weeks. At the time the opening date seemed rather ambitious but as it turned out all was ready in time. The new building is located in an area that is renowned for its mosques, shrines and temples where the people flock to serve their traditional gods of wood and stone. It is to be remembered that in the past the members of the ERCS too served these gods and many experienced rejection and hardships from parents and relatives when they turned away from the faith of their fathers to serve the one true God. Now the Light of the Gospel can be heard in the same city block and it is to be hoped that many now enslaved in the powers of darkness will come to believe in the glorious Gospel of the God of Grace.

Both congregations are served by their own minister. Pastor Lau serves the FERC and Pastor J. Mahtani the CERC. Though the bond between the two churches has yet to be formalised there are close ties and good relations between the two churches and their ministers. There is an arrangement for pulpit exchange and when there is need the one assists the other with pulpit supply. Thus it happened that on the Sunday of our visit Pastor Mahtani preached in the FERC and Pastor Lau in the CERC. We were able to hear both ministers.

In a way it is a pity that our stay included only one Sunday, as it is very difficult to properly digest all the new impressions that accompany such a first visit to these churches. Yet despite the many racial and cultural differences between these people and ourselves the dominating impression right from the moment of meeting is that we are one in Christ. The members of these churches desire to serve the Lord according to His revealed will. And they confess that Word as we do in the Three Forms of Unity. The people attend Church to hear that Word preached from a pulpit or lectern that stands central. They listen intently with open Bibles: only a few write notes. There's little noise to disturb the hearers even though temperatures rise quickly in the iron clad building and the sermon is not what we would call short.

Pastor Mahtani preached on 2 Timothy 4:7,8, under the theme of, "I have fought the good fight of faith". An outline of the main points of the sermon are published in the weekly bulletin distributed before the service. This helps the congregation to prepare beforehand and also encourages discussion afterwards, especially among the youth attending pre-confession classes. Many church goers use the outline to record additional notes as they listen to the sermon.

In his sermon Pastor Mahtani referred to many parts of scripture to explain in considerable detail the exact meaning of the text. "I fought a good fight, ...", says Paul. No, Paul wasn't boasting that he had fought good. But it's a good fight, a worthy fight, it's the fight mentioned in Genesis 3, it's a battle that has been won, by Christ; we must put on the whole armour to fight that fight, in which we are more than conquerors, the crown (of righteousness) is reserved for me ... on that day. Therefore we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:12, 13). A sermon full of grace and glad tidings, and at the same time encouraging and exhorting the congregation - elders, deacons, but also mothers of covenant seed, and students, yes everybody - to fight the good fight in your everyday calling and to comfort each other with the gospel of Christ's return. Very scriptural, very Reformed.

The afternoon sermon of Pastor Lau on Galatians 5:13 also contained a very clear message. We are freed from the curse of the law but not from the law. The law is a school master - it brings us back ... to Christ. We are willing slaves (as in the year of Jubilee) of our Lord. As his servants we should know his will, grow to maturity and not

depend on the elder to tell us. An action may be lawful, though not expedient. Must not in the first place consider oneself but how it benefits your brother and sister. Encourage each other and grow in Christ. The service of the Lord is full of joy.

As Pastor Lau preaches he makes use of easy to understand examples and from the Bible in his hand he reads the scripture passages that he uses to develop his theme. The preaching is certainly rich and scriptural.

So is the instruction given at Youth Fellowship (somewhat akin to our preconfession class), where Pastor Lau gave quite an in-depth lecture on what scripture teaches about worldliness. The six girls and two boys in attendance were all given a stenciled outline of the talk and could look up each scripture passage as it was explained in relation to the topic.

Afterwards some time was spent on learning a particular scripture passage. The students, who were aged between 14 and 18 years, seemed to quite enjoy this task and appeared quite proficient in committing the texts to memory.

During the summer of 1987/88 Br. John W. Eikelboom and his wife Elvira, members of the FRC of Kelmscott, spent approximately seven weeks in Singapore. The following quotations from their report serve to give further insight into the well and woe of life in these churches.

*"... we were in close contact with the church members; going out on social outings, participating in various prayer meetings, praise meetings, mission services, Bible study meetings, tracting sessions, student camps, anniversary celebrations, christian gospel meetings, caroling and of course attending church to hear the preaching.*

*The members tend to be mainly young, unmarried or newly married couples. A large proportion (50%) are university or ex-university students who come across the christian religion at university. After attending various churches and religious sects they eventually have ended up becoming members of the ERC's.*

*Historically the people of the EPC had only one service every Sunday after which they met in church fellowship. At night various Bible study clubs were then held. Hence the people were not very receptive to the idea of a second worship service.*

*This was also understandable given that morning services lasted at least one and a half hours, were followed by a sermon discussion or singspiration for 30-45 minutes and then lunch fellowship. Members would finally arrive home thoroughly tired at 2.30pm or later.*

*However, convinced that a second service was of paramount importance, the consistory of the CERC did introduce evening services in January 1988.*

*Although members are familiar with the Three Forms of Unity, having undertaken in particular a twenty four week study programme of the Heidelberg Catechism at pre-baptism classes, little reference is made to these confessions during the actual preaching.*

*Themes from these confessions are however clearly evident in the preaching. The elders, ministers and deacons must also sign the Form of subscription which states that:*

*"... we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confessions and Catechism of the Reformed Churches together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht 1618/19 do fully agree with the Word of God."*

*We also experienced one celebration of Holy Supper during our stay in Singapore. The procedure appeared to be much the same as that of our Australian Churches. the form is read, after which the elders carry around the bread and wine and personally ensure that only approved members participate. Visitors cannot participate although I am told that had we applied earlier to the consistory we would, in all likelihood, have been granted approval to participate.*

*There are a number of other church activities which deserve mentioning. Each Wednesday night, a prayer meeting was held. At these meetings one of the brothers gave a short 'exhortation' using a segment of the Bible after which participants could share a problem, concern or other issues. Attempts were made to focus on matters of common interest such as pastoral work, finding a block of land to build a church, elections for office bearers, special thanksgiving days or serious circumstances. After sharing, all present knelt down and in turn prayed for certain issues which had been brought up.*

*A youth camp was held for one week during our stay. This commenced with the school holidays and comprised of an intensive programme of Bible discussion, prayer, sing-spiration, messages from various teachers and sermon discussion.*

*We (also) experienced a special Christmas service ... a translation into Chinese was given sentence by sentence; ... a marriage ceremony; ... a programme of celebrations for the sixth anniversary of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore and ... we took part in a 'tracting sermon' which involved handing out book-marks which advertised the times and location of CERC services, in particular the Christmas service.*

*Overall the programme within the church was obviously a very busy one with many meetings and events.*

*The government in Singapore ... in the past restricted the number of children allowed per family to two. This was enforced by penalties: a third child would incur a greater hospital bill, would be sent to a school further from home and the parents would have more trouble finding housing/employment etc. Hence within the church only the family of Pastor Mahtani numbers more than two children. Lately the law has changed and the government now encourages the richer people to have three or more children.*

*Singapore is a city in which shops and businesses are open ten to twelve hours a day, for seven days a week. Hence church people are not uncommonly asked and required to work on Sunday. Since the government employs over 15 per cent of the workforce, a proportion of church members face severe problems if they refuse to work ... Hence some church members work on Sunday.*

*Coming to a large degree from heathen families with whom they cannot share their beliefs, Sundays are in*

*particular a day when they do not wish to go home for lunch. Hence in the absence of lunch fellowship (which were discontinued with the introduction of the second service) they go out to eat in the city at restaurants and eating places.*

*It is clear that there are great challenges to these Singaporean people in their striving to be Reformed and in maintaining a life pleasing to God. They are surrounded by many idol worshippers even within their own families. In addition, a bewildering array of 'christian' sects, cults and churches have arisen within the short space of one or two decades. Each of these groups is trying to attract people to join them. There is enormous growth amongst certain groups, especially charismatic churches. The influence of charismatic churches. The influence of charismatic movements is being strongly resisted by church leaders in the Evangelical Reformed Churches and as yet this evil has not penetrated."*

Stopping over at Singapore on his return journey from Canada, J. Eikelboom paid a visit to the ERCS, attending their three Church services on Sunday 23rd July, one in the First Church at 2 pm where Rev. Mahtani preached - it was well attended, with good participation from all concerned - and both the morning and evening services in the Covenant Church where Rev. Lau preached - with similar remarks about both services, excepting the poor evening attendance. According to Rev. Mahtani Sunday observance in the ERCS is a serious problem. Despite intensive preaching and instruction little progress is made, a major factor being that the elders generally do not support the ministers, since they themselves are not convinced by the preaching. Rev. Mahtani has now begun regular development meetings with his elders, at the expense of much needed pastoral work in his congregation.

Other information worth mentioning here is that the First Church now hires a Seminar room on the 12th floor of the Singapore World Trade centre for its Sunday service. The members would love to have their own meeting facilities, as this would be of much benefit to the development of church activities, and this they also brought before the Lord in their prayers that day. Some members who had recently visited Perth mentioned that they went to the Presbyterian Church there. The ERCS did not attend the 1989 ICRC. Its Church bulletin of 9 April 1989 has the interesting items:

*"On Friday night the Classis met till just past midnight. Pastor Mahtani, the chairman of the meeting, shared with us from Luke 5:1-11 about The Miraculous Draught of Fishes. We were encouraged to be obedient (v.5), courageous (v.10) and humble (v.8) if we are to do great things for the Master, like these apostles did. By next Classis in September we hope to form a Classical Standing Committee to manage the theological training of men for the ministry. In June 1990, there will be an international conference of some Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in Grand Rapids. Our two pastors will be away from June 4-19, 1990. Such a trip will undoubtedly strengthen our sister-church relationship with the PRC. We will also have the opportunity to meet with delegates of churches from other countries, like Australia and New Zealand. This will certainly encourage us in our fight for the truth. In these days of denying the absolute truth of God, it is heartening to meet with men who still believe that God's truth is eternal and unchanging, still authoritative over His people. Pray for our pastors as they prepare themselves for the conference."*

## 6. INFLUENCE OF PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

We were able to discuss the question of the Protestant Reformed Church influence frankly and openly at our meeting with delegates of the ERCS. Pastor Lau and Pastor Mahtani as well as one elder from each church were present and after mutual introductions we had good discussions about the issues raised in our mandate.

The ERCS is obviously very thankful for the contribution of the Protestant Reformed Churches in leading them to the Reformed faith, in training their ministers, in providing literature and tracts for Bible study and evangelism. Hence they value their sister relations with the Protestant Reformed Churches and generally cherish the contact they have with them.

At the same time the ERCS aims to be an independent Church federation. It sees its task in Singapore and adjacent regions and welcomes contacts with churches such as ourselves and with any church that serves God according to truth as revealed in His infallible Word.

This means that differences have to be discussed. They, rightly, insist on unity that is based on truth.

During our discussions it certainly became evident that Pastors Lau and Mahtani hold to the Protestant Reformed Church view of the covenant, and vigorously defend this view from scripture and the confessions (Three Forms of Unity). But it is not a view that the ERCS has adopted officially. It is not binding. Members of the Canadian Reformed Churches who did not share this view of the covenant were admitted and welcomed as members when they lived for some years in Singapore. The "Declaration of Principles" has not been adopted by these churches and very few of the members would be aware of their existence.

Because these matters have not previously been discussed within these churches we in a sense were raising new issues. Having raised it, I think we would do well and possibly are obligated to set out how we, the FRCA, understand God's covenant. We can be certain that the ERCS will study such a document and will wish to discuss it with us as soon as they are ready to do so. In the meantime we should do all what we can to assist them in their struggle to be Reformed.

## 7. OBSERVATIONS

- 7.1 There can be no doubt that our Lord who gathers His church has led these people from the worship of pagan gods to the Reformed Faith, and that the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore wholeheartedly desire to serve God according to scriptures and the reformed confessions, namely the Three Forms of Unity.
- 7.2 The congregations are active students of God's Word and zealous in their task of bringing others to the Reformed Faith which they have come to love as the Way of Truth.
- 7.3 Problems relating to what one ought/ought not to do on Sundays, hymns versus psalms, life or term elders,

birth control and family planning are vigorously studied and debated so that in all areas God's will may reign in the lives of His subjects. We see evidence of ongoing reformation.

- 7.4 Neither the emissaries from the PRC nor the ministers presently serving the two congregations have made an issue of a particular covenantal view. The churches have not adopted the "Declaration of Principles" of the PRC of America and it would be true to say that the content and background to the Principles are virtually unknown to all except the ministers who received their theological training in America.
- 7.5 As a result of their theological training in America and perhaps also due to earlier presbyterian influence both ministers do adhere to and strongly defend the distinctively PRC view of the covenant. However, they do not hold this view as binding, and in the past members of our Canadian sister churches have been members of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore.
- 7.6 The ERCS values its sister relations with the PRC of America and would liaise with these churches before entering into any formal relationship with the FRCA. It also believes that any expression of unity should be based on true unity and hence differences like the ones that appear to exist should be thoroughly discussed first.
- 7.7 From our meeting with representatives of the ERCS there can be no doubt that they would welcome continuing contact and discussions.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That Synod express its gratitude to the ERCS for the welcome and the assistance extended to its delegates.
- 8.2 That Synod discharges deputies appointed by Synod Albany and appoint new deputies with the mandate:
  - a) to offer whatever assistance that can be given to help the ERCS to be and remain Reformed;
  - b) to prepare a paper for the ERCS on how we see the covenant with the offer to discuss with them this and other distinctive Protestant Reformed Theology.

# Q. International Conference of Reformed Churches

Deputies appointed brs. J. Eikelboom and J.L. van Burgel as delegates to the I.C.R.C.  
Their report is submitted below.

## A. Report by delegates attending the I.C.R.C. held at Langley from 19th June to 28th June, 1989.

### 1. Introduction:

The Australian delegates J. Eikelboom and J.L. van Burgel arrived at Vancouver airport at approximately 11am Friday, June 16th, 1989 after a 20 hour journey by Canadian Air from Sydney with two intermediate stops at Nadi and Honolulu.

Mrs Berends, wife of the ICRC treasurer met us at the airport to bring us to the house of our hosts Bert and Linda Vane. After recovering from the well known "jet-lag" on Saturday, we were able to attend church services in Langley on Sunday morning and at Lynden on Sunday afternoon. We were thankful to be able to worship the Lord with our Canadian and American brothers and sisters.

Monday was spent preparing further for the Conference, due to start the next day. On Monday evening we were able to attend the prayer service for the ICRC which was led by Rev van Beveren, who spoke on Galatians 2:18-21

The prayer meeting was well attended.

### 2. Conference Preliminaries

At 10am on Tuesday, 20th June the second International Conference of Reformed Churches was opened by the Rev. J. Visscher on behalf of the convening church of Cloverdale. Rev. Visscher addressed the conference on the purposes, potential and vision of the Conference.

The following member churches were represented:

- Canadian Reformed Churches
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Free Church of Scotland
- Free Church in Southern Africa
- Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- Presbyterian Church in Korea
- Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
- Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa were represented as churches applying for membership.

The following churches were listed as 'observer churches'

- Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
- Christian Brethren Free Church (Philippines)
- Free Reformed Churches of North America
- Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Presbyterian Church in America
- Reformed Churches in South Africa
- Reformed Church in the United States
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.
- The Gereja Gereja Reformaci in Indonesia (Sumba/Savu) and the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church (Timor) were expected to attend but did not arrive.

Later in the conference it was pointed out that the churches listed above as 'observer churches' were actually 'visiting churches' although they had been given the constitutional privileges of an observer church.

The Australian delegates decided not to pursue this irregularity any further.

The Conference appointed as executive:  
Chairman: Rev. Dr. J. Visscher  
Vice-Chairman: Rev J. de Gelder  
Recording Secretary: Prof. A.C. Boyd  
Corresponding Secretary: Rev. M. van Beveren

and as official advisers Prof. C. Graham and Prof Dr. K. Deddens, with rights to speak but without vote. All visiting and observing delegates were given the right to take part in all discussions although not to vote.

### 3. Adoption of Agenda :

Appointment of Committees to deal with matters on the agenda :

1. Committee on Membership and Finance,
2. Committee on Constitutional Matters
3. Committee on Study Report- Creeds
4. Committee on Study Report- Missions
5. Committee on 1993 Conference

J.L. van Burgel was appointed to committee 1 and J. Eikelboom to committee 4. The titles and speakers of the papers to be presented at the Conference were set.

During the discussion on the adoption of the agenda, the Australian delegates questioned whether the topic on "Apartheid" belonged to the work of the member churches of the Conference, by way of the following address :

*The adoption of the agenda of the Conference is an important matter. We take into account that this is a Meeting of Churches, and not of private persons. That puts a well defined limit on what we can do here.*

*The Australian delegates have examined the titles of the papers placed on the provisional agenda by the interim Committee. And we have no difficulty, except with the paper titled "apartheid". This brings to mind Edinburgh 1985 where some remarks were made about the relevance of this Conference, and the question was asked whether a Conference statement ought to have been issued on South African apartheid, which was seen as a matter of public importance. It seems now that this matter is in fact on this provisional agenda. We stress the words "it seems". For without having dealt with the paper we can only guess at what will be said and done.*

*The interim Committee has no doubt been given some insight into the contents of the paper, and has judged, on this Conference's behalf that the topic is indeed one that properly belongs here. All the same we think it is not unreasonable if, when reading the title "apartheid", and with Edinburgh 1985 in mind, one translates that into an expectation of a paper which deals with a political problem. If the Conference were to start on that road it would be difficult to not make conclusions, and then there would be the implication of a Conference statement. With that we would begin to become a political pressure group, well on the way of the World Council of Churches.*

*It is of course possible to direct Scriptural light onto any matter, be it political or otherwise. There is nothing wrong with that and it is probably done very often in the preaching. It is also possible that a member church asks the Conference to put a matter of particular importance to that church on the agenda. If that is the case here, we do not know about it. However even then we would hesitate, especially in the light of Edinburgh 1985. Even allowing for these possibilities our question remains : does the topic belong on the agenda of a Conference of Reformed Churches ? Is it an issue that relates to the task of the churches back at home ?*

*Their task of proclaiming God's Word in the official preaching and of confirming God's grace in the official administration of the Sacraments and of church discipline. That is the only message - and at the same time it is a complete message - which the church is authorized to proclaim in the name of the Lord in the official preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is the only answer and the complete answer for the forgiveness of all iniquities, the healing of all diseases and the vindication and justice in all oppression. The Church must let God speak to man through His Word. That alone throws light upon life to regenerate to a new life in the Spirit.*

*We ask in very plain terms : is the Church still game enough to put complete trust in the message of God's Word, also for the healing of rifts in nations, without a message of a Reformed Conference turned political pressure group ? The Reformed testimony that Christ expects us to give to the world is not by way of a message from a Conference of churches, but by way of being united by faith in Him. For that shows to the world the great restoring power and grace of our Saviour. And that is also true for political life.*

*We believe that if any agenda item at this Conference in any way whatsoever could turn into a political matter it does not belong here. Therefore we seek an assurance from the chair before consenting to have it on the agenda of this Conference of Reformed Churches.*

After a brief discussion the Conference remitted the matter to Committee 2 for advice. The remainder of the agenda was adopted.

### 4. Report from Corresponding Secretary and Interim Committee:

The secretary reported on the work of the Interim Committee since the 1985 Conference. He referred with sorrow to the resignation of Rev. D. Lamont due to illness and the death of Rev. Drs M.K. Drost, member of the missions committee. He reported that the following churches had advised to be unable to attend the Conference this time but they assured the Conference of their continued interest:

Reformed Church of Japan ( who wrote that in view of the recent outcome of the REC meeting they were interested in the ICRC but their Assembly still had to deal with the matter ) ; Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana del Peru ; Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand (formerly the OPCNZ) ; Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The secretary paid tribute to Rev G. van Rongen's work in the Credo committee (In a letter Rev van Rongen had expressed regret that he was unable to be present, and passed on his greetings to the Conference).

5. Committee 2 recommended that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (VGKSA) be accepted as members of the ICRC. This recommendation was unanimously accepted. At this point the Australian delegates raised several points of concern with the purpose of the Conference and any new member or existing member's commitment to it, by way of the following address :

*We express joy and gratitude that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa can join with us as members of the ICRC. However, when we see that the FRSA through this admission will become co-members of the ICRC with for example the Free Church in Southern Africa this raises an issue which we wonder whether the committee addressed.*

*We can read in article 4 the conditions for membership of the ICRC. We do trust that the committee investigated these and is satisfied that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa are eligible to be members of the Conference. For this we are thankful.*

*However we believe that article 4 cannot be taken in isolation. Like every other article, it must be read in the context of the whole Constitution - and in particular of article 3 - the purpose of the Conference. For surely any Church which applies for membership ought to accept and work towards the purpose of the Conference.*

*We refer firstly to Article 3 (1) which reads that the purpose of the Conference is "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ."*

*And also article 3 (2) which states that the purpose of the Conference is "to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches".*

*The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, and for that matter all churches here should have some difficulty with these two sections of article 3. For what is the FRSA relation to the Free Church in Southern Africa? And what, for that matter, is the relation of other member churches with each other?*

*Quoting from the excellent booklet published by the our sister churches - the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, entitled "For the Sake of True Ecumenicity" we read on page 6 "ecumenical fellowship is possible only when cooperating churches can honestly declare with regard to each others confessional standards, that they are in conformity with the Word of God. In no other way can form be given to the first rule of true ecumenicity, that it shall serve unity in truth. The churches , cooperating in ecumenical fellowship, must also have the mutual confidence that they all sincerely maintain their standards and live up to them", and further :*

*"In all these churches there must be an unreserved and reliable subscription to the standards. They have to make sure that in all these churches there is faithful doctrinal discipline, in order that the unity of faith be maintained against error"*

*If that were known to be so of all the member churches - and let's make it clear that we're not passing any such judgment - then all could be here in ecumenical fellowship as sister churches, and not just as ICRC members.*

*We would like to remind member churches that that is the reason why the FRCA always wanted a conference of sister churches. Only then can we be sure we have true unity of faith . If on the other hand we have something less than true unity of faith then it will affect our way of dealing with other matters on the agenda.*

*Having said all that, we repeat the question whether the Committee dealt with this aspect of the admission procedure. We do re-iterate that the FRCA welcomes the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in the ICRC - after all they are our sister churches and we have the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship with them which expresses the unity of faith we have with them.*

6. Committee 2 recommended that the topic "Apartheid" be allowed to remain on the agenda because, while the topic could be treated as a political subject it was not only political. The Australian delegates having made their position clear did not pursue the matter and the agenda was adopted in full.

## 7. Further Constitutional Matters dealt with during the Conference :

- 7.1 the proposal from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands that delegates at the beginning of the conference express their agreement with the basis of the Conference was not proceeded with after the RCN delegates indicated they did not wish to pursue the matter.

- 7.2 Committee 2 recommended that the proposal from the Free Church of Scotland that the constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognize the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches, not be adopted. Extensive discussion followed which highlighted the different ways in which member churches see the role of the Conference. The Presbyterian Churches tended to still see the Conference as an ecclesiastical fellowship and drew inevitable conclusions from that view. The Reformed churches tried to emphasise that the ICRC was a conference.

The Australian delegates showed their understanding of the Presbyterian position and addressed the Conference as follows :

*The FRCA thankfully acknowledged that the Lord has His Churches and believers in many countries in this world. In recognition thereof the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have sought to strengthen the bonds with such churches.*

*This became particularly urgent after the 1982 Constituent Assembly where our Churches expressed unity of faith in Christ with other Churches with whom they had built up no ecclesiastical relationship since they, at that time, were largely unknown to them.*

*It should be understood that the type of meeting the FRCA had in mind when it was first suggested, was one of churches who had already established ecclesiastical relations as sister churches. Unfortunately however, the developments leading to, and at the constitutional assembly in 1982, went into another direction.*

*As a result, despite the emphatic statement in the Constitution that member churches in the Conference express the unity of faith they have, this wider gathering presents us with the unsatisfactory situation of a meeting of churches some of which have as yet not formally recognised each other as having unity of faith in Christ, and even others who have had little or no contact.*

*To redress this, the FRCA in its Synods since the Constituent Assembly have intensified their contacts with churches abroad, even to the extent where many church members believe we're going too fast and wide.*

*It is worth mentioning what the chairman of our 1983 Synod wrote in defence of our churches' decision to recognise the EPC of Ireland, FC of Scotland and RPC of Taiwan : "If the above-mentioned churches would not have been recognised as true churches, Synod could not have come to the decision to join the ICRC ..." (Una Sancta V31/6).*

*And dealing with some suggested proposals to the 1985 ICRC, he wrote further : ... "Churches which do not seek national unity with member churches cannot unite internationally at a conference."*

*As a result of developments this Conference is regrettably now not the 'faith-communion' it ought to be - and was originally intended to be by us - but merely a 'discussion-communion', a forum.*

*This has its practical consequences for our participation in the Conference. For example, since our churches believe that cooperation in mission work is possible only with sister churches, we had to advise the Missions Committee accordingly.*

*The FRCA would like to see this unsatisfactory situation redressed. Unity of faith in Christ must be clearly established back at home before it can be expressed here.*

*To be here as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, in obedience to His command 'to be one' implies the willingness to observe all that He has commanded. Only in that obedience may the Churches in this Conference ask God to bless and give the needed strength for carrying out the task He has given and as we set out earlier. It is a task of spiritual struggle against the evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

*The cost and effort expended on an international Conference of Reformed Churches is by far from small. As responsible stewards who have to give account to the Lord as owner, we must ask the question whether it can be justified.*

*The answer can be in the affirmative only if the work of this Conference is of benefit to the Churches in the place where they live, for the promotion of God's glory and the coming of His Kingdom. And that means in more than Mission work alone. That is the fruit which the International Conference of Reformed Churches must bear as its justification.*

The full text of the minuted discussion is included to give an impression of the differing views.

- i) Membership of the ICRC should not replace true sister church relationships.
- ii) The mutual recognition sought by the Free Church of Scotland proposal was possible only between sister churches.
- iii) The Constitution of the ICRC does lay on member churches the obligation to express and promote the unity of faith that member churches have, and churches failing to act should be called to explain their failure.
- iv) Among member churches there are differing procedures and policies for promoting inter-church relationships and these need to be respected.
- v) The proposal of the Free Church of Scotland presents a goal to be aimed at but is not a responsibility of the Conference as such.
- vi) The question of admission to the Lord's Table was brought up. Delegates of the Reformed Churches referred to the admittedly strict procedures that were applied even to their own members when visiting other congregations of their own Churches and in the light of that pleaded for understanding of their attitude in this matter to members of other churches. Delegates of the Free Church of Scotland pointed out that the standards for admission to the Lord's Table within the Free Church of Scotland were high, but at the same time the Church welcomed to the Lord's Table all who were members in good standing in any true Church of Jesus Christ. They spoke of the grief experienced both when members of the Free Church of Scotland were not admitted to the Lord's Table within member churches of the ICRC and also when members of Reformed Churches which had membership in the ICRC felt themselves unable to come to the Lord's Table within the Free Church of Scotland. The delegate of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia suggested that the matter required to be examined in the light of Scripture rather than on the basis of historical development within the various churches.
- vii) The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, while not able to accept the proposal of the Free Church of Scotland in the terms in which it was stated, agreed that the mutual recognition referred to was what should be sought. At the heart of the matter is the doctrine of the Church.
- viii) The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches cautioned against trying to go ahead too quick-

ly. The position of their Churches was that they were happy to be part of this Conference in a way in which they had never previously been able to partake in an inter-church conference because they saw that this Conference does recognize and express unity and is committed to promote unity. It has great possibilities. Out of membership of this Conference they had already made contact with other churches with a view to establishing sister church relationships. They were grateful for what they had in the Conference and were pledged to its purposes, but wished to identify clearly what were Conference responsibilities and what were the responsibilities of the Churches.

- ix) The Free Church of Scotland delegates responded. Prof. D. Macleod wished still to highlight the anomaly in the situation that there were member churches of the Conference who, while recognizing other member churches in the Conference as true churches and accepting their delegates as brethren, did not allow members of these churches to come to the Lord's Table. He wished also to state the ongoing difficulty that the Free Church of Scotland had with the difference that was made between recognizing a church as a true church and accepting a church as a sister church. However they considered that there had been a fruitful and helpful discussion and in the hope that future meetings of the Conference would continue consideration of these issues they would not oppose the Committee's recommendation to pass, at this time from the proposal of the Free Church of Scotland.

Conference decided to accept the Committee's recommendation.

- 7.3 Committee 2 recommended that the proposal by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia "that membership of the REC (RES) is an impediment to membership of the ICRC" not be adopted. The delegates from the FRCA defended the proposal as follows :

*This clause ought to be inserted so that there is a strong witness against the false ecumenism of the REC. The Conference should make its position regarding the REC abundantly clear and guard against any weakening of its attitude by including the provision in its constitution.*

*For the FRCA the membership of the REC has always been an obstacle for ecumenical relations. The same could be said for our dutch sister churches, the RCN*

It appeared to be the opinion of the conference that the matter was already adequately covered by article IV, 1 (d) which restricts membership of the ICRC to those churches who are not members of "any organisation whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis."

The Committee recommendation was accepted with only three churches voting against.

- 7.4 The proposal from the Canadian Reformed Churches to amend article V of the constitution to read "the conclusions of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation " was unanimously accepted.
- 7.5 The proposal from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that the first words of Article II of the regulations be amended to read "each conference shall elect..." was unanimously adopted. (in slightly amended form)
- 7.6 The proposal from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that subsection 4.b.iv of Article II of the regulations be amended to read "forward to the churches materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference" was defeated 9 votes to 1 with only the Australian delegates supporting the proposal.
- 7.7 The proposal from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to add to subsection 2 of article IV of the regulations the words "when committees are appointed, the Conference should also appoint persons who can serve as alternate committee members" was altered to read "the Conference shall also appoint members who can serve as substitute members should original appointees no longer be able to serve" was unanimously adopted.
- 7.8 The proposal from the Free Church of Scotland that in subsection 3 of article IV of the regulations "one year" be substituted for "two years" was unanimously adopted.
- 7.9 The proposal from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that there be added to Article 5 of the regulations the statement, "only delegates of churches and not organisations should participate in the meetings of the Conference" was rejected 9 votes to 1 on the grounds that the existing regulations adequately covered the proposed alteration.
- 7.10 The proposal from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that "Article V of the regulations should include a clear statement about the position of observers and advisers and also a clear indication of which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church" was remitted to the interim committee to examine and report to the next Conference. (the existing rules were admitted to be ambiguous)
- 7.11 The proposal from the Free Church of Scotland that the Regulations and procedures should make possible discussion of important issues not included in the pre-set agenda provided a proposal to this effect be tabled by at least five voting delegates, was eventually carried as the following amended motion "additional subjects for the agenda introduced by a delegate of a member church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the agenda". The Australian delegates after having initiated the amendment that such decision should require a two-thirds majority, were the only member church to vote against the amended motion.
- 7.12 The last and most contentious proposal discussed was that from the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, to amend the Basis "to insert the stipulation that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members". Committee 2 considered this

proposal more properly belonged to Article IV membership, a view which was shared by the Australian delegates. However Committee 2 recommended the following amendment to subsection 1.a of Article 4 of the Constitution : "adhere and are faithful to confessional standards which are in agreement with the Basis of the Conference". According to Committee 2 this would allow membership of churches which adhere to other Confessions not contained in the Basis as long as these confessions were in agreement with the Basis.

The Australian delegates then moved an amendment that Article IV be altered instead to read " adhere and are faithful to their own Confessional standards which are included in the Basis of the Conference". The Australian amendment lapsed for want of a seconder. No other member church could see the danger in the Committee's amendment. It was not until outsiders, (from the visiting churches including Rev Galbraith of the OPC and Rev Bilkes of the Free Reformed Churches in North America) warned against this broadening of the basis, that delegates from member churches began to show some sympathy for the case put by the Australian delegates, who then moved that the Committee amendment be ruled out of order as it clearly did not address the original proposals from the FRCA and the CRC and added a new element which had not been legally presented to the Conference. The Conference chairman asked for advice from the floor and with the exception of the Free Church of Scotland most delegates now saw the dangers of the proposal and it was subsequently ruled out of order. The committee was instructed to come with a new proposal regarding the proposals from the FRCA and the CRC.

Your delegates wish to draw attention to the irregularity of the procedure followed by the chair. The motion to have the Committee amendment ruled out of order was not properly dealt with. Instead of giving it the precedence motions of such nature deserve, the final ruling was not made until after further protracted discussion on the merits of the Committee amendment.

Committee 2 subsequently recommended to deal with the proposal as follows :

that there be recorded in the Minutes of this meeting of the Conference the following statement "The Conference declares that all member churches are expected to adhere and be faithful to their own confessional standards, and that they recognize the Reformed character of the Basis, and also that they are committed to the Purpose of the Conference."

In presenting this solution the Committee indicated to have given long consideration to the matter, looking at various ways of dealing with it. They brought forward this proposal as one that in some way answered the proposals submitted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, while at the same time leaving open the possibility for churches to propose in future years relevant changes to the Constitution if, on further reflection, they thought these necessary.

There followed prolonged discussion in which the following points were made (quoting from the Minutes):

- i) Attention was drawn to both the reaction of the Free Church of Scotland and of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands circulated with the Provisional Agenda. The original proposal of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is based on a misunderstanding. The Committee's recommendation does not help. The sub-section 1.a of Article IV does not require the office-bearers of member churches to subscribe to anything other than the Confessional standards of their own churches. This Article does not in fact refer to "subscription" at all. "Subscription" is what is required of office-bearers by their own churches. The declaration proposed in the Committee's recommendation is superfluous. It would be a bad precedent to legislate because of a misunderstanding. We should be able to live with the Constitution as it is without alteration or declaratory statements (Free Church of Scotland, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Corresponding Secretary).
- ii) If in fact the proper understanding of the present Constitution is that no subscription is required of office-bearers except to the adopted standards of their own churches why not make a statement to that effect? (Canadian Reformed Churches, Free Reformed Churches of Australia)
- iii) The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches indicated that what their churches were committed to was the position set out in the original proposal from their Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- iv) The present basis of the Conference declares the unity that there is between member churches and gives recognition to the doctrinal unity that there is between the standards listed. The framers of the Westminster Confession did not see themselves as replacing the Three Forms of Unity but setting forth their doctrine for the Anglo-Saxon world. Does the Conference need a statement that could be taken as some sort of protection for member churches from guilt by association (in this instance association with the Westminster Confession of Faith)? Anything that might detract from the message that the Basis of the Conference recognizes a common theology in the standards listed there would indeed threaten the future of the Conference (Free Church of Scotland).
- v) If the Committee's proposal is carried and such a statement included in the minutes of this Conference it could be used to tie the hands of future Conferences.

On a vote being taken the Committee's recommendation was defeated by 5 votes to 3, Australian delegates voting in favour without prejudice to their original proposal.

In terms of the proposal of their Churches circulated in the draft agenda the delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia then moved that in Article II of the Constitution there be inserted, "Delegates to the Conference subscribe only to the standards of the Churches of which they are members."

On a vote being taken this motion was defeated by 7 votes to 2. (CRC and FRCA)

## 8 Report and recommendations of Committee 3 (Ecumenical Creeds) and Conference decisions

The Report, copies of which had been circulated to delegates, was presented by Dr. J. Faber who spoke to the Report and explained the Committee's recommendations.

Conference decided as follows :

The Conference commends the Report to the careful attention of the member churches and invites them to submit their comments if any to the next meeting of the Conference.

The member churches are requested to consider especially the following points:

- a) the difference in the use of these creeds in the member churches;
- b) a number of deviations from the received text in the International Consultation Text:

## 9 Papers delivered at the Conference and discussions.

\* On Tuesday evening 20th June Rev. Prof. C. Graham addressed the Conference on the subject of "Nehemiah, the Rebuilder". Discussion took place on a number of issues raised by the paper. This discussion developed mainly along the lines of the relationship of the book of Nehemiah to the New Testament and to Christology in particular. From there consideration was given to the Exemplarist and Redemptive Historical use of the Old Testament. The consensus view was that these were not mutually exclusive. Interest in the relationship between these two approaches to the Old Testament was such as to suggest that papers on these topics might be given at a future meeting of the Conference.

\* On Wednesday 21st June Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen addressed the Conference on the subject of "Baptism with the Holy Spirit". In the discussion comments were made and questions asked on a large number of the points made in Prof. van Bruggen's paper. These he replied to giving further explanation of statements made in the paper and defending the positions he had put forward. He pointed out that his approach to the subject of his paper had been dictated by hermeneutical considerations. In reply to an observation about the misuse made by Pentecostals of the term "baptized with the Spirit" and a related observation that our Confessions, written three hundred years before the rise of the modern Pentecostal movement, gave us no dogmatic protection against this divisive movement, Prof. van Bruggen did recognize the responsibility falling on Reformed Churches to develop new formulations in line with the Confessions to deal with new situations. There was also raised the question of the implication for ecumenical relations of being baptized with the Spirit. Prof. van Bruggen considered that the question was outwith the scope of his lecture.

\* On Thursday evening 22nd June Prof Dr Ho Jin Jun addressed the Conference in a Paper on "The Tangun Shrine Worship and Radical Christian Movement in Korea". Discussion included the following (from the Minutes) :

- i) The task of the Church in Korea and the Reformed Churches in other countries with regard to politics and government;
- ii) The place given in teaching in seminaries and mission training programs to exposing the doctrinal and philosophical background of popular teachings such as Liberation Theology and, in Korea in particular, Minjung Theology;
- iii) The working out in practice in all countries of what is implied in Prof. Jun's statement "We need the relevancy of Reformed Theology in Korea today" (pg. 19 of paper);
- iv) In connection with iii) above, the responsibility of members of the Conference to help each other not only to criticize theologies such as Liberation Theology, but to discover, in the tradition of those who formulated our Reformed Confessions, what the Bible is saying to the situation facing us today and so apply our Reformed Theology;
- v) The possibility and desirability of seeking to form Christian political parties, after the example of Abraham Kuyper, in Korea and elsewhere, so as to seek to relieve in some measure the problem of seeking to influence society without the Church courts getting involved in political matters;
- vi) The need to instruct believers so that they will influence society;
- vii) The need to avoid any teaching that suggested that the gospel of Christ and him crucified was not all sufficient.
- viii) Should member Churches of the ICRC which had the duty to be prophetic in their ministry and therefore constantly to seek renewal, be happy with the term "Conservative Church"?

Prof. Jun responded to some of the points raised. Because Christians are a very small minority in Korea a Christian political party would have little influence even if it could be formed. The tendency in the Korean Churches had been to concentrate on the salvation of individuals and they were weak in the area of instructing their people with regard to what is happening in society around them. There was little reference in the older Reformed writings to the matter of demon possession that was a real issue for them.

\* On Friday evening 23rd June Prof. Dr. J. Douma addressed the Conference on the subject of "Apartheid". In the discussion which took place the following Monday in the morning session (from the Minutes) :

- i) Rev. O.J. Douma (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) made the plea that although the paper dealt only with Apartheid in South Africa the Conference should discuss the subject in more general terms. The fact that even within the Dutch reformed churches in Canada there was separation from each other with respect to the Lord's Table was a form of Apartheid. Such Apartheid was sometimes justified on the grounds that if two Churches tried to unite what happens is that we are left with three Churches. Is the problem too big to attempt a solution?

- ii) Rev. W. Boessenkool (Free Reformed Churches in South Africa) read from a prepared paper a long response. Copies were made available to participants. The main points in Mr. Boessenkool's response were as follows:
1. Rev Boessenkool said that the paper of Dr. Douma was misrepresenting the political situation in South Africa. He warned that the ICRC was going in the line of the WCC and the REC when political issues were tabled. He wanted the ICRC to adhere to Art. 30 of the Dordt Church Order, otherwise the result could be that some Reformed Churches in South Africa would not want to ask for membership.
  2. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr Douma was incomplete. According to Dr. Douma thousands of black people had been shifted to other places, the ruling position of the whites being the cause that this took place. Besides that the fear of the whites had inspired them to do so. Rev. Boessenkool pointed out that it was not fear but the willingness to help with better and cheaper housing, that was the background. Also that at this moment nobody will be shifted to any other place without his consent. Everybody being free to look for work at any place he likes.
  3. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr. Douma was inaccurate. Rev. Boessenkool gave many figures of the rapidly changing scenario in South Africa. Many figures were given of things that had changed which Dr. Douma had not brought into account in his paper. Rev. Boessenkool proposed that the Conference file Dr. Douma's paper and his reaction to it, and continue with the agenda. For the most important thing in the world is to contend for the faith which has been delivered to us. Unity in the truth will stand forever.
  4. Rev. Boessenkool maintained that the delegates of the member churches of the ICRC really expected a thoroughly theological analysis which goes into the roots of the issue. He therefore regretted that the paper together with the other papers had not been sent to the delegates in advance.
- iii) Mr. A. Roos moved that Prof. Douma's paper and the response by Rev. Boessenkool should not be published and that the Conference terminate discussion of the topic and proceed to the next business.
- Chairman's Ruling 1. The Chairman indicated that it would be impossible at this stage to put an embargo on the publication of Prof. Douma's paper. He ruled that the paper be included with Conference papers and that the responses be recorded by the recording secretary for inclusion in the minutes and that the Conference continue with discussion.
- Chairman's Ruling 2. The Chairman ruled that he would not be happy to accept further long printed statements but he did encourage full participation in the discussion centered around Prof. Douma's paper.
- iv) Dr. P. Rossouw (Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa) having apologized for the unavoidable absence of his colleague Prof. Dr. J. Heyns, made the following points :
- a) The ecclesiastical aspects of the subject were rightly approached by way of an ethical analysis of Apartheid but such an analysis needed to be full and it was impossible at one session to give a full picture of the situation in South Africa.
  - b) He wished to ask Prof. Douma if in preparing and presenting his paper he had been aware of the fact that South Africans were very aware of mistakes made in the past and that 80% of all South African Christians were committed to changes.
  - c) South Africa was in a transitional stage as far as government is concerned.
  - d) Why had the paper made no reference to -
    - 1) the persistent efforts of the South African government to get together all acknowledged black African leaders for consultation;
    - 2) the fact that the Group Areas Act and other Acts related to Apartheid are under reconsideration and a Bill of Human Rights is being considered for all racial groups in South Africa.
  - e) While injustices were committed in implementation the declared aim of successive Prime Ministers was justice ; and fear was not the great motive.
  - f) Freedom of speech in South Africa to criticize the government is unrivaled in all Africa.
  - g) The presentation in Prof. Douma's paper is out of date. South Africa is on the way to meaningful change.
  - h) The Role of the Church in South Africa. It is admitted that it was a mistake ever to have tried to give a Biblical justification of Apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Church has listened to criticism from all over the world and has reconsidered her position. The paper belittled the major changes in the Dutch Reformed Church as seen in the publication Church and Society. There is no Apartheid in the Dutch Reformed Church. The Dutch Reformed Church has in fact denounced the ideology of Apartheid and has urged the government to uphold the Scriptural norms for human justice.
  - i) South Africa is in a state of transition towards a contextualized Christian democracy. What she needs is not boycotts but critical solidarity.
- v) the Conference's Responsibility in the Matter was discussed
- It was suggested that the Conference agree with the substance of Prof. Douma's paper that Apartheid finds no basis in Scripture, leave working out of dismantling to South Africa, encourage South African Reformed Churches to join the Conference (Rev. Cl. Stam), appreciate that the solving of the problems will take time, and appreciate that the Reformed Churches in South Africa are doing what they can (Prof. Dr. K. Deddens). The struggle in South Africa is a battle for the Reformed faith

against a fake Christless Christianity proclaiming the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man without reference to Scripture.

vi) the responsibility of the Church to the State was discussed

In light of Article 30 of the Church Order, Dr. Faber questioned Prof. Douma's statement on page 29 of his paper relating to the Church's responsibility.

Prof. Douma in replying pointed out that he would be given only some 15 minutes time to reply to the criticism voiced during a one-and-a-half hour session. He said that the subject had not been chosen by the Dutch churches. The Interim Committee had invited him to give an evaluation of a relevant subject. With reference to the Reformed Churches in South Africa Apartheid was not a determining factor for admission to ICRC but the subject had to be faced. He was aware while preparing the paper of all the information referred to by Dr. Rossouw. He defended his position on the duty of the church in South Africa to speak out against this sin, as against any sin. It is an ecclesiastical task.

Apartheid had to be addressed in all its aspects. The Dutch Reformed Church had criticized the application of Apartheid but not Apartheid as such. Why had Rev. Boessenkool not spoken about the "sin" of Apartheid? It is important for the member churches to go on speaking to one another about a matter that has brought so much misery to South Africa.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Douma for his paper and his response to the observations made and expressed the great need for ongoing prayer.

\* On Monday afternoon Dr. K. Deddens addressed the Conference on the subject, "Contextualization in Missions". In the discussion attention was drawn to the following points (quoting from the Minutes) :

- i) Contextualization is knowing the background of those to whom you speak.
- ii) We may be oversensitive on the issue of cultural imperialism. We may have, because of a long period of Bible teaching, something more to export than theology.
- iii) The problem of upward mobility when lives are changed by the Gospel.
- iv) Can we not learn from Marxist diagnosis and analysis of the problems of the poor while rejecting its proffered remedies? We must not allow rejection of false theologies to become an occasion for ignoring the needs of the poor.
- v) The problem of the use of the term "Christian" as a synonym for "Western". Maybe a term can be coined to describe true faith in Christ on analogy of Hindu-ism, Marx-ism, Christo-ism.
- vi) The problem of breaking with customs that belong to the old religion.
- vii) New third world situations may call for expansion of the Confessions.
- viii) It may be difficult to teach people the Scriptures in their own culture if their language is limited; especially in decadent, rather primitive, cultures.

Prof. Deddens in replying to comments agreed with those who had suggested that Scripture and Contextualization were two most important questions for future Reformed Churches worldwide. He agreed that all cultures are not equal but the missionary had often a great deal to learn from the native culture. We can learn from all sources, including Marxism. The problem of limited languages can be overcome over a period of time. With regard to need for extension to the Confessions he wished to point out the fullness of the teaching in the ecumenical creeds and the Reformation Confessions.

\* On Tuesday evening 27th June Prof. D. Macleod addressed the Conference on the subject of "Christology". For details of the discussion refer to Conference Minutes.

\* On Wednesday evening 28th June Prof Dr C van Dam addressed the Conference on the subject of "the Elder as preserver of life". For details of the discussion refer to Conference Minutes.

## 10 Committee 4 (Missions) - Report and recommendations :

The Rev. Norman E. Reid presented the report from Committee 4 who reviewed progress made on the mandate given to 1985 Standing Committee which contained the items below (shown as 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3).

10.1 To gather information from the member churches regarding their missionary activities and training programs.

### 10.1.1 Missionary Activities

- (a) On examining the returns from the churches it was noted that the Korean Church had not made any submission to the committee. Dr. Ho Jin Jun, being a member of Committee 4 explained that his church had 15 missionaries working in Taiwan, Indonesia, Ghana, Japan and the Philippines. With aid from the Presbyterian Church in America his church had begun a missionary training institute in Korea. He asked that lecturers be sent to help in his training program, especially in the field of Pastoral Theology.  
The Committee recommendation that member churches take note of the request of the Korean Church was adopted.
- (b) A letter from a committee of the church at Spakenburg-South (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) was received asking about possibilities anywhere in the world for new missions activity or expansion of existing activities. The letter also contained an offer of financial support and/or man power to assist in such projects.
- (c) Rev. J.M. Vingno, an observer from the Christian Brethren Free Church (Philippines) expressed the desire for the ICRC to help send missionaries to his area, as need for Reformed witness is great.

The Committee recommendation that the Conference request the delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to convey the information from Rev. Vingno to the Church at Spakenburg- South was adopted.

10.1.2 To gather information regarding missionary activity and training programs.

The Committee discussed the submission from the Free Church of Scotland in the Information Re The Provisional Agenda Page 5, Item 8 "Re Missions" first paragraph. The Committee noted that Dr. Deddens was delivering a paper on "Contextualization".

10.1.3 Missionary Training Programmes

The Committee recommendation that the Conference instruct the Standing Committee on Missions to investigate programs of missionary training was adopted.

10.2. To gather information regarding coordination of missionary activities of member churches in training and exchanging missionaries.

(a) A letter from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was read to the committee stating that they would cooperate in actual mission activities with sister churches only. It was agreed that since this issue was basic to the whole Conference it should not be discussed in the Missions Committee.

(b) Discussion took place regarding the need for more contact between the churches in Sumba/Savu (Gereja Gereja Reformaci, Indonesia) and the Korean missionaries in Java.

The Committee recommendation that the Conference draw the attention of the churches in Sumba/Savu to the presence of two Korean missionaries in Java and the attention of the Korean Church to the existence of the Churches in Sumba/Savu was adopted.

(c) The Convener reported that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland was cooperating with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in establishing a Reformed congregation in the north of England in conjunction with the Presbyterian Association of England. The Irish Church was providing man power and the Dutch Church helping financially and with temporary preaching supply. This is a practical outcome of our relationship within ICRC.

(d) A message was received from Prof. Boyd speaking of the need on the Peruvian mission field for teachers in the high school, Collegio San Andres, in the Free Church of Scotland mission. Rev. McDonald spoke of need for additional missionaries in the areas served by the Free Church in Southern Africa.

The Committee recommendation that the Conference request members take note of these needs was adopted.

(e) Dr. Deddens drew the attention of the Committee to the conference organized by the missionaries in Brazil and Curacao belonging to the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. This Conference will take place in October 1989 in Curacao. Invitations have been extended to missionaries serving in Peru, Surinam and South Africa. The Conference will be in the English language, and will also involve mission aid workers.

The Committee recommendation that the Conference draw the attention of member Churches to this information was adopted.

10.3 (at the time of writing this report the exact text was not available to us, so for details we must refer to Conference Minutes)

## 11 Report on Workshop on Inter-Church Relations

Dr J. Visscher presented a paper on the "Rules for Inter-Church Relations" which outlined current rules for correspondence as adopted by Reformed Churches, and rules for fraternal relations as adopted by Presbyterian Churches

The paper concluded with a suggested set of rules for "ecclesiastical fellowship". These rules do not differ significantly from the rules for correspondence currently used by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

They read as follows:

1. to take mutual heed that the fellowshiping churches do not deviate from the Christian doctrine and practice as taught in the Holy Scriptures and summarized in the Reformed Confessions;
2. to inform each other of changes proposed in doctrine and church government;
3. to forward Acts/Minutes of each other's Assemblies/Synods and to invite delegates to each other's Assemblies/Synods;
4. to accept attestations or certificates of membership and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, when invited by a local church council/ session;
5. to inform each other regarding relationships with third parties and membership in ecumenical organisations.

The Australian delegates pointed out that the basic rules mentioned in the paper as being a typical Reformed approach, were missing the critical element of the requirement to admonish or take care for churches which deviate from the Reformed Confessions in doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline. It was noted that the proposed rules in the paper (quoted above) do have this provision (rule 1) whereas the latest version of Rules proposed by the deputies of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands omits it.

The Free Church of Scotland reacted to rule 1 "to take mutual heed that the fellowshiping churches do not deviate from the Christian doctrine etc ..." by indicating they considered it contained an element of mistrust, of suspicion, with the sister church "sniffing around".

Rev C. Stam responded by stating that rule 1 did not imply suspicion but expressed a mutual responsibility. Prof J. van Bruggen suggested a more positive wording to rule 1 so that it indicates a commitment to seek and encourage each other to continue as faithful churches. Rev J. Visscher also did not see rule 1 as motivated by suspicion and saw some merit in Prof van Bruggen's suggestion.

Rev Stam found difficulty with rule 4 which allowed each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer sacraments. He pointed to the restrictions in force at present with the transfer of ministers to a Reformed sister church in another country.

The most direct response to the rules came from Professor Macleod of the Free Church of Scotland. He saw no problem with or need for rules 3 and 4.

Firstly, he noted the admission to the Lord's Table is governed by the local eldership and they may allow visitors if they are members of the true church of Christ. These churches are not listed in some sort of official list but members of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland or the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands would be heartily welcome if showing true faith. The true church of God is not limited to orthodox and pure churches.

Secondly, the decision of access to his pulpit lies with the local minister who may admit a minister who will not violate his beliefs and Confession. This minister may be Church of England or Baptist or Church of Scotland or any Reformed minister who will not violate the trust placed in him. At the 1985 Edinburgh ICRC delegates from member churches of the Conference had been invited to preach in the Free Church of Scotland pulpits because the Free Church ministers had wanted to show that all members of the Conference preach the same Gospel. He said we experienced here (at Langley) an embarrassment in that we cannot share pulpits, meaning a reluctance to share with the Presbyterian faith.

Thirdly, there is provision in the standing orders of the General Assembly to allow delegates from bodies to address the Assembly. Some of these are not always orthodox, some with evangelical direction. The purpose is to express solidarity with them and to offer encouragement.

Professor Macleod found rule 5 more difficult to accept since it appears to suggest a form of veto on whom the church may talk to. He considered rules 1 and 2 are adequately covered by rules 3 to 5.

In Scotland, Prof MacLeod said, they are reluctant to unchurch any body of Christians. There may be in one place 3 or 4 denominations which are valid expressions of the Church of Christ.

Rev Stam noted that when we have recognised each other as sister churches then we have found each other to be faithful. There is no element of suspicion in rule 1. He was however concerned with the comments of Professor Macleod. It seems that those who do not 'sniff' seem more liberal in the opening of their pulpits.

Rev Underhay from the Free Church of Scotland emphasised that it was not correct to assume that the FCS is free and easy in their access to the pulpits. It is a responsibility of the local minister who must take utmost care.

The Australian delegates noted the discussion with great interest since it has been reported on several occasions that the Dutch sister Churches cannot commence a sister church relationship with the FCS since the FCS do not understand the need for our restrictive rules.

Following the workshop on rules the Australian delegates approached the delegates from the Dutch sister churches again to emphasise strongly that their omission of any mutual admonition condition from their proposed set of rules would continue to be resisted by the Free Reformed Churches. It should be noted that the PCEA have also received from the Dutch sister churches this draft set of rules omitting any reference to mutual admonition of each other in cases of a deviation from Confession. It is then understandable that the PCEA delegates addressing the Free Reformed Churches at the meeting in Byford could say they had no difficulty with the Dutch rules. Rev. J. de Gelder, who is the secretary of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands assured us that the formulation of rule 1 as proposed by Rev. Visscher at the Conference they could agree with and he could give no explanation as to its omission from the latest version of proposed Dutch rules.

(For further comments made by delegates reference should also be made to the Conference minutes of Session 10.)

## **12 Report from the Executive Committee**

### **1. Next Conference**

Hosting Church: Presbyterian Church in Korea

Place: Seoul, Korea

Time: the first half of September 1993

Alternative Host: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

### **2. Interim Committee - Substitutes**

for the Committee: Rev. O.J. Douma, Prof. D. MacLeod, Rev. M. Vander Wel

for the Corresponding Secretary: Rev. C.L. Stam

### **3. Suggested Topics and Speakers for the next Meeting**

Marriage and Divorce - Drs. A. Kamer

Church in a Secular Society - Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes

Admission to the Lord's Supper - Rev. J.A. MacCallum

Preaching: Red. Hist & Exempl. - Prof. Dr. C. Trimp

Church Growth - Dr. J. Visscher  
Theonomy - Prof. A.I. MacLeod  
Prophecy Today? - Prof. Dr. S.G. Hur  
Children in the Covenant - Prof. F.S. Leagy  
Possible Theme: Issues Facing the Church Today

#### 4. Paper and Respondents

A summary of each paper should be received by the Cor. Sec. at least six months prior to the next meeting.

Respondents will be assigned to reply to each paper from among those delegated to the meeting. The respondents should receive the papers six months in advance.

#### 5. Committee on Theological Affirmation

Mandate: to take up the suggestion of the PCEA regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a "true church" and the consequences of such a statement for inter-communion, etc.

Members: Prof. E. Donnelly  
Prof. Dr. J. Faber (Convener)  
Prof. B. Kamphuis  
Prof. D. MacLeod  
Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes (substitute)

#### 6. Committee on Social Responsibility

This suggestion by the FCS remains unclear to the Executive; hence, we recommend that the FCS reconsider this matter and come to the next meeting with a more detailed proposal which can be fully assessed.

#### 7. Committee on Missions

Members: Prof. A.C. Boyd  
Rev. Boesenkool  
Dr. K. Deddens  
and several others (see Minutes of Conference)

- 12.1 The Australian delegates spoke against the choice of topics. For example we said the topic of "Marriage and Divorce" was not one required at our Conference but rather the subject which had been suggested by the FCS which was the "Doctrine of Marriage". Further, in response to the suggested Conference theme, we pointed out that the church of the Lord is not an issues church. The Church does not deal with issues but preaches the Gospel.
- 12.2 On the proposal to establish a Committee on Theological Affirmation the Australian delegates opposed such a committee since we do not need an agreed statement on what we already confess. We assured the Conference that the FRCA would not reduce its Confession by one word, particularly as it speaks clearly regarding the church and inter-communion. The Conference has no task such as this. Let the Conference remain what it is : a conference where together we can dig deeper in Scripture, to increase understanding and knowledge.

As can be seen from the Executive report, this Committee on Theological Affirmation has as mandate "to take up the suggestion of the PCEA regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a "true church" and the consequences of such a statement for inter-communion, etc"

The proposal emanated from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia proposal that the "Conference aim to develop an agreed statement on what is a 'true church', together with the implications of such for issues as inter-communion, acceptance of attestations, etc., and that such statement relate the centrality of Jesus Christ to these issues".

The Australian delegates again spoke on this issue saying it opposed the establishment of such a committee and, as we told the Conference, the FRCA is already having in-depth discussions with the PCEA at this stage, centring on the very issues which the PCEA now wants the ICRC to make an "agreed statement" on. This gives the impression of the ICRC trying to put pressure on its member churches from above and usurping the responsibility of the member churches to discuss these matters on a local level.

The delegate from the PCEA, Rev. Gadsby agreed that indeed the proposal stemmed from the discussions being held at the moment between our two churches but he could see no harm in such a committee since anything the Conference concluded would have no binding power.

The chairman, Rev J. Visscher also considered our objections as fanciful since the ICRC can only advise. However he did later on express support for the PCEA proposal because within the Canadian Reformed Churches there had been committee after committee appointed to discuss matters of divergencies with the OPC. It was time he said, this came to finality and a committee such as that recommended by the Executive could possibly help in this regard.

Professor Macleod of the FCS expressed support for the setting up of the committee since the conference seems so much to be a talking shop and we must face up to issues and be able to make a statement.

Rev. Stam of the CRC did not want such a committee since the three forms of unity were very clear on the position of the church and there were well established rules for inter-communion. The Conference was a place where individuals could present their views, which could then be discussed and the delegates take the results home. But now a Committee was set up with a mandate to come with an "agreed statement", which would then lead via discussions and conclusions to decisions and resolutions. And then we would be stuck with them. The Conference had no role to play in this direction.

When the matter was put to the vote, only the delegates from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opposed the establishment of the committee and the Canadian Reformed Churches abstained because its delegation could not come to agreement on this issue. Rev Stam insisted that the Minutes show that the abstention was the result of division within the delegation.

- 12.3 For us as delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia it was a sad end to the conference. It reflected the divisions which had at times become evident not only between the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions but between the Reformed sister churches and their delegates themselves.

It is notable that immediately following this decision efforts were made to establish what the Australian Churches had sought right from the early beginnings : a meeting of sister churches. It was to be held the next day, after the Conference. For us it was too late, in more ways than one.

Respectfully submitted to Deputies meeting held at Armadale, 29/31 July 1989 by ICRC delegates :

J Eikelboom and L van Burgel

Not all deputies could support the delegates' conclusions and recommendations to Synod. Brs J. Eikelboom, J. A. Swarts and J.L. van Burgel supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in section B1 below. Deputies Rev. K. Bruning, Rev. W. Huizinga and Rev. A. Veldman decided to submit their own conclusions and recommendations. These are contained in section B2.

## **B Mandate, Observations, Conclusions and Recommendations on the International Conference of Reformed Churches**

### **B1. Conclusions and Recommendations by J. Eikelboom, J.A. Swarts and J. L. van Burgel**

#### **A. Mandate**

Delegates went to the ICRC with the mandate -

- (1) to place before the Conference a number of Constitution/Regulation amendment proposals as decided upon by Synod (Acts 1987/110), and to defend same. As discussed and confirmed in our Deputies' meetings, some of these proposals sought to ensure that the ICRC live up to its name - a Conference, whilst others aimed to guard against a false ecumene (REC) or sought to clarify delegates' position in the Conference (subscription to own Confessions).
- (2) in the matter of interchurch relations, to promote and explain where necessary Synod's decisions that:  
'there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister-churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence' (Launceston 1985/74.II)  
and  
'our recognition of another Church as being "true and faithful Church" means that .... a sister-church relationship can be established' (attestations, admission to sacraments, recognition of ministry) (Launceston 1985/67)
- (3) in the matter of practical cooperation (for example in Mission) with member-churches, to explain and amplify where necessary Synod's decision that this can be done with sister- churches only (Launceston 1985/88).

#### **B. Observations**

Article III.1 of the ICRC Constitution reads :

"to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ".

From this we conclude that the Constituent Assembly in 1982 established the ICRC as more than a conference, more than a discussion forum.

Subsequent developments which strengthen this conclusion are, for example:

- (a) 1983 Synod made decisions in the belief that the ICRC was more than a conference. At this Synod there were proposals to declare all participating non sister-churches "faithful Churches of the Lord" (1983/72,75), and it is significant that dealing with these proposals Synod interrupted its discussions on the ICRC (commencing in Art 60) and before the proposal to join the ICRC was tabled (Article 87). Synod obviously saw the need to first establish that there was (had been) unity of faith in the Constituent Assembly before deciding to join. This procedure would not have been necessary for a discussion forum.

This conclusion is strongly supported by what we read in the quoted writings of the 1983 Synod chairman in 'Una Sancta' Vol 31/6 (see paragraph 7 above).

- (b) The Presbyterian Churches, and in particular the FCS also see the ICRC as more than a Conference - see their proposal (paragraph 7.2 above).

However, right from the beginning that mutual recognition of 'unity-of-faith' between member churches has not been established in many instances, neither has much progress been made since then in this respect.

We clearly detected in the Conference that the different understanding of the meaning of the Church with the different emphasis placed on it by the Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity and the Presbyterian Churches with their Westminster Standards would result in a divided approach to fundamental matters, and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas.

Regrettably these differences were often papered over. There was the outward show of unity, but no real commitment to it. Also our sister churches were unprepared to face the issues frankly and openly. Some seemed uninterested, others were divided in their stand.

This lack of unity became also visible in the lack of agreement and direction in several discussions at the 1989 Conference. Therefore we saw the need to repeatedly voice concern about the disparity between the Constitutional concept of the ICRC (an ecclesiastical gathering of churches united in the faith) and the forum it can only be.

We did meet faithful men at the conference, from both the sister churches and the observer/visiting churches. Many gave us encouragement for our stand. At times we felt the pressure, not only from the Presbyterian delegates but more often from those of our sister churches.

Our report shows where we spoke and what we said. Though outspoken, and not without sin or weakness, we let ourselves be guided by a sincere desire to faithfully carry out our given mandate and to promote Scriptural unity.

We openly supported the FCS delegates when they extended their membership in the ICRC to the only possible consequence, a consequence which cannot be avoided if one is sincere in taking the words of the Constitution for what they say.

### C. Conclusions and Recommendation

Recalling Synod's decisions (1985 and subsequently 1987/110.D.5)

'that the 1989 Synod make a decision regarding our continuing membership in the ICRC on the basis of the reports of conference- delegates and of the Report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, giving due consideration to the stated grounds for this and the above decisions'

and summarising the 1989 Conference as follows:

- (a) despite our plea not to enter into matters of a political nature on the grounds that this is not the task of the Church, the Conference continued on with the largely political 'Apartheid' paper and the subsequent unproductive and divisive discussion ;  
a cause for further concern is that during the Conference the consensus view surfaced that for the ICRC to become a 'relevant organisation' it must move in the direction of publicly speaking out on political and social issues of significant importance;
- (b) despite the repeated FRCA claims that the Constitution demands that establishment of church unity at the local level should precede, or at least be concurrent with, a coming together in the Conference, this aspect remained largely ignored. Judging from the observed reactions there can be little hope for improvement in this regard ;  
thus indicating that the Conference will continue on the present course, claiming in its Constitution to be a meeting of Churches united in Christ, whilst in practice it is no more than a discussion forum - and a divided one at that ;  
rather than unwillingness, the ICRC is powerless to redress this situation, since it arises, as we believe, because of the divergent views the participating churches have on the Church ;
- (c) that the Conference is insufficiently guarding against the danger of a false ecumenism is evident from the rejection of the proposed Constitutional exclusion of churches which have membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council;  
more than this rejection itself, a cause for alarm is the watering down by our Dutch sister-churches of the strong stand they took earlier on against RES membership (for example, at the time of establishing the sister-church relationship with Korea, see also their booklet "for the sake of true ecumenicity") ;  
we also draw attention to our Synod's statement on the (then) RES that 'apostate churches are tolerated in that organisation causing disunity of faith' (1983/75);  
the generally accepted argument in the meeting that we should not single out the REC not only ignores that there's where the interface with the ICRC currently lies, neither does it take into account the recent further deterioration in the REC (Harare), but it could also leave us no defence for keeping the WCC provision in the Constitution (this was actually argued in the Conference);
- (d) the establishment of a Committee on Theological Affirmation with the mandate to prepare an 'agreed statement' on the Church clearly places the ICRC outside its Constitution. This is the first step on a path that leads to becoming a superbody, making conclusions and resolutions for its members, like other ecumenical bodies do as a matter of routine. It may be true that ICRC decisions are not binding on member churches, but honesty to the ICRC's purpose demands that member churches take such decisions seriously, and many will do so without much question ;

your delegates recommend that the Deputies propose to Synod 1989 that the FRCA withdraw their membership in the ICRC on the following grounds :

- (1) Scriptural norms set as task for the Church the proclamation of the gospel only. All activities of the Church(es) without exception must relate to that task and when meeting with other Churches for that purpose this can be done only in full sister-church relationship.
- (2) Contrary to the provision in its Constitution, the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organisation where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist. Neither do most member churches show to understand the urgency of the need to redress that situation.
- (3) The almost common opinion at this 1989 Conference will inevitably push the ICRC in the direction of an organisation which will make public statements on a variety of 'important' political and social issues (these delegates see this as a response to purpose 5 of the Constitution : to present a Reformed testimony to the world). The ICRC will therewith align itself with the many other pressure groups in the world ; it will become just another 'issues' organisation. Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ must keep far from such unecclasiastical activity.

J. Eikelboom      J.A. Swarts      J.L. van Burgel

## **B2. Conclusions and Recommendations by Revs. K. Bruning, W. Huizinga and A. Veldman**

### **A. Mandate:**

According to Art. 110 of the Acts of Synod Albany, Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad were charged with the following mandate with respect to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC):

1. to continue the membership in the ICRC Churches;
2. to place before the Conference to held in June 19-28, 1989 in Vancouver (Cloverdale), Canada, a number of Constitution/Regulation amendment proposals as recorded in Acts Synod Albany, Art. 110, 2;
3. to make certain suggestion to the agenda of the above- mentioned meeting (See Acts Synod Albany, Art. 110, 3);
4. to send two members of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad as delegates to the meeting of the conference to be held in Vancouver;
5. to report to Synod on the outcome of the conference.

As to this mandate Deputies appointed the brs. J. Eikelboom and J.L. van Burgel to attend the meeting of the ICRC in Vancouver and to defend the proposals recorded in Art. 110, Acts Synod Albany 1987. For the outcome of their findings we may refer to their report.

As to the outcome of the proposals tabled during the meeting of the Conference we may refer to the Minutes of the Conference.

### **B. Observations:**

- 1 Art. III.1 of the ICRC Constitution reads that the first purpose of the Conference is "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ". This unity is based on the very fact that according to the basis of the conference both **The Three Forms of Unity** and **The Westminster Standards** are recognised as Reformed confessions. Therefore churches that adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis must have unity in faith, despite the fact that not always sister relations have been established. This is a goal to be aimed at, but in not a pre-requisite to become a member church of the ICRC. The decision as FRCA to join the ICRC was based on the acceptance of the constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE, and not on any evaluation of potential member churches.
- 2 The proposed amendment to the Basis of the Constitution "that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members" was defeated. Yet during the conference it has been made clear "that all member churches are expected to adhere and to be faithful to their own confessional standards, and that they recognise the Reformed character of the Basis, and also that they are committed to the Purpose of the conference.
- 3 During the meeting of the Conference in Vancouver it has been made clear that there is a commitment to work towards the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches. Unfortunately there is still a difference of opinion regarding the rules for such an ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 4 As to the conclusion of the representatives of the FRCA that the ICRC is no longer a conference but has moved into the direction of an ecclesiastical body, this is based rather on fear than on facts. The Conference hasn't taken any decision which proves that it is moving into this direction. Even the Appointed Committee for Theological Affirmation as such is not a sign that the Conference will become "super-body, making conclusions and resolutions for its members, like other ecumenical bodies do as a matter of routine." The establishment of this committee is completely in line with Art. III.4 of the Constitution, "to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters." If the doctrine of the church is indeed at the heart of recognising each other as true and faithful churches, why not have this matter studied by a committee of theological skilled persons both of Reformed and Presbyterian background."

5 As to the conclusion that the Conference more and more becomes an issue conference, this is not a conclusion which can be drawn by the decisions taken by the meeting in Vancouver. It originates from the viewpoint of the delegates who see as the only task of the church to preach the gospel. Yet the gospel must also be applied in today's society. It can be very beneficial, therefore, as Reformed churches in the world to speak about problems the churches are confronted with in the 20th century.

6 As to the amendment to Art. IV.4 that it should also include the REC, the Conference decided that this matter was already adequately covered by the present rule that only those churches can be admitted as member churches which "are not members of the World Council of Churches or any other organisation whose aims and practises are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis. Although one can regret that the REC hasn't been included in this clause, this does not mean "that the Conference is insufficiently guarding against the danger of false ecumenism."

#### **C. Conclusions**

1 The ICRC has met in Vancouver in complete accordance with the Purpose of its Constitution.

2 The outcome of the Constitution/Regulation amendment proposals indicate more efficiency and maturity. Many of our proposals were (unanimously) adopted. These discussions and decisions certainly show continuing adherence to the constitution as originally adopted. Also, the decisions have not proven that the ICRC is no longer a Conference but is moving in the direction of becoming an ecclesiastical super body.

3 Taking into account the decision taken by Synod Launceston 1985 (Acts Art. 88) which mentions the grounds on which basis the FRCA can continue membership within the ICRC, there is no need to withdraw from the ICRC, but instead there is much reason to continue the "opportunity for contact by way of a conference with foreign churches of reformed confession" (Acts, Art. 88, 1985).

#### **D. Recommendations**

Undersigned deputies appointed by Synod Albany recommend to Synod Armadale that:

- 1 the FRCA continue the membership in the ICRC;
- 2 the FRCA send two delegates to the next conference to be held in Korea; in 1993.

Rev. K. Bruning    Rev. W. Huizinga    Rev. A. Veldman

# I.C.R.C. Minutes

## SESSION 1

**Tuesday, June 19th  
Morning & Afternoon**

At Langley and in the Canadian Reformed Church there on Tuesday, the 19th of June, 1989 The International Conference of Reformed Churches met pursuant to the decision of the last meeting of the Conference held in Edinburgh in September of 1985. The meeting of the Conference was constituted with devotional exercises conducted by Rev. Dr. J. Visscher representing the Canadian Reformed Churches as calling body. Dr. Visscher also addressed the Conference on the purposes, potential and the vision of the Conference. (The address will be available as an appendix to the minutes).

### 1. Participating Churches

Rev. Dr. Visscher reported that the calling body had examined and found satisfactory the credentials of the participating members. The following list of participating churches and delegates was noted ("D" = Voting Delegate, "A" = Advisor):

#### Member Churches

- Canadian Reformed Churches
  - Rev. Cl. Stam (D)
  - Dr. J. Visscher (D)
  - Prof. Dr. J. Faber (A)
  - Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam (A)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland
  - Rev. Norman E. Reid (D)
- Free Church of Scotland
  - Rev. J.A. Gillies (D)
  - Prof. D. Macleod (D)
  - Prof. A.C. Boyd (A)
  - Rev. Wm. Underhay (A)
- Free Church in Southern Africa
  - Rev. A.A. MacDonald (D)
- Free Reformed Churches of Australia
  - Mr. J. Eikelboom (D)
  - Mr. J.L. VanBurgel (D)
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
  - Rev. W. Peter Gadsby (D)
- Presbyterian Church in Korea
  - Dr. Ho Jin Jun (D)
- Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
  - Rev. J. de Gelder (D)
  - Prof. Dr. J. Douma (A)
  - Rev. O. J. Douma (D)
  - Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen (A)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
  - Rev. W.D.J. McKay (D)

#### Church Applying for Membership

- Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
  - Rev. W. Boessenkool
  - Mr. A. Roos

#### Observer Churches

- Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
  - Rev. P. DenButter
  - Rev. J.C.L. Starreveld
- Christian Brethren Free Church (Philippines)
  - Rev. J.M. Vingno
- Gereja Masehi Musyafir (Indonesia)
  - Rev. E. Fangidae

- Free Reformed Churches of North America
  - Rev. P. VanderMeyden
  - Rev. L.W. Bilkes

- Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa
  - Prof. Dr. J. Heyns
  - Dr. P. Rossouw

- Orthodox Presbyterian Church
  - Rev. J.P. Galbraith
  - Rev. T.E. Tyson
  - Rev. J.J. Peterson
  - Rev. G.I. Williamson

- Presbyterian Church in America
  - Prof. Dr. D.C. Jones
  - Dr. R.S. Rayburn

- Reformed Churches in South Africa
  - Prof. Dr. J.L. Helberg
  - Prof. Dr. V.E. D'Assonville

- Reformed Church in the United States
  - Rev. R. Sander

- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
  - Dr. Bruce Stewart

### 2. Executive

The Convener reported that the Interim Committee proposed that the Executive be appointed as follows:  
Chairman - Rev. Dr. J. Visscher  
Vice-Chairman - Rev. J. de Gelder  
Recording Secretary - Prof. A.C. Boyd  
Corresponding Secretary - Rev. M. van Beveren  
The proposal of the Interim Committee was accepted.

### 3. Further recommendation of the Interim Committee

The following recommendations of the Interim Committee were also accepted.

- 3.1 That Principal C. Graham and Prof. Dr. K. Deddens be appointed official advisors to this Conference with right to participate in all discussions but without right to vote.
- 3.2 That it be understood that observer and visiting delegates have the right to take part in all discussions although not to vote.

### 4. Agenda

The following was proposed as the Agenda for the Conference:

#### 4.1 Main Agenda

- Reports - Secretary - Rev. M. van Beveren
  - Interim Committee
  - Treasurer - Mr. H.A. Berends
  - Auditor

(The first two reports should be tabled the first day of the Conference)

- Study Reports - Ecumenical Creeds
  - Missions

Workshop - Rules for Inter-church Relations

Advisory Committees to be appointed:

- Committee of Membership and Finances
  1. to deal with membership application of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
  2. to deal with Treasurer's report; auditor;

proposals from the FRC of Australia

- Committee on Constitutional Matters to deal with amendments from various churches in Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Scotland
  - Committee on Study Report - Creeds
  - Committee on Study Report - Missions
  - Committee on 1993 Conference

to deal with site, date, hosting church, agenda including possible topics and speakers

#### Appointments

- Executive Committee (substitutes)
- Treasurer
- Standing Committees

#### 4.2 Speeches & Papers

- Prof. C. Graham - "Nehemiah the Rebuilder"
- Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen - "Baptism with the Holy Spirit"
- Prof. D. Macleod - "Christology"
- Prof. Dr. J. Douma - "Apartheid"
- Prof. Dr. K. Deddens - "Contextualization in Mission"
- Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun - "Tangun Shrine Worship & Radical Christian Movement in the Korean Church"
- Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam - "The Elder as Preserver of Life in the Covenant"

#### 4.3 Discussion

Mr. J. Eikelboom questioned whether the topic of Apartheid ought to have a place on the Conference Agenda. He spoke to the matter asking whether the issue belonged to the real work of the member Churches of the Conference and expressing the fear that the Conference could be diverted to political issues. (A copy of Mr. Eikelboom's address is retained among Conference papers and copies are available for delegates who wish one)

It was agreed to remit the matter to the Constitutional Committee and suspend a decision on including it on the Agenda until the Committee reports.

It was noted that this above discussion raised the question as to how the agenda is compiled.

#### 5. Report from Corresponding Secretary and Interim Committee

The Corresponding Secretary reported on his own work and the work of the Interim Committee. He spoke of the happy and fruitful work of the Interim Committee over the period since last meeting of the Conference. He referred with sorrow to the resignation of Rev. D. Lamont due to illness and to the death of Rev. Drs. M.K. Drost, member of Missions Committee. He passed on the regret of the following Churches for their being unable to be represented this year, while assuring the Conference of their continued interest:

- Reformed Church of Japan
- Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana del Peru
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Christ Church, New Zealand
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

Rev. van Beveren reported that several Churches had written to him seeking information about the Conference.

The initiative of member Churches who had sent the topics for consideration had been helpful but he requested that when a topic was recommended the name of a speaker should also be mentioned.

He paid tribute to the contribution made to the work of the Committee by Principal C. Graham and Rev. G. van Rongen, expressing regret that Rev. G. van Rongen was unable to be present, and passing on his greetings to the Conference. (Rev. van Beveren's Report is retained among Conference papers and copies are available for delegates who wish one).

The Conference recorded its thanks to the Interim Committee and especially to Rev. van Beveren.

The Conference suspended its sitting for lunch.

#### 6. Committees

On the recommendation of the Executive the Conference agreed to the following membership of Committees:

#### Membership and Finances Committee

- Rev. O.J. Douma - Convener
- Rev. W.D.J. McKay
- Rev. Cl. Stam
- Mr. J.L. Van Burgel

#### Committee on Creeds

- Prof. Dr. Faber - Convener
- Prof. D. Macleod
- Prof. Dr. J. Douma
- Rev. W. Underhay

#### Constitution Committee

- Rev. W. Peter Gadsby - Convener
- Rev. J. Gillis
- Prof. C. Graham
- Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam
- Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen

#### Missions Committee

- Rev. Norman E. Reid - Convener
- Mr. J. Eikelboom
- Dr. Ho Jin Jun
- Rev. A. A. MacDonald
- Prof. Dr. K. Deddens

#### Committee for Next Conference

- The Executive
- Dr. J. Visscher - Convener
- Rev. J. de Gelder
- Prof. A.C. Boyd
- Rev. M. van Beveren

The Conference suspended its sitting to give Committees time to begin consideration of their remits.

#### 7. First Report of Membership and Finance Committee

##### 7.1 Application from Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

On behalf of the Committee Rev. Cl. Stam reported that the applicant had satisfied the Committee and that they joyfully recommended that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa be accepted into membership of the ICRC.

The recommendation of the Committee was unanimously accepted and the Chairman addressed the delegates and welcomed the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa into membership. The Rev. W. Boesenskool and Mr. A. Roos replied and indicated the desire of their Church both to benefit from membership of the Conference and contribute to it. Mr. Roos offered to make available to delegates a printed statement prepared by the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa.

##### 7.2 Statement by Mr. J.L. Van Burgel

Mr. Van Burgel made reference to what Free Reformed Churches in Australia saw as a weakness in the admissions procedure. They were concerned that Article IV of the Constitution should never be taken in isolation but always in the light of serious consideration of Article III regarding Purpose. Member Churches should always be asking themselves if they were seeking to fulfill the Purposes of the Conference beginning with those stated in III,1 and III,2 of the Constitution. From the beginning the desire of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was to see a Conference of sister churches. Mr. Van Burgel's statement was noted. (A printed copy is retained among Conference papers and is available to delegates).

#### 8. First Report of Constitution Committee - Paper on Apartheid

The Convener, Rev. W.P. Gadsby reported that the committee had taken up their remit regarding the inclusion of the paper on Apartheid on the Agenda and after full discussion recommended unanimously that it be included on the grounds that it had been properly included on the proposed

agenda in exactly the same way as other topics and that while the topic could be treated as a political subject it was not only political.

After discussion it was agreed to adhere to the proposed agenda and ask Prof. Dr. J. Douma to give his paper on Apartheid.

The meeting adjourned and Committees continued consideration of their remits.

## SESSION 2

### Tuesday, June 19th - Evening

At Langley on Tuesday, the 19th of June, 1989 in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

#### 1. Introducing the Churches

Prof. Dr. Bruce Stewart introduced the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America tracing its root back to 17th century Scotland and outlining its development in North America from the founding of its first congregation in Pennsylvania in 1745. He referred also to its missionary work first in Haiti and later in the Middle East and the Far East.

#### 2. Conference Address

Rev. Prof. C. Graham addressed the Conference on the subject of "Nehemiah, the Rebuilder"

The Chairman thanked Prof. C. Graham for his paper and indicated that discussion of it would be taken up at the morning session next day.

The session was closed with prayer.

## SESSION 3

### Wednesday, June 20th - Morning & Afternoon

At Langley on Wednesday the 20th of June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

#### 1. Discussion of the paper "Nehemiah, the Rebuilder"

Discussion took place on a number of issues raised by Professor Graham's paper. Professor Graham responded to these. The discussion developed mainly along the lines of the relationship of the book of Nehemiah to the New Testament and to Christology in particular. From there consideration was given to the Exemplarist and Redemptive Historical use of the Old Testament. The consensus view was that these were not mutually exclusive. Interest in the relationship between these two approaches to the Old Testament was such as to suggest that papers on these topics might be given at a future meeting of the Conference. Prof. Graham was again thanked for his contribution.

#### 2. Second Report of Constitution Committee

The Convener of the Committee, Rev. W.P. Gadsby reported as follows:

2.1 Proposal of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that, Delegates at the beginning of the Conference express their agreement with the Basis of the Conference. Constitution Article II - Basis.

##### Recommendation

The Committee recommended that the proposal was not necessary in as much as all Conference delegates are accredited by their Churches, all of whom subscribe to the Conference Basis.

##### Decision

The delegates of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands indicated that they did not wish to pursue the matter and the Conference, agreed, unanimously to pass from it.

2.2 Proposal of Free Church of Scotland that, "The Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognize the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches." Constitution Article III - Purpose.

## Recommendation

The Convener reported that the Committee had taken note of and agreed with the observation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to the effect that "The matter 'is sufficiently covered by Art. III, 2 of the Constitution. . . Member churches should strive to achieve the above mentioned goal, but this situation does not automatically arise from being a member of the ICRC. Before a sister church relation can be established, time should be taken for the necessary contacts and discussions.'" The Committee was therefore not recommending adoption of the proposal.

## Discussion

There followed a prolonged discussion in which the following points were made by delegates:

- i) Membership of the ICRC should not replace true sister church relationships.
- ii) The mutual recognition sought by the Free Church of Scotland proposal was possible only between sister churches.
- iii) The Constitution of the ICRC does lay on member churches the obligation to express and promote the unity of faith that member churches have and churches failing to act should be called to explain their failure.
- iv) Among member churches there are differing procedures and policies for promoting inter-church relationships and these need to be respected.
- v) The proposal of the Free Church of Scotland presents a goal to be aimed at but is not a responsibility of the Conference as such.
- vi) The question of admission to the Lord's Table was brought up. Delegates of the Reformed Churches referred to the admittedly strict procedures that were applied even to their own members when visiting other congregations of their own Churches and in the light of that pleaded for understanding of their attitude in this matter to members of other churches. Delegates of the Free Church of Scotland pointed out that the standards for admission to the Lord's Table within the Free Church of Scotland were high, but at the same time the Church welcomed to the Lord's Table all who were members in good standing in any true Church of Jesus Christ. They spoke of the grief experienced both when members of the Free Church of Scotland were not admitted to the Lord's Table within member churches of the ICRC and also when members of Reformed Churches which had membership in the ICRC felt themselves unable to come to the Lord's Table within the Free Church of Scotland.  
The delegate of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia suggested that the matter required to be examined in the light of Scripture rather than on the basis of historical development within the various churches.
- vii) The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, while not able to accept the proposal of the Free Church of Scotland in the terms in which it was stated, agreed that the mutual recognition referred to was what should be sought. At the heart of the matter is the doctrine of the Church.
- viii) The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches cautioned against trying to go ahead too quickly. The position of their Churches was that they were happy to be part of this Conference in a way in which they had never previously been able to partake in an inter-church conference because they saw that this Conference does recognize and express unity and is committed to

promote unity. It has great possibilities. Out of membership of this Conference they had already made contact with other churches with a view to establishing sister church relationships. They were grateful for what they had in the Conference and were pledged to its purposes, but wished to identify clearly what were Conference responsibilities and what were the responsibilities of the Churches.

- ix) The Free Church of Scotland delegates responded. Prof. D. Macleod wished still to highlight the anomaly in the situation that there were member churches of the Conference that, while recognizing other member churches in the Conference as true churches and accepting their delegates as brethren, did not allow members of these churches to come to the Lord's Table. He wished also to state the ongoing difficulty that the Free Church of Scotland had with the difference that was made between recognizing a church as a true church and accepting a church as a sister church. However they considered that there had been a fruitful and helpful discussion and in the hope that future meetings of the Conference would continue consideration of these issues they would not oppose the Committee's recommendation to pass, at this time from the proposal of the Free Church of Scotland.

#### Decision

The Committee's recommendation was adopted.

The meeting was suspended for lunch

- 2.3 Proposal of Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches of Australia, "That membership of REC (RES) is an impediment to membership of the ICRC." Constitution - Article IV Membership.

#### Recommendation

The Committee considered that the point is adequately covered by Article IV, 1 (d) of the Constitution and recommended that the proposal be not accepted.

#### Discussion

There followed considerable discussion in which the following points were made:

- i) The need to witness against a false ecumenicity (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)
- ii) The peculiar position of the REC (RES) from that of all other bodies because it includes several churches which in many ways are close to the churches of the ICRC and therefore should be excluded from dual membership (Canadian Reformed Churches).
- iii) The wording of the proposal: what does impediment mean? The Canadian Reformed Churches had understood this to mean the incompatibility of membership in REC and in the ICRC and therefore supported the proposal.
- iv) The problems created by drawing up lists of organizations. Where do you stop? Who do you include? How often do you update? (Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia)
- v) Admission to the ICRC is already tightly controlled by the Constitution and acceptance involves commitment to the whole Constitution and Regulations (Free Church of Scotland)

#### Decision

On a vote being taken the recommendation of the Committee was adopted by 8 votes to 3.

- 2.4 Proposal of Canadian Reformed Churches to amend Article V of the Constitution to read, "The con-

clusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation."

#### Recommendation and Decision

The Committee's recommendation for adoption of the proposal was unanimously accepted.

- 2.5 Proposal of Free Reformed Churches of Australia that the first words of Article II of the Regulations be amended to read "Each meeting of the Conference shall elect. . ." was unanimously adopted.
- 2.6 Proposal of Free Reformed Churches of Australia that subsection 4.b.iv of Article II of Regulations be amended to read, "forward to the churches materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference".

#### Recommendation

In the light of preliminary discussion of the matter by delegates the Committee brought forward a revised recommendation that in the light of the words "as authorized by the Conference" contained in this subsection, no change was called for.

#### Decision

On a vote being taken the Committee's recommendation was adopted by 9 votes to 1 (Free Reformed Churches of Australia wish to adhere to their proposal).

- 2.7 Proposal of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that there be added to sub-section 2 of Article IV of the Regulations the words, "When committees are appointed, the Conference should also appoint persons who can serve as alternate committee members."

#### Recommendation

After preliminary discussion of the matter the Committee recommended the adoption of a revised version of the proposal to read as follows, "The Conference shall also appoint members who can serve as substitute members should original appointees no longer be able to serve."

#### Decision

The Committee's recommendation was unanimously accepted.

- 2.8 Proposal of Free Church of Scotland that in sub-section 3 of Article IV of Regulations "one year" be substituted for "two years".

#### Recommendation and Decision

The recommendation of the Committee that the proposal be accepted was unanimously adopted.

- 2.9 Proposal of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that there be added to Article V of the Regulations the statement, "Only delegates of churches and not of organizations should participate in the meetings of the Conference."

#### Recommendation

The Committee recommended that the proposal be not accepted on the grounds that the existing regulations cover the situation with regard to delegates. Furthermore, if the proposal is adopted in its present form it could be so interpreted in the future as to prevent the Conference from inviting an individual to address it.

#### Discussion

The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa indicated that their Synod had considered the proposal and they wished to support the proposal.

#### Decision

On a vote being taken the recommendation of the Committee was adopted by 9 votes to 1.

- 2.10 Proposal of Free Reformed Churches of Australia that, "Article V of the Regulations should include a clear statement about the position of observers and advisors and also a clear indication of which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church."

#### **Recommendation**

The Committee recommended that the matter be remitted to the Interim Committee for further consideration and report to the next meeting of the Conference; the Interim Committee to have their recommendations made available for circulation one year before the next meeting of the Conference.

#### **Decision**

It was agreed to adopt the recommendation of the Committee and to remit the matter to the Interim Committee and draw their attention to the lack of clarity on the relationship of Article V,3 to VII,1 of the Regulations.

The session was brought to a close.

### **SESSION 4**

#### **Wednesday, June 20 - Evening**

At Langley on Wednesday, the 20th of June 1989 in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

#### **1. Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the first and second sessions, copies of which had been circulated to delegates, were adjusted and adopted.

#### **2. Introducing the Churches**

Dr. Ho Jin Jun introduced the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) and their Seminary in Pusan. He reviewed the history of the Kosin Church which had come into being in 1951 as the result of a split in the main Korean Presbyterian Church over the issue of forced involvement in Shinto worship during the time of the Japanese occupation. The Kosin Presbyterian Church had close contacts with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America and with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands who had provided professors for their seminary.

Prof. Jun referred to problems faced by the Seminary including the fact that up till now most of the faculty had been trained in western countries and, without experience of pastoral ministry in their own country, lacked ability to apply the Gospel to the Korean situation. They were now insisting that new appointees to the faculty should have experience in the pastoral ministry.

They had already begun to move the Seminary from Pusan to Seoul: a move which they hoped to complete next year at considerable financial outlay. He requested prayer for his Church and Seminary.

Before concluding he indicated his Church's readiness to host the next meeting of the ICRC.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Jun for his account of his Church and Seminary and expressed the prayerful good wishes of the Conference members.

#### **3. Conference Address**

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen addressed the Conference on the subject of "Baptism with the Holy Spirit". The Chairman thanked Prof. van Bruggen for his paper and indicated that discussion of it would be taken up next morning.

The session was closed with prayer.

### **SESSION 5**

#### **Thursday, June 22 - Morning & Afternoon**

At Langley on Thursday, the 22nd June, 1989 the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

#### **1. Discussion of Paper by Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen on "Baptism with the Holy Spirit"**

Comments were made and questions asked on a large num-

ber of the points made in Prof. van Bruggen's paper. These he replied to giving further explanation of statements made in the paper and defending the positions he had put forward. He pointed out that his approach to the subject of his paper had been dictated by hermeneutical considerations.

In reply to an observation about the misuse made by Pentecostals of the term "baptized with the Spirit" and a related observation that our Confessions, written three hundred years before the rise of the modern Pentecostal movement, gave us no dogmatic protection against this divisive movement, Prof. van Bruggen did recognize the responsibility falling on Reformed Churches to develop new formulations in line with the Confessions to deal with new situations.

There was also raised the question of the implication for ecumenical relations of being baptized with the Spirit. Prof. van Bruggen considered that the question was outwith the scope of his lecture.

The Chairman thanked Prof. van Bruggen for his paper and his helpful answering of questions and comments.

#### **2. Treasurer's Report**

The Chairman welcomed the Treasurer, Mr. H.A. Berends and invited him to present his report. Mr. Berends spoke to the Report, copies of which, including financial statements, had been circulated to members (copies of these are retained among Conference Papers).

The Chairman thanked Mr. Berends for his report and his work throughout the years.

#### **3. Second Report of Membership and Finance Committee**

3.1 On behalf of the Committee, Mr. J.L. van Burgel recommended that the Conference:

- i) accept with thanks and gratitude the report of the treasurer, Mr. H.A. Berends;
- ii) note that all outstanding assessments for the 1985 Edinburgh Conference have been received and that by using some of the 1987 and 1988 assessments all expenses of the Edinburgh Conference have been met;
- iii) note that a budget for the 1989 Conference has been prepared and it appears there will be sufficient funds to cover expenses;
- iv) accept the auditor's report submitted by the Cloverdale Consistory which indicated that they found the treasurer's books to be correct and complete to the end of March, 1989;
- v) decide that if the next ICRC is to be held in Seoul, the Presbyterian Church in Korea be requested to appoint a treasurer with the following mandate:
  - a) To draw up a budget for that Conference with the assistance of the Interim Committee.
  - b) To assess each member Church on the basis of the percentages used for the 1989 assessments, except for the following changes:  
The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia 0.5%  
The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa 0.5%
  - c) To collect the installments needed on a yearly basis.
  - d) To reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference.
  - e) To submit his financial report to the next meeting of the Conference.

#### **Decision**

It was moved, seconded and agreed that the Conference accept the recommendations i) to iv). With reference to recommendation v)

it was moved, seconded and agreed that there should be substituted the following, "reappoint Mr. H.A. Berends as treasurer with the following remit:

- a) To draw up a budget for the next Conference with the assistance of the Interim Committee;
- b) To assess each member Church;
- c) To collect the installments needed on a yearly basis;
- d) To reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference;
- e) To submit his financial report to the next meeting of the Conference."

3.2 Proposal from Free Reformed Churches of Australia that the Conference reconsider the decision of the meeting of 1985 regarding travelling expenses to the effect that, "Travelling expenses be borne by the member churches on the same basis as ordinary costs of the Conference."

#### Recommendation

The Committee recommended that the Conference:

- 1. confirm the decisions of the 1985 ICRC re costs of the Conference and therefore does not accept the Free Reformed Churches of Australia proposal to include travelling expenses with ordinary costs of the Conference;
- 2. decide to continue to provide sufficient funds to enable financial assistance to be given to those member churches, otherwise financially unable, to send one delegate to the Conference.

#### Discussion

Discussion revealed support for the proposal of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia on the grounds that it gave the smaller member Churches the opportunity to exercise their right to attend the Conference. It was pointed out that paragraph 2 of the Committee's recommendation introduced a limitation of the present understanding whereby smaller member churches are free to apply for financial help for two delegates. It was asked whether the cost implications for the larger churches had been evaluated.

#### Decision

It was agreed to ask the Committee to reconsider its recommendation.

#### 4. Welcome

At this stage the Chairman welcomed Dr. R.S. Rayburn, observer, Presbyterian Church of America, who had just taken his seat in the Conference.

#### 5. Second Report from Constitution Committee

5.1 Proposal from Free Church of Scotland supported by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that there be added as second and third sentences of subsection 2 of Article VIII of the Regulations the following, "Recommendations should also be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter. Amendments to Committee proposals shall be receivable by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of Conference."

#### Recommendation

The committee recommended that sub-paragraph 2 of Article VII of Regulations be amended to read as follows, "Materials for the agenda should be received by the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance. Recommendations should also be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter. Amendments to Committee proposals can be received by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of the next meeting of the Conference. Other agenda 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."

#### Decision

The recommendation of the Committee was unanimously accepted.

5.2 Proposal from Free Church of Scotland that, "The Regulations and procedures should make possible discussion of important issues not included in the pre-set agenda provided a proposal to this effect be tabled by at least five voting delegates."

#### Recommendation

The Committee recommends that there be added as sub-section 4 of Article VII of the Regulation the following, "Additional subjects for the agenda shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a simple majority whether to place these matters on the agenda."

#### Discussion - Amendment 1

It was moved and seconded that the words "simple majority" in the last sentence of the proposed additional sub-section be replaced by "two-thirds".

#### Decision - Amendment 1

On a vote being taken the amendment was carried by 5 votes to 4.

#### Discussion - Amendment 2

It was moved and seconded that there be inserted after the word "agenda" in the first line of the prepared additional sub-section the words "introduced by a delegate of a member church".

#### Decision - Amendment 2

On a vote being taken the amendment was carried by 6 votes to 2.

#### Decision

On a vote being taken it was agreed by 6 votes to 1 with one abstention to adopt the following as sub-section 4 of Article VII of the Regulations, "Additional subjects for the agenda introduced by a delegate of a member church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the agenda."

5.3 Proposal from Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches of Australia to insert the stipulation that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members.

The Convener reported that although this proposal had been circulated to member Churches under Article II, Basis, of the Constitution the Committee had dealt with it in connection with Article IV, Membership, because it was related to sub-section 1.a of that Article which reads, "adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis." The Convener explained that the Committee had considered the matter in conjunction with the proposal of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that there should be added as sub-section 1.c of Article IV of the Constitution the following, "show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the Conference in their own country."

#### Recommendations

- i) That sub-section 1.a of Article IV of the Constitution be altered to read, "adhere and are faithful to confessional standards which are in agreement with the Basis of the Conference."
- ii) That there be added as sub-section 1.e of Article IV, "declare that they accept the Basis of the Conference and are committed to the Purpose of the Conference."

- iii) That there be added to sub-section 2 of Article IV the words "and/or the Purpose of the Conference."

In presenting the Committee's recommendations the Convener explained that the Committee was seeking to deal with the problem of diversity and unity found within the Conference with respect to confessional standards. They also wished the Conference to be able to deal sympathetically with applications for membership from Churches that might subscribe to only one of the Three Forms of Unity, or to a confessional standard which is not listed in the Basis but is yet in agreement with those there listed. The proposed addition of sub-section 1.e ensured that churches seeking membership accept the Basis, although not subscribing to standards listed there, and are committed to the Purpose of the Conference.

#### Proposed Amendment

An amendment to the committee motion was moved as follows:

"Those churches shall be admitted as members which:

- a) adhere and are faithful to their own confessional standards which are included in the Basis of the Conference"

The motion lapsed due to lack of a seconder

#### Discussion

There followed considerable discussion in which the following points were made:

- i) If the Committee's recommendation is accepted the Conference will be required to devise means of satisfying itself that the standards of the applicant Church are acceptable and Churches making application will not know in advance whether their standards are acceptable.
- ii) The Committee's recommendation makes the basis too wide and undefined. A church may subscribe to a very brief confession which does not in fact contradict the Basis of the Conference but covers very little of the substance of the Confessions referred to in the Basis.
- iii) Consideration must be given to the new younger churches who might be encouraged to join the Conference. Just as the member churches recognize the need for contextualization in the work of mission so the concept requires to be applied with regard to Confessions. It would be unreasonable to expect young churches outwith the West to adhere to 17th century European Confessions, rather than formulate their own Confessions.
- iv) Could not the proposal of the Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches of Australia be met by including a simple statement in the minutes of the meetings of this Conference?

#### Decision

The Chairman was asked to give a ruling as to whether the Committee's proposal was in fact out of order because it was proposing an amendment to the Article on Membership whereas the original proposal had been circulated under the heading of the Article on Basis and that the proposal was substantially different from that proposed by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The Chairman ruled that the whole matter should be reconsidered by the Committee in the light of the points raised in the discussion.

#### 6. Welcome

Rev. P. Den Butter and Rev. J.C.L. Starreveld, the visiting delegates of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and Prof. Dr. J.L. Helberg and Prof. Dr. V.E. D'Assonville, the observer delegates of the Reformed Churches

in South Africa, all of whom had just taken their seats in the Conference, were welcomed.

The session was concluded.

## SESSION 7

### Friday, June 23 - Morning & Afternoon

At Langley on Friday, the 23rd of June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

#### 1. Discussion on Paper by Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun on "The Tangun Shrine Worship and Radical Christian Movement in Korea"

Discussion ranged over a considerable number of points raised by Prof. Jun's paper. These included the following:

- i) The task of the Church in Korea and the Reformed Churches in other countries with regard to politics and government;
- ii) The place given in teaching in seminaries and mission training programs to exposing the doctrinal and philosophical background of popular teachings such as Liberation Theology and, in Korea in particular, Minjung Theology;
- iii) The working out in practice in all countries of what is implied in Prof. Jun's statement "We need the relevancy of Reformed Theology in Korea today" (pg. 19 of paper);
- iv) In connection with iii) above, the responsibility of members of the Conference to help each other not only to criticize theologies such as Liberation Theology, but to discover, in the tradition of those who formulated our Reformed Confessions, what the Bible is saying to the situation facing us today and so apply our Reformed Theology;
- v) The possibility and desirability of seeking to form Christian political parties, after the example of Abraham Kuyper, in Korea and elsewhere, so as to seek to relieve in some measure the problem of seeking to influence society without the Church courts getting involved in political matters;
- vi) The need to instruct believers so that they will influence society;
- vii) The need to avoid any teaching that suggested that the gospel of Christ and him crucified was not all sufficient.
- viii) Should member Churches of the ICRC which had the duty to be prophetic in their ministry and therefore constantly to seek renewal, be happy with the term "Conservative"?

#### Prof. Jun's Response

Prof. Jun responded to some of the points raised. Because Christians are a very small minority in Korea a Christian political party would have little influence even if it could be formed.

The tendency in the Korean Churches had been to concentrate on the salvation of individuals and they were weak in the area of instructing their people with regard to what is happening in society around them.

There was little reference in the older Reformed writings to the matter of demon possession that was a real issue for them.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Jun for his paper and his further contribution in answering questions raised.

#### 3. Third Report of Membership and Finance Committee (cf. Minute 3.2 Decision of Session 5)

##### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommended that the Conference adhere to the decision of the 1985 Conference in Edinburgh.

## Decision

The Committee's recommendation was adopted unanimously.

## Recommendation 2

The Committee recommended that member churches should pay the travel expenses of their own delegates. Those churches unable to pay such expenses may request assistance from the General Funds of the Conference for travelling expenses of one delegate.

## Discussion

The Corresponding Secretary drew the Conference's attention to the fact that there had been no objection from any church to the Edinburgh 1985 Conference decision which left open the possibility for a small church to be aided with the expenses of two delegates. There had been no sign of this privilege being abused, nor was the Conference facing financial difficulties.

## Decision

An equal number of votes having been cast for and against the Committee's recommendation the Chairman declared that the status quo would be maintained.

## 4. Third Report of Constitution Committee (cf. Minutes 5.3 Decision of Session 5)

### Recommendation

The Committee recommended that there be recorded in the minutes of this meeting of the Conference the following statement: "The Conference declares that all member churches are expected to adhere and be faithful to their own confessional standards, and that they recognize the Reformed character of the Basis, and also that they are committed to the Purpose of the Conference."

In presenting the Committee's recommendation the Convener indicated that they had given long consideration to the matter and had looked at various ways of dealing with it. They brought forward this proposal as one that in some way answered the proposals submitted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, while at the same time leaving open the possibility for churches to propose in future years relevant changes to the Constitution if, on further reflection, they thought these necessary.

### Discussion

There followed prolonged discussion in which the following points were made:

- i) Attention was drawn to both the reaction of the Free Church of Scotland and of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands circulated with the Provisional Agenda. The original proposal of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is based on a misunderstanding. The Committee's recommendation does not help. The sub-section 1.a of Article IV does not require the office-bearers of member churches to subscribe to anything other than the Confessional standards of their own churches. This Article does not in fact refer to "subscription" at all. "Subscription" is what is required of office-bearers by their own churches. The declaration proposed in the Committee's recommendation is superfluous. It would be a bad precedent to legislate because of a misunderstanding. We should be able to live with the Constitution as it is without alteration or declaratory statements (Free Church of Scotland, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Corresponding Secretary).
- ii) If in fact the proper understanding of the

present Constitution is that no subscription is required of office-bearers except to the adopted standards of their own churches why not make a statement to that effect? (Canadian Reformed Churches, Free Reformed Churches of Australia)

- iii) The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches indicated that what their churches were committed to was the position set out in the original proposal from their Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- iv) The present basis of the Conference declares the unity that there is between member churches and gives recognition to the doctrinal unity that there is between the standards listed. The framers of the Westminster Confession did not see themselves as replacing the Three Forms of Unity but setting forth their doctrine for the Anglo-Saxon world. Does the Conference need a statement that could be taken as some sort of protection for member churches from guilt by association (in this instance association with the Westminster Confession of Faith)?  
Anything that might detract from the message that the Basis of the Conference recognizes a common theology in the standards listed there would indeed threaten the future of the Conference (Free Church of Scotland).
- v) If the Committee's proposal is carried and such a statement included in the minutes of this Conference it could be used to tie the hands of future Conferences.

### Decision

On a vote being taken the Committee's recommendation was defeated by 5 votes to 3.

## 5. Motion from Delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

In terms of the proposal of their Churches circulated in accordance with the Constitution (Article VI), the delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia moved that in Article II of the Constitution there be inserted, "Delegates to the Conference subscribe only to the standards of the Churches of which they are members."

### Decision

On a vote being taken the motion was defeated by 7 votes to 2.

## 6. Iterations to the Constitution or Regulations should be submitted in accurate terms with clear indications as to the precise point in the wo

The Committee in presenting their report took the opportunity to recommend that member churches should be informed that proposals for alterations to the Constitution or Regulations should be submitted in accurate terms with clear indications as to the precise point in the wording of the Constitution or Regulations at which the alteration or addition is to be incorporated.

## 7. Minutes of Sessions 3 and 4

The minutes of Sessions 3 and 4, copies of which had been circulated, were adjusted and adopted.

## SESSION 8

### Friday, June 23 - Evening

At Langley on Friday, the 23rd of June, 1989, in the evening the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

## 1. Report of the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds

The Report, copies of which had been circulated to delegates, was presented by Dr. J. Faber who spoke to the Report and explained the Committee's recommendations. Before presenting the Committee's recommendation, Prof. Faber underlined the following points:

- i) The difficulty faced by the Committee on Creeds in seeking to fulfill their mandate by correspondence. He paid particular tribute to the work of Rev. G. van Rongen in coping with and helping the Committee to overcome this difficulty.
- ii) The importance of the Committee's mandate in view of the fact that the Confessions of all the member churches of the Conference all went back to the ancient creeds and also in view of the attempts by the modern ecumenical movement to alter texts of the Creeds.
- iii) The tremendous influence of the ICET which shows the influence of modern theology.

#### Recommendation

The Committee recommended as follows:

The International Conference of Reformed Churches at Langley, B.C., 1989, having taken note of the Report of the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Creeds, thanks the Committee, and especially its reporter, the Rev. G. Van Rongen, for the work done. The Conference commends the Report to the careful attention of the member churches and requests them to submit their comments to the next meeting of the Conference.

The member churches are requested to consider especially the following points:

- a) the difference in the use of these creeds in the member churches;
- b) the following deviations from the received text in the International Consultation Text:
  - 1) the expression "conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit" instead of the Scriptural formulation "by the Holy Spirit" both in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed;
  - 2) the omission of the words "God" and "Almighty" in the expression "seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty";
  - 3) the omission of the word "thence" in the clause concerning Christ's coming as judge of the living and the dead.
- c) the placing between brackets of the Filioque clause in the Nicene Creed as accepted in the Western Church.
- d) the omission of the phrase "descendit ad inferna" in the text used by the Presbyterian Church of Korea.
- e) the addition of the word "Christian" in the clause concerning the holy catholic church by churches that follow the German rather than the Latin text of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563).
- f) the addition of the words "I believe" in some translations of the same clause.

#### Discussion

Discussion centered on two points:

- i) Whether it was necessary to request churches to send in comments and commit future Conferences to further discussion of the text of the creeds.
- ii) The use of the preposition "by" to translate the expression de Spiritu Sancto in the Apostles' Creed.

#### Decision

It was agreed to accept the recommendation of the Committee with the following adjustments:

- i) That in the second line of the second paragraph the word "invites" be substituted for "requests" and that on the same line there be added after "comments" the words "if any".
- ii) That in the paragraph relating to deviation

in the ICET text (b.1) the Scriptural formulation be stated as "of/from the Holy Spirit" rather than "by the Holy Spirit".

#### 2. Introducing the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh

Principal Emeritus C. Graham introduced the Free Church of Scotland College. He traced the history back to the year 1843 when there took place the event in the history of the Church in Scotland which has come to be known as "The Disruption". In that year the majority of the ministers of the Church of Scotland, as a protest against intolerable state intrusion into the affairs of the Church, left the Church to form the Church of Scotland, Free, while still adhering to the principle of good state/church relationships. They were left without manses, churches, or facilities for training students for the ministry. Within 25 years three Theological Colleges had been established. By the end of the century deviations from Scriptural teaching had infiltrated the Free Church Colleges. This affected the Churches and paved the way for a compromising union in 1900 and only 26 ministers remained in the Free Church. Although these men had the right to all the property of the Church they were deprived of most of it. A fine building in the heart of Edinburgh was assigned as church offices and College. This building houses the College today. Its faculty of five professors, all of whom have had experience in the pastoral ministry, is appointed by the General Assembly. Its main purpose is to train ministers for the Free Church of Scotland but students from other backgrounds are welcome and each year several are enrolled. The library of some 40,000 books includes many valuable old volumes including some first editions of Calvin.

#### 3. Conference Address

Prof. Dr. J. Douma addressed the Conference on the subject of "Apartheid". The Chairman thanked Prof. Douma for his paper and indicated that it would be discussed on Monday morning.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

### SESSION 9

#### Monday, June 26 - Morning & Afternoon

At Langley on Monday, the 26th of June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

#### 1. Discussion of the paper on "Apartheid" by Prof. Dr. J. Douma

Several participants presented responses to Prof. Douma's paper.

- i) Rev. O.J. Douma (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) made the plea that although the paper dealt only with Apartheid in South Africa the Conference should discuss the subject in more general terms. The fact that even within the Dutch reformed churches in Canada there was separation from each other with respect to the Lord's Table was a form of Apartheid. Such Apartheid was sometimes justified on the grounds that if two Churches tried to unite what happens is that we are left with three Churches. Is the problem too big to attempt a solution?
- ii) Rev. W. Boessenkool (Free Reformed Churches in South Africa) read from a prepared paper a long response. Copies were made available to participants. The main points in Mr. Boessenkool's response were as follows:

1. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr. Douma was misrepresenting the political situation in South Africa.

He warned that the ICRC was going in the line of the WCC and the REC when political issues were tabled. He wanted the ICRC to adhere to Art. 30 of the Dordt Church Order, otherwise the result could be that some reformed churches in South Africa would not want to ask for membership.

2. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr Douma was incomplete. According to Dr. Douma thousands of black people had been shifted to other places. The ruling position of the whites being the cause that this took place. Besides that the fear of the whites had inspired them to do so. Rev. Boessenkool pointed out that it was not fear but the willingness to help with better and cheaper housing, that was the background. Also that at this moment nobody will be shifted to any other place without his consent. Everybody being free to look for work at any place he likes.
  3. Rev. Boessenkool stated that the paper of Dr. Douma was inaccurate. Rev. Boessenkool gave many figures of the rapid changing scenario in South Africa. Many figures were given of things that had changed which Dr. Douma had not brought into account in his paper. Rev. Boessenkool proposed that the Conference file Dr. Douma's paper and his reaction to it, and continue with the agenda. For the most important thing in the world is to contend for the faith which has been delivered to us. Unity in the truth will stand forever.
  4. Rev. Boessenkool maintained that the delegates of the member churches of the ICRC really expected a thoroughly theological analysis which goes into the roots of the issue. He therefore regretted that the paper together with the other papers had not been sent to the delegates in advance.
- iii) Mr. A. Roos moved that Prof. Douma's paper and the response by Rev. Boessenkool should not be published and that the Conference terminate discussion of the topic and proceed to the next business.

#### Chairman's Ruling 1

The Chairman indicated that it would be impossible at this stage to put an embargo on the publication of Prof. Douma's paper. He ruled that the paper be included with Conference papers and that the responses be recorded by the recording secretary for inclusion in the minutes and that the Conference continue with discussion.

#### Chairman's Ruling 2

The Chairman ruled that he would not be happy to accept further long printed statements but he did encourage full participation in the discussion centered around Prof. Douma's paper.

- iv) Dr. P. Rossouw (Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa) having apologized for the unavoidable absence of his colleague Prof. Dr. J. Heyns, made the following points:
- a) The ecclesiastical aspects of the subject were rightly approached by way of an ethical analysis of Apartheid but such an analysis needed to be full and it was impossible at one session to give a full picture of the situation in South Africa.
  - b) He wished to ask Prof. Douma if in preparing and presenting his paper he had been aware of the fact that South Africans were very aware of mistakes made in the past and that 80% of all South African Christians were committed to changes.
  - c) South Africa was in a transitional stage as far as government is concerned.
  - d) Why had the paper made no reference
    - 1) to the persistent efforts of the South African government to get together all acknowledged black African leaders for consultation;
    - 2) to the fact that the Group Areas Act and other Acts related to Apartheid

are under reconsideration and a Bill of Human Rights is being considered for all racial groups in South Africa.

- e) While injustices were committed in implementation the declared aim of successive Prime Ministers was justice and fear was not the great motive.
  - f) Freedom of speech in South Africa to criticize the government is unrivaled in all Africa.
  - g) The presentation in Prof. Douma's paper is out of date. South Africa is on the way to meaningful change.
  - h) The Role of the Church in South Africa  
It is admitted that it was a mistake ever to have tried to give a Biblical justification of Apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Church has listened to criticism from all over the world and has reconsidered her position. The paper belittled the major changes in the Dutch Reformed Church as seen in the publication Church and Society. There is no Apartheid in the Dutch Reformed Church. The Dutch Reformed Church has in fact denounced the ideology of Apartheid and has urged the government to uphold the Scriptural norms for human justice.
  - i) South Africa is in a state of transition towards a contextualized Christian democracy. What she needs is not boycotts but critical solidarity.
- v) Conference's Responsibility in the Matter

It was suggested that the Conference agree with the substance of Prof. Douma's paper that Apartheid finds no basis in Scripture, leave working out of dismantling to South Africa, encourage South African Reformed Churches to join the Conference (Rev. Cl. Stam), appreciate that the solving of the problems will take time, and appreciate that the Reformed Churches in South Africa are doing what they can (Prof. Dr. K. Deddens). The struggle in South Africa is a battle for the Reformed faith against a fake Christless Christianity proclaiming the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man without reference to Scripture.

#### vi) Responsibility of the Church to the State

In light of Article 30 of the Church Order, Dr. Faber questioned Prof. Douma's statement on page 29 of his paper relating to the Church's responsibility.

#### Response - Prof. J. Douma

Prof. Douma in replying pointed out that the subject had not been chosen by the Dutch churches. The Interim Committee had invited him to give an evaluation of a relevant subject. With reference to the Reformed Churches in South Africa Apartheid was not a determining factor for admission to ICRC but the subject had to be faced. He was aware while preparing the paper of all the information referred to by Dr. Rossouw. He defended his position on the duty of the church in South Africa to speak out against this sin, as against any sin. It is an ecclesiastical task.

Apartheid had to be addressed in all its aspects. The Dutch Reformed Church had criticized the application of Apartheid but not Apartheid as such. Why had Rev. Boessenkool not spoken about the "sin" of Apartheid? It is important for the member churches to go on speaking to one another about a matter that has brought so much misery to South Africa.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Douma for his paper and his response to the observations made and expressed the great need for ongoing prayer.

#### 2. Message from Gereja Gereja Reformasi, Indonesia

The message reported receipt of a message from the Gereja

Gereja Reformaci, Indonesia expressing their regret at being unable to send an observer to the Conference.

### 3. Conference Paper

Prof. Dr. K. Deddens addressed the Conference on the subject, "Contextualization in Missions". The Chairman thanked Prof. Deddens and invited discussion of the Paper.

#### Discussion

In the discussion attention was drawn to the following points:

- i) Contextualization is knowing the background of those to whom you speak.
- ii) We may be oversensitive on the issue of cultural imperialism. We may have, because of a long period of Bible teaching, something more to export than theology.
- iii) The problem of upward mobility when lives are changed by the Gospel.
- iv) Can we not learn from Marxist diagnosis and analysis of the problems of the poor while rejecting its proffered remedies. We must not allow rejection of false theologies to become an occasion for ignoring the needs of the poor.
- v) The problem of the use of the term "Christian" as a synonym for "Western". Maybe a term can be coined to describe true faith in Christ on analogy of Hindu-ism, Marx-ism, Christu-ism.
- vi) The problem of breaking with customs that belong to the old religion.
- vii) New third world situations may call for expansion of the Confessions.
- viii) It may be difficult to teach folk the Scriptures in their own culture if their languages are limited especially in the decadent, rather primitive, cultures.

#### Response - Prof. Deddens

Prof. Deddens in replying to comments agreed with those who had suggested that Scripture and Contextualization were two most important questions for future Reformed Churches worldwide. He agreed that all cultures are not equal but the missionary had often a great deal to learn from the native culture. We can learn from all sources, including Marxism. The problem of limited languages can be overcome over a period of time. With regard to need for extension to the Confessions he wished to point out the fullness of the teaching in the ecumenical creeds and the Reformation Confessions.

Prof. Deddens was thanked for his responses to the discussion.

The session was closed with prayer.

## SESSION 10

### Tuesday, June 27 - Morning & Afternoon

At Langley on Tuesday, the 27th of June, 1989, the ICRC did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises conducted by the Chairman.

#### 1. Minutes of Session 5

The minutes of the Session 5, copies of which had been circulated, were adjusted and adopted.

#### 2. First Report of the Missions Committee

The Rev. Norman E. Reid presented the report from the advisory Committee on Missions. The first part of the report with recommendations as adopted by the Conference are minuted below. (The second part of the report with adopted recommendations are minuted under Session 12, Wednesday, June 28).

"The Committee reviewed progress made on the mandate

given to 1985 Standing Committee which contained the items 1,2, and 3 below (for item 3 see minute of Session 12). The advisory committee's report with recommendations and Conference decisions are minuted below.

1. To gather information from the member churches regarding their missionary activities and training programs.

#### 1.1 Missionary Activities

- (a) On examining the returns from the churches it was noted that the Korean Church had not made any submission to the committee. Dr. Ho Jin Jun, being a member of the present committee, was invited to speak. He explained that his church had 15 missionaries working in the following countries: Taiwan, Indonesia, Ghana, Japan and the Philippines. With aid from the Presbyterian Church in America his church had begun a missionary training institute in Korea. He asked that lecture(s) be sent to help in his training program, especially in the field of Pastoral Theology.

#### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that member churches take note of the request of the Korean Church.

#### Decision 1

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

- (b) A letter from a committee of the church at Spakenburg-South (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) was received asking about possibilities anywhere in the world for new missions activity or expansion of existing activities. The letter also contained an offer of financial support and/or man power to assist in such projects.
- (c) Rev. J.M. Vingno, an observer from the Christian Brethren Free Church (Philippines) expressed the desire for the ICRC to help send missionaries to his area, as need for Reformed witness is great.

#### Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Conference requests the delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to convey the information from Rev. Vingno to the Church at Spakenburg-South.

#### Decision 2

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

- 1.2 To gather information regarding missionary activity and training programs.

The Committee discussed the submission from the Free Church of Scotland in the Information Re The Provisional Agenda Page 5, Item 8 "Re Missions" first paragraph. The Committee noted that Dr. Deddens was delivering a paper on "Contextualization".

#### 1.3 Missionary Training Programmes

##### Recommendation 3

On the training of nationals and identifying suitable training schools, etc. the Committee recommends that the Conference instructs the Standing Committee on Missions to investigate programs of missionary training.

##### Decision 3

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

2. To gather information regarding coordination of missionary activities of member churches in training and exchanging missionaries.

- (a) A letter from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was read to the committee stating that their church would cooperate in actual mission activities with sister churches only.

It was agreed that since this issue was basic to the whole Conference it should not be discussed in the Missions Committee.

- (b) Discussion took place regarding the need

for more contact between the churches in Sumba/Savu (Gereja Gereja Reformaci, Indonesia) and the Korean missionaries in Java.

#### Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends the ICRC that the Conference draws the attention of the churches in Sumba/Savu to the presence of two Korean missionaries in Java and the attention of the Korean Church to the existence of the Churches in Sumba/Savu.

#### Decision 4

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

- (c) The Convener reported that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland was cooperating with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in establishing a Reformed congregation in the north of England in conjunction with the Presbyterian Association of England. The Irish Church was providing man power and the Dutch Church helping financially and with temporary preaching supply. This is a practical outcome of our relationship within ICRC.
- (d) A message was received from Prof. Boyd speaking of the need on the Peruvian mission field for teachers in the high school, Collegio San Andres, in the Free Church of Scotland mission. Rev. McDonald spoke of need for additional missionaries in the areas served by the Free Church in Southern Africa.

#### Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Conference request that members take note of these needs.

#### Decision 5

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

- (e) Dr. Deddens drew the attention of the Committee to the conference organized by the missionaries in Brazil and Curacao belonging to the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. This Conference will take place in October 1989 in Curacao. Invitations have been extended to missionaries serving in Peru, Surinam and South Africa. The Conference will be in the English language, and will also involve mission aid workers.

#### Recommendation 6

The Committee recommended that the Conference draw the attention of member Churches to this information.

#### Decision 6

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

### 3. Conference Request

The Conference requested the Missions Committee to reconsider and resubmit the second part of their Report with recommendation to a later session of the Conference.

### 4. Workshop - Rules for Inter-Church Relations

The Vice-Chairman, Rev. J. de Gelder, occupied the Chair. Rev. Dr. J. Visscher presented a paper, copies of which were circulated, as a basis of discussion on the topic of inter-church relations. (This paper is retained among Conference papers.)

#### Discussion

The ensuing discussion involved a large number of participants. The observations made included the following:

- i) **Wording of Rule 1**  
The delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia pointed out that they adhered to wording as in the rules of the Canadian Reformed Churches. These words expressed the responsibility churches have to each other to be ready to admonish and

rebuke one another whether or not these are churches of the one federation or churches of different federations or denominations.

The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa indicated that they deliberately omit reference to liturgy because liturgy can be determined by a wide variety of influences. The Free Church of Scotland delegates expressed the view that to begin with this rule suggested suspicion and tended to vitiate at the outstart the whole question of inter-church relationships.

Rev. Cl. Stam (Canadian Reformed Churches) did not see Rule 1 as expressing suspicion but as an expression of mutual responsibility. He questioned use of the term "practice" in the wording of Rule 1 in the proposal.

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen proposed that this Rule 1 should be more positive. As it stands it gives the impression that the wording should indicate a commitment to each other to seek and encourage each other as faithful churches in the struggle to remain faithful. The point was endorsed by other delegates.

In reply Dr. Visscher said he did not see this point as motivated by suspicion. These rules were first established for use of churches with very close relationships. He admitted they could be interpreted negatively and a more positive statement of this rule was perhaps desirable. As to the use of "practice" in Rule 1 he explained that he had in mind churches which subscribed to an acceptable Confession and did not adhere to it.

#### ii) Rules 2 and 7 in the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa proposed rules.

The delegates of that church draw attention to the word "intended" in Rules 2 and 7 and considered it most important. In reply Dr. Visscher expressed reservation about the wisdom of insisting on such a practice. The omission of reference to liturgy in the proposed rules he saw to be in keeping with Article 50 of the Church Order.

#### iii) Rule 3

Prof. D. Macleod (Free Church of Scotland) saw this as desirable and suggested that if it is done it largely covers provisions of Rules 1 and 2.

#### iv) Rule 4

Rev. Cl. Stam found difficulty with allowing each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer sacraments. He pointed to the restrictions in the Dutch and South African rules at this point. Such permission should be given only by special arrangement. Recognition of each other should not necessarily include admission to each other's pulpits. Prof. Dr. Faber could not see how this could be left out if Churches were recognizing each other. The difference between admission into the ministry of the Church and occasional preaching had to be remembered. Rev. van Beveren though Rule 4 was being idealistic at this stage, it may be that for a time we could not implement the proposal about admission to each others pulpits. People may not be ready for it yet though it was a goal to be aimed at. Prof. D. Macleod saw that in view of different liturgies there could be practical difficulties in inviting each other's ministers to administer the sacraments but he saw the rest of proposed Rule 4 altogether desirable while making the point that the responsibility to invite a preacher to the pulpit lay with the minister who is held responsible for

his action. At Edinburgh in 1985 delegates from other member churches of the Conference had been invited to preach in the Free Church of Scotland pulpits because the Free Church ministers had wanted to make a declaration to the congregations that all members of the Conference preach the same Gospel.

In reply Dr. Visscher indicated that he could not see how preaching could be excluded from Rule 4. If we recognize others as true Churches we are saying they preach the Word. If some ministers of Reformed Churches did not accept invitations to preach in other churches it could be attributed to their understanding of the relationship between pastor and consistory which required consultation with the consistory before acceptance of such invitations.

v) **Need for a process of getting to know each other.**

Several participants (including Rev. J.J. Peterson, O.P.C., who outlined the process in existence between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches) made the point that the purpose of the Conference was to promote such a process. This was being accomplished (for example, because of common involvement in the ICRC the Canadian Reformed Churches had entered into discussions with the Free Church of Scotland). Rules governing inter-church relationships, which were in any case an alien concept to Presbyterian Churches, perhaps found their place at the end of the discussion process rather than at the beginning. Rev. P. Den Butter questioned the wisdom of an attempt to adopt the rules. Let the Churches decide for themselves how to pursue Article III,2 of the Constitution

vi) **Existence of true churches side by side**

Rev. P. Gadsby (Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia) wondered if sometimes reluctance to recognize one another as a true church stemmed from an unwillingness to accept that two true churches could exist side by side. With several other participants he acknowledged that the ultimate goal must be unity and visible union. yet among the churches there are differences which will mean that for a time they may have to walk apart. Overcoming obstacles to unity will be achieved by recognition. It was important to consider not just where a church stands at any one point of time but the direction in which she was moving (Rev. G.I. Williamson, Orthodox Presbyterian Church). The point was endorsed by Prof. D. Macleod in the course of his contribution. The enormous problem facing the world today in the existence of apostate churches denying the fundamental truths of Scripture. We must not waste their energy on disputes between Reformed churches.

vii) **Summing up**

The Chairman of the session said that the purpose of the workshop had been to have a free and open discussion and that had been accomplished. No conclusions had been reached but it was hoped that the delegates would be able to report to their churches on these discussions.

The session was closed.

**SESSION 11**  
**Tuesday, June 27 - Evening**

At Langley on Tuesday, the 27th of June, 1989, in the eve-

ning the did again convene and was constituted by devotional exercises.

**1. Introducing the Churches**

The Chairman invited Professor V.E. D'Assonville to introduce the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Professor D'Assonville began with an expression of appreciation of the welcome and fellowship he and his fellow-delegates had experienced at the Conference.

He recalled that the Reformed Churches in South Africa had come into being by way of secession in 1859 on Biblical grounds similar to those which occasioned the secession in Holland in 1834. The early years had witnessed a severe struggle for survival and then towards the end of the century the war had renewed their trials. They suffered not only the closure of their seminary but the loss of thousands of people as a result of the war and the concentration camps. Nothing was left after the war— churches, manses and farms had been burnt down. As a result there was large-scale emigration of the people.

But in spite of all, God prospered them. A seminary which began in 1969 has become the largest, indeed, the only Christian university in the African continent having now some 10,000 students. No colour bar exists in the university. Now also the Church has its Bible and psalm book in the Afrikaans language.

The church has grown and kept to the Word and the forms of unity. Their conviction and experience is that truth and love are from the Spirit of God. Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is sentimentality.

The Chairman thanked Prof. D'Assonville for his account of his church and their trials.

**2. Conference Address**

Prof. D. Macleod addressed the Conference on the subject of "Christology". The Chairman thanked Prof. Macleod for the preparation and delivery of his speech and indicated that discussion on it would take place the next morning.

The session was closed with prayer.

*Note: The minutes for the sessions on Wednesday June 28th were not yet available at time of printing.*

**REPORT FROM DEPUTIES APPOINTED TO EXAMINE THE  
LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCES  
TO SYNOD 1989**

**1. MANDATE**

Synod Albany 1987 appointed the undersigned "to finalise (the matter of examining the linguistic aspects of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances) and to report to next synod" (Art. 72, Acts 1987).

**2. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Upon examining the report prepared by deputies appointed by Synod 1983, and submitted to Synod 1985, and the response to that report by Synod 1985 (Art. 39, Acts 1985), it appears that their work was adopted, albeit with a number of minor changes. Synod then appointed a committee to examine "the linguistic aspects of these Ordinances so as to be able to finalise their text" (Art. 39, Acts 1985). This committee, however, was unable to complete its work and Synod therefore charged "that these matters are to be finalised by the Churches by the end of 1985 by mutual agreement" (Art. 93, Acts 1985).

Synod 1987 concluded that the work in question was not finalised by mutual agreement of the Churches and it subsequently appointed the present deputies to complete this task and report to next Synod (Art. 72, Acts 1987).

In the meantime, the Kelmscott consistory, not aware of any existing documents, set about drawing up its own certificates in connection with the departure of Dr. Hur. The result of their work has been included in Synod Acts 1987 under Appendix K (Forms 3, 4, and 5).

**3. ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCES**

Deputies have now completed their mandate and submit the following for your consideration. Where required, the proposed Forms and/or Ecclesiastical Ordinances - or "Certificates" as we have called them - are accompanied by explanatory notes. As a general comment regarding the latter we advise that they have - in some instances - been significantly edited to rid them of verbosity.

Respectfully submitted,

K.A. WIESKE

S.H. TERPSTRA

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**3.1 FORM 1 - SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS**

We, Elders and Deacons of the Free Reformed Church at ( ), signatories to this Subscription Form, sincerely, solemnly, and with a good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that in our respective offices we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, earnestly reject all errors which conflict with this doctrine, and declare that we will exert ourselves in keeping the church free from all such errors.

Should at any time in the future reservations regarding the said doctrines arise in our minds, we faithfully promise not to propose, teach or defend them, neither publicly nor privately, but to disclose these reservations to the consistory so that it may examine them. Furthermore, we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the consistory. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the consistory or should we persist in our reservations we agree, by that very fact, to be suspended from our respective offices.

Moreover, should the consistory at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our opinion regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, with the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our respective offices, reserving for ourselves the right of appeal. Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will submit to the determination and judgement of the consistory.

Notes:

1. The phrase "acquiesce in" has been amended to read "submit to" (refer to last sentence).
2. The word "sentiments" in paragraph four has been replaced by the word "opinions" (refer Art. 39 [6], Acts 1985).

### 3.2 FORM 2 - SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR MINISTERS OF THE WORD

We, ministers of the Word in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, signatories to this Subscription Form, sincerely, solemnly, and with a good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same in our public preaching or writing. We also promise not only to earnestly reject all errors which conflict with the aforesaid doctrine, but that we shall at all times be willing to refute and contradict them, doing our utmost in reproving, combating, and helping to resist such errors.

Should at any time in the future reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds we faithfully promise not to propose, teach, or defend them, neither in our preaching nor in our writing, publicly nor privately, but to first disclose these reservations to the ecclesiastical assemblies in the ecclesiastical way so that they may examine them.

Furthermore, we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies or should we persist in our reservations we agree by that very fact to be suspended from our office. Moreover, should the consistory, the classis church, or synod at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our opinion regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our office. However, we reserve for ourselves the right of appeal should we believe ourselves aggrieved by the judgement of the consistory or classis church.

Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will submit to the determination and judgement of the consistory and/or classis church.

Notes:

1. The phrase "acquiesce in" has been amended to read "submit to" (refer to last sentence).
2. The word "sentiments" in paragraph five has been replaced by the "opinions".

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### 3.3 FORM 3 - CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR CALL

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

*The Free Reformed Church at ( ), acting as classis church, has on (date) \_\_\_\_\_  
examined and declared eligible for call*

*Mr \_\_\_\_\_*

*The preparatory examination was conducted in accordance with the provisions of Art. 5 of the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and relevant synodical regulations.*

*For the Classis Church:*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Chairman*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Clerk*

Notes:

1. The Latin words have been changed to their English equivalents as per Art. 39 (1) Acts 1985.
2. The latter part of the draft accepted by Synod 1985 where it refers to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia has been deleted. This has been done, firstly, for linguistic reasons and, secondly, because this certificate is not intended to limit the call to one from an Australian church. This was literally translated from the Dutch form and is not relevant to our situation.

### 3.4 FORM 4 - CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION TO THE OFFICE OF MINISTER OF THE WORD

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The Free Reformed Church at ( ), acting as classis church, has on (date) \_\_\_\_\_, examined according to Act. 5 C.O. and in accordance with the synodical regulations for the Peremptory Examination

Cand. \_\_\_\_\_  
who has been called to the Ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments by the church at \_\_\_\_\_

After having received the favourable advice of the Deputies ad Art. 49 C.O., and having witnessed the subscription to the Form for Ministers of the Word by the above mentioned brother, the classis church has admitted him to the Ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

For the Classis Church:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

#### Notes:

1. The Latin words have been changed to their English equivalents (Art. 39 (1) Acts 1985).
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### 3.5 FORM 5 - CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE FROM THE CONSISTORY

The consistory of the Free Reformed Church at ( ) has been advised by the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_, its Minister of the Word since (date) \_\_\_\_\_, that he has accepted the call extended to him by \_\_\_\_\_ At its meeting held on (date) \_\_\_\_\_, the consistory decided to:

1. grant the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ an honourable discharge from his duties with the Free Reformed Church at ( ), effective as from the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_, from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of \_\_\_\_\_;
2. declare that during the period of his ministry within the Free Reformed Church at ( ), he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and godly in his walk of life within the congregation;
3. provide him with two copies of this Certificate of Release for presentation, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order, to the church at \_\_\_\_\_ and to classis \_\_\_\_\_, as proof of proper and lawful release from this church, and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine;
4. record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his \_\_\_\_\_ year stay in the Free Reformed Church at ( ), and on his departure commends him to the LORD and His grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour and cause him to be a blessing within the church which he may now begin to serve.

For the consistory:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

#### Notes:

1. The word "Dismissal" in the title has been replaced by "Release".

### 3.6 FORM 6 - CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE FROM THE CLASSIS CHURCH

The consistory of the Free Reformed Church at ( ) acting as classis church for the Free Reformed Church at ( ), acknowledges the advice received from the Free Reformed Church at ( ) that the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_, has accepted the call extended to him by the \_\_\_\_\_ and that the consistory of the Free Reformed Church at ( ) has, at its meeting held on (date) \_\_\_\_\_, decided to:

1. grant the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ an honourable discharge from his duties with the Free Reformed Church at ( ), effective as from the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_, from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of \_\_\_\_\_;
2. declare that during the period of his ministry within the Free Reformed Church at ( ), he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and godly in his walk of life within the congregation;
3. provide him with two copies of this Certificate of Release for presentation, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order, to the church at \_\_\_\_\_ and to classis \_\_\_\_\_, as proof of proper and lawful release from the Free Reformed Church at ( ) and the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine;
4. record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his \_\_\_\_\_ year stay in the Free Reformed Church at ( ), and in the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and on his departure commends him to the LORD and His grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour and cause him to be a blessing within the church which he may now begin to serve.

For the Classis Church:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

Note:

1. This form is substantially the same as the one printed in appendix K, Acts 1987, under the title "Form 5".
2. The word "Dismissal" in the title has been replaced by "Release".

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### 3.7 FORM 7 - REQUEST FOR RELEASE FROM THE CONSISTORY TO THE CLASSIS CHURCH

To the consistory of the Free Reformed Church at ( ), acting as classis church for the Free Reformed Church at ( ).

You are hereby advised:

1. That the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_, who has been our Minister of the Word since \_\_\_\_\_, has accepted the call extended to him by the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. That the consistory has subsequently granted Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ a most honourable discharge from his duties with us commencing from the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_ from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. That this consistory declares that during his term of office within our congregation, Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office and godly in his walk of life.

It is therefore proposed that you, as classis church, may with a similar declaration release Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ from his duties within the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, so that in accordance with the relevant Articles of the Church Order the church at \_\_\_\_\_ and classis \_\_\_\_\_ may accept him with lawful Certificates of

*Release from both the church and bond of churches which he has served, and with a good attestation concerning both his doctrine and life.*

*For the consistory:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman  
\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

Notes:

1. The title of this form has been amended to more accurately reflect its purpose.
2. The wording of this form is substantially the same as the one found in appendix K Acts 1987 under the heading "Form 4".

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### 3.8 FORM 8 - EMERITUS DECLARATION FROM THE CLASSIS CHURCH

*The Free Reformed Church at ( ), acting as classis church, acknowledges the advice received from the consistory of the church at ( ), that the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ who has served that church as Minister of the Word since \_\_\_\_\_, has requested to be relieved from the responsibilities of his office.*

*Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the said consistory at its meeting of \_\_\_\_\_ has acceded to this request, consistent with the provisions of Art. 13 C.O.*

*Supported by the favourable advice of Deputies Art. 49 C.O., it now declares:*

1. *That Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ be granted an honourable release from the responsibilities of his office as from \_\_\_\_\_.*
2. *That Reverend \_\_\_\_\_, during the time of his labour within the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, has been faithful and diligent in his office and godly in his walk of life.*
3. *That Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ be thanked for the \_\_\_\_\_ years of faithful service which the Lord allowed him to perform in the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.*

*Finally, we commend Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord with the fervent prayer that it may please Him to confirm the fruits of his labour.*

*For the Classis Church:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman  
\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

Notes:

1. The adopted form (Art. 39 (5) Acts 1985) is verbose and ambiguous. Verbose, because it is repetitious, and ambiguous because the reference to payment of the annuity (wrong word in this context) is limited to one year only. Hence, the entire declaration has been re-written. Over regulation has been avoided by the reference to Art. 13 C.O.
2. The decision of Synod 1985 to delete the word "old" (Art. 39 (5) Acts 1985) has been made superfluous by the general reference to Art. 13 C.O.

# **REPORT FROM DEPUTIES APPOINTED TO LINGUISTICALLY REVISE THE CHURCH ORDER**

## **1. MANDATE**

Synod Albany 1987 appointed the undersigned to:

1. scrutinise and improve the language use of the C.O.
2. make use of the Canadian text in so far as possible
3. report to next synod (Art. 33 Acts 1987)

## **2. OBSERVATIONS**

In setting about our work we were mindful of the observations and considerations recorded in Art. 33 which led Synod to charge us with the above mandate. In our study of both the Australian and Canadian Church Orders we were quickly convinced that the latter is far superior to our own in terms of its language use. Moreover, its style is lucid and meaning is unambiguous while our own displays many dutchisms and meaning is often obscured by poor syntax.

Bearing in mind Synod's instruction "to make use of the Canadian text as so far as possible" and acknowledging the considerable linguistic weaknesses of the Australian C.O. we were faced with a task of considerable dimensions; indeed, it virtually meant re-writing the C.O.

Furthermore, upon comparing both Church Orders it appeared that they differed little in substance although the divisions in articles do not run parallel. Nevertheless, this minor difference seemed hardly to justify a re-write of our own C.O. Additionally, a re-examination of the division of articles in our C.O. is required as we presently do not have a 26th article.

## **3. CONSIDERATIONS**

Therefore, having considered the background and thought processes which appear to have determined Synod's recommendations and mandate in this matter (gleaned from those things detailed under 'Observations' and 'Considerations' in Art. 33 Acts 1987), your deputies have taken the view that a mere linguistic correction of the C.O. was but one part of the mandate. The other, equally significant part, is to seek as much uniformity between the Australian and Canadian Church Orders as possible. To achieve this dual purpose your deputies are convinced that an examination of the Canadian C.O. and its adaptation to our circumstances would be a better and less time consuming way to go.

Its advantages are:

1. Much unnecessary work will be saved.
2. Because of the similarity between the Australian and Canadian situations, it is beneficial to strive for as much uniformity as possible.
3. The Canadian C.O. has already been subjected to linguistic correction by people better qualified than your deputies.
4. It solves the problem of what to do with the blank space that is currently our Art. 26.
5. Every member will have ready access to the C.O. as it is printed in the Book of Praise. The only significant differences between it and ours are in matters of the assemblies.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Deputies recommend that new deputies be appointed:

1. to examine the substance of both the Australian and Canadian Church Orders;
2. to adapt the Canadian Church Order so that it clearly reflects the substance of the Australian Church Order;
3. to maintain the division of Articles of the Canadian Church Order;
4. to report to next Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

K.A. WIESKE

S.H. TERPSTRA

# DEPUTIES TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

appointed by Synod 1987 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

## REPORT TO SYNOD 1989

Esteemed brethren,

1. Synod 1987 gave your deputies the following mandate (Acts, Art. 84 D):
  - "2. a. assess the churches \$30.00 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton.
  - b. that deputies be charged with the collection of these funds from the churches and with forwarding the same to the college.
  - c. encourage the churches to continue to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theologische Universiteit at Kampen.
  - d. to charge deputies to continue correspondence with Kampen to obtain necessary information and documentation.
  - e. instruct deputies to continue publishing all relevant news about the training for the ministry so that our church members may receive a good understanding of the need to support those colleges and the training of the students.
  - f. instruct deputies to continue their efforts to support theological students and to ask the churches to provide funds for financial support.
3. That deputies be instructed to investigate the possibilities of working towards our own theological training and the facilities required for such an undertaking.
4. That deputies report their findings to next synod."

## 2. Contact with the Theological College in Hamilton

### 2.1 Information received:

Reports received from the Board of Governors provided a regular flow of information concerning developments in and around the College.

We merely highlight some of the items here:

- 2.1.1 The special course leading to a "Diploma of Theological Studies" as approved by Synod 1986 of the Canadian Reformed Churches has been put into place (ref. Acts Synod 1986, report on the Diploma Course of Theological Studies, page 198).
- 2.1.2 Two new professors were appointed by Synod 1989 of the CRC. Dr. N.H. Gootjes is due to take Dr. J. Faber's place as professor of dogmatics when the latter retires on 31-12-1989. Dr. J. DeJong has been appointed to the department of diaconology and ecclesiology as from May 1990, just prior to the retirement of Dr. K. Deddens. That the vacancies could be filled by these two brothers will be a cause for deep gratitude.
- 2.1.3 Despite conscientious endeavours by the Finance and Property Committee of the College we have not been able to show the video tape of a "College Evening" at Hamilton to our congregations. However, Br. J.G. VanDooren was very helpful in showing his own tape of the college when he visited the Australian churches during the winter of 1988.

### 2.2 Support given.

The financial support decided on by the Synod of Albany 1987 was duly advised to the Hamilton College. Your deputies had expected the churches to respond as from 1 January 1988. However, after several attempts by deputies in their correspondence with the churches, it would appear a sad reflection on the strength of the bond of churches when we have to report that the churches did not live up to their promise. The decision taken in September 1987 was not carried out or honoured only partially by some of our churches. Deputies were therefore unable to carry out this important part of their mandate.

As the 1989 budget for the College showed an amount of CAN\$34,000 as "gifts from Australian sister churches", and our remittances during the budget period could not exceed CAN\$19,921 (=A\$20,860), it is evident that our failure to honour a common commitment may have caused serious concern, even embarrassment, to the Board of Governors.

Looking ahead, it should be borne in mind that the level of support should not be adversely affected by inflation. The November 1989 equivalent of the support level determined in September 1987 would be very close to A\$35 per communicant member per annum. On the external value of the Australian dollar it is not practical to speculate; consequently no iron clad guarantee in terms of Canadian dollars can be supplied.

## 3. Contact with Theological University Kampen

- 3.1 Deputies reminded the churches of their responsibilities towards "Kampen" through regular collections. Our

financial support is still being appreciated, although in the aftermath of the 1987 decisions it is understood that no great burdens will be involved.

- 3.2 Financial reports, fata academica and study guide have been duly received from the governing bodies.  
 3.3 In confirmation of the close bond between our churches and the training institutions at Kampen and Hamilton, deputies intend to send brief messages to the "Schooldag" resp. "Convocation Day" during September.

#### 4. Publicity

- 4.1 Pertinent data from information received from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" were passed on to the membership through four items in Una Sancta (xxxv/21, xxxvi/2,3,5). These covered study requirements as well as overseas events affecting study courses and their environment.  
 4.2 Particular emphasis was placed on the need for ministers in the churches of the Lord, and on urgent consideration to be given to this need by young men in the churches. We are thankful to the Lord for His merciful provision in alerting some capable young brothers. They are now in the process of preparing themselves for training overseas. At this juncture, there are no requests for financial support.

#### 5. Students' support

During 1988 the support to Br. J. Kroeze, College Hamilton, could be finalised. He accepted a call by the CRC of Hamilton for the missionary work in N.E. Brazil in August 1988, and subsequently moved to Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, where he renders his services to that small congregation while he prepares himself for his missionary duties.

#### 6. Finance

- 6.1 Statement of Receipts and Payments - 1/7/87 to 30/6/89

|  |   |          |                 |               |
|--|---|----------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Opening Balance - 1st July 1987</b> |   |          |                 | \$18328.20    |
| <b>Receipts</b>                        | <b>- Students Support</b>                                   |          |                 |               |
|  | F.R.C. Kelmscott  | Aug. '87 | \$1890.00       |               |
|  | Launceston  | Nov. '87 | 289.95          |               |
|  | Armadale  | Nov. '88 | 1890.00         |               |
|  | Byford  | Dec. '88 | 420.00          | 4489.95       |
|  | <b>- Hamilton College</b>                                   |          |                 |               |
|  | F.R.C. Launceston   | Feb. '88 | \$2402.92       |               |
|  | "   | Aug. '88 | 4500.00         |               |
|  | "   | Mar. '89 | 3660.25         |               |
|  | "   | Jun. '89 | 2906.30         |               |
|  | Bedforddale   | Feb. '88 | 1980.00         |               |
|  | "   | Aug. '88 | 1980.00         |               |
|  | Byford  | Feb. '89 | 3240.00         |               |
|  | Armadale  | Apr. '89 | 4410.00         |               |
|  | Albany  | Jun. '89 | 6330.00         | 31409.47      |
|  | <b>- Interest</b>   |          |                 | 1740.34       |
|  | <b>- Gift Bible Study Club Semper Reformanda Launceston</b> |          |                 | <u>137.00</u> |
|  |   |          |                 | \$56104.96    |
| <b>Payments</b>                        | <b>- Students Support</b>                                   |          |                 | 20995.80      |
|  | <b>- Hamilton College</b>                                   | Sep. '88 | \$10860.00      |               |
|  |   | Mar. '89 | 10000.00        |               |
|  |   | Jun. '89 | <u>10549.47</u> |               |
|  |   |          |                 | 31409.47      |
|  | <b>- Library Hamilton College</b>                           |          |                 | 137.00        |
|  | <b>- Bankcharges etc.</b>                                   |          |                 | <u>89.41</u>  |
| <b>Balance as at 30th June 1989</b>    |   |          |                 | \$3473.28     |

6.2 The Balance consists of:

|   |                    |                   |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| - Funds   | - Hamilton College | \$ -.-            |
|   | - Students Support | 177.77            |
| Advance Payment from the F.R.C. of Launceston to Students Support |                    | <u>3355.51</u>    |
| Held in Investment account with Tasmania Bank                     |                    | <u>\$ 3473.28</u> |

| 6.3 Support Hamilton College | Assessed 1988 | Amount Received | Amount Due | Amount 1989 |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| F.R.C. of Albany             | 6330.00       | 6330.00         | -.-        | -.-         |
| Armadale                     | 8400.00       | 4410.00         | 3990.00    | -.-         |
| Bedfordale                   | 3960.00       | 3960.00         | -.-        | -.-         |
| Byford                       | 3240.00       | 3240.00         | -.-        | -.-         |
| Kelmscott                    | 5190.00       | -.-             | 5190.00    | -.-         |
| Launceston                   | 7380.00       | 13469.47        | -6089.47   | -.-         |
| West Tamar F.R.C.            | -.-           | -.-             | -.-        | -.-         |

## 7. Training in Australia?

Your deputies have commenced "to investigate the possibilities of working towards our own theological training and the facilities required for such an undertaking."

They had to address some basic considerations when they surveyed the resources available to match the demands of such training, such as:

- 7.1 Spread over the face of Australia there are now seven congregations counting some 2600 members including 5 or 6 ministers on active service and 2 emeriti. The question arises: is this resource base broad enough to support a properly accredited institution which will meet the requirements of the churches?
- 7.2 The sister churches in Canada and the U.S., spread over an equally vast continent, have been singularly blessed when, in faith, they established the Hamilton College. That College has a capable faculty and excellent facilities, supported by the churches in Australia. Yet, its very considerable resources are under utilised at present, and are likely to be so for some time to come.
- 7.3 A system of itinerant students depends on regular availability of tutor ministers. The workloads of our ministers are such that it may realistically be queried whether their consistories would be happy to make adequate blocks of their ministers' time available for the purpose.
- 7.4 Another weighty consideration is that the student's place and involvement in an established institution of academic studies normally gives him the optimum full-time support he is entitled to.
- 7.5 It would appear to be a good Scriptural stewardship to utilise the Hamilton resources to their fullest extent, given also the language, and to monitor the Australian resource base as well as student numbers in view of longer term requirements.

## 8. Recommendations

Synod decide:

- a. to assess the churches \$35 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton, as from 1-1-1990.
- b. to discharge deputies, and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  1. collect funds for Hamilton from the churches and forward them to the college;
  2. encourage the churches to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theological University in Kampen;
  3. continue correspondence with both Hamilton and Kampen in order to maintain contact and to obtain information;
  4. publish relevant news about the training for the ministry so that church members understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
  5. arrange the support of theological students whenever needed in accordance with Article 19 of the Church Order;
  6. alert the churches to the requirements and the possibilities for an Australian based theological training in the light of changing circumstances.

With brotherly greetings,

The Deputies,

A.M. HIDDING    REV. K. JONKER    J. VANDER ROS

Launceston, 30th June, 1989

# **RULES FOR SYNODS of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of AUSTRALIA**

## **Article 1 - FREQUENCY OF SYNODS**

Synods shall be convened once in every three years - in accordance with Article 45 of the Church Order, - provided that as long as classes have not been formed synods shall be convened once in every two years.

An extra-ordinary synod shall be convened at the request of at least two Classes - in accordance with Article 45 of the Church Order, - provided that as long as classes have not been formed it shall be done only at the request of at least two churches.

## **Article 2 - SYNOD DELEGATES**

- (a) Every classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to synod, provided that as long as there are only two classes, every classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. Delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as is possible.

As long as classes have not been formed, every church shall delegate its minister and one elder to synod.

If no minister is available an elder may be appointed in his place; if no elder is available a deacon may be appointed in his place.

- (b) The churches shall provide their delegates with proper credentials, confirming therein their adherence to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order.

## **Article 3 - CONVENING THE SYNOD**

- (a) The synod shall appoint, in alphabetic order, the church which is to convene the next synod.

- (b) This convening church shall:

- . give six months written notice to the churches of the synod's meeting place and time.
- . invite the churches to submit items for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- . request Synod's Deputies to submit their reports for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- . prepare the draft agenda in accordance with the provisions of Article 3(c) of the RULES
- . forward to the churches - in triplicate, and at least three months prior to the convening of synod - the draft agenda together with any documentation on the items received for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- . ensure that all items required at synod are tabled.

- (c) The following items shall be placed on the draft agenda:

- 1 all those listed in Article 16 of these RULES.
- 2 all those received from the churches by at least four months prior to the synod date.
- 3 all deputies' reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of Article 10(b) of these RULES.
- 4 all correspondence received.

- (d) In the case of an extra-ordinary synod, the times and conditions specified in this article shall be adhered to as much as possible.

## **Article 4 - CONDUCT OF SYNODS**

- (a) When synod deals with general business it shall be conducted in 'open' sessions. Business of a personal nature will be dealt with only in 'closed' sessions.

- (b) Separate synodical acts shall be written for the 'open' and 'closed' sessions.

- (c) Members of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of Australia have the right of admission to the 'open' sessions.

- (d) Synod delegates only may participate in the discussions unless synod decides otherwise.

- (e) After having adopted the agenda, synod shall accept no further correspondence.

## **Article 5 - OFFICERS OF SYNOD**

- (a) Synod shall appoint the following officers:

- a chairman
- a vice-chairman
- a first clerk
- a second clerk

- (b) the assessor assists the other synodical officers where needed in the execution of their duties; he prepares the 'Press Release' of synod.
  - (c) the first clerk prepares the Acts of Synod.
  - (d) the second clerk conducts all synod's correspondence. This includes written advice to all parties concerned, of synod's decisions and appointments.
- A copy of every item of outgoing correspondence shall be placed in synod's archives.

### **Article 6 - VOTING**

- (a) Wherever possible, decisions should be taken unanimously.
- (b) In the case of a vote being necessary, any question in a matter of general business shall be voted on orally. In the case of a tied vote, the question shall be deemed to have been rejected.
- (c) Questions concerning persons shall be voted on by secret ballot.  
Ballot papers incorrectly filled in and blank ballot papers shall be invalid.  
Those who receive the largest number of votes shall be deemed to have been elected, provided that this number be not less than half the number of valid votes cast.  
If a decision cannot be made by way of two free ballots, any subsequent ballot shall decide between those who received most votes in the previous ballot.  
If the vote is tied another ballot shall be held. Should a tied vote occur for a second time, the decision shall be made by calling upon the name of the Lord and the drawing of lots.

### **Article 7 - PROPOSALS AND DECISIONS**

- (a) The chairman may direct that a proposal be submitted in writing.
- (b) Decisions shall be formulated and recorded in the Acts after the model in Appendix 1.

### **Article 8 - EXECUTION OF DECISIONS**

Synod's decisions shall be carried out either by its officers or by Deputies appointed for that purpose.

### **Article 9 - DEPUTIES**

- (a) The appointment of deputies with their alternates shall be done in accordance with Article 48 of the Church Order. In particular, synod may appoint deputies with their alternates for:
  - correspondence with other churches
  - the exercise of discipline over office bearers (Art.76 of the Church Order)
  - the synod's treasury
  - the synod's archives
  - the audit of the archives
- (b) All deputies' reports must be made in writing. Unless otherwise instructed, such reports must reach the convening church in time for inclusion with the draft agenda to be sent to the churches three months before synod - see Article 3(b). Supplementary reports and Late reports dealing with matters which took place after the reports' due date shall also be submitted to the convening Church in writing for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- (c) Deputies shall present their financial statement (if any) to synod, to be audited before they are discharged.
- (d) Synod shall give deputies proper written instructions.

### **Article 10 - APPROBATION OF CALLS**

As long as classes have not been formed, the approbation of calls shall be done by classis church which shall report to the next synod.

The following documents are required for the approbation of a call of a minister:

- 1 the letter of call
- 2 the letter of acceptance of the call
- 3 the Certificate of Dismissal from the church last served by the minister
- 4 the Certificate of Dismissal from the classis to which the church last served by the minister, belongs
- 5 a certificate from the calling church that the necessary public announcements were made

### **Article 11 - SYNOD COSTS**

- (a) Itemised accounts of properly authorized synod expenses incurred by either the convening church, synod

deputies or delegates, must be presented to the synod treasurer for payment. The several deputies appointed for one specific purpose must submit a joint statement of expenses.

- (c) The share of each church in synod costs shall be in proportion to its number of confessing members as at the 1st January of the year of synod.

### **Article 12 - SYNOD TREASURER**

- (a) The synod treasurer shall inform the churches of their share of synod costs  
(b) He shall pay all properly authorized and documented synod expenditures  
(c) The books of the treasurer shall be audited by a synod committee, following which the treasurer will be discharged

### **Article 13 - STANDARD PROCEEDINGS**

The following proceedings shall be standard at every synod:

- 1 Opening by the convening Church
- 2 Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials
- 3 Election of Officers
- 4 Constitution of Synod
- 5 Delegates' Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
- 6 Adoption of the Agenda
- 7 Adoption of Meeting Procedure
- 8 Incoming Correspondence
- 9 Instructions
- 10 Report by classis churches
- 11 Deputies' Reports, and discharge of Deputies
- 12 Audit of Treasurer's books, and discharge of Treasurer
- 13 Calculation of the percentages of the Churches' share of Synod costs
- 14 Appointment of Deputies
- 15 Appointment of convening Church, and the place and time of the next Synod
- 16 Questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order
- 17 Personal Questions
- 18 Adoption of Acts
- 19 Approval of Press Release
- 20 Censure according to Article 47 of the Church Order
- 21 Closing of Synod

### **Article 17 - AMENDMENT OF THESE RULES**

Amendment of these RULES shall be sought only by means of a proposal from one or more churches.

#### **MODEL FOR COMMITTEE PROPOSALS**

##### **CAPTION STATING AGENDA-ITEM**

Committee ( ) presents:

##### **A MATERIAL - Agenda-item(s)**

1

2

##### **B OBSERVATIONS**

1

2

3

##### **C CONSIDERATIONS**

1

2

3

##### **D RECOMMENDATIONS**

1

2

Adopted Unanimously.

