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Logo of the ICRC

The logo of the ICRC is explained as follows:

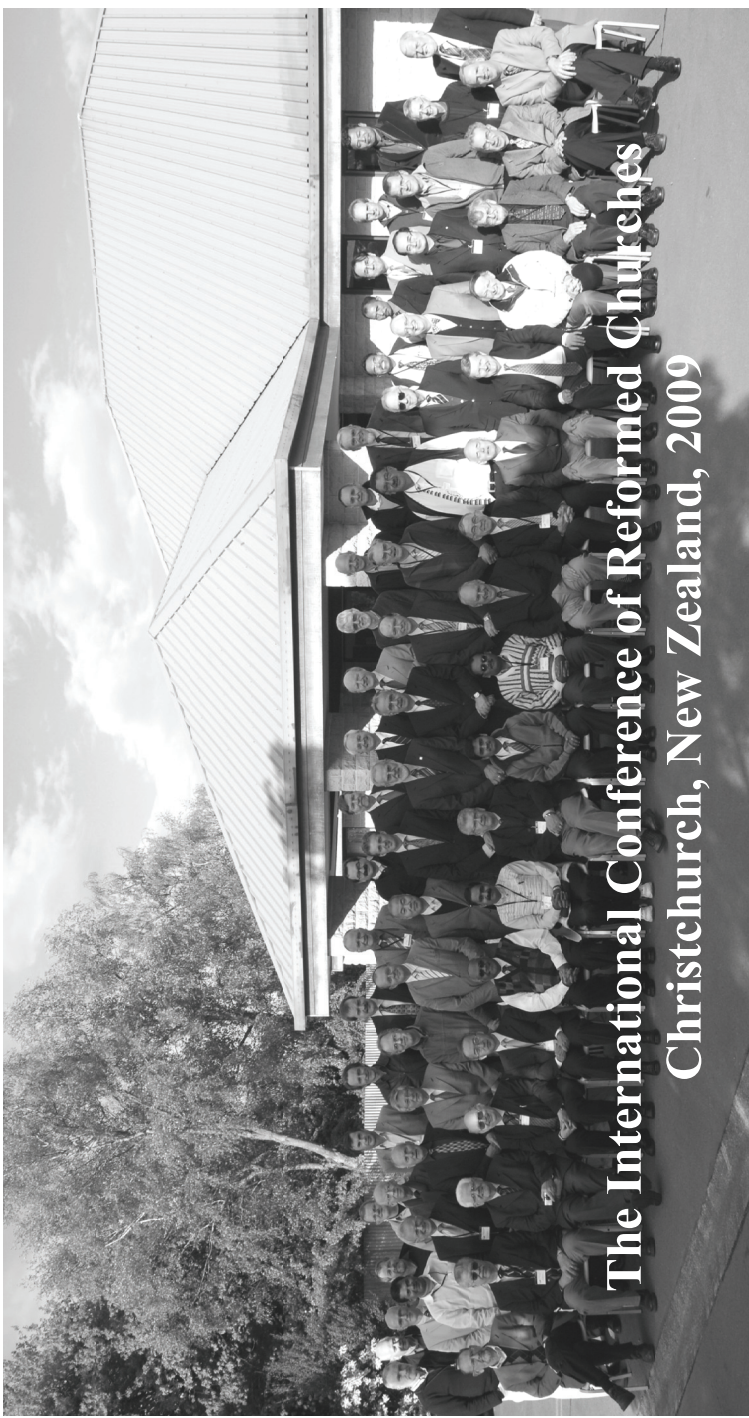
The *circle* symbolizes the world, reflecting the international character of the ICRC.

Surrounding the circle, we see the *church*, which began small – at the beginning of the ages – and is moving out into all the world, manifest in the ICRC – a continuing movement signified in the unfinished, open end.

The *cross*, a symbol of the church – at the starting point also a symbol of Christ's redemptive work for all the world – spanning the entire world.

The *curved lines* also reflect the dynamic movement in the history of the church.

Section 1
Conference Minutes



Prayer Service

Evening, Thursday
15 October 2009

Rev. Robert van Wichen welcomed delegates and visitors. The conference sang the first verse of New Zealand's national anthem.

Rev. John Goris led the prayer service for the opening of the seventh meeting of the ICRC.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Opening: Revelation 5: 9-14.

Time for silent prayer.

“Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124: 8)
“Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Singing: Psalm 115.

Confession of faith: the Apostles' Creed.

Prayer.

Reading: Isaiah 40: 1-17 (Rev. Paul Bae).

Singing: “Comfort, comfort ye, my people” (Hymn 406).

Reading: Matthew 5: 1-16 (Rev. Dirk van Garderen).

Sermon: Matthew 5: 4 (Rev. Dirk van Garderen).

Singing: “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah” (Hymn 407).

Prayers.

- Thanks for the conference and safe travel (Rev. Maynard Koerner).
- Petition for a God honouring conference (Rev. David Miller).
- Petition for the worldwide church and particularly for the suffering church (Rev. Ben Fourie).
- The Lord's Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 86 verses 1,2 and 5.

Benediction of Numbers 6: 24-27 (Rev. J. Goris).

Sung doxology: Psalm 9 verse 1.

The text of the sermon is contained in Section III.

Session 1

Morning, Friday
16 October 2009

1. Opening

Rev. Bort de Graaf opened the seventh conference at 9:06 a.m. and welcomed all delegates from all over the world.

Singing: Ps 117.

Reading: Psalm 122.

This is a psalm of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem. They love the holy city because God's house is there, and there is the mystery of atonement by shedding of blood, and there the Most High God meets his sinful people. Many enemies tried to destroy Jerusalem. Therefore they pray for peace, not for a convenient life but that they might meet God. Jerusalem is symbolic of the church. The church has many enemies, within and outside. Therefore we apply these words to the church: Give peace, Lord. How does he give peace? The Lord works through us. He begins in our heart and from us it flows out to others – when I become humble before the Lord and my brothers. May God give us much peace.

Singing: Psalm 122

Prayer

Singing: Psalm 23.

2. Roll Call

Rev. Dirk van Garderen for the host church presented the credentials of delegates and observers.

2.1 Member Churches and their delegates

Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

Rev. Dr James Visscher	voting
Rev. Robert A. Schouten	voting
Dr John Vanderstoep	adviser

Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (CRCI)

Rev. Yonson G. Dethan	voting
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Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CRCN)
(Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (CGKN)

Rev. Laurens A. den Butter	voting
Rev. Han Schenau	voting
Rev. Bort de Graaf	advisory
Rev. Arjan Hilbers	advisory

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)

Rev. C. Richard H. Holst	voting
Rev. Dr Peter J. Naylor	voting

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI)

Rev. Gareth N. Burke	voting
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Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

Rev. Alex J. Macdonald	voting
Rev. James Maciver	voting
Rev. Kenneth M. Ferguson	advisory
Rev. Iver Martin	advisory

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)*(Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken Suid Afrika) (VGKSA)*

Mr Cornelius Roose	voting
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Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

Rev. Cornelis Pronk	voting
Rev. Carl Schouls	voting

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Mr Mark T. Bube	voting
Rev. Dr George W. Knight III	voting
Rev. Jack J. Peterson	advisory
Rev. Thomas E. Tyson	advisory

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

Rev. George Ball	voting
Rev. Dr Rowland Ward	voting

Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) (PCKK)

Rev. Dr Paul Goeng Ho Bae	voting
Rev. Dr Jung Chul Choi	voting

Presbyterian Free Church of India (PFCI)*previously called the Free Church of Central India (FCCI)*

Rev. Shaym Babu	voting
Mr Pradeep Kumar	voting

Reformed Churches in Indonesia NTT (RCI)*(Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia NTT) (GGRI)*

Rev. Umbu Hapu Pariamalinya	voting
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Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (RCN)*(Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)) (GKN(v))*

Prof. Klaas Wezeman	voting
Rev. Piet K. Meijer	voting

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

Rev. Bruce Hoyt	voting
Rev. John Goris	advisory
Rev. John Rogers	advisory

Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)

Rev. Ben Fourie	voting
Rev. Dr Douw G. Breed	voting

Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

Rev. Maynard Koerner	voting
Rev. James Sawtelle	voting

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI)

Prof. David McKay	voting
Mr John McEwen	voting

United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

Rev. Raymond Sikkema	voting
Rev. Dick Moes	voting

2.2 Member Churches whose delegates were not present at this time***Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)***

Rev. Frank van Dalen (USA)	voting
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Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

Rev. Bruce Parnell (USA)	voting
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Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)

Rev. Edwin Darsanglur voting

2.3 Observers (Churches that have applied for membership)

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC)

Rev. John MacLeod
Rev. David S Fraser

Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)

Rev. David Lipsy

Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK)

Rev. Heon Soo Kim
Rev. Byoung Kil Chung

Reformed Presbyterian Church of India

Rev. Anupkumar Arun Hiwale

2.4 Visiting Churches

Christian Reformed Church in Australia (CRCA)

Rev. Fred Vanderbom
Rev. Bert Kuipers

Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ)

Rev. Nobunari Makino

3. The Executive Committee

Rev. Bort de Graaf presented the Interim Committee's proposal for the Executive Committee:

Chairman:	Rev. Bruce Hoyt
Vice chairman:	Rev. C. Richard H. Holst
Recording secretary:	Rev. Dr Peter Naylor
Corresponding secretary:	Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen
Treasurer:	Mr Henk Berends

Rev. de Graaf explained that the URCNA had offered to host the conference in 2013 but that it was the turn of Europe. Rev. Dr Naylor had indicated that the EPCEW would host the conference but if that proved to be impossible the CGK would host it.

The Interim Committee also noted that it had identified two brothers who could stand in for the Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer and continue their work at short notice should they become ill or pass away during the next four years. These were Rev. Jack Visscher (CanRC) and Mr Kyle Lodder (CanRC) respectively.

The conference approved the appointment of the Executive Committee.



The Executive Committee 2009

4. Transfer of chairmanship

Rev. Bort de Graaf handed over the chairmanship to Rev. Bruce Hoyt.

Rev. Hoyt thanked Rev. de Graaf for his service to the conference.

5. Daily Timetable

The programme and daily timetable were presented to the conference.

Daily timetable:

9:00 a.m.	Morning session 1
10:15 a.m.	Coffee/tea break
10:45-11:45 a.m.	Morning session 2
12:30 a.m.	Lunch
2:00-3:15 p.m.	Afternoon session 1
3:15 p.m.	Coffee/tea break
3:45-4:45 p.m.	Afternoon session 2
5:15 p.m.	Bus to Bishopdale Church
5:45-7:15 p.m.	Evening meal
7:30-8:45 p.m.	Evening session
9:00-9:20 p.m.	Coffee/tea
9:30 p.m.	Return to Holiday Inn

Rev. Gareth Burke requested that some opportunities for open prayer be built into the programme.

The daily timetable was adopted.

Recess at 10:00 a.m.

Reconvene 11:27 a.m.

6. Credentials

After the Executive Committee had checked the list of credentials, missing credentials and delegates who had not yet arrived were noted by the conference.

7. Advisory Committees

Rev. Bruce Hoyt presented a list of the advisory committees required and recommendations concerning members to be appointed to each committee.

1. Finance

Mr John McEwen, Rev. George Ball, Mr Henk Berends.

2. Press Release

Rev. J. Visscher, Mr Mark Bube.

3. ICRC 2013

(to deal with topics, venue, host church, etc.)

Rev. Han Schenau, Rev. Richard Holst, Rev. Paul Bae,
Rev. Cornelius Pronk

4. Mission Committee

Rev. Piet Meijer, Rev. Tom Tyson, Rev. Frank van Dalen,
Rev. Alex J. Macdonald.

5. Free Church & FCContinuing

Mr Mark Bube, Prof. David McKay, Rev. Richard Holst,
Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. Bruce Hoyt.

6. Constitution of the ICRC

Rev. James Maciver, Rev. Laurens den Butter, Mr Cornelius Roose,
Rev. Paul Bae.

7. Committee of Review (proposed by the CanRC)

Rev. Robert Schouten, Mr Pradeep Kumar, Rev. Maynard Koerner,
Rev. Kenneth Ferguson, Rev. Jack Peterson, Prof. Klaas Wezeman.

8. Membership of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)

Rev. Gareth Burke, Rev. Dr George Knight III.

9. Membership of the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK)

Dr John Vanderstoep, Rev. Rowland Ward.

10. Membership of the Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB)

Mr John McEwen, Rev. Iver Martin.

11. Membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCIndia)

Rev. Carl Schouls, Rev. Dirk van Garderen.

12. Membership of the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC)

Rev. James Sawtelle, Rev. Ray Sikkema, Rev. James Maciver.

13. Incomplete applications for membership

(Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi; Nongo u Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv; Reformed Church of SA Soutpansberg)

Rev. Dick Moes, Rev. Bort de Graaf, Rev. Ben Fourie

Approved.

8. Workshop discussion leaders

The Chairman presented recommendations for workshops and leaders.

Paper 1: Rev. Dr George Knight III, Rev. Tom Tyson, Rev. John Rogers.

Paper 2: Prof. Nelson Kloosterman, Rev. Ray Sikkema, Rev. Ben Fourie.

Paper 3: Rev. Frank van Dalen, Rev. Carl Schouls, Rev. Iver Martin.

Paper 4: Rev. Mohan Chacko, Rev. Rowland Ward,
Rev. Edwin Darsanglur

Approved.

9. Programme

The Chairman presented the programme slightly modified from the draft previously circulated. The Executive Committee will add times of prayer.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Thu 15		Registration	Prayer Service
Fr 16	Opening devotions Roll call (credentials) Appointment of Executive Recess Advisory Committees	Plenary session: Agree daily timetable Programme advisory committees Corresponding Secretary's report Recess: committees	Opening devotions Paper 1: Facing the challenge of the charismatic movement, Rev. Dr George Knight III. Church introduction 1 Closing devotions.
Mon 19	Opening devotions Plenary discussion Church introduction 2 Advisory Committee Reports Workshops for Paper 1	Plenary session Recess for committees	Opening devotions Paper 2: Facing the challenge of individualism in church life, Rev. Dr Nelson Kloosterman. Church introduction 3 Closing devotions.
Tue 20	Opening devotions Plenary discussion Church introduction 4 Advisory Committee Reports Workshops for Paper 2	Plenary session Recess for committees	Opening devotions Paper 3: Facing the challenge of Islam, Rev. Frank van Dalen. Church introduction 5 Closing devotions.
Wed 21	Opening devotions Plenary discussion Church introduction 6 Advisory Committee Reports Workshops for Paper 3	Plenary session Recess for committees	Opening devotions Paper 4: Facing the challenge of the Asian Context, Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko. Church introduction 7 Closing devotions.
Thu 22	Opening devotions Plenary discussion Advisory Committee Reports Workshops for Paper 4	Plenary session Final Reports	Plenary session Closing devotions

Adopted.

10. Guidelines for Discussion

The Chairman presented the Guidelines for Discussion. These were discussed, revised and adopted for this present conference. (At the end the conference will vote whether to use them for future conferences.)

The text of the sermon is contained in Section V.

The Vice-chairman asked Rev. David Fraser to close in prayer.

Recess for lunch 12:15 p.m.

Session 2

Afternoon, Friday
16 October 2009

11. Opening

At 2:02 p.m. the chairman called the meeting to order.

Rev. George Ball led in worship.

Singing: Psalm 107.

Reading: 1 Timothy 2: 1-8; 3: 1-6, 14-16.

Prayer.

Chairman informed the conference that the following churches had been asked to give introductions or updates: Reformed Presbyterian Church of India, the Independent Reformed Church in Korea, the Reformed Churches of Brazil, the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Heritage Reformed Congregations, the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and the Reformed Churches of Japan.

12. Report of the Corresponding Secretary

Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen gave his report.

The chairman thanked Rev. C. Van Spronsen for his report.

The conference accepted the report with thanks.

Delegates were requested to submit information about the theological training of their churches to the Corresponding Secretary, to supply the lack noted in the report.

13. Close

The chairman closed the session at 2:38 p.m.

Session 3

Evening, Friday
16 October 2009

14. Opening

The Vice Chairman opened the evening session at 7:31 p.m. He informed the conference that a booklet written by Rev. Dr George Knight III, *Prophecy in the New Testament* (published by Concerned Presbyterians, 1988) was available in limited numbers free of charge.

The Vice Chairman read Mark 1: 29-39 and prayed.

The Chairman introduced the two items for the evening.

15. Paper 1: The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Charismatic Movement, by Rev. Dr George Knight III

Rev. Dr Knight presented his paper.

16. Discussion of Paper 1

Discussion covered the following topics. 1. The place of dreams and visions (referred to in Acts 2: 17)? Charismatics claim to have these. Acts 2 uses OT language: that was how God communicated to the prophets. Our dreams are not a communication from God but the product of our own minds. 2. The place of feelings? Reformed people need to express joy and peace. The Holy Spirit creates joy and other graces too, such as humility and reverence before God. 3. The place of dancing? The view was expressed that our services are more suitable to worship than that, and we ought not to let feelings control us. Our mind is to be transformed and renewed. 4. In missionary work we find that people are attracted to Charismatic churches because people think that God speaks by dreams. The residue of their old life is perhaps the cause of this. 5. If the waning of gifts during the NT period was related to the stabilizing of the church, might the extraordinary gifts be relevant in a mission context? Possibly. 6. The fear of God. Reverence. 7. What is meant by 1 Corinthians 13: 8, 13? Some think that the perfect refers to the completed canon. Better to think that it refers to the perfect knowledge that we shall have when Christ returns. (Wallace's Greek Grammar has an explanation of the subtleties of

the Greek in these verses.) 8. Demons today? 9. Reformed vitality. Young people frequently criticize Reformed believers: where is our vitality? Perhaps we are slow to express the newness of the Holy Spirit's work. We should express it. But we are told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We should not be boastful and self-exalting. There is a harmonious duality in the NT: sinners and yet boldness. 10. There is confusion today about what joy in the Lord actually is. No NT saint was 'goofy', but sober. How do you define joy? 11. Should we bring Charismatic brothers and sisters into our churches as members, and accept them at the Lord's Table? A difference in practice between Reformed and Presbyterians was noted. The Presbyterian approach is to accept a person into membership on the basis of a credible profession of faith without requiring at that stage a mature knowledge of the faith, but when accepting such a person we might say that we want to talk to him about his Charismatic tendencies and ideas.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Dr George Knight for his paper and the conference expressed its appreciation.

17. Introduction of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India

Rev. Hiwale brought the greetings of his church. He had come to the conference seeking to enjoy fellowship. He was a missionary pastor, trained at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, whose focus was on church planting.

Rev. Hiralal Solanki then gave more information about the church.

Origins and History

Presbyterian work in north India began in 1836, with Reformed Presbyterians (now part of PCA and PCUSA); known in India as Reformed Presbyterians and American Presbyterians respectively. They started the work together with Ludhiana as their base and extended to whole of North India unto Allahabad. After a time they organized as separate Presbyteries. Reformed Presbyterians had Saharanpur as the centre. Then came Bible Presbyterian in the 1920s based in the Kanpur area. Due to the influence of modernism and ecumenical tendencies, the American Presbyterians' work became part of the UCNI and later CNI in 1970, uniting along the way with Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Baptists, etc. The Presbyterian seminary at Sharanpur in north India was closed in the 1960s, which left us without a place for training our pastors. The Reformed Presbyterians and Bible Presbyterians which did not merge with CNI came together in 1969 to address this problem, and decided to start an independent Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The day after this

decision, the two presbyteries decided to merge, forming the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India. Although a good beginning was made, yet over the years the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India declined due to lack of leadership. In time, new leaders trained by PTS became pastors and in 1994 the Presbytery was re-organized as the Nav Jeevan Presbytery of RPCI with a new constitution.

Standards

We adhere to Westminster Confession and Catechisms and use the Three Forms of Unity and the Asian Catechism (all available now in Hindi).

Statistics

Geographically we cover 60% of India in the northern states. Although we are small, that also means we have a lot to do. We have seven member churches and 35 fellowships (unorganized) and mission stations in the States of Delhi, Uttranchal-Dehra Dun, Haridwar, Roorkee, Union Territory of Chandigarh, the State of Maharashtra-Nagpur, UP-Kanpur and Orissa, specially sponsored by MPM. We have approximately 3,000 members, 16 full and five associate teaching elders. We are working on a second Presbytery named Reformed Bible Presbytery for mid-north India based in New Delhi.

Associations

We use the Presbyterian Theological Seminary for theological training, the Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship for sister-church relations in India, through which we are related to Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India, Presbyterian Free Church of India (Central India), Presbyterian Free Church (hill region), Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim, and Presbyterian Church of India (Reformed). Abroad we have sister-church relations with Reformed Church of Netherlands (Liberated). They are also our partner in missions and theological training through De Verre Naasten. Other agencies that are also our mission or strategic partners are Mission To the World and Mission of Peace for church planting and training, and Australian Presbyterian World Mission (in process).

Programs and Needs

Our major effort is in church planting and resources for that is our basic need. We are developing our liturgical resources, printing hymn books. We are revising our Form of Church Government to suit to the growing needs of our churches.

Prayer Concerns

Although in India there is freedom to live and practise one's faith, yet there is much persecution in rural pockets and even in city areas. We need a lot of new ministers and lay leaders. As we grow, our needs for finances grow as well, though our churches are good givers and we joyfully manage most of our pastoral and administrative expenses, yet

mission, church planting and training are beyond our means. So we need more partnership in the extension of God's kingdom. Please continue to pray for us and our partners.

Rev. Hiwale recorded thanks for help from Mid-America Reformed Seminary and the URCNA.

18. Closing devotions

Rev. Piet Meijer led closing devotions.

Reading: Romans 12.

Rev. Meijer drew attention to the practical doctrine of the chapter. There are different gifts given by the Holy Spirit for the unity of the church. In prayer, he included petition for Mr Mark Bube and Rev. David Miller, both of whom were unwell.

Singing: Psalm 133.

The session was closed at 9:10 p.m.

Session 4

Morning, Monday
19 October 2009

19. Opening

The Chairman opened the session at 9:03 a.m.

Reading: Haggai 1: 1-15.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 118b: verses 1, 4, 5.

When Israel returned from exile in Babylon, Cyrus and Darius both decreed that Jerusalem should be rebuilt. In face of opposition, they stopped rebuilding, and became interested in their own affairs. The Lord sent the prophet Haggai to command them to rebuild as their first priority. When the Lord speaks of them as “this people” rather than “my people”, he indicates that their identity was involved in this work. They could not worship him unless they rebuilt the temple and worshipped him in the way he had appointed, which foreshadowed Christ. Haggai also indicated that this would please and glorify the Lord (verses 7-8). These things apply to us today. Our identity is bound up with our task of building the church. God has chosen us for this in order that we should please and glorify him (Ephesians 4 and Revelation 5:11-14). Let us do all for the glory of our God.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 96 verses 1, 4 and 5.

20. The ICRC Constitution

The Chairman reminded the conference that not all churches had responded to the question on the ICRC Constitution (see *Proceedings 2005*, paragraphs 75 and 92). He asked delegates to respond so that Advisory Committee 6 could do its work.

The Corresponding Secretary received responses and read the results.

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church – in favour

Canadian Reformed Churches – not in favour

Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia – in favour

Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – in favour, with the condition of a test of any confession proposed

Confessing Reformed Church in Congo – no response

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales – in favour provided a rigorous examination of any confession is made

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland – in favour (as EPCEW)

Free Church of Scotland – not in favour
 Free Church in Southern Africa – in favour
 Free Reformed Churches of North America – in favour (as EPCEW)
 Free Reformed Churches of South Africa – in favour
 Orthodox Presbyterian Church – not in favour
 Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia – in favour (as EPCEW)
 Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) – in favour
 Presbyterian Free Church of India – not in favour
 Reformed Churches in Indonesia NTT – in favour
 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) – in favour
 Reformed Churches of New Zealand – not in favour
 Reformed Churches in South Africa – in favour
 Reformed Churches of Spain – no response
 Reformed Church in the United States – in favour
 Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland – in favour (as EPCEW)
 Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America – no response
 Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India – in favour
 United Reformed Churches in North America – in favour

Summary

In favour: 11

Not in favour: 5

In favour with a qualification: 6

No vote recorded: 3

21. Arrival of delegate

The Chairman welcomed Rev. Frank van Dalen from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Credentials submitted to the Corresponding Secretary.

22. Recess for Workshops

Recess at 9:50 a.m.

Reconvened at 11:02 a.m.

23. Discussion of Paper 1

23.1 Rev. Rowland Ward reported the results of discussion in Group 1. We must not let the Charismatic movement appropriate the term ‘charismatic’. The Reformed church is charismatic – the Spirit’s work is as powerful as ever – but the manifestations are different. Apostles and prophets are the foundation and the signs of apostles belong to the foundation. In Charismatic churches initial enthusiasm often wanes. Group 1 wants a

plenary discussion of the following questions. Why do Charismatic churches attract young people from our churches? Is there something faulty in our preaching? Do cell groups have value? Syncretism. The definition of New Testament prophecy.

23.2 Rev. George Ball reported the discussions of Group 2. They had dealt only with points 11 and 9 of the plenary discussion (paragraph 16 page 19). On point 11 (reception of Charismatics into membership and at the communion table), there was a divergence between Reformed and Presbyterian men. The Confessions do not address the subject explicitly. The conclusion was reached that these should be received on the basis of a credible profession of faith, subject to their attitude: i.e., if they committed themselves to respect the church's position and they were not coming in as missionaries within to win over the church. On point 9 (Vitality), culture influenced how emotions are expressed. There are more emotions than joy. The Psalms express a breadth and can serve as a guide. Those who lead services will minister to believers in various conditions, some rejoicing and some weeping. Vitality means that we must cover all emotions. Our preaching must engage the intellect and emotions.

23.3 Rev. Dirk van Garderen reported for Group 3. There was a diversity of views. All Christians have vitality from their union with Christ and the indwelling Spirit. What this vitality is and how it is expressed will vary in different situations. There are foundational offices (1 Corinthians 12-14). We agreed on the sufficiency of Scripture.

23.4 Rev. Dr George Knight wished to add some remarks. In 1 Corinthians 14: 27-33, note that Paul places several restrictions on the use of gifts. Order must be maintained. Tongues may be used only when there is an interpreter. One prophet must give way to another.

23.5 Open discussion. 1. How to persuade Charismatics of Reformed doctrine? 2. How should we understand the test or norm of 1 Corinthians 12: 3? Sometimes from fear we reject everything. (Rev. Dr Douw Breed). There are more tests than 1 Corinthians 12: 3; e.g., 14: 27.

3. If we admit Charismatics to membership, we may not admit them to office. 4. What is the exegetical basis for distinguishing extraordinary gifts from ordinary? Is that the right terminology?

Rev. Dr Knight answered the last question as follows. Our forefathers used that terminology but "foundational"/"non-foundational" would also be acceptable. 1 Corinthians 12: 28 lists spiritual gifts. Do they all continue? No, apostles and prophets do not because of Ephesians 2: 20. If the apostles and prophets do not continue, what else does not? Signs and wonders and miracles (the gift of healing by laying on hands) are also

foundational. Revelatory gifts have ceased. Other gifts continue: teachers, elders, deacons. (Westminster Confession 1.1 says that those former ways of God's revealing his will has now ceased.)

Prof. David McKay: we need to emphasize that the Spirit effects a comprehensive transformation in us; not just the intellect but the emotional life is being transformed. The Psalms may serve as a guide. If our preaching contains sound exegesis and is applied to the conscience of the hearers, that may go some way towards answering the objections of the Charismatics.

23.6 Summary Statement. It was agreed that Rev. Dr George Knight, Rev. Tom Tyson, Rev. Dirk van Garderen, Rev. Dr Douw Breed and Rev. Dr Rowland Ward would draw up a statement summarizing the discussion.

A similar process would be followed for discussions of papers 2, 3 and 4.

24. Introduction of the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK)

Rev. Heon Soo Kim presented a report on developments since the last ICRC.

Esteemed Chairman and brothers and sisters in the Lord,
The Independent Reformed Church in Korea, IRCK, has known about this International Conference of Reformed Churches since 1997, when you had meeting in Seoul. Recognizing the same faith as you, we had fellowship with you by sending visiting delegations in 2001 and 2005. And now in 2009, we are here with an anticipation of your accepting us, the IRCK, as a member of the ICRC. The IRCK is federated with four congregations in Korea with a total membership of about six hundred and twenty people under the pastoral care of five ministers and one licentiate. Since the early history and some characters of my federation have been presented to you in previous meetings, I would like to focus on new developments.

The year 2009 has a similar meaning for the IRCK as 1559 had for John Calvin who was born in 1509. As a result of Calvin's life-long faithful ministry, in 1559, the Reformed Churches of France had held their first general synod, the Geneva Academy was established, and the definitive Latin edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published. Similar events occurred this year for the IRCK, which was established in 1964 after a serious schism in the largest Presbyterian denomination in 1959 over the issue of the ecumenical movement represented by the World Council of Churches (WCC). The IRCK held its first General Synod with the ministers and elders on August 29 to revise its constitution and decided upon the establishment of a Theological Academy.

As an aside, have you ever heard of the term "Reformed Episcopal Church"? This is a different term from Reformed Episcopality which means to reform the Episcopal Church. You may know that the Reformed Churches in Hungary have had an Episcopal form of church government, yet there 'was' another church that had the same polity. The IRCK for the past 45 years has had this Episcopal form of church government. Of course, this is fundamentally different from the Roman Catholic's hierarchical polity and the term "episcopos" is exactly the same word as referred to in English as "overseer" in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 3:1). Overseer in the IRCK was literally, *primus inter pares*, as the Latin proverb goes. The IRCK adopted this form of church government, not because it only knew of the Pastoral Epistles while being unaware of great Reformation history in the sixteenth century. We studied and translated "the Form of Presbyterian Church Government" in the Westminster Standards and the Church Order of Dordt. We have learned much from them. However, when the church was first established, we had an Episcopal form of church government.

We started with one church in 1964, and at that time it was very difficult to install a biblically qualified eldership. Therefore, the pastor had to voluntarily carry a very heavy burden, and thus this Episcopal form of church government was established. By the mid-1990s, after one generation, three young ministers were ordained and installed, and important decisions regarding the churches were made at the pastors' meeting. But we needed more time to install elders who would be able to take spiritual care of church members in their home visitations. Only by the grace of our Lord, we were able to have such elders after one and a half generations. Therefore, in August of 2009, we held a General Synod comprised of pastors and elders to revise the constitution's Episcopal form of church government.

I am not saying this to make any excuses for the IRCK. What I would like to say is that regarding church governance, each church has unique traits and cultural backgrounds, and especially in those regions which have had a form of oriental monarchical rule and not having a representative tradition, it takes some time to establish a Reformed or Presbyterian form of church governance. Even if a good system of church order would be implanted, a good Reformed or Presbyterian church does not automatically come about. Although it may take generations, we should teach the word of God well from the pulpit to help a church to stand on its own. I mentioned a part of the history of the IRCK to convey this message.

The four churches of the IRCK are seemingly dwarfed in comparison to Korea's so-called "mega-churches." However, you have acknowledged these small churches as Christ's true churches and invited us for introduction. Your acceptance of this small number of congregations would be an enormous encouragement for us.

We think of the IRCK's membership in the ICRC as the Lord's gift [Gabe] as well as our task [Aufgabe]. In particular, I would like to note that in 2013, the 10th Assembly of the World Council of

Churches will be held in Korea, which has been received as good news to Pentecostal, Methodist, and even many Presbyterian churches. A thanksgiving service for Korea's selection as the host of the assembly was held in a five star hotel and attended by most of the leaders and moderators of the Presbyterian denominations. For a welcoming meeting attended by over eight hundred people, a congratulatory video message was sent by the President of the country, and also the Chairman of the National Assembly, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the Prime Minister, all gave addresses of welcome in person. This is the evidence of complicity between the secular and religious authorities and, I believe, a clear sign of apostasy. Of course, some confessional churches take this seriously, but most churches welcome the hosting of the WCC Assembly. Most national daily newspapers in Korea have welcomed it with the expression of "Christian Olympics" in 2013, which is similar to the 1988 Olympic Games in Korea. To our great regret, many believers in my country lack the spiritual wisdom to discern the good and the bad, and though they have zeal, their knowledge about God and the church is seriously lacking. In a country where "mega-churches" are highly esteemed, and in an age when false ecumenism is gaining more power with help of government and public media, we want to stand up as a witness for the Biblical and Reformed faith. False ecumenicalism seeks an institutional unity, but we seek a true unity on the basis of confessions. We want to be one in true faith, just as the Father and the Son are one (John 17: 21-23). We believe that the ICRC is pursuing true ecumenicity in obedience to the priestly prayer of our Lord, and we want to join you in this spiritual battle. And we hope the ICRC would pay more attention to, and fight against the false ecumenism, which is spreading influences subtly among the so-called "two third Third World." I believe that pursuing the true ecumenicity is the real vitality of Reformed Faith, since this gathering work is being done by the exalted Christ through His Word and His Spirit (Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism).

To fulfil our mission in my country we have our own publication, the Holy Covenant Press. Our press has published 105 titles, which have sold a total of around four hundred thousand copies. One of our best and steady sellers is the Heidelberg Catechism, which has sold fourteen thousands copies over last five years.

In regards to ecclesiastical relationships, the IRCK has entered into a limited sister church relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands since last year, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (lib.) has put the IRCK on the list of official contact churches. Thankfully these two churches have sponsored our membership in the ICRC. The Lord has heard our prayer for the North Korean, and has opened a way to support an OPC missionary who is working among the Korean and Chinese in the north-eastern part of China.

In my country, we have a very close ecclesiastical tie with the Independent Reformed Presbyterian Church in Korea, which is

composed of eight congregations with a membership of around six hundred souls. The IRCK support the IRPC with good and solid Reformed materials and encourage them at the Bible conferences that we have held together two times a year since 1994. To educate our future ministers and to reach other Reformed Christians in my country, our last General Synod in August has decided to start a Theological Academy from 2010.

I would like to thank you again for acknowledging these four small churches as the Lord's true churches, and inviting us to introduce ourselves again, particularly with a view to take us as a member of the ICRC for the sake of His glory alone. Thank you for your kind attention.

Chairman expressed thanks to Rev. Kim. Advisory Committee 9 will be dealing with the application and will report on Tuesday afternoon.

25. Closing devotions

Rev. Richard Holst closed the session with prayer.

12:10 p.m.

Session 5

Afternoon, Monday
19 October 2009

26. Opening

The Chairman opened the session at 2:01 p.m.

Rev. Bae led the opening devotions.

Singing: Psalm 23.

Remark: Korea was chosen to host the WCC at Pusan in 2013. The Kosin church decided not to attend or support it.

Reading: Acts 1: 6-11.

The risen Lord made us witnesses of his resurrection. We cannot do this by ourselves. The Holy Spirit makes us his witnesses. By his power we can drive out demons, we can overcome ourselves. The great commission is given to us. We are sent to all nations, to the ends of the earth. The Korean church has a vision of mission. By the Holy Spirit his church has grown.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 118 verses 1, 4, 5.

27. Minutes

Sessions 1-3 paragraphs 1-18 approved.

28. Missions Committee Report

Rev. John Goris presented the Missions Committee Report and the attachments (supplementary report on contact with the World Reformed Fellowship; protocols and the *2009 Mission Field Survey*).

There was one meeting between 2005 and 2009.

Regional Conferences are encouraging (Europe 2; Africa 1; Asia Pacific 1).

The Missions Newsletter suffers from a lack of information from members. Members are urged to send information including their publications (English language).

Rev. Yonson Dethan attended the World Reformed Fellowship at its March meeting.

Two protocols have been drawn up (attached to the report): one dealing with how to respond to major disasters; the other about help for persecuted Christians. The conference will need to ratify these.

Rev. Goris thanked Mr Mark Bube for the work done on the Protocols and the *2009 Mission Field Survey*.

In conclusion, Rev. Goris read Rev. 22: 17.

29. Report on the European Conference

Rev. Han Schenau presented his report on the European Conference of Reformed Churches.

In my traveller's guide I read that Christchurch by her British founders originally was meant to be an ecclesiological Utopia. High demands were posed to candidate immigrants. They should bring with them a testimony written by their minister. It should say that the immigrants belonged to his most respected church members, did not drink alcohol, were eager to work and were honest people. Well, as I am my own minister, it would not be difficult to get such a testimony today. But I know for sure that I am not the right person to found an ecclesiological Utopia. I'd rather testify about the work of the Lord in Europe. For a moment I want to speak to you as chairman of the next European Conference of Reformed Churches. As you know, the 2005 ICRC, gathering in Pretoria, decided to stimulate regional conferences. These should have goals in brotherly encouragement and in mission sense. The two Dutch member churches soon took the initiative to organize such conferences. An organizing committee was formed with delegates from England, Scotland and Holland. Twice, in 2007 and 2008, a conference has been held in Soest, the Netherlands. Invitations were sent to the seven European ICRC member churches. They were all represented. They took with them as observers delegates from churches, whom they have official relations with.

On the first conference the main goal was getting to know each other better and to exchange information about Reformed church life and mission projects. There were papers about being Reformed in a European perspective with strongly secularized but also Roman Catholic and Muslim contexts. The second conference was meant to draw charcoal lines for the third conference, which – the Lord providing – will be held March 2010 in Edinburgh. Papers were given by Dr David McKay, Rev. Lucius de Graaff and Dr Erik A. de Boer. We raised two committees to do some preparatory investigations.

One on missionary projects and church plants, being done or considered by the member churches. And a second on the need and possibilities of theological cooperation and biblical education to help mission workers and church planters.

The 2010 conference will be fully dedicated to Reformed Mission in Europe. Theme will be ‘Route’ – reaching out unitedly to Europe. As the place to be we chose Edinburgh, because in 1910 the first World Mission Conference was held there. Later, as a consequence, the World Council of Churches was raised. In the course of the years sadly enough the missionary zeal became a victim of theological relativism and political activism. It is not our purpose to do history over again and then better. This would be too pretentious. We just want to be obedient to the calling of our Lord. To spread the Gospel that has been given to us so richly in the Reformed tradition.

Europe is a continent, rich in many aspects, but where sometimes the candle of the Gospel seems to be taken away. This would be a just verdict of God over apostasy of the true biblical faith. The process of marginalizing faith and declension of the church has not stopped yet. There is a revival of religion, caused by the immigration of Muslims and by the sympathy for all kinds of syncretism. We even see a return to the old paganism of pre-Christian Germanianism. Not in any other way than with deep humility and great compassion we as European Reformed Churches would like to spread the light of Christ in our darkened continent. Grateful that the light is still shining. We remember the Word of the Lord: See I have placed before you an open door, that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and you have not denied my name... And we pray that this could be said of us.

We as European churches really enjoy being encouraged in this meeting with brothers from all over the world. And to share with the grace of the Lord, that is given to us. May the Lord bless this conference, you all personally and the ministry you have in your denominations. Thank you.

30. ICRC Missions Committee: 2009 Mission Field Survey

Mr Mark Bube introduced the *2009 Mission Field Survey*. He noted with emphasis that the information contained in the Survey should be restricted to the participating churches and not to be published on the internet without the permission of the church or churches concerned.

31. Discussion of Missions Committee Report

The Advisory Committee will consider the Report and bring recommendations to the conference.

It was noted that Rev. John Goris and Mr Mark Bube are due to retire from the Missions Committee but that these had led the work and were still needed. The matter of leadership and continuity was referred to the Advisory Committee.

Mr Mark Bube noted two other matters. 1. The protocol for responding to major disasters had been presented for adoption. 2. A clause had been added to the proposed Mandate.

32. Motion from the CRCN

Rev. Han Schenau presented a motion from the CRCN on itinerant training for the ministry.

Regarding itinerant form of ministry training

It is very evident that among the needs of the churches in developing countries theological *education* is of the utmost importance. Too many pastors have to go out to do their (missionary) work without having been properly trained for their job.

Now we as Reformed Churches have training institutes and courses all over the world. We can and must assist those pastors, not to say each other, as much as possible.

This is a motion to have a kind of pool of teachers who are available to serve for a short period of time in a particular theological institute or course anywhere in the world. Being also a platform of Reformed Churches the ICRC is able to make an inventory list of theological institutes or course of Reformed background, not necessarily being called Reformed institutes, and of churches that are able and willing to send out Reformed teachers.

The advantage of having such a pool is that it would be possible to work with *low budgets*, in comparison to the traditional mission work (sending out missionaries for a longer period of time). Not only for the institutes or course who are in need of a teacher to fill up gap in their curriculum but also for the churches that can send a teacher. Costs can be held low because the appointed teacher will only be at his destination for

a short time. Teachers will only be sent after an institute or course has *asked* for their assistance. It would be wise to seek teachers who are living in the vicinity of an asking partner, not only to reduce costs but also to reduce a possible cultural gap between the asking and sending partner.

Our motion is that the Missionary Committee investigates the possibilities of this itinerant form of ministry training.

The Chairman recommended that we give this thought and when the Advisory Committee reports we also consider this motion.

Rev. Rowland Ward asked that a modification of the motion be considered at the same time.

The mission committee be given the mandate to consult the Missions convenor or other appropriate officers of member churches so as to secure name, qualifications, areas of expertise and contact details of suitable persons who may be able to serve as short-term theological teachers, and that the combined list of these persons, together with contact details of their denominations' missions convenor or other contact be made available to the member churches. The list is to be updated from time to time.

33. Time of Prayer

The conference spent time in prayer focused on the mission work of the churches.

34. Closing devotions

Rev. Shyam Babu led devotions.

Reading: Matthew 5: 1-10.

Prayer.

Session was closed at 4:45 p.m.

Session 6

Evening, Monday
19 October 2009

35. Opening

The session was commenced at 7:15 p.m.
Singing: Psalm 67

Rev. Cornelius Pronk read Romans 10: 1-13.

Remarks: The whole afternoon we have spent on missions, rightly important to the ICRC. What shall we preach to those who do not know God and Christ? Romans 10 shows the absolute importance of justification by faith alone, based on Christ's righteousness and available to all. This message is for all in our congregations, because we are all lost sinners by nature. Refer to the Westminster standards on Justification.

Prayer.

36. Paper 2: The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Individualism, by Rev. Dr Nelson D. Kloosterman

Prof. Kloosterman presented his paper.

37. Discussion of Paper 2

Questions. 1. What were "the prayers" of Acts 2? The morning and evening prayers in the temple. They did not turn their backs on the temple. 2. How do we deal with children who are born with low self-esteem? Such a child does not exist. Children are born in sin and full of pride. They need the gospel and the challenge to repent. 3. Trinitarian mutual indwelling? This is the paradigm for all reality, the model for the life of the church. 4. In the Westminster Confession, adoption is spoken of in the plural whereas regeneration is for individuals. Adoption is a family word. 5. Defining fellowship. The Greek word *κοινωνία* (koinonia) means having things in "common". It starts with union with Christ and blossoms and bears fruit in fellowship with all the children of God. 6. How should we treat or minister to people who suffer from narcissism? As with any other sin. Identify the sin – hold up the mirror of God's Word to expose self-love. Why are they so? Perhaps they are not confident that anyone else will love them. Point to God's love.

38. Introduction to the Reformed Churches of Brazil

Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen presented information on the Reformed Churches in Brazil.

Introduction

Explanation why I am giving this introduction. The IRB, due to limited manpower and financial resources, was unable to send a representative who would be versed in the English language.

I have worked there for a number of years, still pay regular visits there and have a number of “links”, personal, or via a committee and a board related to the work in Brazil.

History

Brazil is a predominantly RC nation, with spiritistic influences from Africa, through the slave trade, as well as many remaining religious elements from the original native Brazilian tribes.

For a short period in the early 1600s, there was an active group of settlers of Dutch origin who were actively involved in establishing Reformed churches and mission in the north-east of Brazil. However, that was short-lived, as the Portuguese took over and re-conquered the territory also for the RC Church. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil became well established throughout this huge country. This year they are blessed to celebrate their 150th Anniversary in Brazil. However, much of the population still remains without Reformed witness.

Around 1970 the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed Churches started mission work, encouraged by some of the Dutch Reformed colonists who had established themselves in the Southern part of Brazil previously.

Work began in Curitiba, Paraná, by Dutch missionaries and in the coastal area, just south of Recife, in the NE states of Pernambuco and Alagoas by the Canadian missionaries. By God’s grace I was the first missionary in that particular region sent out by the CanRC. The Lord greatly blessed this work. Many embraced the Reformed faith and were attracted by the preaching of the Gospel and the reformed way of worshipping the Lord. More missionaries were sent. The Revs Ralph Boersema and Pieter Meijer (the latter being present here) worked fruitfully for a number of years.

After some time, office-bearers could be ordained, elders as well as deacons, and Reformed Churches could be instituted. Soon young Brazilian men could be trained for the ministry and presently there are 6 local pastors taking care of congregations as well as a number of preaching points. As of the year 2000 they were constituted as a Federation of Reformed Churches of Brazil, adopting as their confessional standards the Three Forms of Unity. For their church polity they adopted an adapted version of the Church Order of Dort.

At the moment there are three instituted churches while several congregations are at the point of being instituted. These churches also

have a number of preaching points in the region. Generally, wherever possible, Christian schools are organized and provide many children and young people to be educated from a Christian perspective.

Ministers sent out from Canada now focus on assisting the Brazilian Churches where requested, mostly in the area of training of office-bearers.

Much of the outreach is also done through literature and a "Reading Room" in downtown Recife, jointly with the Puritan Project, a movement originating from within the IPB to promote the Reformed faith.

Other means are radio, symposia, conferences and a training centre.

As of late, there is a rapidly increasing interest in the Reformed faith also by congregations and ministers of different backgrounds from various parts in Brazil. The Lord is opening many doors!

Although the number of members is still rather low, much is being done to let the light of God's Word shine in the lives of many who either lived in darkness or had a distorted view of the Christian faith.

There is a great need for Theological Training and the IRB are exploring their options.

In this connection we may also mention that there is a Reformed Theological Training via internet, I.R.T.T. or FITREF, under directorship of the Rev. Ralph Boersema, in the Portuguese language, with a number of teachers of Presbyterian and Reformed persuasion, from Brazil as well as repatriated missionaries. They are a blessing to many students, ministers, office bearers and others in Brazil, as well as other Portuguese speaking countries such as Portugal and Mozambique. Their financial basis is still very weak, but it is their prayer that God will grant that this will improve over the years.

The IRB, being small and often isolated in a huge country with numerous other large churches, RC, Pentecostal and Charismatics of all colors, sometimes very extreme, could benefit much from being part of the ICRC and experiencing that the Reformed Churches are truly catholic, worldwide, often experiencing many of the same struggles. For the ICRC it would also be the first member on the South American continent.

May it be an encouragement to them and all of us, experiencing how the Lord gathers His Church from all nations, cultures and languages, all understanding the Word and language of the Holy Spirit, being one in Christ!

The Chairman thanked Rev. Van Spronsen for his report.

39. Closing devotions

Rev. Alex J. Macdonald led closing devotions.

Singing: Psalm 103

Reading: Mark 5: 1-20

Here is a man you would not want to meet or to marry your daughter (Legion). In our cities are people like him, enslaved by evil as we once were. Jesus met him. We are sometimes loath to follow his example. He showed his love to those who were marginalized.

At first he thought Jesus would torment him. People do think like that. Jesus called him “a man” – he had not been treated as a human being, chained up – a man in God’s image. We must let people know that we value them.

He wanted to go with Jesus but he sent him back to tell his own people. We need an army of people who know Jesus to go out and tell about him.

Prayer.

Closed around 9:10 p.m.

Session 7

Morning, Tuesday
20 October 2009

40. Opening

The Chairman opened the morning session at 9:04 a.m.

Singing: Psalm 80 verses 1-5

Reading: Haggai 1: 1-15.

For 16 years the people did not build and so were chastened but did not heed the message of providence. This building should have been their first priority (their identity and God's glory was involved). The same principle was stressed by Jesus (Matthew 6: 33). When they did not respond to providence, the Lord spoke by Haggai. When God's people hear his Word, they respond. Others reject the Word. They repented. The fact that it took three weeks to act reflects that it was a sincere change, not an easy "sorry". He recognized it and reassured them (verse 13). The Spirit of God was behind this. Repentance always leads to deeds. Repentance alone wouldn't build the house of God. It must involve hard work. Verse 5 is selfish individualism: verse 14 is the body in action. There was something for every one to do. The praise is to the Lord because he stirred them up. He does not forsake his people. Despite our many failures, he still calls us and enables us to do all things through Christ who strengthens us, and he is still in the midst of the churches.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 119:33-40

41. New delegates

The Chairman welcomed delegates who had arrived on Friday:

Rev. Edwin Darsanglur of the RPCNEI;

Rev. Fred Vanderbom and Rev. Bert Kuipers of the CRC of Australia.

42. Discussion of Paper 2

42.1 Rev. Dr Nelson Kloosterman added two notes to his paper. 1. Trinity as a model for the church should receive emphasis. 2. He could have emphasized Covenant, which holds the individual and the group in balance.

42.2 Rev. Andre Hotslag (pastor of Dovedale Church) reported the discussions of Group 1. They covered six areas. 1. Is there a positive side

to individualism? Luther's stand. Liberty of conscience. There is a place for individuality, not individualism. We must have a personal relationship with Christ as distinct from an individual relationship. 2. The East/West difference. 3. It is the Spirit who creates community, not the forms of our church, preaching, sacraments, discipline. 4. Is it true that homosexuals cannot experience community? 5. Unity is not to be equated with uniformity. The church has to recognize what is biblically important. The distinction between the elements and circumstances of worship is relevant to this. 6. Immigration requires us to seek integration and avoid the multiplication of many fellowships based on language groups. Love is the curb to freedom.

42.3 Rev. John Rogers reported for Group 2. 1. We must differentiate between self-esteem and self-confidence. 2. We question whether the plurality of the language of adoption should be given the significance that it is in the paper. 3. We must speak to our culture with the Reformed faith, taking account of their circumstances but remaining faithful in proclaiming the message without reduction.

42.4 Rev. Ben Fourie reported for Group 3. How can we solve the problem of individualism in the covenant community? *Koinonia* is not natural friendship. Our relationship with Jesus Christ blossoms into true loving-kindness and love. When we encounter individualism, we must show the sin of it and also take practical steps to involve the person in the church as a team. We must overcome the generation gap by preaching to the church as a whole, with family-oriented ministry. When we train pastors we should take account of the problem of individualism at that stage. Preaching should address the heart of the individual but also the covenant body.

42.5 General discussion. 1. The heart of the gospel, the goal of Christ, is the re-integration of all creation by grace. Sin brings disintegration. 2. The danger of over-emphasizing the corporate and neglecting the individual and his needs. 3. Distinction between personal and individual relationship with Christ. 4. Preaching must address the individual and the body, but should not address special groups. Opposition to children's addresses. 5. Individualism is a problem for modern evangelicalism, which is in doctrinal and moral disarray. Evangelicalism has had many representations and we are not here thinking about such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. 6. The church is guilty of encouraging individualism by certain types of preaching – slogans and sound bites rather than expounding the text. 7. The sin of being boring in preaching. 8. The gospel restores our self-esteem as being in Christ's image but there is a problem when the realities of the gospel do not enter our psyche. The medicine is to preach

Christ. 9. In cases of alcohol and drug abusers, they are often said to have low self-esteem but experience shows that pride is the problem.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Kloosterman for his work.

Rev. Kloosterman prayed.

43. Report of Advisory Committee 10 Membership of the Reformed Churches of Brazil

Rev. Iver Martin presented the committee's report and its recommendation to receive the Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB) as members.

Rev. C. Van Spronsen clarified that the RCB is not a member of the World Council of Churches or of any other organization.

Questions were raised about the RCB's relationships with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brazil. They know the Presbyterian Church of Brazil but have hesitations on account of the broad constituency and the disparity in size. The matter is pending due to pressing domestic business.

Can ICRC receive a church *in absentia* which has never been represented here? The importance of churches being represented was noted. The Constitution does not prevent this church being accepted *in absentia* and we have a precedent (EPCEW 1997).

Motion to receive the RCB as a member of the ICRC.

Vote taken (by church).

20 in favour; 1 against; 3 absent.

Corresponding Secretary to write and welcome them.

44. Closing devotions

Mr John McEwen led closing devotions.

Reading: 1 Peter 5: 1-11.

Prayer (including petition for the Reformed Churches in Brazil and for Rev. Dirk van Garderen who was not well).

Close at 12:17 p.m.

Session 8

Afternoon, Tuesday
20 October 2009

45. Opening

The Chairman opened the session at 2:02 p.m.

Mr Mark Bube led opening devotions.

Singing: Psalm 103 (3 verses).

Reading: Luke 19: 1-10.

The story of Zaccheus. There was nothing about this man to commend him to God but we see the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart creating the desire to see Jesus. In Jesus' words (verse 5) we see what belongs to the gospel. 1. Urgency – "hurry and come down" and 2. Imperative "Today I *must* stay at your house." 3. Efficacy. Zacchaeus heard his master's voice and responded in faith and obedience. As you send missionaries and preach, be sure that Christ's sheep will hear his voice in the voice of his servants. That is the power that we go under. We don't need gimmicks but to be faithful as we proclaim the word. The Spirit prepares the hearts to respond in faith and obedience. 4. Opposition. As soon as people begin to come, opposition arises (verse 7). Now Zacchaeus looks back on his life and the awfulness of his sin weighs on him and he repents. 5. Fruit. 6. Purpose to seek and save the lost.

Prayer.

46. Report of Advisory Committee 13: Incomplete Applications for Membership

Rev. Dick Moes presented the report.

The advisory committee's recommendation was accepted.

47. Report of Advisory Committee 9: the Independent Reformed Churches of Korea

Rev. Rowland Ward presented the report.

Clarifications. Form of Government no longer Episcopal but now a blend of Reformed and Presbyterian forms of government. "Independent" means free of state politics.

Vote of member churches.
21 in favour; (4 not present).

The Chairman welcomed the church as a member of the ICRC and thanked God for their presence among us.

Rev. Byoung Kil Chung gave the response of the IRCK.

Esteemed Chairman and beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,
I would like to extend my gratitude to the ICRC for recognizing the IRCK as a true church and accepting the IRCK as a member of the ICRC. Since the establishment of IRCK's first church in 1964, the IRCK has only looked towards our Lord Christ in heaven and relied on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to stand firmly as Holy Church at this time, when waves of apostasy are rampant. It has made the utmost effort to preach and learn the whole counsel of God.

For the IRCK to become a member of the ICRC today is to obey the Lord's will. As high priest, our Lord prayed, "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17: 23). To fulfill this Lord's will, Christ's churches, which are all over the world, should make an effort to have true unity. And this true unity is only possible through true faith in Christ. Our heavenly Lord gave God's name to his church to separate it from the world and gave His gospel to his church for a unity. So these churches would become one only through true faith of Christ's gospel. Therefore, the WCC, which has turned away from Christ's will, is an organization pursuing a false unity and demonstrates the nature of the Antichrist, stealing the glory of Christ.

The IRCK, as a member of the ICRC, will respect the ICRC Basis. Therefore by fulfilling this unity, the IRCK will demonstrate to the world that God sent his son, Jesus Christ to the world and that God loves the people of Christ as He loves Christ. Thank you.

I would like to add one more thing. Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, if you ever have the opportunity to visit Korea, please feel free to consider the IRCK as your home. We will welcome you anytime you visit us and provide you with free room and board. Thank you.

Rev. Piet Meijer prayed for the IRCK.

48. Report of Advisory Committee 5: Membership of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Mr Mark Bube presented the report.

Clarifications. 1. It is not clear who the sponsors originally were but the following are willing to stand: FRCNA, CRCN and/or OPC. 2. Is there a need for a new application? The agenda for the conference did not make it clear that the FCC application was still on the table. Several of us needed notice to be able to discuss the matter with our own churches. Has FCC made a request for their earlier application to be revived? A request sent to the Corresponding Secretary in the correspondence since 2005. 3. Clarify: it is a separate church from the FCS.

Vote

22 in favour (4 not present)

The Chairman expressed the relief of all.

Prof. Klaas Wezeman made a declaration from the RCN and the CRCN. He expressed thanks that both FCS and FCC are members but we feel pain that no reconciliation has taken place as yet. The ICRC has been confronted with a case beyond her authority and competence. With hindsight, procedures may have caused pain. We pray for God's blessing.

Rev. David Fraser gave the response for the FCC.

Chairman and dear brethren, we believe today that our "Good Samaritan", our Lord and Saviour, has brought us, though wounded, into the "inn" of the ICRC! It is good to feel part of the Reformed community. Much is left unsaid about recent days, but we wish to thank those who stood by us throughout. We do believe in the ICRC because it is a sincere attempt to fulfil the high priestly prayer of our Lord "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17). We also believe that the ICRC has many a practical role to play in strengthening small, brave witnesses in hostile cultures. The ICRC also serves to keep alive a critical self-assessment of our various witnesses as churches and, I would like to think, that it can sound significant responses to the issues and movements that threaten the Reformed truth in our day. We believe we can make a small contribution, in our country, to witness to truth and righteousness in all our church affairs. Though we are, at present, separated from our brethren, we are not schismatics and weep over this division. The Advisory Committee 5's Report, under "Grounds 2", says "Reconciliation is something that all Christians should seek." We as delegates to this conference are charged by the recent meeting of our Commission of Assembly with making an appeal to any individual church willing to act in mediation in seeking to find a solution to our differences. This will be glorifying to Christ our Head and a blessing to all. Soli Deo gloria.

Rev. C. Pronk led the conference in prayer for the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and for the Free Church of Scotland.

49. Introduction to the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Mr Mark Bube briefly introduced AEPC.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bube for his report.

Session closed 3:30 p.m.

Session 9

Evening, Tuesday
20 October 2009

50. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 7:22 p.m. and welcomed visitors.

51. Committee to summarize discussions of Paper 2

The Chairman nominated Rev. Dr Kloosterman, Rev. Sikkema, Rev. Fourie and Rev. Rogers as the committee to prepare a summary of the discussions of Paper 2 (see paragraph 23.6).

52. Opening Devotions

Rev. Maynard Koerner led the opening devotions.

Reading: 2 Kings 6: 8-23.

We think of ourselves as very small and therefore we think we are not able to be very effective. Verse 16 has an important concept: do not fear for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. We are God's army and we need to see that army. There are no battle lines that we cannot face. Islam is powerful and mission to Muslims is a difficult work.
Prayer.

53. Paper 3: The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Islam. Rev. Frank van Dalen

The Chairman introduced Rev. Frank van Dalen, director of missions for the ARPC, who had been heavily involved in mission to Muslims and thus who was well qualified to speak on this subject.

Rev. van Dalen presented his paper.

54. Discussion of Paper 3

Discussion covered the following questions. 1. The number of Christians in Turkey today? Somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000. 2. Why do security forces fear Christian home groups but not public meetings such as those held in the hospital chapel? Because they are able to infiltrate the latter and can monitor the activities. 3. Is Islam an immoral religion? Yes. Pakistan

was judged to be the second most corrupt country in the world, and Indonesia was the most corrupt. Islam concentrates on external purity but you can commit any sins as long as you are not caught. In Ramadan, there is a lot of eating behind closed doors. Some Muslims are sincere but Islam is a religion that goes against sincerity and encourages cheating and lying. 4. Is the material of the presentation a security risk if we inform our congregations? No, except for persons' names. In Pakistan the police know everything that the Christians are doing. 5. If we make Christian movies in India and show them in Pakistan, is that an effective way to have an impact on Muslims? Yes. 6. Is Islam an immoral religion not only in practice but also in principle? Muslims do not think so. If you say the Qur'an is corrupt they will kill you. As Muslim teaching developed, it advocated more and more violence against those who would not submit to Islam but it is being reinterpreted for the western world to make it appear attractive. 7. How to face Jihad? In the western world, jihad is being interpreted as a personal struggle against sin, but in the Qur'an it is the conquest of the non-Muslim world.

55. Introduction to the Heritage Reformed Congregations

Rev. David Lipsy brought greetings from the Heritage Reformed Congregations and introduced them.

The Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) began in 1993. As Reformed believers, our heritage is rooted in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century as it found expression in the Netherlands. As a denomination, our existence was precipitated by a division within the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC), the North American counterpart to the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations) in the Netherlands.

Though it is not a subject we relish addressing, our departure from the NRC took place primarily due to a growing division over a number of years within the NRC concerning one's understanding and expression of the free offer of the gospel. Those familiar with the so-called "Marrow Controversy" in Scotland would find an analogous theological dichotomy within the NRC. Over time, HRC congregations came into existence in various locations in response to these doctrinal and also ecclesiastical issues.

Presently the HRC includes ten congregations, seven of which have fully-functioning consistories, comprising approximately 2,000 confessing and baptized members. HRC congregations are located in five American states and three Canadian provinces. We have sixteen ministers, one of whom labors as a missionary in Zambia and two others in South Africa. Two others have accepted calls to the Southern Presbyterian Church in Launceston, Tasmania and an independent Reformed church in Kalamazoo, MI respectively.

In His providence, the Lord has given us three marvellous opportunities to exercise a pastoral training ministry for His kingdom. In 1995 our denomination established the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) in Grand Rapids, MI, and two of our graduates are now principals in Covenant College in Zambia and Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa respectively. At PRTS we now have now approximately 110 students hailing from four continents enrolled either on campus or through our long distance program. We currently offer M.A.R, M.Div. and Th.M. degrees. Though we have been granted degree-granting status by the State of Michigan, PRTS is in the process of pursuing accreditation through the Association of Theological Seminaries (ATS). Our three full-time professors are Dr Joel Beeke (HRC), Dr Gerald Bilkes (FRCNA), and Dr David Murray (formerly FCC now HRC). We are beginning the process to acquire a 4th professor.

On the ecumenical front, the HRC is a member of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) and, as you know, hopes to receive formal membership in the ICRC at this meeting. We presently have formal ecumenical relationships with the Free Reformed Churches of North America and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and are at the beginning stages and have approval of our broadest assembly to offer to establish formal relations with the Presbyterian Reformed Churches (NA), the United Reformed Churches (NA), the Southern Presbyterian Church (Tasmania), and the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (Netherlands). Representatives of the RCUS have, by invitation, addressed our broadest assembly in October 2007.

Presently we publish a monthly periodical entitled *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* as well as a quarterly mission periodical called *Glad Tidings*. PRTS also regularly publishes a theological journal. Though not formally tied to the HCR, *Reformation Heritage Books* works in close cooperation with us in the publication and distribution of sound and edifying Reformed literature worldwide.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the Heritage Reformed Congregations is what is commonly called Reformed experiential preaching. It is, of course, vital to properly exegete God's Word. It is also very necessary to apply Scripture to daily-life situations. But we also believe Scripture warrants a facet of preaching that addresses *how* the Word of God personally affects us. Consider the visceral experiences of the tried and triumphant saints recorded in the Psalms or the struggles against and victory over indwelling sin as penned by Paul, Romans seven. We are mindful, however, to avoid the mistake, on the one hand, of trying to systematize a blueprint of Christian experience and, on the other, of drifting into a content-less, emotion-based Christianity. Instead, our view of experiential Christianity would be similar to that which Jonathan Edwards expressed in his classis work *The Religious Affections* or Archibald Alexander's *Thoughts on Religious Experience*.

In conclusion, reports such as these and the statistics that are included in them present only one part of a denomination's character and vitality. As a confessional Reformed church with roots in continental Europe, we face the same challenges many of you do in trying to remain faithful to our Reformed principles and beliefs while seeking to reach out to an increasingly post-Christian culture in North America. We also face the perennial challenge of inculcating, with God's help, the beauty and value of our Reformed heritage to succeeding generations *within* the church.

We covet your prayers and brotherly counsel, so that as co-laborers together with God and with you we may strive to serve the Lord with vigor, discernment, faithfulness, and ardent love.

56. Closing devotions

Rev. Gareth Burke led closing devotions.

Singing: Psalm 51.

Reading: Luke 23:26-43.

As the criminal crucified next to Jesus was dying, the Holy Spirit began to work in his life. He saw that Jesus had done nothing wrong, not even a trivial fault. A perfect man! He cried out, Lord remember me...! Notice verse 43, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." 1. A time, "today". When you die, your soul immediately passes into glory. This is a comfort. 2. A person, "with me". Why do you want to be in heaven? To be with loved ones who died in Christ, etc.? The principal reason is to see and be with Jesus. 3. A place, "Paradise", a place of indescribable beauty and safety. If we are in Christ, that is our future, all because God is gracious, loving and kind. Look forward to it and serve him well.

Prayer.

The Chairman closed the session at 9:09 p.m.

Session 10

Morning, Wednesday
21 October 2009

57. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 9:00 a.m. and led the devotions.

Singing: Psalm 48 (stanzas 1-3).

Prayer.

Reading: Haggai 2: 1-9.

Here is the climax of the book with a triple exhortation to be strong and not fear. If his Spirit is with us, who can prevent the work of God being accomplished? God gives his people his Spirit to empower them to do his work. He calls us to build, each member working according to grace, and we may do so in confidence. He says more in verse 6. He reminds them who he is, the LORD of hosts. He will shake the heavens and earth – a reference to judgment, Hebrews 12 – and as Egypt gave gifts to the departing Israelites so the nations will bring their wealth into the house of God. But this did not happen. The temple was replaced by Herod's temple, which was destroyed in AD 70. God was making it clear that the temple was pointing to something greater, to Christ and his body. Rev. 21: 24 presents the fulfilment of Haggai's prophecy. The wealth of the nations are those who are themselves the trophies of saving grace. How glorious is the church of Christ. Remember and proclaim it in this age. We need to take courage and not fear and not depreciate the work of God. There is peace.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 48 (stanzas 4-6).

58. Approval of minutes

The Minutes of Sessions 4, 5, 6, 7 (pages 22-40) as amended were approved.

The Chairman proposed that the leaders of the three discussion groups, Rev. Frank van Dalen, Rev. Carl Schouls and Rev. Iver Martin, be the committee that will formulate a summary of the discussions of Paper 3. Accepted.

Recess for discussion groups.

59. Discussion of Paper 3

59.1 Rev. James Maciver reported on the discussions of Group 1.

1. *The threat of Islam.* We can compare this with communism, humanly speaking. Islam is not united and requires an enemy in order to retain some unity: hence they target Christian faith and the West, which they equate. African Muslims often feel second-class compared to Arabs. Money (oil revenue especially) is a contribution to the threat in that it helps to finance Islamic activity against the Christian church. The “Christian” equivalent to Islam is Mormonism. Islam’s insistence on religious freedom etc. may prove an advantage to the Gospel. It was noted that religious freedom initially meant freedom to be Protestant and not the freedom to regard all religions as equal. It is possible to over-emphasize the “threat” aspect of Islam in a way that makes it more difficult to evangelize. The threat is there as Islam is an enemy of the gospel but we need to love our enemies. The Book of Revelation is useful in this regard. Have we been praying for Muslims as much as we ought?

2. *The building up of the church*

It is possible and desirable to invite Muslims to church services, but they have much to get rid of in their thinking, so we should not expect instant response positively. Worship is a great context in which to present the gospel to Muslims. A good approach has been to work with children, using clinics, education, interpretation services etc. The following generation has set up a church for Muslim converts. There are significant difficulties in establishing a congregation in Muslim contexts. The man-woman divide for example is rigidly observed. Also a person will not act the same way in a Western context as they will in a place like Pakistan. There are also difficulties in crossing caste lines.

3. *Newer Approaches*

Contextualisation. Some are now pushing theological as well as cultural boundaries, but often these attempts raise suspicions as often as removing them. There must continue to be an emphasis on the differentness of the Christian life. An apologetic for democracy? It is dangerous to equate Christianity with any one political party or manifesto. It is not helpful to discuss politics with Muslims as this raises discussion above the level of reaching the heart. Involvement in Iraq has heightened resentment from Muslims against Christians and has resulted in there being less freedom and more persecution for Christians in Iraq than was the case under Saddam Hussein.

59.2 Rev. Yonson Dethan reported the discussions of Group 2.

The strategy of Muslims to make converts includes the use of politics, business, marriage, education, TV, and Jihad. When Muslims reach 40% of the population, they start jihad (as in Indonesia). How to face them? Pray

for them, love and befriend them, bring the gospel to them. Letter to Ministry of Justice – for help.

59.3 Rev. Dr Rowland Ward reported for Group 3 (referring to Rev. van Dalen's questions).

1. Islam the greatest threat? This overstates it: secularism. There are divisions in Islam (Sunni, Shi'ite, ethnic). It is the greatest challenge to evangelizing. Militant Islam is a great threat. 2. Has it affected Reformed churches? Yes, persecution in some countries. Conversions without a church being planted? The ultimate goal of mission is establish a church but we should not despise conversions where it is not yet possible to organize a church. It is not ideal to form a separate church for people from a Muslim background. The church should reflect our oneness in Christ. Accommodation. How much to concede to win some? Not to sacrifice principles. 3. How to respond to persecution: with prayer and protest. The importance of showing hospitality. The need for Reformed teaching in co-operative ministry.

59.4 General discussion

1. Muslims' view of God is too small and of man is too high. By their low standards, man can earn salvation and carry sins with him into heaven. Contrast Revelation 4: 8: "holy, holy, holy", absolutely holy. Their idea of depravity is a relative one, different from total depravity. 2. The *Proceedings 2005* pages 197-212 provide a useful description. 3. The idea that it takes 10-15 years to see conversion of a Muslim is false. Iranians are quickly responsive, Turks may take several months, and in Pakistan it may take several years. Patience is a virtue in evangelizing Muslims. In the West, Muslim leaders are concerned that they are losing their young people to secularism, but the third generation often turns back to its roots and is the most radical. 4. The threat. Muslims do aim to take over the world. Secularism is not comparable, since it is not an organized movement. 5. Should the ICRC develop an overall strategy? In Islam decentralization is very useful. The *Survey* gives a way to co-ordinate. Let the gifts available determine the strategy: see where they can be best employed.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Frank van Dalen for his contribution.

60. Welcome to a visitor

The Chairman welcomed Rev. David Bayne of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

61. Advisory Committee 8 Report (Membership of the Heritage Reformed Congregations)

Rev. Gareth Burke presented the report.

Question. What relations do the HRC have with members of the ICRC? They are sponsored by the CRC and the FRCNA, have relations with both and contacts with other churches here. HRC is a member of NAPARC, which required approval by all the major assemblies of the member churches. HRC cooperate with the FRCNA in the seminary.

Vote by church
23 in favour

The Chairman noted that this was an occasion for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Rev. David Lipsy responded to the vote. He expressed thanks to the Lord for a further manifestation of the oneness of his church throughout the world, one in Christ, holding a common faith. He thanked sponsors, the advisory committee, and members. The HRC covet your brotherly encouragements, admonitions etc. They desire real results from the ICRC in the churches and hope to contribute to the effort. Christ has gained the victory and it is to be known by us. Thanks be to God.

Rev. Carl Schouls offered prayer for the HRC.

62. Introduction to the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Rev. Fred Vanderbom introduced his church.

Dear brothers in Jesus Christ,
Two of our sister Churches have encouraged the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) to send observers to attend your conference here in Christchurch NZ, and we thank you for this. Rev. Bert Kuipers is here especially on behalf of our World Development and Relief Workgroup and has links with several of ICRC's member churches, and I am here as a member of our Inter-Church Relations Committee. It is a great pleasure to interact in Christian fellowship with you and to follow your business and discussions. Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the invitation to extend to you the greetings of the CRCA, give a short overview of my family of

churches, and to explain to you very briefly why our churches sent me here.

1 Who the CRCA are

The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia like our host church here in NZ came into existence as a result of the post-WW2 and post-colonial movement of Dutch people to several "New World" countries. The various orthodox Dutch churches hoped these migrants would integrate with existing Reformed or Presbyterian Churches in Australia and become part of the Lord's witness in that country. In practice this proved too difficult however, as the Presbyterian Churches in Australia were very much affected by liberal theology and leadership and the tolerance of Masonic Lodge membership. The only confessionally faithful Presbyterian Churches on the other hand were committed to a Reformed distinctive (the Regulative Principle or purity of worship) which the Dutch Reformed Churches had set aside over the years and which the immigrants worshipping the Lord in a new land and language found too great a stumbling block. So between 1951 and 1954 Reformed Churches of Australia were born in every one of the six Australian state capital cities, consisting mostly of people with a GKN (Gereformeerd, Synodaal) background, but virtually every congregation also included members of the other Dutch Reformed Churches (Hervormd, Christelijk Gereformeerd (CRCN), and Vrijgemaakt Gereformeerd (RCN). Membership numbers peaked at 10,500 in 1990, with some 45 churches. By that time the CRCA had become a second migrant generation church which now included increasing numbers of Anglo-Australians who embraced both the heart and the scope of the Reformed Christian Faith. In 1982 the CRCA broke their tie with the GKN, and a decade later we added the word "Christian" to our name to overcome a number of common misunderstandings. During the past decade, the CRCA have reworked their mission strategy in terms of their rediscovery of discipleship and leadership training and of intentional, evangelistic church planting.

At our 2006 Synod, the CRCA adopted a Fourfold Aim: 1. To pray for the Lord's Spirit to be poured out on us as people of God, whilst repenting of our significant fruitlessness. 2 To plant fellowship groups and churches in an ongoing way. 3. To prepare leaders who will lead such fellowships and churches. 4. To produce the structural reforms necessary for our churches to fulfil the Lord's work.

The CRCA are experiencing several additional trends of note. 1. During the past two decades the membership of our churches has declined from over 10,000 to about 8,500, but we now enfold substantial numbers of adherents. The number of congregations has remained steady at about 45 and there are in addition to this some half dozen church plants, with another 5 or 6 planned. 2. During the past decade the CRCA have welcomed and enfolded large numbers of South African (Afrikaans) migrants and several ministers. The national, cultural and Christian background of these people is in several respects different from that of the "older" CRCA. This

development asks for a real and continuing degree of “self-emptying” and discerning servant-hood from all concerned. 3. The many “adherents” we now have amongst us are a sign of our postmodern culture where people will attend church and even join in its life and work, but not have membership for various reasons. So despite falling membership the CR churches are not declining in strength. We are seeing greater movement between Christian Churches: our members and other Christians are less loyal to a “brand” church and will join or leave us for a variety of reasons. 4. As everywhere else, there is a growing diversity among our congregations on non-essentials, and the tension between and discussion about the unity and diversity of the Christian Church is quite alive. The CRCA recognizes that structural reform and mission statements alone will not honour our Lord, nor further His work. We are determined to continue in obedience to the Scriptures and in loyalty to our Reformed confessions as the basis for our understanding of Christian faith. We also recognize that the CRCA must become more intentional about obeying the Lord's call to advance the Gospel with energy.

2. Why we are here

The CRCA has been a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) for over 40 years, but due to the REC's planned merger with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) next June, the CRCA has decided to look at alternatives rather than “go with the flow” to the proposed new body, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). The CRCA have been able to contribute significantly to the REC over the years and it has been a valuable platform for developing bilateral contacts. The WCRC however will be much larger and theologically much broader. Both Dutch and Australian people are down-to-earth and practical people. As such we want our inter-church relations to be practical and contributing to the Lord's work among and through us. Our most meaningful relationships are with the RCNZ and RCSA (ICRC members), and with the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) which has joined the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF). We assure you that the observations of our time with you which we shall report back to our churches will be warm and positive.

The CRCA will continue to be interested in your part of God's work, and the most practicable way in which we can work and fellowship together.

We constantly pray that our God may make us worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition our every desire for goodness and our every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (based on 2 Thess. 1: 11f).

The Chairman thanked Rev. Fred Vanderbom for his report.

63. Rev. Neels Smit

Rev. Ben Fourie informed the conference that Rev. Smit, who has a keen interest in the ICRC and has been present at previous conferences, was not able to attend this time because he is suffering from cancer. Rev. Fourie asked the conference to pray for Rev. Smit and send him a message of encouragement.

The Chairman asked the Press Release Committee to draft a letter to Rev. Smit.

64. Closing devotions

Rev. Yonson Dethan led in prayer.

The session was closed at 12:03 p.m.

Session 11

Afternoon, Wednesday
21 October 2009

65. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 2:01 p.m.

Rev. Dick Moes led opening devotions.

Singing: Psalm 2.

Reading: Revelation 6.

We have a great hope that instils longing in the Christian heart. However in Revelation 6 we see that things will get worse before they get better. The throne of heaven is occupied (Rev. 4) and the Lamb is there with the right to open the scroll of destiny that contains all that is involved in bringing in new heavens and a new earth (Rev. 5). With each seal, there is the prayer for the Lord Jesus to come as in Revelation 1: 7 and 22: 17. The four living creatures represent creation which is suffering (as in Romans 8). Four horsemen are the mighty forces of opposition unleashed. As we pray for the coming of light, the powers of darkness clash with it and cause destruction. Why? Because the heart of the gospel is self-denial. Christ is on the throne. Therefore we should continue to pray even though it unleashes suffering and harm. We are to be faithful. He who endures to the end will be saved.

Prayer.

66. Introduction to the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Rev. David Bayne introduced his church.

It is a young denomination, with origins in the Presbyterian Church. In the 1970s, concern was felt about liberalism and the Christchurch congregation seceded. More congregations seceded and joined together loosely, gradually forming a nation-wide Church. It now has 18 places of worship (in 2003 it started with 8). Most are quite small. It holds the Westminster Confession (American version) and a PCA-based Book of Order. It has exchanged fraternal delegates with the RCNZ and the PCEA American. It has joined the WRF. The Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand wants to hold to the Reformed Faith with warmth and with a vision for church planting and missions.

67. Advisory Committee 11: Membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India

Rev. Carl Schouls presented the report of Advisory Committee 11.

Clarifications. Form of subscription? We have seen it. Churches in Orissa? These are in the east state of Orissa and are already under the care of the RPCInd. What relationship among the churches in India? Fellowship and co-operation in theological education.

Vote

24 in favour

The Chairman expressed gratitude for our unity in Lord.

Rev. Hiralal Solanki gave a response. Acceptance will encourage the churches. He thanked those who sponsored their application and their travel and the Advisory Committee. We are a young church but with a long history. Membership will encourage us. We shall seek to grow in Christ and assure you that we will labour to be conformed to Christ. We seek your prayers for the gospel witness in India. Christianity is less than 1% where we live. An enormous task is before us. We shall be glad to associate and assist in a work that you are doing.

Rev. Edwin Darsanglur prayed for the RPCIndia.

68. Advisory Committee 6: Constitution

Rev. Laurens A. den Butter presented the committee's report.

Questions. 1. What effect does the "Yes with conditions" vote have? Normally that is a "No". There is an implied condition in the proposal for change whether we express it or not. The vote taken before was not a constitutional vote, only an opinion. When it comes to a vote it must be yes or no. 2. Rev. Dr Ward noted that the English was mangled and wanted to present a clearer wording. 3. Is this unnecessary, since we have no churches applying with other confessions? 4. The task of reviewing confessions is a daunting task for any committee.

Recess for refreshments.

Reconvene.

The Chairman ruled as follows.

The original ICRC discussed this and gave us the Constitution. It recognized variations of the Reformed Confessions and allowed some flexibility as you see it in paragraph 1a. The Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity present the Reformed Faith and that faith is adhered to if a church holds different standards but they state the same faith. Three meetings ago this proposal was presented. In Pretoria the emendation was submitted to the churches as a Constitutional matter. This has already been voted on by your churches. That was indicated in the first vote.

It is a poor statement because its English is unclear. If we adopt it, it will increase our difficulties. I rule that we take no action now. If we appoint a Committee of Review, that committee will have to consider this matter in any case. It will save time and so we shall refer the matter to that committee.

There was no challenge to the Chairman's ruling.

69. Advisory Committee 7: Review of the ICRC

Rev. Robert Schouten presented the report.

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward presented an amendment to add the words: "with the amendment of 1(d) to delete 'six months' and replace it by 'at least twelve months'."

The amendment was accepted.

The main motion as amended was adopted.

70. Advisory Committee 6: Constitution

It was moved to refer the report to the Committee of Review.

Accepted.

71. Advisory Committee 4: Mission

Rev. Tom Tyson presented the report.

Clarification. The European Conference is free to pursue regional contacts with the WRF in Europe. The budget limits the number of meetings the

Missions Committee can hold. Decision on 2.4.1 referred to the conference and may or may not be pursued.

Nominations to the Mission Committee

(The Advisory Committee limited it to 8 although the conference is allowed to appoint up to 12. It retained 4 members from the present committee and chose 4 new men.)

Rev. John Goris introduced the Advisory Committee's nominations.

There were additional nominations:

Naas Ferreira (as alternate to Derek Mashau)

Yonson Dethan.

Votes

Naas Ferreira – approved.

Yonson Dethan – in favour 14; not in favour 22. Not accepted.

The report was adopted.

72. Closing devotions

Rev. James Sawtelle led closing devotions.

Reading: from Psalm 104.

Prayer.

Closed 5:10 p.m.

Session 12

Evening, Wednesday
21 October 2009

73. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 7:22 p.m. and welcomed visitors.

Rev. David Lipsy led the opening devotions.

Singing: Psalm 119 (part).

Reading: Luke 9: 43-56 and John 21: 17-25.

The disciples were conscious of those around them. Newly restored, Peter was thinking about John! We can be like that. We desire to see the unity of the coming kingdom and we have a foretaste at the ICRC. So we look at one another, our standards etc., and we try to set aside unnecessary differences. But there is another way. Christ is at the centre. By following him, we shall all move together.

Prayer.

74. The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the challenge of the Asian Context, by Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko

Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko presented his paper.

There was not enough time to allow for questions.

The Chairman thanked Dr Chacko for his paper.

75. Update on the Reformed Churches in Japan

Rev. Nobunari Makino presented information about the RCJ. Formed in 1946, it holds the Westminster Standards including the Rules of Discipline and the Directory of Worship. It has set itself the task of writing a doctrinal statement every ten years. So far it has written five: on the Bible, on the Holy Spirit, on Predestination, on Mission and on our Final Hope. The aim is to prepare a new confession of faith suitable for the Japanese context. It has a hymnbook with the 150 Psalms in Japanese. In 2009, the Synod adopted a new Directory of Worship with the aim of refreshing the worship of the RCJ. There are now 9,500 members in 140 congregations organized into six Presbyteries. Japan is still a mission field. After 60 years, they are rethinking what it is to be Reformed in the context of Japan. Evangelizing

Japan is not easy. It has a population of 125 million people and Christians are about 0.8%. The government has never permitted Christians to be above 2% of the total population and when that has happened it has persecuted them severely. It is a hard context but not impossible, not when the Word of God is preached in the church.

76. Closing devotions

Rev. James Visscher led the closing devotions.

Reading: 2 Timothy 4: 1-8.

Paul's final charge to Timothy. 1. Preach the Word. This is the church's task whatever the circumstances. Be busy with that patient and careful instruction. 2. This is a challenge. We must do this in hardship and in prosperity (which can be more of a challenge). 3. We do so in the presence of God and of Christ, and in light of his appearance and his kingdom. We do not receive this charge in a vacuum. Our final destination is in new heavens and a new earth. We have lots to do until he returns.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 96.

The Chairman closed the session at 9:02 p.m.

Session 13

Morning, Thursday
22 October 2009

77. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 9:04 a.m.

Singing: Psalm 73 stanzas 1, 2, 5, 9, 10.

Prayer.

Reading: Haggai 2: 1-19.

Having been building for three months, they begin to wonder if it is worthwhile. Will their sacrifices be any more effective than in the past? They had the wrong theology to sacrifice, ascribing inherent efficacy to the sacrifices and ceremonies (as e.g., Rome's sacramentalism). Sinful man's natural inclinations lead him to trust in what he does rather than in Christ the only Saviour. Haggai gives a principle: holiness is not contagious (verse 12) but defilement is (verse 13). The nature of sin – it easily spreads and pollutes everything it touches – and the nature of holiness. Sin spreads because the human heart is fertile soil for it. You can clean up, civilize and educate the man, but a sinner he remains. Only through direct contact with the sacrificial meal, and only through direct communion with Christ, are we holy. Haggai applies the principle (verse 14). In failing to build God's house, they were implying that they had no need of communion with Christ, which was mediated through the temple. The ruins of the temple were as a dead body – defiling – in their midst. When they build, God assures them of his blessing: "from this day onward" is repeated. (Chastening implies that God had not forgotten them.) The people of God will prosper as they walk in communion with the Lord. Holiness is through communion with Christ. Without it, we defile those around us. In communion with Christ we are assured of his blessings. John 15: "Abide in me!"

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 42.

78. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of Sessions 8 and 9 (paragraphs 45-56 on pages 40-49) were approved.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko for the paper that he delivered on the previous evening.

Recess for discussion groups.

79. Discussion of Paper 4

79.1 Rev. James Sawtelle reported the discussions of Group 1.

We dealt with the first 6 questions. 1. We wished to refocus question 1 thus: Why are the Charismatics growing in Asia and not the Reformed? Media (air time on Christian stations). Easier to join (lower bar). Prosperity gospel seems to meet the felt needs (they want a job etc.). A desire for an emotional outlet. 4. Mass prayer in worship is common. Diversity of opinion. From where does the impetus for this come? Unsure about its origins. 5. Worship without feelings does not honour God. A balance is needed, not just joy: also fear, sorrow, comfort. 6. Yes or no, depending on the use of spiritual gifts. Tongues: *some* would answer no. If we are thinking of gifts in the congregation (e.g., asking someone to read a passage), then yes. We humbly accept the challenge.

79.2 Rev. Robert van Wichen reported on the discussions of Group 2.

Questions 7-12. 7. Tongues: two views, *absolute* cessation and *qualified* cessation. It is linked with the cessation of revelation. Revelation has ceased but in some circumstances it might continue. Is this the same as the NT gift? Definition is needed. 8. Special revelation has come to an end: Scripture normative for all. 9. Do gifts continue in modified forms? We were uncomfortable with the idea but not able to resolve it conclusively because of definitions. 10. We disagreed with the statement and restate it thus: As the gospel goes forth, God often demonstrates his power. 11. A qualified yes. Individuality within community, not simply individuality. 12. Blame the Americans.

79.3 Rev. John MacLeod reported on the discussions of Group 3.

Question 13. Problems because Asian cultural values differ from western? Easy to be preoccupied with one's own culture and assume it is Christian. The Bible changes culture. E.g., funerals. What needs to be changed? Check our own thinking also. Difficult for an outsider to get into the minds of the local people. 15. Are Asians in danger of repeating the mistakes made in the past? E.g. building schools and hospitals. Is it better to begin with low budget options? 16. Soul saving must have the first emphasis; transformation of culture must follow. Solid on-going teaching a vital necessity.

79.4 Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko's remarks.

We should not be afraid to learn from the Charismatics (especially question 6). Special *revelation* has ceased but if God grants extraordinary

gifts let's take them. Many claims are fraudulent or the claimed gifts are questionably used. If we are absolute cessationists, we are saying that God is not free to confer gifts upon us. There is no exegetical basis for saying that. Gifts were both particular and general: "apostle" is used in two ways. The function is carried on in the task of the missionary. On 10, Acts does give us a pattern. The experience of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 was repeated on several occasions. The outpouring of the Spirit needs to be experienced continually by believers. 13. There is a dialectical relationship between Bible and culture: the Bible judges culture and it is applied through culture. Guard against syncretism. 16. The gospel we preach is no different from that preached by Charismatic churches. Asia has lost the kind of gospel that transformed the West because of the emphasis on saving souls.

79.5 General discussion.

After 80 years of mission from Netherlands, we are in transition from planting to helping churches (low budget mission). Where can we help indigenous churches in the way they want to be helped? What do you think about that? Dr Chacko felt that the time for sending western missionaries is over. Third World churches are grown up enough to do their own church planting. Best way to help is by assisting indigenous churches.

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward observed that he had been struck by the fact that there is not much of a difference between strict cessationists among us and others. We need more time to tease it out: strict cessationism / God can do something. At a future ICRC, he wanted two people to interact and present a joint paper.

Q. What are the exceptional circumstances that Dr. Mohan Chacko envisages? 1. When no national church is strong enough to carry on the work. 2. When an outsider is evidently better equipped to present the gospel.

Q. Cessation? The office of apostle no longer exists but the function does and it is carried out through the missionaries.

Practical remark. We have agreed to list churches in need of assistance in teaching. We should also have an overview of non-traditional workers all over the world working. Such should be accountable to the church.

There are about 2,500 missionaries and about 300 churches in New Delhi. But many of these missionaries do not want fellowship with the Reformed churches. Often they do not even attend church. They want to make a new work.

Is it satisfactory for European creedal statements to be imposed in Asia? Should the ICRC encourage Asian members to work together to produce their own confessional statements in a form that is relevant to their own life? Dr Chacko did this in his Asian Catechism.

Chairman thanked Rev. Chacko.

80. Advisory Committee 12: Membership of the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Rev. James Sawtelle presented the report.

Questions. 1. Is there any mentoring process, to assist the church with its application? The sponsoring churches and the Corresponding Secretary would be the ones who should do this. 2. Is there inconsistency in our treatment of applications? Both sponsoring churches believe this is the best way forward and this will help them to make progress in their own form of government. 3. Application stands? Yes. It can be taken up again in 2013 but it will remain 'pending' until the missing information is received.

Report accepted.

81. Confessing Reformed Church in Congo

Rev. James Sawtelle, followed by Rev. Piet Meijer, described the current situation of the CRCC.

The CRCC has recently gone through a period of turmoil. When the denomination was formed some 25 years ago, the Government of Zaire, now Congo, required by law that the church appoint two signatories as representatives. Recently these men had named themselves as representatives for life and had assumed the right to act unilaterally on behalf of the churches. Because of these two men, the RCN missionaries had been expelled from the country, a huge blow to the churches. There is an impasse. Although the churches were unhappy, they could not remove them. Accordingly, they re-formed, took the new name Église Reformée Uni de Congo (ERUC), and appointed two other men to represent them. Most churches went into this group and want to continue and be recognized as the legitimate member of the ICRC. They were unable to send a delegate because of visa problems. There is a lot of confusion. Rev. Kabongo was due to represent them at this ICRC. The BBK has tried to

contact the ERCC and has had no success whatsoever whereas they are able to communicate with the new ERUC side.

There were many questions about the situation. What is being done to stop a repeat of the situation in the case of the two new representatives? (This is still being worked on.) Should we require a new application? Do we accept them as the continuing church in the Congo? Supporting churches need to come to the ICRC with advice to 2013. Some congregations are not in the new union. How many? Do they still have the name of the ERCC? What happens to their relationship to the ICRC? Do we terminate the relationship with the rump? Loss of property: who gained it?

The need for a general procedure to handle church splits was recognized but meanwhile the Corresponding Secretary needs guidance.

The Chairman asked Mr Mark Bube to bring a motion in the afternoon session.

82. Closing Devotions

Rev. John Vanderstoep led in prayer.

The Chairman closed the session at 12:10 p.m.

Session 14

Afternoon, Thursday
22 October 2009

83. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 2:02 p.m.

Rev. Laurens A. den Butter led the opening devotions.

Reading: Ephesians 3: 14-21.

Paul in prison prays not for his own needs but for well-being of the congregations (as also in Philippians 1). Paul resembles Christ who always sought the good of his own people (John 17). In the deepest depths of his suffering he laboured for the well-being of those who were his own. Paul bows to the Father. There is such richness in Christ for all sinners in every part of the world. Therefore he pleads that he would grant the Ephesians the powerful work of the Spirit according to God's riches. Do we recognize the work of the Spirit in our lives? Do we live for the Lord and pray for the congregation's salvation? Does the Lord find us on our knees praying for the spiritual welfare of the congregation, and also for those who are not your friends, those who criticize you, who cause trouble in your life? If not, may Christ be formed in you.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 116 stanzas 1, 8 and 9.

84. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of sessions 10-12 (paragraphs 57-76 on pages 49-61) were approved.

85. Treasurer's Report

Mr Henk Berends presented his report.

The Chairman thanked Mr Henk Berends for his work.

86 Advisory Committee 1: Finance

Mr John McEwen presented the report.

The conference accepted the report.

87. Additional Task for the Committee of Review

Mr Mark Bube proposed:

1. That the Committee of Review be requested to include in its review of the ICRC's Constitution and Regulations a consideration of the matter of how to address ICRC membership issues in situations where, following a split or disruption in a member church, a church with a different name (from that on the roll of ICRC member churches) desires to be recognized as the member church in the ICRC (e.g., the recent situation in the ERCC).
2. That the Corresponding Secretary be authorized to implement (on an interim basis, pending the next Assembly) whatever recommendations or advice the Committee for Review might propose to the next Assembly in this regard.

Vote: Adopted.

88. Advisory Committee 3: ICRC 2013

Rev. Han Schenau presented the report.

Suggestions for other possible speakers were offered from the floor.

- Rev. William Shishko (OPC)
- Rev. James Visscher (CanRC)
- Dr James Dennison (OPC)
- Dr Dale Ralph Davis (PCA)
- Dr Murray Capill (Geelong)

Do speakers have to be from member churches? There is precedent for inviting someone from outside the member churches.

One delegate expressed his concern that the list of speakers was mainly from the western churches and wished to see a wider spread. Another delegate expressed the view that for such a vital subject we ought to select the best speakers, wherever they may come from.

Suggestions were also made concerning the topics.

Paper 1: express more generally as "the continuing call to preach".

Paper 2: since preaching is not just explication and application but also proclamation, change the title to "The nature of preaching".

Paper 3: this should not be a topic on its own.

Paper 4: expand the topic, such as “the challenges of preaching in the early 21st century with its postmodern and entertainment culture”.

Additional topic: preaching to an illiterate community. This would be consistent with the ICRC’s interest in mission.

Vote

Adopted.

89. Appointment of a Committee of Review

The Executive Committee considered the constitution of this committee and felt it would be wise to take 2 men from earliest members, 2 from new members and 1 from somewhere in between. Hence its nominations are: Rev. Dr James Visscher, Rev. James Maciver, Rev. Bruce Hoyt, Rev. Heon Soo Kim, Rev. Dr Douw Breed.

Prof. Wezeman asked if the Executive Committee had considered whether these nominees knew how to audit an organization.

Additional nominations from the floor:

Prof. Klaas Wezeman – accepted.

Mr Mark Bube – accepted.

Prof. Klaas Wezeman withdrew and nominated Mr John Vanderstoep in his place. Accepted.

Executive Committee’s proposal.

Adopted.

Closed at 3:28 p.m.

Session 15

Evening, Thursday
22 October 2009

90. Opening devotions

The Chairman opened the session at 8:03 p.m.

Rev. Heon Soo Kim led the devotions.

Singing: Psalm 133.

Reading: Psalm 133.

This Psalm expresses our experience this week. Notice that the words “running down” appear three times. It teaches us that our fellowship is a gift from above. There are three metaphors. 1. The holy oil of anointing points to the Holy Spirit. 2. Aaron’s beard which flowed over his collar, a symbol of his high priestly authority (the Spirit works through the office of high priest). There were jewels on his shoulders and breastplate with the names of Israel’s tribes, and these were saturated with the holy oil. 3. Dew because of which life flowers. May the fellowship that we experience spread to the churches that we represent. It is a foretaste of the marriage feast of the Lamb. Read Colossians 3:4 and Revelation 22.

Prayer.

91. Advisory Committee 2: Press Release and Letter to Rev. Neels Smit

91.1 Press Release

Rev. Dr James Visscher read the Press Release and received amendments and corrections.

Rev. Dr Douw Breed suggested that the Press Release was useful as information for the member churches but that it may not be in quite the form that ‘the press’ would want. The Chairman recommended that Dr Breed send his suggestions to the Interim Committee for them to take into account for future conferences.

The Press release would be issued to member churches, put on the website, and submitted to the local press in Christchurch.

The conference approved the Press Release.

91.2 Letter to Rev. Neels Smit

Rev. Dr James Visscher read the letter.

The conference approved it.

92. Plaque for the Bishopdale Church

Mr Henk Berends informed the conference that a plaque had been made commemorating the fact that the Bishopdale Church had hosted the seventh ICRC conference.

The Chairman presented the commemorative plaque to Rev. Robert van Wichem for the church.

93. Additional Missions Reports

93.1 Cambodia

Rev. John Goris informed the conference that he had received news that a minister of the PCKK had been able to go into Cambodia in order to train local men to become leaders. A new theological college had been set up. He asked the conference to pray for Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. The church there was a persecuted church undergoing much hardship.

93.2 China

Rev. Dr James Visscher explained how the congregations of Langley B.C. and Cloverdale had begun a significant gospel work with the Chinese.

A Chinese student had graduated from the theological college in Hamilton and the churches had used him to reach out to the large Chinese population of Vancouver. There was now a Chinese church there with about 30 adult members. In co-operation with the Australian church, they had also established a Chinese web site. Since around 2004 or 2005 they had started to visit China, teams going for short intensive stints of teaching. This was a growing work. The Lord was opening many doors. There is a tremendous *hunger for the Word of God* in China, such as he had never seen before. Every teacher who goes there comes back transformed by the experience. He explained that they had been advised not to try to teach infant baptism but to follow the simpler Baptist form of teaching. However, they had not felt able to follow that advice. On the contrary they were teaching covenant theology and the Chinese students were astute and soon perceived the

implications for infant baptism. In that way, Reformed doctrine was becoming known there. Financial resources were not a problem but they had a great need of suitable workers.

Rev. Richard Holst prayed for the Korean work in Cambodia and the Canadian work with the Chinese of Vancouver and in China.

94. Expression of thanks

Rev. Richard Holst, on behalf of the whole conference, thanked the Chairman, Rev. Bruce Hoyt, for his work, recognizing the excellent manner in which he had fulfilled his task.

95. Closing of the seventh conference

The Chairman made some closing remarks. This week had been a series of "holy days" of spiritual revival, encouragement and refreshment, the best ICRC that he had attended so far. He appreciated the warm fellowship, challenging and inspiring papers, stimulating discussions and devotions. The unity had made his work as chairman easy. It had been a privilege for the RCNZ to invite the delegates to New Zealand. It had been a joy to receive five new member churches. It had been good to pray together.

Reading: Haggai 2: 20-23.

Singing: A hymn.

This hymn is Rev. John Goris' parting gift to the conference. He had composed it for this purpose.

O Lord, alert your church to see
That harvest time is near.
The Christ-less crowd within our reach
The Gospel needs to hear.

So stir your church while time abides
To sow the precious seed
In nearby towns and distant lands
Of this your world in need.

O Lord of harvest, send them forth:
Thrust out the reapers now!
Bid old and young your call to hear,
And to your will to bow.

O readily, so readily
Let those who hear respond
With sacrificial service, Lord,
And of your kingdom fond.

The Chairman closed the seventh International Conference of Reformed Churches at 9:10 p.m.

Section II

Advisory Committee Reports

These reports have no official status.
They are published as background information
to the decisions taken and recorded in the Minutes.

Advisory Committee 1

Finance

Your Committee received a copy of the Treasurer's report together with certification of the accounts having been duly audited.

The Treasurer explained to the Committee details of the report. We found everything to our satisfaction.

The Committee was impressed by the significant input and expertise of the Honorary Treasurer.

Recommendations:

1. That the Conference receive and adopt the Treasurer's report;
2. That the Conference adopt the Budget presented by the Treasurer for the years 2010 to 2013.
3. That the Conference thank the Treasurer for his diligence and thoroughness in managing, on our behalf, the funds of the ICRC.

Mr John McEwen (Convenor)
Rev. George Ball

Advisory Committee 2

Press Release

The Seventh meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was held in Christchurch, New Zealand, from October 15 to 22, 2009. A prayer service preceded the official meeting. This service was under the leadership of the Rev. John Goris. The Rev. Dirk van Garderen delivered a fitting sermon on the second beatitude (Matthew 5:4). Several brothers from different parts of the world thanked the Lord for the preparations, the upcoming sessions and the results of the gathering.

The Conference was held during the day at the Holiday Inn in the center of the city and in the evening at the Bishopdale Church. This church is part of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand and together this federation and its members in the Christchurch area took exemplary care of the needs of the delegates. Their keen organizational skills, their appetizing meals and their warm hospitality will long be remembered with fondness.

The Conference opened with words of greetings from the hosting church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Upon the recommendation of the Interim Committee, the Executive was appointed. It was composed of the Rev. Bruce Hoyt (RCNZ) as Chairman, the Rev. Richard Holst (EPCEW) as Vice-chairman, the Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen (CanRC) as Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. Dr Peter Naylor (EPCEW) as Recording Secretary and Mr. Henk Berends (CanRC) as Treasurer. The Rev. Bort de Graaf (CRCN), the retiring Chairman, was thanked for his services to the Conference over the past four years.

Member Churches

When the Conference opened it consisted of the following members:

- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (**ARPC**)
- Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis di Indonesia NTT) (**CRCI**, was *GGRC*)
- Canadian Reformed Churches (**CanRC**)
- Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (**CRCN**, was *CGKN*)
- Confessing Reformed Church in Congo (Église Reformée Confessant au Congo) (**CRCC**, was *ERCC*)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (**EPCEW**)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (**EPCI**)

- Free Church of Scotland (**FCS**)
- Free Church in Southern Africa (**FCSA**)
- Free Reformed Churches of North America (**FRCNA**)
- Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika) (**FRCSA**, was *VGKSA*)
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church (**OPC**)
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (**PCEA**)
- Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) (**PCKK**)
- Presbyterian Free Church of India (**PFCI**) previously called the Free Church of Central India
- Reformed Churches in Indonesia NTT (Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia NTT) (**RCI**, was *GGRI*)
- Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)) (**RCN**, was *GKN(v)*)
- Reformed Churches in New Zealand (**RCNZ**)
- Reformed Churches in South Africa (**RCSA**, was *GKSA*)
- Reformed Churches of Spain (Iglesias Reformadas de Espana) (**RCS**, was *IRE*)
- Reformed Church in the United States (**RCUS**)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (**RPCire**)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (**RPCNA**)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (**RPCNEI**)
- United Reformed Churches in North America (**URCNA**).

New Member Churches

During the Conference the following churches were received as new members:

- Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (**FCC**);
- Independent Reformed Church in Korea (**IRCK**);
- Heritage Reformed Congregations (**HRC**);
- Reformed Churches of Brazil (Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil) (**RCB**, was *IRB*);
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (**RPCInd**).

Papers

The theme of the Conference was “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith.” This theme was explored by means of four papers. Each paper was delivered in the evening at the Bishopdale Church in order that the members of that church and neighbouring churches could also be present. Discussion followed and the next day it continued at the Holiday Inn in a number of workshops and a plenary session.

The first paper was delivered by Dr George W. Knight III (OPC) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Charismatic Movement.” Dr Knight began by analyzing four episodes in the book of Acts (Acts 2: 1-41; 8: 4-25; 10: 1-11; 18; 19: 1-7) related to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He went on to deal with the filling and fulfilment of the Spirit, paying special attention to the gifts of prophecy, signs and wonders, speaking in tongues and healing. He also made some suggestions about how to interact with those deemed to be “Charismatics”.

The second paper was delivered by Dr Nelson D. Kloosterman (URCNA) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Individualism in Church Life.” Dr Kloosterman first described the nature of the challenge that individualism poses for the church and the Christian faith. He then moved on to a diagnosis of the matter identifying a number of causes relating to a loss of transcendence, evangelicalism and the psychologizing of the self. Finally, he outlined a response to the problem that related to the church’s worship and confession.

The third paper was delivered by the Rev. Frank van Dalen (ARPC) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge from Islam.” The Rev. Van Dalen gave an update on the work that the ARPC is doing in Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. He spoke about Muslim distinctives and also gave numerous suggestions as to how to minister to them.

The fourth paper was delivered by Dr Mohan Chacko (RPCInd) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Asian Context.” Dr Chacko opened his address by identifying three challenges facing the churches in the Asian-Pacific region: the charismatic movement, individualism and Islam. He then proceeded to delineate four paradigms in relation to Pentecostalism. This in turn was followed by an examination of individualism. It was concluded by a number of observations on Asian missions.

Introductions

A number of churches applied for membership in the ICRC. They introduced themselves during the meeting.

Other churches sent observers or visitors to the Conference, several of whom introduced themselves or updated the meeting on current work: the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and the Reformed Church in Japan.

Missions

The missionary mandate of the church has had the attention of the member churches of the ICRC since its inception. The 2009 meeting was no different.

The Mission Committee presented its report and it highlighted the fact that regional mission conferences are growing in number. These conferences were held in Europe (2007 and 2008), Africa (2008), and Asia-Pacific (2008). A newsletter has been published on a more or less regular basis. Contact was also made with the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) and more contact will be pursued.

Furthermore, it was decided to arrange a meeting of representatives of the world mission agencies of the ICRC member churches to exchange information and explore ways for possible multilateral cooperation. Information (names, qualifications, areas of expertise and contact details) will be compiled on short-term theological teachers in order that member churches may be made aware of existing resources and be able to make use of them. Protocols on how members may deal with major disasters and persecuted Christians were adopted.

Other Significant Actions

It was decided to accept a proposal from one of the churches to appoint a Committee to review all aspects of the Conference. A proposed amendment to the Constitution was also passed along to the Review Committee for its study and evaluation.

Budgetary Matters

An income and expense statement was received and adopted. It showed that the Conference spent \$136,638.09 (USD) from 2006 to 2009. A four-year budget for 2010-2013 in the amount of \$140,000.00 (USD), or \$35,000.00 per annum, was adopted.

Next Meeting of the Conference

The next meeting is scheduled, the Lord willing, for September of 2013 in Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom, hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (**EPCEW**).

Mark T. Bube
James Visscher

Advisory Committee 2

Letter to Brother Neels Smit

Dear Brother Neels Smit,

Greetings from the Seventh Meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches!

We have received word that you have taken ill and are faced with a life and death struggle as you do battle with that dreaded disease called “cancer”.

As a result, on Wednesday morning, the 21st of October, the Meeting laid your ill health, as well as your future medical care, before the Lord in public prayer. It is our fervent hope that the Lord will bless the treatments you are receiving and use them to restore your health.

Many brothers present in Christchurch remember you with fondness. They made mention of your past contribution to and participation in the work of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Your devotion to the cause of the unity and mission of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ has not gone unnoticed.

May our gracious and eternal Saviour strengthen you with the promises of His Word and fill you daily with the presence of His Spirit. Together we labour for Him and before Him knowing that one day we shall see Him face to face and be blessed forevermore. The apostle Paul has written, “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (II Tim 4: 8). May the knowledge and expectation of this crown sustain you in the difficult days to come.

Love and blessings to you and to your family!

Your fellow servants and colleagues in Christ,
On behalf of the ICRC,
Bruce Hoyt, chairman
Richard Holst, vice-chairman
Cornelius Van Spronsen, corresponding secretary
Peter Naylor, recording secretary
Henk Berends, treasurer

Advisory Committee 3

ICRC 2013

The next ICRC will, the Lord providing, be held in 2013 in Wales. The host church will be the EPCEW (Cardiff, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, presumably with help of the Bethel Presbyterian Church). University or Hotel facilities should be available. The committee suggests the conference to be held in September.

Topic: “The priority of preaching”

1. The indispensability of preaching

The preaching as the main instrument of the Holy Spirit – How can we as preachers preach ‘with demonstration of spirit and power’? – What is the key message? - Interaction between preaching and culture – Interaction between preaching and the reality of their everyday experiences.

2. Preaching as explication and application

The priority of the text – Outlines of Reformed hermeneutics – The address of and the appeal to the congregation – Converted/unconverted hearers – What is experiential preaching and is it legitimate?

3. Preaching and worship

Preaching of the Word as the centre of liturgy, worship as response – Preaching as the guide in the field of tension between form and content – Does living in the West, East, North or South require a different form of communication?

4. Preaching doctrine in a visually-oriented society

The field of tension between doctrine and experience – The undervaluation of the spoken resulting from visual forms of communication – Preaching and the discipline of communication – What is narrative preaching and is it legitimate?

Suggested speakers (no order of preference):

Dr Arie Baars (CRCN)

Dr Sinclair B. Ferguson (ARP)

Rev. Ian Hamilton (EPCW)

Dr David Murray (FCS)

Rev. Carl Schouls (FRCNA)

Dr Cornelis Venema (URC)

Rev. Derek Thomas (PCA)

Dr Hywel Jones (URC)
Rev. Prof. Edward Donnelly (RPCIre)
Speaker from the East or South?

The committee wishes the conference wisdom from above.

Rev. Paul Goeng Ho Bae (PCK(K))
Rev. Richard Holst (EPCEW)
Rev. Cornelis Pronk (FRCNA)
Rev. Han Schenau (CRCN)

Advisory Committee 4 Missions

(Numbering below refers to the Missions Committee Report)

2.1 The meaning of the word “Israel”

Clarification: AC 4 understands the word “Israel” to mean the Jewish people.

2.2 NAPARC

AC4 recommends that because all ICRC members in North America are also in NAPARC, no regional missions conference is necessary for North America, in view of the fact that the missions leaders and executives of NAPARC have yearly meetings.

2.3 Newsletter:

AC4 recommends that the ICRC urges member churches to share their concerns or joys in the area of missions, including sharing missions website information with the Editor.

2.4 Relationship with WRF

- 1) AC4 recommends: The sending of official representatives to bring Fraternal Greetings – a privilege usually reserved for churches who already have some sort of formal ecclesiastical relationship – is a decision that should be made by the ICRC itself.
- 2) AC4 proposes that the Missions Committee appoint 3 representatives to meet (at a mutually agreeable date and venue) with a similar number of representatives of the appropriate (missions) committee of the WRF to discuss areas of cooperation in Reformed mission work.

2.5 Proposed mandate (see also under 3.2 of Missions Committee Report)

a) AC4 recommends the adoption of the 2009 Mandate of the Missions Committee as follows:

MANDATE FOR THE ICRC MISSIONS COMMITTEE

1. *To gather and distribute a booklet summarizing (both by church and field) the mission works of the ICRC member churches. This should be prepared in time for each ICRC.*

2. *To gather and to study the relevant documents from the member churches regarding their mission vision, policies, programs or projects, including the training of missionaries and mission methodologies, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate.*
3. *To arrange for a meeting of representatives of the world missions agencies of the ICRC member churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned work, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible multilateral cooperation in mission among the member churches.*
4. *To help provide a relevant agenda in relation to mission for the Regional Conferences. To help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on mission topics of mutual interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC itself.*
5. *To publish (in a format suitable for republication in the member churches' own media) an ICRC Missions Newsletter, on a regular basis, as appropriate, for the benefit of the churches, mission agencies and/or the inter-church relations committees. This newsletter should include descriptions of opportunities for missionary service and/or mission project participation pending in the member churches, and articles intended to promote interest in Reformed missions. This information, if appropriate, should also be produced on the ICRC website.*
6. *To designate a representative to be responsible to disseminate to the member churches, through their mission contact representatives, opportunities to assist, through a fund established by an appropriate body of a member church, persecuted Christians and their families, especially among those who profess the Reformed faith. Such information might be quite sensitive and should be handled carefully and discreetly by all involved in the effort to provide such assistance; and unless advised to the contrary, no information regarding such assistance should be posted on the internet.*
7. *To develop and maintain a list of mission contact representatives for each member church. Each representative will be responsible for disseminating ICRC missions information and materials to their respective churches and for gathering and transmitting to the Missions Committee the relevant information from their respective churches necessary for the accomplishment of (1)–(6) above.*
8. *To send a report to the Corresponding Secretary at least six months before the next ICRC.*
9. *To propose a budget for the following four years to the next ICRC.*

10. *To consult the Missions convenor or other appropriate officers of member churches so as to secure name, qualifications, areas of expertise and contact details of suitable persons who may be able to serve as short-term theological teachers.*

b) AC 4 proposes the adoption of the Protocol Major Disasters.

c) AC 4 proposes the adoption of the Protocol Persecuted Christians.

3.1 Membership of Missions Committee

AC 4 recommends Paul Bae (PCKK), Peter Smith (PCEA), Derek Mashau (RCSA), Dirk Boersma (FRCSA), David Miller (FCS), Ben Van der Lugt (RCN), Ray Sikkema (URCNA), Doug Clawsen (OPC) as the membership of the Missions Committee for the next four years.

AC 4 recommends Sikkema as Convener.

AC 4 recommends Mark Bube and John Goris as advisors to the Missions Committee, especially for the first two years.

Any replacements to be recommended by the Missions Committee to the Interim Committee.

3.2 Recommend budget with the following amendment:

Travel (Missions representatives to meet with WRF representatives) - \$3,000.

For clarification: from which budget does the expenses of Corresponding Secretary come – the Missions Committee budget or the general ICRC budget?

Rev. Piet Meijer

Rev. Tom Tyson

Rev. Frank van Dalen

Rev. Alex J. Macdonald

Advisory Committee 5

The Free Church of Scotland

(Continuing)

Actions of Previous ICRC Conferences

1. In 2001 the Conference adopted the following with respect to the membership of the FCC (Proceedings of the ICRC, 2001, Article 37):

Without prejudice to the FCC claim, either for or against, but in accordance with our constitution we can only propose the following as a practical solution.

1. The FCC be invited to be seated as non-voting participants for the duration of the 5th Assembly of the ICRC.

Grounds

a) the assembly does not have the jurisdiction to evaluate the claim of the FCC, because the ICRC is a conference and not a church court (cf. Constitution article III and V)

b) the ICRC Regulations allow for non-voting participants in article V.2.

2. The FCC be encouraged to apply for membership in the ICRC.

Ground

They are *de facto* a separate denomination.

2. In 2005 the Conference adopted the following (*Proceedings of the ICRC*, October 12–19, 2005, Article 90, pages 55-58):

1. The ICRC does not accept the application for membership of the FCC at this time.

2. The ICRC urges the FCC as Christian brothers to cease from civil action against their brothers in the FCS.

3. The ICRC urges both the FCC and the FCS to seek biblical ways of reconciliation.

4. The ICRC encourages the FCC to attend our conference as observers.

5. The ICRC will be most willing to receive a new application from the FCC when there is no longer any civil case between the churches.

Grounds

1. The FCC is currently engaged in civil action against the FCS. No church should be accepted as a member of the ICRC whilst it is taking a member church to a civil court on a matter of church discipline, for the following reasons:

(a) Taking a member church to court is contrary to the foundations of the ICRC in that it contradicts the teaching of Scripture to which we are bound. 1 Corinthians 6:6-7: “But instead one brother goes to law against another – and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?”

(b) It is contrary to the stated purpose of the ICRC, namely,

(i) to express and promote the unity of the faith that the member churches have in Christ;

(ii) to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;

(iii) to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;

(iv) to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

2. Reconciliation is something that all Christians should seek.

The Work of Advisory Committee 5

Advisory Committee 5 (AC5) met with delegates from both the FCS (Rev. James Maciver) and the FCC (Rev. David S. Fraser) to discuss the matter of the membership of the FCC in the ICRC. AC5 also discussed the following issues at some length:

1. Whether the FCC is currently eligible for membership in the ICRC.

The FCC has previously satisfied the requirements of Article IV.1.a–d of the *Constitution*, and, to the best of our knowledge, both of the original sponsors continue to support the FCC’s application for membership.

Since the 2005 Conference of the ICRC, the FCC has withdrawn its appeal of the civil matter that was pending at that time. AC5 believes that the burden of the condition in Article 90.5 of the 2005 *Proceedings* was directed toward litigation that might be initiated by the FCC. AC5 does not believe that the legal proceedings (which were not initiated by the FCC) described in Item 7b.1 of the *Provisional Agenda* for the 2009 Conference should now bar the FCC from membership.

2. Whether the FCC can be received as a member only by submitting a brand new application.

While one might read Article 90.5 of the 2005 *Proceedings* and come to such a conclusion, AC5 does not believe that such is the only possible conclusion, especially when read against the “at this time” provision in Article 90.1—would the ICRC process that application at another time? Nor is AC5 convinced that the 2009 Conference would be doing right by our FCC brothers by requiring them to re-file their application (an essentially clerical function at this point in time) and wait still another four years to be received as members.

Recommendation of Advisory Committee 5 to ICRC 2009

That, taking note of the withdrawal of the appeal by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in the civil matter pending in 2005 (*cf. Proceedings of the ICRC*, October 12-19, 2005, Article 90, pages 55-58), the ICRC receive the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) as a member church in the ICRC.

Mr Mark T. Bube
Prof. David McKay
Rev. C. Richard H. Holst
Rev. C. Van Spronsen
Rev. Bruce Hoyt

Advisory Committee 6 Constitution

Advisory Committee 6 had to deal with the amendment of Article IV, 1, as done in the assembly of the ICRC 2001 and the vote thereon by the member churches.

The amendment of 2001 reads as follows:

*1. Those churches shall be admitted as members which:
a. adhere and are faithful to one or more of the confessional standards stated in the Basis, as each church has adopted one or more of these as its own standards, OR, adhere and are faithful to Reformed Confessions listed in the Basis (Art.2), and which confession (or confessions) shall be proposed to be added to Article II of the Constitution.*

This recommendation was proposed to the member churches for voting. The result of the vote is as follows: 11 member churches are in favour; 6 member churches are in favour, but added a certain condition; 5 member churches are not in favour; 3 member churches did not vote.

Committee 6 discussed the interpretation of these votes. First of all we wanted – so to speak – to weigh the contents of the “not in favour” votes. It became clear to the committee that the majority of the “not in favour” voters did so because of the complexity of the matter how to test a proposed confession. It seemed to the committee that also the majority of the “in favour” voters assumed that there will be some sort of mechanism to test the proposed confession. The Committee came to the conclusion that if we proceed with the amendment of Article IV, 1, a, the ICRC needs a committee that is able to test a proposed confession(s) to its faithfulness to the confessions listed in the Basis (Art. 2).

The question came to the Committee about how urgent this matter is. We could not get a clear picture of whether there is a current case that needs the amendment Article IV, 1, a. The Committee couldn't even think of any confession that could make use of the proposed amendment of Article IV, 1, a. Therefore the Committee feels some restraint in proceeding with this matter. Nevertheless the Committee continued on this case because of the majority of “in favour” voters (including the “in favour” voters who added a certain condition).

The Committee is of the opinion that the proposal to amend Article IV, 1, a, and a possible addition of confessions in the future are very important

matter. Therefore the Committee thinks that the assembly should try to receive a 100% “in favour” although the amendment will pass with a majority of 75% of the member churches in favour. The Committee also recognizes that for a 100% “in favour” of the member churches, the delegates of the member churches that voted “not in favour”, need to go back to their churches to consider this matter again.

Having said all this, the Committee proposes to the assembly of the ICRC 2009 as follows:

If the assembly of the ICRC 2009 votes in favour of amending Article IV.1.a the assembly should also decide the following:

1. To install a testing committee, existing of 5-7 members, out of member churches representing the Confessions as listed in the Basis (Art.2). The assembly should consider nominating for this testing committee at least 2 or 3 of the “not in favour” voters.
2. The testing committee will remain in existence in the period between two assemblies of the ICRC, but the members of this testing committee shall be elected or reelected every assembly of the ICRC.
3. The testing committee will report to every assembly of the ICRC.
4. The method by which a proposed confession is tested will be as follows:
 1. a confession to be tested shall be sent to the testing committee
 2. the testing committee shall come with a proposal about the proposed confession that will be sent to the member churches
 3. the member churches shall consider the proposal of the testing committee
 4. the delegates of the member churches shall vote at the next assembly of the ICRC
 5. by a majority of “in favours” the confession is of course accepted; by a majority of “not in favour” voters it will be rejected and such a church cannot be a member of the ICRC

The Committee wishes the assembly of the ICRC Gods blessings,

Rev. James Maciver (FSC)
Rev. Laurens-A. den Butter (CRCN)
Mr Cornelis Roose (FRCSA)
Rev. Dr Paul Goeng Ho Bae (PCKK)

Advisory Committee 7

Review of the ICRC

Observations

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches are asking the Conference to appoint a committee to review the constitution, goals, meetings and activities of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Specifically, the mandate of this Committee of Review would be:
 - a. To engage in a complete review of the history and present functioning of the Conference paying particular attention to:
 - i. Constitution and Regulations.
 - ii. International meeting.
 - iii. Regional meetings.
 - iv. Mission Committee.
 - v. Corresponding Secretary.
 - b. To solicit feedback and comments from the member churches.
 - c. To familiarize itself with other international ecclesiastical organizations, identifying approaches and structures which have worked well and may also improve the workings of the Conference.
 - d. To submit its report six months prior to the meeting of the next Conference.
2. The main ground offered by the Canadian Reformed Churches is that twenty-five years have passed since the International Conference was established.

Considerations

1. The International Conference began with only eight member churches. Today, there are thirty member churches. Numerical growth may affect both goals and strategies to attain these goals.
2. The needs of the member churches change over time and this may affect the way in which the ICRC functions.
3. In order to maintain optimal functioning, it is wise for any organization to periodically review its foundational documents, goals, structures, strategies and activities.
4. Technology has advanced at a very high rate since the first conference of the ICRC. New technology may affect the way in which the ICRC operates.

5. There may ways in which the profile of the ICRC can be enhanced particularly in relation to the quadrennial Conference.

Recommendation

1. To appoint a Committee of Review with a mandate as set forth in the proposal by the Canadian Reformed Churches, with the amendment of 1(d) to delete “six months” and replace it by “at least twelve months”.

Rev. Robert Schouten
Mr Pradeep Kumar
Rev. Maynard Koerner
Rev. Kenneth Ferguson
Rev. Jack Peterson
Prof. Klaas Wezeman

Advisory Committee 8 Membership of the Heritage Reformed Congregations

Your committee met with Pastor David Lipsy (HRC) who outlined for us the history of the Heritage Reformed Congregations. He provided us with a copy of their Formula of Subscription and a copy of the Church Order of Dort (1914 Redaction). We discussed various issues with Pastor Lipsy including the development and work of the denominational seminary – Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids.

The HRC has submitted the necessary documentation as required under Article 4 of the Constitution. The HRC affirms the three ecumenical creeds, Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian, and the three Forms of Unity.

The application of the HRC is being sponsored by The Free Reformed Churches of North America and the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Both sponsors have supplied full and positive reports.

We recommend the acceptance of the Heritage Reformed Congregations into the membership of the ICRC.

Rev. Gareth Burke
Rev. Dr George Knight III

Advisory Committee 9

Membership of the Independent Reformed Church in Korea

The Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK) was founded in 1964 and currently consists of 4 congregations, 5 ministers and about 620 persons. Its constitutional basis consists of Five Forms of Unity in addition to the four ecumenical creeds (i.e., including Chalcedon AD 451), namely, Westminster Confession, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of the Synod of Dort. The subscription is clear and unambiguous, and there are no declaratory acts which allow departure from the Reformed Faith. A regular organisation blending Presbyterian and Reformed polity has been developed.

The IRCK is not a member of the WCC or other organisations whose aims or practices conflict with the Basis of the ICRC, and its actual practice is consistent with the Reformed Faith as set out in its formal standards. We particularly note its extensive publishing ministry and its recent commitment to begin a Theological Academy.

We are unanimous in recommending admission of the IRCK to full membership of the ICRC.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr John Vanderstoep
Rev Dr Rowland S. Ward, Reporter

Advisory Committee 10 Membership of the Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB) Igrajas Reformandas do Brasil

The committee, as well as considering the application on behalf of the above church, met with Rev Cornelius Van Spronsen who represented one of the sponsoring churches, The Canadian Reformed Church, and who was able to translate some of the supporting documents which were in Portuguese.

The committee examined the application particularly in terms of the four criteria listed in clause IV of the ICRC constitution and ascertained that in each case the criteria was met as follows:

- 1) Confessional documents are the Holy Scriptures and the 3 Forms of Unity
- 2) The form of subscription was checked and found to be consistent.
- 3) The form of government is the church order of Dort, adapted in practical areas to the Brazilian situation.
- 4) There are no declarative statements.

The committee is happy to recommend acceptance of the above application.

I. Martin
J. McEwen

19 October 2009

Advisory Committee 11

Membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in India

The RPCIndia has a history going back to 1836 when Presbyterian work was begun in India by Reformed Presbyterians from the U.S.A. A variety of splits and realignments occasioned by departures into various strands of modernism eventually led to the formation of the RPCIndia in 1994.

Currently, this denomination covers 60% of India's northern states, comprising 7 member churches with 35 "Fellowships" (unorganized churches) and preaching stations with a total membership of approximately 3,000 members served by 16 full and 5 associate Teaching Elders.

They are also associated with the RPC of North East India, The Presbyterian Free Church of India, Presbyterian Free Church – hill region, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim and the Presbyterian Church of India (Reformed). They have sister church relations with the RCN.

This church is Presbyterian in its government, adhering to the Westminster Standards and they also use the Three Forms of Unity for both liturgical and educational purposes. Their churches are governed according to a church order entitled "Form of Government of the RPCIndia".

Their application for membership in the ICRC is supported by letters of commendation from:

1. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (September 5, 2008)
2. Reformed Presbyterian Church in North East India (September 11, 2008)
3. Presbyterian Free Church of India (undated letter confirming a decision made on July 14, 2008 to support this application.)

Your committee, assisted by Rev. Edwin Darsanglur of the RPCNEI and Prof. Klaas Wezeman of the RCN, having met with Revs. Hiralal Solanki, Anupkumar A. Hiwale and Dr. Mohan Chacko of the RPCIndia, warmly recommends that the meeting receive with favour the application now before you.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dirk van Garderen
Rev. Carl A. Schouls

Advisory Committee 12 Membership of the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Following is our recommendation to the ICRC regarding the request for membership of the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC):

1. Your committee was unable to meet with representatives of the AEPC since they were not able to be present at the 2009 ICRC meetings. However, both sponsoring churches—the OPC and RCN—provided helpful reports and insight into the life of this communion of believers. The reports from the sponsoring churches are quite positive with reference to the growth and development of the AEPC in recent years demonstrated by their ability to work through internal challenges in a faithful and biblical manner. It is apparent that the AEPC sincerely desire the accountability, encouragement of, as well as express unity with the broader Reformed and Presbyterian churches.
2. The AEPC have furnished a partial fulfillment of the requisite documents required by the Constitution of the ICRC (see article IV c). Their confessional basis is the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms. They have not submitted a form of government, or a statement of subscription (it is reported that they are organized according to a Presbyterian form of government).
3. Your committee recommends the request of the AEPC be postponed to the 2013 ICRC meeting for consideration, along with the encouragement to the AEPC that they provide the remainder of the required documents and send representatives to the next ICRC meeting.

Rev. James Sawtelle
Rev. Raymond Sikkema
Rev. James Maciver

Advisory Committee 13

Incomplete Membership Applications

A. Observations

1. The Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi has requested membership in the ICRC. In an email to the Corresponding Secretary of the ICRC (September 16, 2008), the general secretary of this federation informed him that they had requested six member churches of the ICRC to sponsor them. These churches are: the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Until now, no sponsorship of any of these churches has been received.
2. The Nongu u Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv (NKST) has requested membership of the ICRC. This church became a sister-church of the RCN in 2005 (Synod Amersfoort). The RCN sponsors this federation for membership of the ICRC. Until now no second sponsor was received.
3. The Reformed Church (Synod Soutpansberg) has requested membership of the ICRC. In an email to the corresponding secretary of the ICRC, this church informs him that the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands and the RCN sponsor their request. While the former church federation does indeed sponsor their request, the sponsorship of the latter federation has not been received.

B. Consideration

The Constitution of the ICRC states that “Those churches shall be admitted which: [...] b. have been sponsored by at least two member Churches.”

C. Suggested Decision

All three churches be reminded that we are bound by our constitution so that they must send in their application for membership of the ICRC supported by two sponsoring churches.

Rev. Dick Moes
Rev. Bort de Graaf
Rev. Ben Fourie

Section III

Speeches and Reports



Henk Berends giving the Financial Report

Sermon of the Opening Service

“The Mourner’s Comfort”

Matthew 5: 4

Rev. Dirk van Garderen

I suspect that nothing is further from your mind than having come to this uttermost end of the earth, this most beautiful of beautiful countries, and be challenged to mourn, grieve, weep or gnash your teeth!

We’ve come here:

- to rejoice, give thanks be built up;
- to get to know, learn to understand, respect, trust and *love* each other;
- to create, strengthen and deepen relationships with each other as we represent churches that share the same confessional heritage and values;
- to find ways and means of doing the Lord’s bidding as confessional Presbyterian and Reformed Churches;
- to focus on the Lord’s commission to us in our work at home and abroad, in both missionary and diaconal contexts;
- to check each other out and, if necessary, in truth and in love, to admonish each other with respect to our confessional integrity and commitment;
- for the praise of God’s glorious name, the advancement of the kingship and kingdom of our God.

In a nutshell, we’re here in Jesus’ name and for God’s sake! For the King and his Kingdom!

Hence, should we commence this conference with a reminder that only those who mourn are blessed and will be comforted? True, this International Conference of Reformed Churches is not meant to be or, I pray, going to become anybody’s or any church’s funeral. All of us share the heartfelt desire that this will be a time to put our hands and hearts to the plough and make straight furrows for the Lord.

And yet, in preparing for this conference, I felt myself irresistibly drawn to the second beatitude, to Jesus’ words, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5: 4). It seems to me that the tone of this conference needs to be set and maintained in the light of this, the second beatitude.

* * *

As you will know, the *Sermon on the Mount* introduces the great blocks of teaching in Matthew's gospel. Seated on a mountainside with his disciples as well as a great crowd that had gathered, the Lord Jesus began to teach saying "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5: 3-5).

"Blessed"

'Beatitudes': succinct, staccato sayings that convey so much with such economy of language, describe God-like wholeness, joy and peace, that sense of being in the presence of and surrounded by the prosperity, light and sunshine of God's grace and love. Blessed: being approved of by and the experience of being approved of by God (Carson). Divine approval.

"Mourn"

God blesses, is present with, surrounds and approves of those who *mourn!* Reflect on that word 'mourn' for a moment. It brings to mind grief, painful grief that hurts the heart, chokes the throat, and blinds your eyes with tears. It is an expression of helplessness, hurt and despair.

Understand well. This mourning is not about a pulling long face and continually wiping teary eyes. It is not about a black hat, a black coat or stockings. Rather, it is the mourning and groaning that must occur when you come face to face with your own sinfulness; its continuing destructive power and impact on your life as well as that of others. "O God, I grieve you, we grieve you. Therefore I mourn!"

If the first beatitude stresses the lack of our personal spiritual resources, the second one strikes still deeper. We are by nature poor in spirit. We lack spiritual assets, possess nothing worthy of God's love. That's bad. But, as this beatitude highlights, it gets worse! Our hearts are not merely without spiritual assets; they are filled with our sin, our moral and spiritual filth and corruption. Whenever you face yourself as you really are, you tremble, weep and mourn as the awareness of your personal sin and guilt overwhelms you – even as a child of God. You mourn and groan because you know that although you are spiritually alive in Christ you still continue to sin. It's the mournful wretchedness Paul describes in Romans 7 as he cries, 'What a wretched man I am! Who can rescue me from this body of death (Romans 7: 24)?

It's the wretchedness you experience when Jesus tells the parable of two men who went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, a senior clergyman who would have felt one hundred per cent at home in a confessional, Reformed context, who believed utterly in walking the talk,

in personal sanctification and, I suppose, even the doctrines of grace. The other is that despicable, ostracized tax collector, rejected by all. Who can but conclude that, all dross aside, the tax collector is *me* (Luke 18.9-14)?

Grieve and mourn because the real “you” is still so sinful, so wretched, so aware of deserving not a crown but a pauper’s burial!

“Comfort”

Paradoxically, it is those who mourn in this manner who will receive real comfort from the Father of compassion, the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1: 3). It is only those who are characterized by this heartfelt mourning to whom God calls out, “Comfort, comfort my people.” It is only to those that the LORD speaks tenderly (Isaiah 40: 1, 2). It is only to those who mourn that the Lord’s anointed will be revealed and extend the glory of his comfort. Recall Isaiah 61: 1, 2, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.”

Who are those that receive the comfort of the Anointed One? We know it all too well! It is those begin by seeing themselves as they really are before the sight of an all-seeing, all-knowing, thrice holy God! Those who know themselves to be totally devoid of anything save the grace, compassion, mercy and loving-kindness of their God. Those who cry, “Nothing, absolutely nothing in my hands I bring,” only, totally, in a deathlike grip, to that cross I cling!

Being a part of this conference if the light of this beatitude

My call to you as esteemed brothers, colleagues, fellow delegates to this conference is to approach, to hear, to speak, to judge and act in this conference as those who continue to mourn and grieve over your own sinfulness, stubbornness, bias and spiritual myopia! The splinter in the eyes of another, so plain, offensive and irritating as it may be to you, needs to be discussed and dealt with in the light of the grievous, death-deserving plank that infests your own! In the language of the second beatitude, it is only as a mourner that you can express, experience and effectively put to work the comfort that you yourself receive in Christ!

Let me apply this in two ways.

1. I think first of all of our relationship to one another as members or prospective members of the ICRC.

Ours is a wonderful heritage in that confessionally and experientially we strive to be the true heirs of the Calvinistic reformation. The Bible alone. Christ alone. Salvation by faith alone, received by grace alone. Live and hope in the light of the sovereignty of a covenanting God who, before the foundation of the world, unconditionally chose us in Christ to be holy. We breathe and live firmly in the tradition of the continental and British Reformed and Presbyterian Confessions and Catechisms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

But that heritage, linked with our particular historical and cultural traditions, forever entices and attempts to seduce us. It so easily makes us Pharisaic, proud, content and as a result contentious, self-righteous and divisive. History, even very recent history in some of our circles, continues to demonstrate and prove this over and over again. That danger is surely present every time we speak together, look at others and compare them with what we think they should be but, as will become apparent, aren't! That danger will make us judgmental in an unbiblical sense and undermine the very things that brought us together as an ecumenical organisation in the first place.

How to address this? Hear and heed this beatitude. In other words, listen to each other as those who mourn, those who are continually in need of and graciously receiving heavenly comfort in and through Christ as Saviour. Let us hear each other in the light of our own struggles, shortcomings and sinfulness! Let us bear with each other as those who know what it is to experience grief, to mourn over our own sinfulness before the face of God. Strive to reach out to each other as one comfort seeking and receiving mourner to another. Surely that is the way that the Lord of this church, the Lord of all churches, commands us to go.

2. I think in the second place of our relationship with and responsibility to the world in which we are called to be salt and light.

I am utterly convinced that each of us is deeply offended by what we see and experience whenever we venture out into this world. The world is a terrible place. It is in the grip of corruption, depravity, immorality, spiritual arrogance, and a thousand other wicked powers. Wherever we look, there is darkness. Whenever we venture out of the relative safety of our homes or from behind our denominational walls, we see the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil exerting and extending their life and soul destroying power.

And what do we do? I would suggest that unless and until we look at all of this as those who mourn, who genuinely weep and gnash our teeth about

the power of sin, we will do nothing that really matters. I would suggest that unless and until we stop shedding what amount to crocodile tears, we will be all talk, the clucking of concerned hens, but no more! I would suggest that unless we mourn in the same way as we have learned to mourn over our own sins and what they still do to us, we will not be moved to make the sacrifices, to go out into this world. I put it to you that unless we mourn, really mourn over what we see around us, the remedies, the comfort we propose to bring, will be hollow and hypocritical. I put it to you that the blessedness, the heartfelt happiness of knowing that God is for us and for this world will only be extended to us as we mourn and as mourners we reach out into the world.

Concluding comments

O how blessed, how approved by God, how approving to God will we as Christ's disciples be if we mourn. For only those who mourn will be comforted and able to proclaim and share in that real comfort that has come into this world from God through Jesus Christ his son, our Lord.

* * *

Report of the Corresponding Secretary

Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen

Esteemed Delegates and Members,

Reviewing the four years that have passed since the last Conference, held in October 2005, in Pretoria, South Africa, we can only stand amazed at God's grace and mercy. According to His eternal decree, the Almighty God and heavenly Father continues to gather His Church from the ends of the earth, in spite of opposition, persecution and struggles in a number of places. Satan strives to destroy the work of the Lord here on earth but we know he will not succeed. But in all this we can only say with the Psalmist: *"Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness."* (Ps. 115:1)

We also express our gratitude to the Lord that He allowed our plans, to hold this Conference at this time and this place, to be realized. Much preparatory work has taken place, especially by the hosting member, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and many had to travel from far and near. Here we are once again, by God's grace, to experience some of the unity, peace and fellowship we may have in Jesus Christ!

During these four years that expired since our last Conference in Pretoria, S.A. in 2005, all members of the Interim Committee could continue to fulfil the tasks of their positions. They may have been quiet years for you as members, as far as ICRC activities were concerned, but certainly not for undersigned as being the Corresponding Secretary. The Constitution describes my task between the meetings of the Conference as, among other things:

- i. attend to all correspondence;*
- ii. receive all reports from committees of the Conference and distribute them to the member Churches;*
- iii. assist the convening Church;*
- iv. publish materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference;*
- v. report to the next meeting of the Conference on his activities and in the interim be responsible to the Interim Committee.*

It is the latter assigned task that causes me to stand before you at this time to give my report as Corresponding Secretary.

Interim Committee

The Interim Committee's Chairman is Rev. Bort de Graaf (The Netherlands), Vice-Chairman Rev. Bruce Hoyt (New Zealand), Treasurer br. Henk A. Berends (USA), Recording Secretary Rev. Dr Peter J. Naylor (Wales), liaison from the Missions Committee, Rev. John Goris (New Zealand) and Corresponding Secretary Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen (Canada).

In between the Conferences most of the work is being done by the Corresponding Secretary, such as correspondence, preparing the agenda, keeping the website updated etc.

In matters that are not routine or that require some judgment he will consult with the fellow members of the Interim Committee.

The Interim Committee met once in between the Conferences, namely on June 12, 2007, in Dyer, IN, USA, in the beautiful facilities of the Mid America Reformed Seminary.

This meeting was scheduled in order to make the necessary arrangements for this Conference, held here in New Zealand. Consulting the suggestions made at the previous Conference, topics and speakers and a provisional agenda were decided upon. Other practical arrangements to be taken care of by the hosting Church received full attention.

Correspondence

Taking care of the correspondence requires regular attention, considering that there were approximately 400 incoming items and 200 outgoing. The website has contributed to an increased flow of correspondence, mostly via email, dealing with a great variety of matters. There are the regular inquiries about the ICRC, membership requirements, information about Churches in different countries; others provide us with reports and information about the various works of ministry and charity being conducted in many different countries, and frequently accompanied by requests for assistance, either with financial resources or manpower for teaching and preaching. Then, especially approaching another Conference, there are numerous requests from individuals or organizations desiring to attend, often in the hope that the costs will be taken care of by the ICRC.

We aim to respond to most of these communications in an appropriate manner.

We also want to express our appreciation to those members who make a point of sending us their minutes, directories or magazines.

With gratitude we note how the Lord is working in numerous places throughout the world and also experience that there is a growing interest in the reformed faith and a desire to have fellowship with others of the same faith.

Membership Applications

With gratefulness we could list eight Churches applying for membership in the ICRC. They are: the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Kenya, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi, the Heritage Reformed Congregations, the Independent Reformed Church of Korea, the Nongu u Kristu U ken Sudan hen Tiv, the Reformed Churches of Brazil, the Reformed Church of South Africa (Soutpansberg) and the Reformed Presbyterian church of India.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, not all of these applications have complete documentation to meet the requirements for membership. Nevertheless, we rejoice that they seek affiliation and unity with this assembly of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches.

It is the hope and prayer of the Interim Committee that the pending application for membership of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) can also be favourably concluded at this Conference.

Speakers

We are thankful that the speakers accepted our invitation to deliver a presentation at our assembly and that the Lord brought them safely in our midst. All presentations were received before the Conference and could be distributed to the delegates. The theme chosen for this Conference is *“The Vitality of the Reformed Faith”*, facing the challenges of the Charismatic Movement, Individualism in Church life, Islam and these challenges in the specific Asia-Pacific context. May it assist us in facing these challenges as we are confronted with them in our own particular circumstances.

Hosting Church

It has been a pleasure to work together with the hosting Church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and in particular with the members of the ICRC 2009 Host Committee.

We enjoyed good cooperation and regular communication and are confident that we are in good hands for the Conference!

Website

The website is functioning well, under the capable hands of our webmaster. All materials posted must pass the desk of the Corresponding Secretary. We aim to have all information on our site as up-to-date as possible providing you, amongst other things, with the addresses and contacts of all the members. However, we can only be as up-to-date as you allow us to be, by promptly submitting updates or changes.

Missions Committee

Being an “Ex Officio” member of the Missions Committee, I also have the privilege of staying involved in and informed of its activities. One meeting was held on April 22 – 25, 2008, at Cobham, Surrey, United Kingdom. We may refer you to the report of the Missions Committee for further information. It is good to note that another survey could be published, the “2009 Mission Field Survey” as well as a “Protocol for Responding to Major Disasters” and a “Protocol for Implementing Mandate Task 5” (Assistance to persecuted Christians).

The Missions Committee also seeks to encourage that Regional (Missions) Conferences are held on the various continents, with increasing results.

Theological Training Commissioner

The 2005 Advisory Committee 9 on “Theological Education” recommended that the Conference assemble and distribute information on existing theological education programs and institutions of all member Churches, and information on needs in this area.

The Interim Committee requested me to collate this information. Several requests have gone out to the members but the response was so meagre that a compilation of this information would give such an incomplete picture of what is available among the members, or what the needs are, that I did not further pursue it as at this date. We do thank those Churches who did provide us with information. However, obtaining a good, broad response from the members when information of various kinds is required, continues to be problematic.

The Last Days

Time and again we are reminded that we live in the last days before Christ's glorious return. His and our arch enemy, the devil, also knows this. Many are his assaults on the people of the Lord. We hear of, and many of us experience, unrest, oppression, persecution, discrimination and lack of freedom. Many are the Lord's warnings of the coming judgment and calls to repentance as we witness earthquakes, floods, droughts, epidemics. We remember those who are effected by these disasters All is foretold as the Lord speeds on to the end, *"but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* (Mat. 24 : 13,14).

"The spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come'. He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'"(Rev. 22: 17, 20)

May the Lord grant His blessing on this international meeting of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches so that we, by standing firm, may promote the coming of the Kingdom! Shalom, peace be with you!

* * *

Financial Report

Esteemed Members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches,

It is my privilege and pleasure to present to you a report on the financial matters as they pertain to the ICRC, especially about the period January 1 2006 to December 31 2009.

These Financial Statements have been audited along with the 2002 to 2005 statements.

The mandate received according to Article 9 of the Regulations for the treasurer is as follows:

1. to assess the membership annually according to the established method:
 - i. The established method as noted in the Proceedings of the 1989 Conference is described as “to request each member Church to submit to the treasurer the number of baptized members as well as the estimated average per capita income of its members”.
2. to collect the funds in equal instalments;
3. to reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference;
4. to provide the Missions Committee with the budgeted amount as required;
5. to submit a financial report to the next Conference;
6. to draw up a budget with the assistance of the Interim Committee for the following Conference.

The Conference in 2005 adopted a budget for a total of \$135,000.00 (USD). For the most part this amount was received during the last four years. The exception was that some members are noticing that the general economic malaise also affects their income and consequently their disbursements. The present outstanding amount is about 10% of the assessments. However, we do expect to obtain most of the outstanding receivables in the near future.

From time to time there are questions raised as to what expenses are covered and not covered when a Conference takes place. For the information of the members the following policy is generally applied:

- A. ICRC pays for all food consumed by all, at the ICRC functions.
- B. ICRC pays accommodations for up to two representatives per Member Church.
- C. Observers pay their own way.
- D. Spouses pay their own way.
- E. All Churches requesting membership need to pay their own way.
- F. ICRC pays towards one delegate's travel costs of those Churches who are unable to pay themselves. If they find a sponsor for the second delegate's travel fees, something that appears to happen, ICRC pays the accommodations for the second delegate.
- G. ICRC pays the travel costs of the convener and participants in their Mission Committee Meetings. ICRC does not cover the costs of Mission Committee members attending the Conference Meetings. These costs are generally born by the member churches as part of their delegation to the Conference. ICRC also participates in covering some of the costs of the Regional Meetings. This needs to be arranged with the organizers of such meetings and the Convener of the Mission Committee.
- H. The costs of the Interim meeting, which is generally held once during the four years is also covered by the ICRC.
- I. ICRC also pays for the expense of the Speakers and provides them with a nominal honorarium, which is of such nature that the ox is not muzzled but on our account he could not become obese.

As far as the financial statements are concerned we present the final Income Statement and Balance sheet for the years 2001 to 2005. While the statement issued in 2005 anticipated a \$6,500.00 loss, the documents this year indicate there was a \$ 6000 surplus, This beneficial change occurred mainly through the very effective and prudent handling of the Pretoria organizers of the 2005 Conference.

The Statement for the 2006-2009 years is stated as at July 31, 2009. We also present an estimated Income Statement to December 31 2009. This report shows that there are ample funds available to cover the 2006-2009 financial needs.

We are also very appreciative of all the Member Churches who faithfully remit the assessments. Most of the funds came in at the right time and we appreciate their treasurers' activities in this regard.

In closing we are grateful to the Lord above all who has provided everything we needed and gave us all the resources in order to be able to do the task at hand. May His name be praised and glorified through all the activities of the Conference.

Respectfully submitted

Henk A. Berends, Treasurer
October 22, 2009

Income Statement

Four years from January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2009

Note: all figures are in US Dollars

	Budget	2009 Projected actual
	\$	\$
Receipts		
Assessments received	135,000.00	134,706.74
Interest received	.	399.14
Total income to date	<u>135,000.00</u>	<u>135,105.88</u>
Expenditure		
Accommodation, provisions	50,000.00	55,669.65
Administration	5,000.00	3,400.00
Bank charges	-	204.83
Speakers' honorariums and travel	2,000.00	2,000.00
Interim committee expenses	11,000.00	13,101.53
Mailings, Postage	1,000.00	1,853.92
Miscellaneous	2,000.00	1,000.00
Miscellaneous conference expenses	-	2,000.00
Mission meetings	36,000.00	34,449.22
Newsletters	4,000.00	500.00
Proceedings, publishing	5,000.00	3,000.00
Travel assistance	13,500.00	13,395.99
Travel costs various	5,000.00	5,049.58
Web maintenance	500.00	1,013.37
Total	<u>135,000.00</u>	<u>136,638.09</u>
Total Receipts over Expenditure		<u>(1,532.21)</u>

Balance Sheet

Projected at December 31, 2009

	<i>2009</i> <i>Projected</i> \$	<i>2005</i> <i>actual</i> \$
Assets		
Accounts receivable	28,317.44	19,952.78
Cash in bank	<u>32,168.02</u>	<u>18,363.74</u>
Total assets	<u>60,485.46</u>	<u>38,316.52</u>
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	28,850.00	5,861.06
Loss	1,532.21	-
Equity	<u>30,103.25</u>	<u>32,455.46</u>
Liability and equity	<u>60,485.46</u>	<u>38,316.52</u>

Income Statement
4 years ended December 31, 2005

	<i>Budget</i>	<i>2009 Projected actual</i>
	\$	\$
Receipts		
Assessments received	120,000.00	119,758.05
Donation received	-	460.56
Interest received	-	580.82
Total income to date	<u>120,000.00</u>	<u>120,799.43</u>
Expenditure		
Hotel accommodation	30,000.00	15,040.83
Provisions, refreshments	20,000.00	21,508.43
Administration	3,000.00	3,808.52
Speakers' honorariums	2,000.00	1,400.00
Speakers' travel expenses	4,000.00	3,000.00
Interim committee expenses	2,500.00	4,850.53
Mailings, Postage	3,500.00	975.32
Miscellaneous	2,000.00	212.08
Mission meetings	29,000.00	40,683.97
Newsletters	3,000.00	1,500.00
Proceedings, publishing	5,000.00	3,336.32
Travel assistance	12,000.00	10,140.59
Travel costs various	4,000.00	6,921.82
Web maintenance	-	677.55
Total	<u>120,000.00</u>	<u>114,055.96</u>
Total Receipts over Expenditure		<u>6,743.47</u>

Proposed Budget 2009-2013

	<i>2009</i> <i>Budget</i> \$	<i>2009</i> <i>Actual</i> \$	<i>2013</i> <i>Budget</i> \$
Accommodation, provisions	50,000.00	55,669.65	55,000.00
Administration costs	5,000.00	3,400.00	3,500.00
Bank charges		204.83	1,000.00
Speakers' honorariums, travel	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
Interim committee expenses	11,000.00	13,101.53	10,000.00
Mailings, postage	1,000.00	1,853.92	2,000.00
Miscellaneous	2,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Misc. conference expenses	-	2,000.00	1,500.00
Mission meetings	36,000.00	34,449.22	40,000.00
Mission Newsletter	4,000.00	500.00	2,000.00
Proceedings, publishing	5,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
Travel assistance	13,500.00	13,395.99	13,000.00
Travel costs various	5,000.00	5,049.58	5,000.00
Web design and maintenance	<u>500.00</u>	<u>1,013.37</u>	<u>1,000.00</u>
Total	<u>135,000.00</u>	<u>136,638.09</u>	<u>140,000.00</u>

Basis for Assessments 2009-2013							
<i>Member</i>	<i>Number of members</i>	<i>Per capita income</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Total budget</i>	<i>Cost p.a.</i>	<i>Cost per member</i>	<i>Cost per member p.a.</i>
		\$	%	\$	\$	\$	\$
ARPC	42,000	45,800	9.57	13,393.21	3,348.30	0.319	0.080
CanRC	16,843	38,600	3.23	4,526.65	1,131.66	0.269	0.067
CRCI	1,400	1,800	0.01	17.55	4.39	0.013	0.003
CRCN	74,663	39,000	14.48	20,274.02	5,068.50	0.272	0.068
CRCC	13,500	300	0.02	28.20	7.05	0.002	0.001
EPCEW	385	35,000	0.07	93.82	23.46	0.244	0.061
EPCI	850	35,000	0.15	207.14	51.78	0.244	0.061
FCC	3,000	35,000	0.52	731.07	182.77	0.244	0.061
FCS	10,000	35,000	1.74	2,436.90	609.23	0.244	0.061
FCSA	2,100	2,675	0.03	39.11	9.78	0.019	0.005
FRCNA	4,461	40,044	0.89	1,243.77	310.94	0.279	0.070
FRCSA	1,783	9,700	0.09	120.42	30.10	0.068	0.017
HRC	2,000	45,800	0.46	637.77	159.44	0.319	0.080
IRCK	600	25,000	0.07	104.44	26.11	0.174	0.044
OPC	28,799	45,800	6.56	9,183.59	2,295.90	0.319	0.080
PCEA	750	37,300	0.14	194.78	48.69	0.260	0.065
PCKK	250,000	20,000	24.87	34,812.86	8,703.22	0.139	0.035
PFCCI	300	1,300	0.00	2.72	0.68	0.009	0.002
RCB	400	10,300	0.02	28.69	7.17	0.072	0.018
RCI	4,500	1,800	0.04	56.40	14.10	0.013	0.003
RCN	124,710	39,000	24.19	33,863.80	8,465.95	0.272	0.068
RCNZ	3,308	27,200	0.45	626.48	156.62	0.189	0.047
RCSA	100,829	8,700	4.36	6,107.65	1,526.91	0.061	0.015
RCS	310	33,600	0.05	72.52	18.13	0.234	0.058
RCUS	3,857	45,800	0.88	1,229.94	307.49	0.319	0.080
RPCI	3,000	35,000	0.52	731.07	182.77	0.244	0.061
RPCInd	3,000	1,300	0.02	27.15	6.79	0.009	0.002
RPCNA	6,641	45,800	1.51	2,117.72	529.43	0.319	0.080
RPCNEI	14,000	1,300	0.09	126.72	31.68	0.009	0.002
URCNA	22,919	43,640	4.97	6,963.86	1,740.97	0.304	0.076
Totals	740,908	-	100	140,000.00	35,000.00		

Report of the Missions Committee for the 2009 assembly of the ICRC

1. Introduction

Theology must lead to doxology, and doxology must lead to missions, which in turn leads to doxology. That is the message of that wonderful missions psalm, Psalm 67. *“Let all the peoples praise Thee!”*

The Missions Committee has been very conscious of the importance of its task to assist the member churches in promoting the gospel. We have attempted to fulfil our mandate to the best of our ability, but it was not an easy task. Not only are we dependent on the Lord in serving Him, but we also depend on the member churches in assisting us to carry out our mandate for the benefit of all. Proper co-operation would give us better results.

2. Report

2.1 *The MC and its activities*

The Pretoria Conference in 2005 appointed/re-appointed the following persons to the MC: Rev. J. Goris (convener); Rev. Dr L. J. Joosse and Mr Calum Ferguson, representing the European region, Rev. Pascal Ngoy Nsenga and Prof. Dr T. Derrick Mashau, representing the African region, Rev. Yonson Dethan and Rev. Dr Paul G. H. Bae, representing the Asia/Australasia region, Rev. R. Sikkema, Rev. Ken Herfst and Mr Mark Bube, representing the American region (NA & LA). Rev. Dr L. J. Joosse was re-appointed by the MC to be its secretary. Rev. C. van Spronsen continued to serve on the MC as a member of the Interim Committee, and Rev. J. Goris as convener of the MC was appointed to serve as liaison on the Interim Committee. Mr Calum Ferguson's place was taken over by Rev. D. Miller, who had already served on the MC during the previous term.

As recommended by the 2005 assembly, the MC met only once during the interim period, and briefly after the conclusion of the Pretoria conference. It is also planned that the MC will meet again briefly prior to the ICRC conference in Christchurch in 2009, DV.

Although two of the appointed MC members were absent from the meeting in April 2008, the MC did benefit from the better regional representation

suggested at Pretoria. It was also noted that in 2009, two of the current MC members will be due to retire, having served the maximum period of 12 years. The April 2008 meeting of the MC recommended that these two brothers be appointed as advisors, a role that was already hinted at during the 2005 conference (Art. 68, sub. 4a, vi, p.41).

At some stage during the MC gathering in London the meeting was addressed by Mr Mike Moore of Christian Witness to Israel. Israel's place in God's plan of salvation should not be forgotten by the Church, and the ICRC has from the start taken this into account. Mr Moore's contribution was an important reminder for the mission of the Church, also in the ICRC context. Although the updated version of the mandate did not single out this fact, reference was made in the body of the 2005 report (p.121) that also Jewish people need to acknowledge Messiah Jesus. As well as the Free Church of Scotland, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are also paying practical attention to mission work among the Jews.

The April 2008 meeting of the MC was profitable, even though it was held in the latter half of the inter-conference period. In future it would be better to meet no later than one year after the plenary assembly so as to give ample thought and time to the assignment handed to the MC.

In the absence of the MC secretary, the meeting requested brothers Mark Bube and Ray Sikkema to keep a record of the minutes. Special thanks to Mark Bube for his thorough presentation of the MC discussions and decisions.

2.2 Regional (mission) Conferences

Although not directly organised by the MC, regional (mission) conferences should be encouraged by the MC. Helpful suggestions and information may be provided to the organising churches in the different regions.

The most noteworthy point during the period between the 2005 and 2009 ICRC assemblies has been the blossoming of regional conferences in

Europe

In March 2007 the first large scale regional was held with numerous representatives from all over Europe, e.g. Austria, Belarus, England, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, Ukraine. The enthusiasm of the gathering prompted plans for another Euro-regional for November 2008. The topics of the first regional included, "*The Unity of the Church in a*

European context”, and “*European Islam: Threat and Challenge*”. There was a panel discussion on “Being Reformed in a uniting Europe”, besides a number of workshops on missions. Future plans included a European Evangelism Conference focusing especially on urban mission in Europe, as well as Celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Calvin’s birth and the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt.

The second Euro-regional was held in November 2008, and the attendance was again most pleasing: over 70 delegates. Whilst the first Euro-regional was aimed at getting to know each other from all across Europe in the common bond of the Reformed faith, the second one began to explore how the various churches could work together. The conference looked at the missionary thinking of John Calvin, and considered the practical implications in present-day Europe, notably “creative urban evangelism”. There was also a helpful exchange of ideas on current theological training. This conference decided that the European regionals should be held every two years. The next regional conference is due to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2010, DV.

The second *African* conference was held in Kenya, also in November 2008. Dr Ben van der Lugt spoke on “The Bible and hermeneutics”, and discussion centred on the African context. Dr Caleb Kim presented a talk on “The Bible and the Qur’an”, a relevant topic in the face of the fast-growing Islamization of Africa. A third lecture was given by Dr Derrick Mashau on the subject of “The Bible and Justice”, and the way this can be implemented in the African context.

The third *Asia-Pacific* regional conference took place in January 2008. Some two dozen delegates came together in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They discussed “Aspects of Ministry in Asia”. Three papers were presented: (1) Equipping for Ministry; (2) Exercising Ministry and (3) Extending Ministry. The delegates heard about creative access to “closed” places where practically all doors may be shut. Some amazing opportunities were yet present. However, not *every* available means was biblically appropriate. Discussion times were very profitable and all delegates shared about the work they represented, and spent time in prayer for each other and with each other.

Reports of the regional conferences are more extensively presented in the various Newsletters.

On the whole the regionals proved very helpful and provided great stimulation and bonding in the service of Christ the King. It was regretted

that the North and Latin *American* continents could not see their way clear to organise conferences in their regions.

2.3 Newsletter

By the time that the 2009 conference will be held, DV, some five newsletters will have been published. Many of those on our mailing list do now receive their Newsletter by email. This has been a fast and less costly procedure. It also comes in colour, when colour pictures of events etc are available. The printed issue which is sent by airmail does not appear in colour.

General lack of information passed on to the Editor resulted in fewer publications. We have mainly reported on regional conferences, and had one issue on Urban Missions. Few member churches faithfully forwarded mission news, sending their magazines to the Editor. Most churches do not send any information nor mission publications.

We would urge the member churches to share their concerns or joys in the area of missions. Admittedly we have not made much use of advertising opportunities for missionary service. First of all, no such requests came in, and secondly, the wisdom of putting this on display is sometimes questioned. It is better through the use of the survey booklet to share areas of service and work alongside those in areas where specifically qualified people can join an existing work.

2.4 The World Reformed Fellowship (WRF)

In July 2007 the Interim Committee referred the matter of the WRF to the Missions Committee and recommended that an observer be sent to investigate the value of the Missions committee “perhaps becoming a member for the sake of missions information”.

At the April 2008 meeting of the MC, brothers Yonson Dethan and Leendert Joesse were delegated to attend the Board meeting of the WRF in Jakarta in March 2009. Due to synodical commitments at that time, brother Joesse was unable to go. The alternates, brothers Paul Bae and John Goris, were approached. Both of them were not in a position to make the trip to Jakarta either, nor was Dr Derrick Mashau, who although willing and ready to step in, was detained because of a family funeral commitment. Brother Dethan, however, attended, and his presence on behalf of the MC was much appreciated by the Board of the WRF.

The WRF kindly asked the ICRC, to send one or more official delegates, possibly from its MC, to bring fraternal greetings to its General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland, in April 2010, DV. This would also open the door to recommendations as to how we could best engage in further practical contact within the area of missions.

Further the WRF stated that appropriate members of the ICRC would be welcome at their regional conferences and assemblies. They would also appreciate the opportunity to attend conferences and regional gatherings of the ICRC which are open to the public.

WRF also wishes to explore whatever other possible areas of co-operation between WRF and ICRC could be pursued. The 2009 ICRC conference may wish to single out such areas.

2.5 Other mandated matters

The MC had been requested at Pretoria 2005 to present a responsible way of assistance to persecuted Christians, and also how best to respond to major disasters. Mr Mark Bube prepared the respective protocols for these tasks to the MC and presented them for discussion. Both were accepted with much appreciation for the work done by our brother. The two protocols will be attached to this report. Brother Mark Bube was appointed as the designated MC representative.

The updated version of the Survey booklet is again being prepared by Mr Mark Bube. It is not always easy to get access to the right mission person in the member churches. Contact addresses (including e-mail addresses) do change and are not always reported.

The gathering of the relevant documents from member churches regarding their mission vision, policies, programs or projects, etc has not been a successful undertaking. We shall need to look at this more closely as a conference: mandate, item ii. The MC meeting in April 2008 made a proposal in this regard. It is found in the "proposed mandate", item 3. See Appendix 1.

3. Proposals

3.1 The Missions Committee

As far as we know all appointed members of the MC wish to continue to serve on the committee. Two members, however, are due to retire. They are brothers Mark Bube and John Goris. They have completed their 12 year

term. The other members of the MC considered it might be helpful to retain the services of these brothers as advisors.

3.2 Mandate additions/alterations

A newly-formulated mandate is attached in Appendix 1.

3.3 Financial matters

Recommendation 1

“That the ICRC approve a 2009-2013 budget for the Missions Committee of \$13,375 USD per annum.”

<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Assistance to regional conferences	\$
(Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe @ \$4,000)	12,000
Committee meetings (3 meetings @ \$12,000)	36,000
Travel (observers to WRF 2010)	3,000
Newsletter	2,000
Survey booklet	500
Total budget	<u>53,500</u>

The expenditure of the MC will be included in the financial statements of the Treasurer.

The proposed MC meeting cycle:

If the new item 3 is added to the mandate, the suggested meetings of the MC would be as follows:

- The year that the ICRC meets
- First year after: MC meeting #1
- Second year after: World Missions Agency (WMA): representatives & MC
- Third year after: MC meeting #2
- Fourth year after: next ICRC meeting

Three appendices are attached to this report.

This report was compiled by the convener, who acknowledges gratefully the help of other MC members. (John Goris)

Supplementary Report of the Missions Committee to the ICRC 2009

This supplemental report is to update the conference with respect to matters pertaining to contact with the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).

In 2005 the Conference adopted the following:

(a) We recommend that the Interim Committee should make contact with the WRF to investigate the desirability and possibility of cooperation in Mission.

(b-amended) We recommend that the Interim Committee make contact with the WRF. (*Proceedings of the ICRC*, October 12–19, 2005, Article 68.1, page 40)

The Interim Committee met in June 2007, and shortly thereafter communicated the following to the Missions Committee regarding Article 68.1:

The Interim Committee discussed this matter and recommends that the Missions Committee send an observer to the WRF to investigate the value of the Missions Committee perhaps becoming a member for the sake of missions information. This was recommended since the focus appears to be on missions, also in our own previous recommendation to investigate the desirability and possibility of cooperation in mission.

The Missions Committee can then come with a more informed recommendation whether to proceed in this direction or not.”

In its meeting in April 2008, the Missions Committee adopted the following:

32. WRF MATTERS (continued). Noting that the next General Assembly of the WRF is not scheduled until March 2010, it was agreed, in response to the request of the Interim Committee, to send two observers, if possible, to the next annual meeting of the WRF Board of Directors in Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 24-26, 2009. Messrs. Dethan and Joosse (with Messrs. Goris and Bae

as alternates) were appointed. The secretary was requested to write to the WRF on behalf of the MC to enquire about the possibility of our two observers meeting with the WRF Board of Directors to learn how the WRF might envision a relationship with the ICRC and/or its MC.

In God's providence, only Mr. Dethan was able to attend the meeting of the WRF Board of Directors in Jakarta in March 2009, following which he received a letter from the International Director:

April 03, 2009

TO: The Rev. Yonson G. Dethan

FOR: The Missions Committee of the ICRC

FROM: Dr. Samuel Logan

On Behalf of: The Board of Directors of the WRF

Mr. Dethan -

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the World Reformed Fellowship, I would like to thank you again for participating in the meeting of our Board in Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 25, 2009. It was a delight and a joy to have you with us.

I am writing to ask that you convey to the Missions Committee of the ICRC the strong and enthusiastic hope of the WRF that we might find ways in which our two organizations can work together. We believe that such cooperation could help both organizations achieve their purposes and, even more important, such cooperation would, in itself, be a testimony to the fact that we see ourselves united in the service of Jesus Christ from a solidly Reformed perspective.

I have attached to this e-mail a section from the Minutes of our Jakarta Board meeting. You will see there the clear statement of our Board with regard to this matter.

Specifically, we would like the ICRC, perhaps through its Missions Committee, to send official representatives to the WRF General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland, in April of 2010. I have also attached to this e-mail a brief overview of the program for that General Assembly. Obviously, if the ICRC were able to send representatives to our General Assembly, we would be eager to discuss what might be the best way to have one

of those representatives to bring Fraternal Greetings to the Assembly.

In addition, the WRF regularly holds regional conferences and assemblies and we would be eager to make the information about those meetings available to all of the appropriate members of the ICRC so that they could attend if they desired to do so. Likewise, we would be eager to make WRF members aware of conferences and assemblies which are sponsored by the ICRC and open to the public. We would be delighted to post any information about such ICRC meetings on the WRF website.

There are probably other ways in which the ICRC and the WRF might cooperate and we are eager to explore any such possibilities with you.

Finally, I have attached to this e-mail a copy of the most recent membership list of the WRF. This might give you and the ICRC Missions Committee a sense of how and where our cooperative efforts might be most productive.

We have great love and respect for the ICRC and many of us in the WRF are already involved in your ministry through our own denominations. My own ordination, for example, is in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Therefore, we are especially thankful to have this opportunity to explore with you the possibility of further direct links between the ICRC and the WRF.

Thank you again.

Sam Logan

Dr. Samuel Logan

International Director

The World Reformed Fellowship

430 Montier Road

Glenside, PA 19038 USA

E-mail: samueltlogan@aol.com

Website: www.wrfnet.org

In its meeting on October 15, 2009, the Missions Committee—believing that further exploration of possible ways in which the Missions Committee of the ICRC and the appropriate (missions) committee of the WRF could eventually cooperate with one another would best be accomplished by meeting with the WRF brothers face-to-face—adopted the following:

6. REPORT ON WRF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING. Mr. Dethan reported on his time as the MC's observer to the meeting of the WRF Board of Directors in Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 24–26, 2009. Discussion ensued. It was agreed that the Missions Committee appoint three representatives to meet (at a mutually agreeable date and venue) with a similar number of representatives of the appropriate (missions) committee of the WRF to explore possible ways in which the two committees could eventually cooperate with one another to advance the Reformed witness around the world. It was further agreed to inform the ICRC that the Missions Committee has received the following invitation from the International Director of the WRF—

Specifically, we would like the ICRC, perhaps through its Missions Committee, to send official representatives to the WRF General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland, in April of 2010. I have also attached to this e-mail a brief overview of the program for that General Assembly. Obviously, if the ICRC were able to send representatives to our General Assembly, we would be eager to discuss what might be the best way to have one of those representatives to bring Fraternal Greetings to the Assembly (*Letter, by email dated April 3, 2009, from Dr. Samuel Logan to the Rev. Yonson Dethan*).

—but that the Missions Committee does not believe it is authorized to send such by its current mandate.

The sending of “official representatives” to bring “Fraternal Greetings”—a privilege usually reserved for churches who already have some sort of formal ecclesiastical relationship—seemed to us to be a decision that should be made by the ICRC itself, and not by a committee whose powers are otherwise delimited by its mandate.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark T. Bube
Secretary, *pro tem*

October 19, 2009

Section IV

Conference Papers

Each conference paper is followed by a Summary of the discussion of the paper by the workshop on the subject.



Conference Speakers

Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko, Rev. Dr George Knight III, Rev. Frank van Dalen,
Rev. Dr Nelson D. Kloosterman.

The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Charismatic Movement

Rev. Dr George W. Knight III

Synopsis

The paper opens with a description of the challenge we face and of the specific differences between the two groups. It analyzes the appeal of the Charismatics to four episodes in Acts (2:1-41; 8:14-25; 10 through 11:18; and 19:1-7) and presents our understanding of those accounts. It then relates our understanding of “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” and the significance of “filling” and “fullness of the Holy Spirit” in Acts. Heeding Paul’s word in Ephesians 5:18 (“be filled with the Spirit”) and correlating the “filling” teaching from Luke and Acts, we encourage that teaching.

We consider the meaning of “prophecy” and its related terms in the New Testament (“prophet” and “prophesy”). We then proceed to deduce that the extraordinary gifts cease, considering the cessation of “the apostles and prophets” and their ministry of being “the foundation” “of the household of God” from Acts 2:19-20. We next consider the cessation of “signs, wonders and miracles,” and the waning in the New Testament of “speaking in tongues” and “the gift of healing.” This leads us to the deduction that when the “foundation of the apostles and prophets” is laid, not only do they and their ministry cease, but the extraordinary gifts given as “signs” also have ceased.

We conclude with a statement about the spiritual benefit of the study, also how we should evaluate and interact with Charismatics, and finally a summary of the theme and content of the paper.

The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Charismatic Movement

George W. Knight III

The Specific Challenge of the Charismatics, and the Differences between the Reformed and Charismatics

As Reformed believers seek to face the challenge of the Charismatic movement, we must first of all identify that challenge with which we are facing and the movement with which we are dealing and the specific differences between that movement and the Reformed Faith. The challenge we face is the assertion of the Charismatics that they have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, with the implication implied, if not asserted, that we might think that we have sound doctrine, but what is that compared to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Charismatics hold that the extraordinary spiritual gifts of the Spirit continue (regarded as extraordinary by the 16th century reformers), and that they should be sought and utilized by Christians today.¹ Thus they do not hold that these special gifts have ceased, as do the Reformed², but rather continue.

The Sources of the Charismatics with which we are dealing

Among the Charismatics there are various differences among them on various points, but on the continuation of the special gifts they are virtually identical. As we consider them in this paper, we will recognize that the book *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: Four Views* categorizes them into at least four groupings: Pentecostals, Charismatics, Third Wave, and a newer category called “open but cautious.” The editor (Grudem) puts himself in the last category, but has proposed a new way to understand

¹ W. Grudem (ed.), *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, and Leicester: IVP, 1996), 11-15. Of the four writers for this book, three hold that the miraculous gifts continue, and one does not.

² Cf. the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, I.1, “... to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.” For a fine study of this statement see the doctoral dissertation of G.H. Milne, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Cessation of Special Revelation: The Majority Puritan Viewpoint on Whether Extra-biblical Prophecy is Still Possible* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

New Testament prophecy that is not held by the representative of that category.³ This book published rather recently in both North America and Britain contains essays by competent proponents of each view⁴, and also an excellent interaction among the four writers. Furthermore, each writer summarizes in some detail, with biblical arguments adduced, the various views held by the group he represents. This work is the basic source for our study, with some attention also being paid to W. Grudem's view of New Testament prophecy.⁵

How should we analyze the four episodes in Acts?

(Acts 2: 1-41; 8: 14-25; 10: 1 – 11: 18; and 19: 1-7)

One of the most important differences between the Reformed, and the Pentecostals and some Charismatics, is the belief of the latter two that the Book of Acts is our guide for the special gifts and that the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as it appears in Acts, occurs as a special act subsequent to regeneration by the Spirit.⁶ Thus they cite Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41), the Apostles and the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-25), Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10 through 11:18) and Paul and the John's Disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). In these episodes they say those who were already regarded as disciples were then baptized by the Holy Spirit, and this they say is the model for Christians for today.

Pentecost [the Apostles] (Acts 2:1-41)

An examination of these passages shows, however, that each passage displays a specific reason for the timing of the baptism by the Holy Spirit that is recorded, and that reason is unique to each situation and therefore is

³ See the doctoral dissertation of W. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), and his more thorough, albeit popular, ongoing discussion and interaction with others over the entire New Testament, *The Gift of Prophecy In the New Testament and Today* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988).

⁴ A Cessationist View is represented by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., An Open but Cautious View by Robert L. Saucy, A Third Wave View by C. Samuel Storms, and A Pentecostal View and A Charismatic View are both represented in one article by Douglas A. Oss; they are rather fully identified on pages 14-15 of W. Grudem (ed.), *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

⁵ See, for his main works on the subject, footnote 3.

⁶ Grudem (ed.), *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 11; for a further clarification of these views see esp. 242 for the Pentecostals and 257 for the Charismatics, and also the pages between.

not intended to be a model for others.⁷ First, the Pentecost experience itself fulfils Jesus' words to his disciples that they would receive "the promise of the Father" in being "baptized with the Holy Spirit" and "will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you will be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:4,5 & 8). That power comes upon them not only in that "from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind" filled the house and the "divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them" but also in that "they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (2:2-4). This was the filling with the Holy Spirit and endowment with power that could come only from the ascended Jesus Christ, who was giving the promise of the Father, and his own promise, to his disciples. This was their experience because they had lived both before and after the resurrection and ascension and had become believers before the promise could be given. These spectacular phenomena of wind and fire are not, however, given again, and even the speaking in tongues seems not to have been as significant as when each person was able to hear them in his own language.

What did Peter, standing with the eleven, say to those who were listening? He gave them the Gospel and then said to them "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (2:38-39). Here Peter offered to the hearers that which the apostles had received in two stages (forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit) as one complete offer to be given and received simultaneously. It is this that is the model for today, not the unique experience of the apostles, and notice that the hearers were not asked to wait, as the apostles had been asked to do (Acts 1:4), nor did they, but responded immediately (2:41). Nor is it recorded that they received the spectacular signs that the apostles had received, nor that they spoke so that those in different languages could hear and understand. The passage goes on to say only that these believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer" (2:42). Only of the apostles does the Acts account say that "many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles" (2:43b).

⁷ I first learned (as a seminary student) of the significance of these passages and how they should function in the life of the church from N. B. Stonehouse, in his article "Repentance, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Spirit," in his publication of collected articles, *Paul Before the Areopagus And Other New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 70-87. This significance has grown with me as well as becoming commonplace to those dealing with this question.

The Apostles and the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-25)

The second account is found in the context of Acts 8:4-25. The account begins by recounting that “Phillip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ” (8:5). The response is given in these words: “And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Phillip when they heard him and saw ‘the signs’ that he did” (8:6, single quotes added to the word ‘signs’ for emphasis). The result is in verse 10: “But when they believed Phillip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

The apostles at Jerusalem heard “Samaria had received the word” but that the Holy Spirit “had not fallen on any of them, but that they had only been baptized in the name of Jesus,” so when they heard this “they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit” (8:14-16). “Then they laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit” (8:17).

This episode has its own uniqueness. The Samaritans become believers and were baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit until the hands of the apostles were laid on them. One may deduce from the text that this order of events was determined by the Lord for a similar reason as that in Cornelius’ case, when he and his household received the Holy Spirit first and then were baptized (see immediately below in Acts 10 and 11). In Cornelius’ case this was to convince the circumcised believers along with Peter and those back in Jerusalem that they should receive and welcome Gentiles as fellow believers. In this case it was to unite the Samaritans and Jews together as the Samaritans realized they were dependent upon the laying on of the hands of the Jewish apostles, and the Jews (represented by the apostles) recognized that they had to receive into one body with the one Holy Spirit their believing brothers, the Samaritans. Peter and John continued to testify and speak “the word of the Lord” to these believers in Samaria, and as “they returned to Jerusalem” it was accomplished by “preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans” (8:25).

Peter and Cornelius [the Gentiles] (Acts 10:1 – 11: 18)

The third Acts account is that found in chapters 10 and 11. There we read of Peter being persuaded by God that he should go and take the Gospel to Cornelius and his household at Caesarea. Cornelius was as “a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household ... and prayed continually to God” (10:1-2). Peter, after presenting the Gospel, concluded his remarks to Cornelius and those with

him with these words: “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (10:43). “While he was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speak in tongues and extolling God” (10:44-45). Here again, as in Acts 2, the Gospel message, belief in Jesus, forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit are tied together, but this time the baptism with the Holy Spirit came on the Gentiles first in order to convince circumcised believers that they had really been saved and admitted to the people of God. See how Peter urged them to be baptized because they had “received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (10:47). This action of the Spirit not only convinced those with Peter but the circumcised believers in Jerusalem, as 11:15-18 indicates.

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning... . If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way... . And they glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

Several things need to be noted about this episode. Even though Cornelius was a God-fearing man (10:2), it is clear that Peter was directed by the angel to “declare to you [Cornelius] a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household” (11:14). Peter equated their receiving the Holy Spirit with what the apostles had experienced “when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ” (11:17). It is interesting that Peter relates that gift to the apostles’ belief in Jesus, and to nothing else, even though the gift came some time after their belief in him, namely, after Jesus ascension. But this perspective is exactly the way Jesus had already presented the promise of the Spirit in John 7:39, “Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Thus this baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household (except for preceding their water baptism) just as Peter had proclaimed and promised to the Pentecost crowd. (Acts 2:38-39) The fact that the Holy Spirit falls upon them before they are baptized was done to convince the circumcised believers with Peter, and also those back in Jerusalem (again Acts 11:15-18). So the speaking in tongues was a sign for all to be aware of the salvation and baptism of the Spirit that had happened to these, the first Gentiles believers.

Paul and John's Disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7)

The fourth episode is in Acts 19:1-7. Paul came to Ephesus and found some disciples to whom he said, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you were baptized? And they said, No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. And he said, Into what then were you baptized? They said, Into John's baptism" (19:1-3). Paul then told them that John instructed "the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying" (19:4-6). They were believers as surely as John the Baptist was, but ones who had not heard, even though they had received John's baptism, the declaration that Messiah had come. Hearing this good news from Paul, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and when Paul had laid his hands on them [aorist participle], the Holy Spirit came on them" (8:6). This was another unique experience. These men had believingly responded to a message someone had presented from John the Baptist, and being convicted of their sin, they had repented and had been baptized into John's baptism. That is, they received "John's baptism," but not baptism in the name of Jesus. Hearing from Paul that John had not only called men to repentance for their sins, but also to "believe in the one to come," namely, Jesus, they believed in him and received baptism in his name. Whether while baptizing, or thereafter, Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them. This baptism of the Spirit (and its attendant salvation in Jesus) was signified to them and to Paul by these disciples "speaking in tongues and prophesying" (19:6).

What should we learn from these four episodes?

These four episodes are not models for the Christian church to follow because they have no consistent and uniform pattern. The first (Pentecost, Acts 2) and this fourth one (the Ephesians, Acts 19) are the closest to one another, but even here there is a difference. Some of the apostles had been disciples of John the Baptist, but they heard his message pointing to Jesus, and they turned to Jesus in true faith as believers, and therefore they had waited for the ascended Lord to send God's promise of the Holy Spirit. These disciples of John in Ephesus had not come as far as the apostles, but had only heard and responded to the initial part of a John-the-Baptist-type message, that is, repentance, but had not heard the part about believing in the one who was to come after John the Baptist. But none of us, or those that we reach with the Gospel, find ourselves in that situation, and we, or they, never will. Nor are we Samaritans (Acts 8), very much disliked by the Jews and disliking them equally, who having heard the Gospel and

responded to it, need to recognize that only through the hands of Jewish apostles will we receive the empowering and energizing and uniting work of the Holy Spirit. As we shall see below from Paul, we received the Spirit when we believed, and did not need to wait for the apostles, or anyone else, to lay on hands. Yes, we are Gentiles, like Cornelius and his household (Acts 10 & 11), but we should not expect that we should speak in tongues to convince circumcised believers that we are really Christians. All of us (who live outside these special and transitional situations) are in the same position as those to whom Peter proclaimed the Gospel right after the Pentecost episode: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

What do we learn from Paul about Christians being baptized with the Holy Spirit?

To this truth Paul also testified, as in 1 Corinthians 12:13, where he stated: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Paul’s double use of “all” buttressed by the reference to Jews, Greeks, slave and free, and underlined by his triple use of “one” (Spirit, body, Spirit) makes it clear that “all” believers have been brought into the one body of Christ by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and are being nurtured by that one Spirit. This use of the word “baptize” with the Holy Spirit indicates that the same activity of that Spirit has worked in us “all” that worked in different ways for specific purposes in the book of Acts. Paul in several verses in Romans 8 reminds Christians how dependent they are on the Holy Spirit and that without his presence in their lives they are not Christians. He emphatically asserts in verse 9, “anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him,” and he also asserts in verse 14 “... that all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Finally, he reminds the Romans, and ourselves, “you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father! The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (8:15-16; cf. Gal. 4:6-7). Notice that this work of the Spirit is not only that of regeneration and conversion, but also that of leading believers now (8:14), of causing us to know that we are his children, of being able to know that he is our Father (8:15-16), and that having “believed in him, [we] were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it” (Eph. 1:14). Indeed, it is the entire work of sanctification.

What should we learn about the filling and fullness of the Holy Spirit in Acts?

This brings us back to the book of Acts where Jesus' promise to the apostles was that they "will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you [them]," and that Holy Spirit given "power" will enable them to "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). It is this aspect to which we should give further attention as it occurs in Acts, particularly with the use of two verbs for "fill" and a cognate noun of one of the verbs that means "full of."⁸

First we look at *πίμπλημι*. It is this power of the Holy Spirit that enabled their preaching to be powerful and effective, and through that power they were rightly esteemed by others as having "boldness" (Acts 4:8 & 13, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them . . .," and "they saw the boldness of Peter and John"). These two elements are tightly tied together in Acts 4:23-31. Peter and John and the Christian community asked the Lord to "grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness" (4:29), and their prayers were answered "and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:31). Thus "filling" came upon Peter, as an example, one who had already been baptized with the Holy Spirit (2:4, the word actually used is "filled"), and who had already been said to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (4:8). Likewise Paul was promised that he would "be filled with the Holy Spirit" when he regained his sight (9:17), and 13:8 attested that he had been so filled.

Next consider the noun *πλήρης*. The church at Jerusalem was instructed to select men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3). The church chose such, and about Stephen in particular is it said he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (6:5), and this is repeated of him in 7:55. Likewise a similar description is given of Barnabas: "he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (11:24).

The last of the three words is the verb *πληρώω*. This verb is used in concert with the other verb *πίμπλημι* in Acts 2. The wind "filled the entire house where they were sitting" (*πληρώω*, Acts 2:2) and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (*πίμπλημι*, Acts 2:4). Also it is written that "the disciples [of Antioch] were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (*πληρώω*, Acts 13:52).

⁸ One Greek verb is *πίμπλημι*, and it is used of the filling of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17 and 13:9. Related to this verb is the verb *πληρώω*, which is also used with the filling of the Holy Spirit in Acts in 2:2; 13:52 and Ephesians 5:18, and its cognate noun *πλήρης* which is also used with the filling of the Holy Spirit in Acts in 6:3, 5; 7:55 and 11:24.

What is Ephesians 5:18 teaching us?

The significance of the interconnected usage of these words in Acts is that Paul addressed Christians in his letter to the Ephesians and exhorted them to “be filled with the Spirit,” using one of the same verbs as was used in Acts (Eph. 5:18, πληροῦσθε, present passive imperative of πληρόω). Paul explicitly recognized that they had been “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” and that they should not “grieve the Holy Spirit” who already indwelt them (1:13; 2:22; 4:30). He is not asking Christians to seek the Spirit or have him baptize them or fall on them, because his other letters show that he knew that this is already true. But he did ask Christians to seek to be filled with the Spirit. No matter how we understand the preposition⁹ used before the Spirit in the phrase “be filled with the Spirit,” this statement correlates the verb “be filled” and “the Spirit.” “Be filled with the Spirit,” is an imperative, which by definition, is a command. It is in the passive voice: “be filled.” Christians are to seek that “filling” to happen to them by the action of God.¹⁰

What should we learn about “filling” from Luke, Acts and Ephesians taken together?

Here the Lord’s teaching in Luke 11:13 is helpful in giving us a proper understanding of the Ephesians 5:18 teaching. In the second half of that passage Jesus said, “how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!” Since the regenerating work of the Father is not a result of one’s asking for the Holy Spirit, nor is the baptism or sealing work of the Holy Spirit dependent upon asking for the Spirit to be given to Christians, one must ask what is it that Jesus is teaching with reference to the Spirit? Here I think that the Lucan passage is speaking about the same phenomenon of the Holy Spirit as the Ephesians passage is, namely, the filling or empowering of the Spirit for the work of serving the Lord. We see an illustration of this aspect in Acts 4:29-31: The disciples prayed “grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all

⁹ The English translation usually used is “with.” The Greek statement is πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι. Some render the Greek ἐν with the word “with” to indicate the sphere in which they are filled, and others render it with the word “by,” indicating the instrument that does the filling. See H. W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 703-705, and P. T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 391-393; both opt for the instrumental usage and would render the Greek preposition with the word “by.” See also A. J. Köstenberger, “What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit? A Biblical Investigation,” *JETS* 40 (June 1997): 229-240.

¹⁰ This understanding accords with the parallel passage in Colossians: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . .” (Col. 3:16).

boldness And when they had prayed ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” Those that so prayed had already been regenerated by the Spirit and had received the Spirit. But they prayed for his filling and asked him to use them enabled by his Spirit.

This combination of passages in Ephesians, Luke’s Gospel and this and other passages in Acts, show Christians should still be seeking and praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit for empowerment in their Christian service. Yes, it may seem a little strange to speak about the command for being filled with the Holy Spirit, but this is the language of the apostle Paul. Paul prayed that God would grant Christians to “be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you being rooted and grounded in love ... may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:16-19). So we should pray for ourselves, and our fellow Christians, to be strengthened by “being filled with the Spirit.” But, what about the extraordinary displays of the Spirit’s presence and work, such as the gift of healing, and signs and wonders, which we read about in Acts 4:29-31, for example? Those must await our consideration of signs and wonders, and the gift of healing.

What about prophecy (and its related terms) in the New Testament?

The noun “prophecy,” and its related words, the noun “prophet” and the verb “prophesy,” are used in the New Testament, as in the Old, of the revelation given by God to the prophet to be proclaimed.¹¹ This is evident in the first usage of this concept found in the New Testament church in Acts 2:14 ff., especially in verses 17 and 18 where the verb “prophesy” is used once each in both verses, and where Joel 2:28-32 is cited as being fulfilled. Paul dealt at length with the concept of prophecy in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 11-14, especially in chapter 14. There he tersely referred to prophecy with the word “revelation” in verse 26, and in verse 30 wrote about “a revelation” being given to one of the “prophets,” who should by this act of God be allowed to “prophesy” forthwith, and the other one speaking should “be silent” so that his brother may do so.

¹¹ For a brief but rather thorough study of this question of prophecy and its related terms see my booklet, *Prophecy in the New Testament* (Concerned Presbyterians, 2nd printing 1996).

A word about Grudem's view of New Testament Prophecy

The Reformed community and most of the Charismatics have agreed on this understanding of New Testament prophecy.¹² Dr Grudem, and those that follow him, distinguish New Testament prophecy from Old Testament prophecy, as he has asserted about New Testament prophecy that it does not “possess a divine authority of actual words.”¹³ Grudem regards New Testament prophecy as “speaking merely human words to report something God brings to mind,” or, “as something which God can use to bring things to our attention, but as something which nevertheless can contain human interpretation and mistakes.”¹⁴ He seeks to demonstrate this view by appealing to various prophecies in Acts¹⁵, and especially to Agabus in Acts 21:10-11 and maintains that “using OT standards, Agabus would have been condemned as a false prophet, because in Acts 21:27-35 neither of his predictions are fulfilled” [i.e., “Paul was not bound by the Jews ... and he had to be delivered from the Jews . . .].¹⁶ Agabus had said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” (Acts 21:11). Notice that, contrary to Grudem, Paul used very similar words to those of this prophecy to describe to the Jews why he was imprisoned in Rome: “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans” (Acts 21:11, “deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles,” Acts 28:17, “yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans”). The word “bind,” if understood in its metaphorical sense of the ones responsible for his being bound and being brought to Rome, certainly has the Jews in view according to Paul.

¹² Sometimes the word concept is used to indicate preaching in its popular usage, so that one may hear of a preacher being seen as prophetic in his proclamation, but this is only by extension of its meaning and usually, as the New Testament does, preaching and teaching on the one hand and prophesying on the other are recognized as distinct and different activities. The prophet communicates directly the message given to him by God. The preacher or teacher communicates the message already given by God.

¹³ W. A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in I Corinthians* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), 78; also in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 83.

¹⁴ The first quotation is in the table of contents, 7-8, and in chapter subheadings, on pages 67 and 89, and the second is found in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 114.

¹⁵ For the interaction with Grudem on Acts 21:4, “And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem,” see *Prophecy in the New Testament*, 6-7, note 1.

¹⁶ *The Gift of Prophecy in I Corinthians*, 79.

Paul wrote that after the Romans had “examined me, they wished to set me at liberty But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar ...” (Acts 28:18-19: cf. also the testimony of Felix, “And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison,” Acts 24:27; note also the numerous times where it is indicated that the Jews are prosecuting the case against Paul, Acts 21:27; 22:30; 24:1-2; 25:2,15,24). So not only is this case of prophecy, and others in Acts, inadequate to make Grudem’s case, the thesis itself on its face is not compelling.¹⁷

What may we deduce from Scripture about the extraordinary gifts?

This leads to the question that separates, in general, the Reformed perspective from that of the Charismatic, and that is whether or not the extraordinary spiritual gifts continued after the apostolic age. This question like other related matters (do the apostles continue?, is the canon of the Scriptures closed?) cannot be solved by citing some one or more Scripture passages, but only by that “good and necessary consequence [which] may be deduced from Scripture.”¹⁸

The cessation of the apostolic and prophetic offices

First consider the cessation of the apostolic and prophetic offices and their gifts. The word “apostle” as it appears in the New Testament designates the twelve, Paul (and perhaps a few others [cf. Acts 14:14]) and refers to those appointed by Christ as eyewitnesses of his resurrection, to be first in leadership and authority in his church, to communicate his revelation, and to be the foundation for his church.¹⁹ The word “prophet”

¹⁷ I am indebted to Victor Budgen, *The Charismatics and The Word of God* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2nd ed. 1989, reprinted, 2001), 270-272, for the arguments used in the text. For further refutation of this erroneous view, see R. B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 65-67.

¹⁸ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.6. The sentence as a whole reads as follows: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”

¹⁹ See G.W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 58, for the biblical references for each of the items mentioned above. In addition to this predominant New Testament usage, in a couple of places the word designates the “messenger” or “delegate” sent by the church, for example, 2 Cor. 8:23 and Phil. 2:25, and the word for apostle is also used sometimes to designate “false” apostles (2 Cor. 11:13; cf. also 11:5 & 12:11).

in the New Testament (when joined with the word apostle) designates a New Testament person and not an Old Testament figure. This is deduced from the fact that Paul affirmed that the apostles and prophets had been “appointed in the church” by “God” respectively “first” and “second,” that is, that they are the first and second most necessary gifts for the church (to which teachers are then named as the third most [cf. 1 Cor. 12:28]). These two, apostles and prophets, are among the gifts God has given to the church (1 Cor. 12:28-31). Compare also 12:4-11 that speaks of the “varieties of gifts” given by “the Spirit for the common good” and includes among them “prophecy”.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians mentions “apostles and prophets” in three very important situations (Eph. 2:20; 3:5 and 4:11). In 4:11, these extraordinary gifts, (as well as ordinary gifts that continue), are given by the ascended Christ. In 3:5, they are the receivers and bearers of “the mystery of Christ” which has been made known to them, being “revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” In 2:19-20, they are identified as “the foundation” on which “the household of God” is “built” with “Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” In 4:11, these apostles and prophets are clearly distinguished from each other, as they are in 1 Cor. 12:28, and thus also in 2:20 and 3:5²⁰.

The foundation of the apostles and prophets

Paul referred to apostles and prophets as “the foundation” in Eph. 2:19-20, meaning by this that the church is “built out and up from the revelation given by Christ, with the apostles and prophets elaborating and explaining the mystery, which has been made known to them by the Holy Spirit (3:4-11, esp. v. 5).”²¹ The data in the New Testament shows that once Judas (the betrayer) was replaced, there were no more replacements for the other apostles, and the same evaluation is implied for the prophets joined so closely with the apostles. The non-replacement of the apostles is evident in the reference in the Book of Revelation that states that the wall of the

²⁰ In Eph. 4:11 both apostles and prophets have their distinguishing definite article in the Greek, and also a distinguishing μέν and δέ. Grudem’s assertion that the references in Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 should be understood to mean “the apostles who are also prophets” (*The Gift of Prophecy in I Corinthians*, 105) must candidly be said to be a case of special pleading for his argument that New Testament prophecy continues. He appropriately recognizes that Eph. 2:20 indicates the foundational and non-repetitive character of the “apostles” and therefore from his perspective (that “prophecy” continues) the passage must not be understood as referring to “prophets” themselves.

²¹ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Pillar NT Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 218.

Jerusalem to come “had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:14). From the reference to the apostles and prophets being the foundation in Eph. 2:19-20, it should be clear that they are not repeated in the life of the church but serve rather as the once-laid foundation for the church. The implication is that neither the apostles nor the prophets (given by Christ as one of the primary spiritual gifts) continued beyond the foundational stage of the church (except in the book of Revelation). Thus the instruction in 1 Thessalonians 5:20 and 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 with reference to prophets and prophecy was relevant in the apostolic age, but when that gift is no longer given that instruction is mute. This fact has further implications, namely, that not all the spiritual gifts continue in the life of the post-apostolic church.

“Signs” (σημείον), “wonders” (τέρας) and “miracles” (δύναμις)

When the Gospel was being proclaimed in the early church, it was accompanied by “signs” (σημείον), and often “wonders” (τέρας) and at least four times by “miracles” (δύναμις), and these were often (but not always) brought about by the apostles.²² The actions that are usually in view when these signs were in evidence are those of healing. Acts 4:22 says it explicitly with the words “the man on whom this sign of healing was performed.” (cf. 4:16 and the context). Similarly in Acts 4:30 where the church prayed to God that he would enable them to speak the gospel boldly “while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” The case with Philip, however, makes it clear that healing is not the only sign they performed, when Acts relates that they heard and “saw the signs that he

²² Σημεῖα are aptly rendered by the English word “signs” as they are pointers to the message they accompany and do signify its truthfulness and reality. Τέρατα are used in the NT only in the plural and only with σημεῖα. Those that experienced this phenomenon were amazed at what they were seeing and thus the translation “wonders” is appropriate. Notice as an example of this phenomenon Acts 8:13 where τέρατα is not used with the other two, but the verb used indicates “he was amazed.” Δυνάμεις generally means power or capability, but in the four or so times that it occurs with these other two words it is usually rendered “miracles.” The apostles are in view in the majority of usages in the Book of Acts (cf., e.g., Acts 5:12), but Stephen and Philip are also involved with these “signs” (Acts 6:8 and 8:6 respectively). Σημεῖα is used 13x in Acts, twice each in 4 Pauline letters but not always with the same significance, once in Hebrews and 7x in Revelation, and 48x in the four gospels. Τέρατα is used 9x in Acts, once each in 3 Pauline letters, and once in Hebrews, and once each in Mt., Mk. and Jn. Δυνάμεις, which occurs 119x in the NT, is used 4x in Acts accompanying the other two words.

did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed ... and many ... were healed” (Acts 8: 6-7)

The most significant thing to learn from these signs is how they signify the reality of the gospel of Christ. Immediately after the passage from Joel has been quoted with its use of wonders and signs (Acts 2:19), the significance of these signs is spelled out with reference to Jesus: “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst ... “ (Acts 2:22) by the use of the verb “attested.” This result of the signs is repeated throughout Acts: “awe came upon every soul” when these signs “were being done through the apostles” (Acts 2:43); “Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles... . And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:12 & 14). It is specifically said that “the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did” (Acts 8:6). In Acts, Paul and Barnabas were encouraged to speak boldly for the Lord when he “bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3). In concurrence with the words of Acts, the words of the apostle Paul give a similar report. He summarized his ministry to the Gentiles in these words: “... Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience – by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God . . .” (Romans 15:18 & 19). Thus he wrote to the Corinthians “the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works” (2 Cor. 12:12). Finally, the writer to the Hebrews summarized the gospel message which he had received from those before him with these words: “It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb. 2:3-4). The key statement is, “God also bore witness by” these signs.²³ Leaving aside the references to our Lord in the Gospels and again in Revelation, only in the Book of Acts and in these words in these three epistles (which looked back to what they had seen and experienced earlier) are there these tremendous words about signs and wonders and miracles. Do not these facts themselves indicate that they refer only to the foundation stages of the church? Are these then not the corroborative works that God gave to the apostles and those who labored with them as they laid the foundation for

²³ Συνεπιμαρτυρέω is the Greek verb used here and it means to “testify at the same time” (BDAD) with the dative words in the Greek “signs and wonders and various miracles” signifying the means used to give that testimony.

the church (Eph. 2:20), and have they not ceased when the apostles died and the apostolic era itself came to an end?

The waning of the extraordinary gifts in the New Testament

Speaking in tongues

Consider also some of the other special gifts and their apparent waning within the New Testament itself. Take the speaking in tongues phenomenon and the associated events. In its first occurrence with the apostles (Acts 2:1-13), the phenomenon is accompanied by the fact that “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:2-3). The most striking aspect of this is that the apostles “began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). The result was that each one in the crowd was hearing them speak the mighty works of God “in his own language” (Acts 2:6; cf. also 2:7-11 where this is repeatedly said). But in the other episodes in the Book of Acts where speaking in tongues is reported (10:46 and 19:6), the wind and fire are not mentioned nor is the ability of the others to understand in their own language, and when the speaking of tongues is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14 an interpreter is then required if one is to speak in public (cf. esp. 1 Cor. 14:27-28). In Corinth the one speaking in tongues no longer spoke to the hearers “in his own language” but must have someone interpret what he has said for them to understand. It is noteworthy in the New Testament, that aside from the three special occasions in the Book of Acts (2:1-13, Pentecost [the Apostles]; 10:44-48, Peter and Cornelius [the Gentiles]; and 19:1-7, Paul and the disciples of John’s baptism in Ephesus), and Paul’s lengthy instruction about these and other gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14, the phenomenon of “speaking in tongues” is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, neither as a characteristic of a believer or as a necessity for an officer in Christ’s church. Was this one of the signs given in the foundational period of the building of Christ’s church that not only faded and changed and became less spectacular, but faded away altogether as a sign?²⁴ If this be so, as I think that it is, then the words of instruction for it,

²⁴ Compare the language of the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 13:8 where he wrote “as for tongues, they will cease.” The voice of the Greek verb is middle whereas the other two verbs concerning prophecy and knowledge are passive. Wallace suggests for this middle the understanding of “they will cease [on their own],” or more fully in his text, “cease of their own accord, i.e., ‘die out’ without an intervening agent (indirect middle).” See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 422 f. not only for his treatment of this verb and

like those for prophecy, also become mute when it is no longer given as a “sign” (which both tongue speaking and prophecy are called in 1 Cor. 14:22).²⁵

The gift of healing

The gift of healing, one aspect of the “signs,” manifests the same waning in the New Testament. During Christ’s ministry and that of the apostles, the gift of healing was in full display, as in the extensive healing of Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5:12-16, where the people “even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats,” as well as people “from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick . . .,” “and they were all healed” (Acts 5:15-16). Think not only of them “all” being healed, but also consider the spectacular phenomenon that they had put their sick in the streets “that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on them” (Acts 5:15). During the ministry of Paul recorded in Acts, “God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of the them” (Acts 19:11-12). Here was one of those “signs,” designated by the third item in that three-fold list, i.e., “miracles” (τέρατα, translated by the ESV as “extraordinary miracles”), with its result that “fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was exalted,” and “so the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily” (Acts 19:17 & 20). Except for the examples in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, and the three references to the “gifts of healing” in 1 Corinthians 12 (9, 28 & 30), the rest of the New Testament does not characterize Christians or officers in the church as possessing this special gift. Rather Paul, through whom God had done many miracles with the handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched his skin (Acts 19:11-12), later in his ministry prayed that God would take away “a thorn . . . given me in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7) and learned that the thorn would stay and that God’s grace was sufficient for him (2 Cor. 12:8-9). Furthermore, and even more telling, Paul “left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus” (2 Tim. 4:20), rather than personally healing him! Finally, note Paul’s statement about Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25-27. Paul states that he had been ill and underlines his statement with these words: “Indeed he was ill, near to death” (2:27a). After this vivid description of his illness, he writes thankfully of God’s mercy in raising him from his illness and out

its understanding but also for his defense of that understanding over against the dominant opinion among NT scholars that the verb is future deponent and therefore active in meaning. See also footnote 26.

²⁵ Σημεῖον the same word as was used in the Acts accounts when it spoke of signs, wonders and miracles.

of the near death situation. We read “God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (2:27b). Paul’s statement about God’s mercy on him most likely implies that God did the healing. What conclusion can be drawn from these situations? Is it not appropriate to deduce that the extraordinary sign of healing had done its work in undergirding the laying of the foundation of the Gospel, and that it has ceased as a sign gift. Indeed, God still does heal in answer to prayer, but not by means of one who has the gift of healing, and not always, as the two examples from Paul make evident. The Christian should indeed ask God to heal, if it is God’s will, and be willing to accept the verdict, whatever it may be, as the expression of God’s will. On the matter of public prayer for the one who requests it, James wrote these instructions for the elders as well as the one requesting their prayers: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one that is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And, if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:13-15).

The deduction about the cessation of the apostles and prophets and sign gifts

Thus one can deduce from this survey of the evidence that God has laid the foundation for his church in the apostles and prophets, and that he gave to them and those with them certain signs, wonders and miracles to collaborate the Gospel proclaimed and the foundation being laid. With the cessation of their task, the ministry of the apostles and prophets ceased and the signs given to them also ceased (even beginning to do that within the New Testament itself).²⁶ Thus we can deduce that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are no longer being given to the church. At the same time, we must still gladly say that the ordinary spiritual gifts are still given and are still needful for the church and for Christians.

How can we deduce such a deduction? Not because we are wiser or more perceptive than the Charismatics. But only because we have searched out God’s Word and want to be obedient and resigned to it.

²⁶ In this argument we are not appealing to “the perfect” as meaning the close of the canon in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, as some others have done, because we think that Paul is writing about something else there and not about the subject we are addressing (for my fuller treatment of this passage see *Prophecy in the New Testament*, 21-22 footnote 12). But see also footnote 24.

What spiritual benefit has this study been?

What has this search produced that is beneficial to the soul and life of believers as well as edifying to their minds? It is that in Christ they have all that they need, and they do not need to seek something better or higher, such as a follow-up baptism of the Holy Spirit. Except for those few instances in the New Testament where God was especially instructing his church about the Samaritans and the Gentiles, that they were one with the Jewish believers and apostles, the New Testament repeatedly affirms that when people are united to Christ by faith they have in him thereby received the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Thus all Christians have the vitality of being united to Christ and indwelt by his Holy Spirit. And just as with so many other of the gifts and graces of God, they are continually being urged by the apostle Paul to be filled with the Spirit and to walk by the Spirit, and not just rest content that they have once believed and once repented and once been baptized by the Spirit.

How are we to interact with Charismatics?

How then are we to interact with our Charismatic fellow Christians? When the opportunity is appropriate we should talk with them in an understanding way and try to show them why we think that the supernatural special gifts have ceased because they have done the tasks God assigned for them. When they point to their own lives as a proof positive of their Charismatic thinking, we should try to point out to them other ways of understanding their life. Were they only nominal Christians who have now come to really trust in him and therefore like those Ephesian disciples they have of course received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as they trusted in Christ? Or were they really believers who turned from their lackadaisical walk as God has heard their prayer and is filling them with his Holy Spirit in which they were already baptized?

In our eagerness to protect the Christian flock from the error of the Charismatics, we must at the same time seek to lead those who are

²⁷ The Holy Spirit is the one that makes us alive in our deadness in sins and brings us to embrace Christ offered in the Gospel by saving faith. God in adoption gives us the Holy Spirit, i.e., he baptizes us in him. Thus the Spirit first makes us alive, and then when we are united to Christ by faith, God pours his Spirit within us. *The Westminster Larger Catechism* in answer 74 puts it quite well when it says “Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, ...”

involved in that error from those errors and embrace them as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The vitality of the Reformed Faith is evidenced in the regenerating work of God immediately leading to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing filling of that Spirit in God's people. This work of God enables his people to understand that God has sovereignly founded his church in the apostolic age on the apostles and prophets with a display of extraordinary gifts, and also to understand that God continues to build his church on that foundation without those apostles and prophets being present today by the ordinary (but not extraordinary) spiritual gifts God still gives his church. This vitality and understanding enables those who embrace the Reformed Faith to meet the challenge of the Charismatic movement and also other aberrant variations of the Christian Faith.

Committee Report

Discussion of Paper 1

Extraordinary Gifts

We submit the following summary of the main features of the discussion of Dr Knight's paper.

1. There is full consensus that special revelation is now fully inscripturated in line with Ephesians 2: 20 – the church built on the foundation of apostles and prophets. Thus the statement in *Westminster Confession* 1.1 'those former ways of revealing his will to his people being now ceased' is to the point, as also *Belgic Confession* art. 2-7.
2. The giving of the Spirit at Pentecost is a very special event in the history of redemption. It and subsequent episodes of the giving of the Spirit in Acts 8, 10-11 and 19 are actions of the Spirit which demonstrate the unity of all believers in the one body of Christ, whether Jew, Samaritan, Gentile or disciples of John. No normative two-stage theology of Christian experience – conversion followed by a distinct baptism of the Spirit – can be derived from these episodes. Every true believer has the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), and is gifted and empowered by the Spirit.
3. The point of 'perfection' in 1 Cor. 13: 9-11 which brings the end of partial knowledge is the return of Christ, although some think that the completion of the canon of Scripture is what is referred to.
4. Prophecy, tongues and 'gifts of healings' are closely associated with the foundational Apostles, and some agree with the presumption that these gifts do not continue beyond the Apostolic period; others do not agree. Since Scripture is not explicit on this question, any deductions from Scripture by good and necessary consequence need considerable care, and some doubts can remain in some minds.
5. There is some difference among us as to the precise nature of the modern phenomena termed prophecy, tongues and 'gifts of healings'. The options, which may not be mutually exclusive, as all agree, at least to some extent, on (a) and (b), appear to be:
 - a. a psychologically-based human imitation;

- b. Satanic in some instances;
- c. a gift of God but not revelatory in terms of point 1.

Nevertheless, the discussion suggested, some dissenting, that there is a consensus that much or perhaps all of what occurs today reflects a situation which adequate preaching and pastoral care supplant where there is genuine spiritual life and loving Christian fellowship. True conversion and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22ff.) must be our focus, not extraordinary gifts.

6. It is vital to remember that all gifts are to be used for the building up of others in love (1 Cor. 13) under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12: 3). Paul's regulation of undoubtedly genuine prophecy and tongues in 1 Cor. 14: 26ff. reflects this concern.

Respectfully submitted.

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The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Individualism in Church Life

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Synopsis

Under three headings (a description, diagnosis, and response to the challenge of individualism), the author identifies the character and consequences of modern individualism as the enthronement of the self, both in public society and especially in the church. We are helped in our reflection by paying attention to a sociological analysis of distinctive features of contemporary generations, such as Generation X and the Millennials. Within public society, egalitarianism constitutes the public religion that worships individual rights, special interests, and forced toleration. The model of therapeutic psychology often serves to supply what may be called the private religion of the self, where rights, needs, and personal happiness constitute life's core values.

No diagnosis of individualism in church life can avoid evaluating the religious phenomenon known as "evangelicalism," which is to be understood as a particularly virulent embodiment of religious individualism, many of whose doctrinal assumptions and religious practices are less than fully biblical. Especially its weak doctrine of the church (ecclesiology) constitutes a serious challenge to confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian churches. This includes its underdeveloped regard for the Bible's teaching about the means of grace, about the organization of the church, and about requirements relating to church membership.

To meet the challenge of individualism in church life, we must recover and develop a fresh understanding and practice of the Bible's teaching concerning spiritual adoption into the family of God and concerning the church as the communion of saints.

The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Individualism in Church Life

Rev. Dr Nelson D. Kloosterman

1. A Description of the Challenge

1.1 The self as center

We begin our assessment of the challenge of individualism in church life by marking words or phrases associated with the topic, by mapping a field of associative ideas. Consider the following assortment: narcissism, self-reliance, happiness, choice, satisfaction, experience, spontaneity, experience, toleration, feelings, self-esteem, rights, privacy, self-ish, sentimentality.

From this list emerges an initial description of the challenge of individualism. The core of this challenge is that the autonomous self becomes the center of reality, the source of meaning and value, and the norm for good and evil; sensation becomes the goal of experience, while experience is the route to self-realization.

Within Western philosophy, politics, and culture, the self has come to define reality in terms of preference and utility. Without any objectifiable criteria of right and wrong—that is, apart from any objective moral criteria outside the self—only the self and its feelings provide moral guidance. Because rules are essentially instrumental and utilitarian, they are understood to be human constructions designed to function as means to personal goals. Utility replaces duty, and what is “good” is defined in terms of results.

One helpful way to assess the challenge of individualism in church life is to reflect on the sociological dimensions of various generations living today. Studies have characterized modern generations in terms of their relationship to authority, their self-understanding, and their contribution to society in general. Consider the following description of two important generations known in the United States as “Generation X” and the “Millennials.”

Born between 1965 and 1976, the 51 million members of Generation X grew up in a very different world than their predecessors. Widespread divorce and working moms created “latchkey” kids out of many in this generation—children who came home after school to an empty house, left on their own for hours each day. This led to traits of independence, resilience and adaptability, so that many who belong to Generation X have a strong dislike for someone “looking over their shoulder.” For them, accountability and relationships become a challenge. Yet, at the same time, this generation expects immediate and ongoing feedback, works well in multicultural settings, and exhibits a pragmatic approach to getting things done. Generation X redefines loyalty, so that rather than remain loyal to their company, they have a commitment to their work, to the team they work with, and the boss they work for. A Baby Boomer complains about his dissatisfaction with management, but figures it's part of the job, whereas a Gen Xer will send out a job application and accept the best offer available at another organization. More than Baby Boomers, members of Generation X dislike authority and rigid work requirements. An effective mentoring relationship with them must be as relaxed as possible. Giving performance feedback plays a big part, as does encouraging creativity and initiative to find new ways to get tasks done.

By contrast, the Millennial Generation was born between 1977 and 1998, and is now just beginning to enter the workplace. The 75 million members of this generation were raised at the most child-centric time in the history of the West. Perhaps because of the showers of attention and high expectations from parents, Millennials display a great deal of self-confidence. Technology has always been part of their lives, whether it's computers and the Internet or cell phones and text pagers. Often Millennials are team-oriented, banding together to date and socialize rather than pairing off. They work well in groups, preferring this to individual endeavours. They're good multi-taskers, having juggled sports, school, and social interests as children. Millennials seem to expect structure in the workplace, and seem willing to acknowledge and respect positions and titles. This doesn't always mesh with Generation X's love for independence and hands-off style. Millennials need mentoring, no matter how smart and confident they appear. Because they appreciate structure and stability, formally mentoring Millennials with set meetings and a more authoritative attitude on the mentor's part has worked well. Such mentoring is most effective by breaking down goals into steps, as well as by offering any necessary resources and information needed to meet challenges. Because they work so well in team situations, mentoring Millennials in groups seems to work best.

As we can see, such sociological analysis, while not normative, is nevertheless informative for Christian analysis. We may learn more clearly how, among today's generations, the self is shaped, how the self relates to the surrounding environment, and how the self interprets moral, social, and religious realities.

1.2 Egalitarianism as public religion of the self

This enthronement of the self has led to the crisis of personal identity. When the self is separated from family, religion, and vocational calling as sources of authority, searching for the identity of the self constitutes the essential quest for becoming human. One's identity is no longer received, but it is achieved and acquired—by one's choice.

New forms of religion, for example, embody this quest. Romantic and psychologistic pantheism, found in extreme forms of environmentalism and New Age practices, locate the identity of the self in terms of participation in the whole. There is a god within each of us, and each of us is divine. Religions that practice the idolatry of the self reject any form of hierarchy, as well as any form of external authority and external moral obligation. All selves are equal, and the views of every self are valid.

In terms of public culture, the anomaly exists that society is simultaneously the greatest oppressor of the self and the only arena for self-expression. The impersonal quality of political and industrial institutions, where bureaucracies and markets leave the self feeling wounded and worthless, requires the invention of new ways to anchor the isolated self.

Today we are witnessing the powerful coalition between the religion of self-realization and the politics of special interests and individual rights. Historically both religion and politics have served the public order by integrating the individual within the group (church, society). But with the loss of mediating structures that once nurtured this integration (family, neighborhood schools, voluntary associations), with the accompanying loss of civic virtue, both church and state now face the challenge of satisfying the competing demands of "raw selves."

All of this has led to a new understanding of "community." Perhaps one of the saddest examples may exist in what is euphemistically called "the homosexual community." The danger is that in such a community, the self touches other isolated selves at restricted points of interest, never engaging or embracing, only touching, like marbles in a pail. By contrast, true human fellowship requires the existence of a "fellow," an "other" with whom one communes.

1.3 Psychology as private religion of the self

Names associated with the rise of secular psychology as private religion of the self include Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Rollo May (see Bellah and Vitz). The core principles of this religion include self-esteem, narcissism, self-help (recovery groups), personal choice, and values clarification.

Perhaps the clearest parable of the modern existentialist personality is the ancient Greek legend of Echo and Narcissus. According to the legend, Echo was a woodland nymph who fell in love with Narcissus, who was an uncommonly handsome but also uncommonly vain young man. He contemptuously rejected her expressions of love. She pined away and died. The god Apollo was angered by Narcissus' pride and self-satisfaction, and condemned him to die without ever knowing human love. One day, Narcissus was feeling thirsty, saw a pool of clear water nearby, and knelt beside it in order to dip his hands in the water and drink. He saw his face reflected on the surface of the water and fell in love with the reflection. Unable to win a response from the image in the water, Narcissus eventually died beside the pool.

Today's technology has great narcissistic potential—the mirror has evolved into the webcam, and the diary into the weblog. Psychiatry professionals have diagnosed the “narcissistic personality disorder” as a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration. With apparent self-confidence they mask fragile insecurity and vulnerability to the slightest criticism. Understandably narcissism yields a number of personal and social pathologies. The isolated self, the dysfunctional marriage and family, social victimhood real or imagined, all blend together to form a public culture where commitment is scorned, tradition is despised, and transcendence is rejected.

1.4 The church as a collection of selves

In addition to the challenges to the church of Jesus Christ that individualism represents from the foregoing description, it may be added that the seeds and fruit of individualism affect the church at its heart. When people speak in marketing terms of a “loss of brand loyalty,” and in sociological terms of a “loss of external identity,” these can easily be transferred to the life of the church. For many Christians today, denominations don't matter; doctrinal precision is merely another form of power politics; authority and accountability get replaced by experience and authenticity. The biblical validity and requirement of church membership

are becoming a necessary part of the church's apologetic, both to those outside the faith and to those inside the church.

Within today's church, the language of historic Christianity can easily be put in service to the idolatry of the self. The goal and message of this religion are self-esteem, self-acceptance, loving oneself, and forgiving oneself. Within a voluntarist ecclesiology, the church exists to serve the self. Christian spirituality comes to be defined apart from the church, the means of grace, and the communion of the saints. To the extent they continue to be acknowledged, under the influence of individualism the church's means of grace (preaching and the sacraments) and public worship come to be viewed more in terms of self-interest, self-expression, and self-realization.

Among our own churches, especially in the West, we are seeing the erosion of commitment to the church on several levels. Any authority asserted by leaders, whether or not it is exercised biblically, is often resisted by members. Various forms of accountability are vanishing—including accountability of leaders to members, as well as accountability of members to leaders and to other members.

This hymn to self-piety captures rather well the intersection between individualism and religion in our time (by Doug Marlette, cited by Wells):

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a stunted self-concept like me,
I once was stressed out, but now am empowered,
Was visually challenged, but now I see.

2. A Diagnosis of the Challenge

Perhaps the most direct, albeit disheartening, description of the phenomenon under consideration is found in 2 Timothy 3:1-5:

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people (ESV).

For the purpose of clarity and interpretation, compare these verses from another, older English translation:

But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power therefore. From these also turn away (ASV).

In these verses, Timothy and the church are being reminded that “the last days,” or the entire period of history until the Lord’s return, will be marked by people exhibiting the vices that follow. A number of these vices are mentioned only here in the New Testament, the first of which (self-loving) may be understood as the source of all the rest: people will be “lovers of self.” Such self-love inevitably and predictably leads to love of money, pride and arrogance, abusive and malicious talk, and disobedience to authority. False teachers who foster such vices may have a form of godliness, but they deny its power, by both their teaching and their conduct.

In the light of this biblical forecast, a number of causes may be identified, both in the church and its surrounding culture.

2.1 The loss of transcendence

We are living in a time when love for God is being displaced with various competitive affections. Substitute loves—for money, pleasure, even evil itself—give rise to twenty-first century idolatries just as pervasive and pernicious as those practiced during Bible times. In our day, with the idolatries of freedom and of power, people have surrendered their understanding of transcendence, their acknowledgement of a “higher Being,” which acknowledgement once served to limit the errors of both collectivism and egoism. The contemporary worship of freedom and power are found on both the “right” and the “left,” among both “conservatives” and “liberals.” The cultures of the West have come to be marked by toleration and pragmatism—leading one writer to observe that “toleration is the pragmatist’s substitute for love” (see Conyers).

When cultures lose the understanding and practice of divine transcendence, then the powers of creation provide identity and meaning. In our day the idols of power and freedom have captured the hearts and minds of

postmodern people. In addition, all areas of life tend to become politicized and commercialized; virtually all human relationships and human actions are governed by the self-interested calculations of costs and benefits. People become opportunists, relationships become utilitarian, promise-keeping serves self-interest, and law-making embodies values restricted to contemporary experience.

Losing the understanding and practice of divine transcendence affects a person's ability to worship God, to receive truth, to sacrifice for others, and to deny oneself. It could be argued that true human community is possible only where divine transcendence, or living together *coram Deo* (before the face of God), is practiced.

2.2 Evangelicalism

Within such a cultural context, it easily happens that the language of the Christian faith comes to be redefined and re-invented. Each term in the phrase "the gospel of salvation from sin and guilt frees us for new obedience" gets redefined in terms of the self. For example, "sin" and "guilt" describe whatever injures self-esteem and lowers feelings of self-worth. "Salvation" describes whatever relieves low self-esteem and facilitates self-realization. The "gospel" consists of positive affirmations of the self and promises that everything in life will cooperate to fulfil personal desires for prosperity and well-being. The notion of "freedom" is easily absolutized; in the church, the needs and expectations of other believers are viewed as impediments to personal freedom, rather than putting Christian liberty in service to love (see Kloosterman).

Closer to home, Reformed and Presbyterian churches most often encounter the challenges of individualism in the form of what is called "evangelicalism." Although the term *evangelical* is being debased in our day because of serious doctrinal and moral diversity among those calling themselves evangelicals, historically evangelicals generally have espoused a high view of Scripture (inerrancy, infallibility), a high view of the saving work of the Triune God (creation, virgin birth, regeneration), a high view of the need for penal substitutionary atonement, along with many features of the standard biblical *ordo salutis*.

Despite the compatibility at many points between evangelicalism and confessional Reformed and Presbyterian understanding, at least three particular features of evangelicalism (there are more!) represent a significant challenge to Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

The first is *hermeneutical*: with regard to Scripture, the right to private interpretation, a privilege won through bloody battles during the Reformation, has morphed into the claim that every private interpretation is right. The individualism expressed in vigorous antipathy toward ecclesiastical creeds and confessions represents a significant challenge to our churches today.

The second involves *soteriology*: within evangelicalism, individual regeneration has become the starting point for spiritual autobiography. Another way of stating this challenge is to say that the activity of the Triune God *with and on behalf of a people* tends to be obscured by the emphasis on the Holy Spirit's work *within the individual* as the starting point and goal of divine redemption. Happiness, once thought to be a by-product of moral conduct, is proclaimed as the object of religious pursuit itself. Feelings are more important than character for defining reality, subjective experience more normative than objective truth, where Christian testimony is more about me-and-God than about God-for-us.

Third, directly related to this is that evangelicalism is characterized by its *voluntarist ecclesiology*, or doctrine of the church. Generally speaking, an evangelical view of the church begins with the individual and moves to the group—once a person is “saved,” he or she voluntarily “joins” a church that measures up to a set of personal preferences (Ferguson, 72). Characteristically evangelicals minimize the means of grace (preaching and the sacraments) or redefine them in terms of individual experience. This voluntarist understanding of church membership is accompanied by a strong egalitarian view of church leadership, whereby ecclesiastical offices and authority are seen at best as irrelevant, at worst as impediments, to personal spirituality.

Because it lacks a strong biblical doctrine of the covenant and of the church, evangelical worship tends to value experience over catholicity, to prize personal testimonies above congregational litanies, and to restrict piety to particular acts of individual communion with God.

2.3 The psychologizing of self as anti-Christian religion

This modern preoccupation with the self radically affects the church's message and ministry, as Ronald Wells has argued.

In response to the humanist commitment to the perfectability of the self, the Christian gospel proclaims the radical sinfulness and self-deception of the human person, and calls for continual dying to self in cruciformity with Christ.

The psychologizing of life erodes the capacity for thinking, but the Christian gospel calls people to be committed to cognitive reality and objective truth outside themselves. There exists such a thing as “the Christian mind.”

Finally, the psychologizing of life corrodes interest in the world of creation and culture, but the Christian gospel seeks to integrate creation and redemption, nature and grace, general and special revelation.

3. A Response to the Challenge

Earlier we noted the description given in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 of people in “the last days.” In that context, we may not fail to notice that the apostle twice (vv. 10 and 14) emphatically calls Timothy, in the face of such degeneration around him, to remain rooted in Scripture’s patterns of teaching and morality. One important antidote for protecting the congregation from the ravages of self-lovers is the consistently biblical teaching and living on the part of the congregation’s leaders—minister, elders, and deacons.

This biblical teaching and living must involve careful attention to biblical images that describe the church’s identity and function in the world. In contrast to metaphors that possess a biblical richness and texture, today the church is seen by some as a *lecture hall* (with auditors receiving information, emphasizing *hearing*), by others as a *theatre* (viewing worship as drama, with actors, script, furnishings; emphasizing *seeing*), by still others as a *corporation* (in terms of management, marketing, and need-fulfilment, emphasizing *service*), and as a *family* (focusing on relationships, experience, and socialization, emphasizing *body life*). Now, to be sure, each of these images contains truths that we wish to preserve—the aural, the visual (think of the *visible* sacraments), service, and relationships. The challenge is to biblically integrate these images and aspects of the church’s identity and activity in the world (see Martin).

3.1 The church’s worship

Although we do not have the space for expanding this more fully, the challenges of individualism are met first of all by the church’s public worship. The Lord’s Day assembly of God’s people embodies the recognition of divine transcendence in a world committed to immanence. Worship directed to and empowered by the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reminds us that real truth can be apprehended with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength. Corporate, congregational worship is gladly

governed by God’s Word and self-consciously shaped by confessional truth about God, creation, humanity, sin, covenant, grace, Christology, pneumatology, and eschatology (to name a few dimensions). Such biblical worship enlists every dimension of human personality—mind, will, and emotions.

Most importantly, the means of grace administered in weekly congregational worship nurture the congregation as it lives out of the Bible’s ongoing story of creation—fall—redemption—consummation, of sin—salvation—service. Such worship, because it is directed to and empowered by the Triune God, integrates the “one” and the “many” in concrete fellowship and mutual identity. The “self” is nurtured as an essential part of the “whole,” while the body is nurtured by the growth of its members. Both the self and the body are nourished in their identity, calling, and function through the God-appointed congregational means of grace, viz., preaching and the blessed sacraments.

3.2 The church’s confession

As part of our response in terms of our description and diagnosis of the challenge of individualism to the church, we are selecting from a large number of confessional and doctrinal truths only two for elaboration and emphasis. These are the doctrines of *adoption* and of *the communion of the saints*.

3.2.1 *Adoption as fruit of justification and bridge between the one and the many in Christian experience*

It was Cyprian who insisted that he cannot have God as Father who refuses the church as mother. The church is the mother of believers, said John Calvin, because she brings them to new birth by the Word of God, educates and nourishes them all their life, strengthens them, and finally leads them to complete perfection (commentary on 1 Tim. 3.15).

For further orientation within Scripture, we cite the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 12, Of Adoption:

I. All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption,[1] by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God,[2] have his name put upon them,[3] receive the Spirit of adoption,[4] have access to the throne of grace with boldness,[5] are enabled to cry, Abba, Father,[6] are pitied,[7]

protected,[8] provided for,[9] and chastened by him, as by a father:[10] yet never cast off,[11] but sealed to the day of redemption:[12] and inherit the promises,[13] as heirs of everlasting salvation.[14]

(1) Eph. 1: 5; Gal. 4: 4-5. (2) Rom. 8: 17; John 1: 12. (3) Num. 6: 24-26; Jer. 14: 9; Amos 9: 12; Acts 15: 17; II Cor. 6: 18; Rev. 3: 12. (4) Rom. 8: 15. (5) Eph. 3: 12; Heb. 4: 16. (6) Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6 (7) Psa. 103: 13. (8) Prov. 14: 26. (9) Matt. 6: 30, 32; I Peter 5: 7. (10) Heb. 12: 6. (11) Lam. 3: 31-32; Psa. 89: 30-35. (12) Eph. 4: 30. (13) Heb. 6: 12. (14) I Peter 1: 3-4; Heb. 1: 14.

In addition, consider this summary from the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 74:

What is adoption?

Adoption is an act of the free grace of God,[1] in and for his only Son Jesus Christ,[2] whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children,[3] have his name put upon them,[4] the Spirit of his Son given to them,[5] are under his fatherly care and dispensations,[6] admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.[7]

(1) 1 John 3: 1. (2) Eph. 1: 5; Gal. 4: 4-5. (3) John 1: 12. (4) 2 Cor. 4: 18; Rev. 3: 12. (5) Gal. 4: 6. (6) Psa. 103: 13; Prov. 14: 26; Matt. 6: 32. (7) Heb. 6: 12; Rom. 8: 17.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q/A 34, teaches this:

What is adoption?

Adoption is an act of God's free grace,[1] whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the Sons of God.[2]

(1) 1 John 3: 1. (2) John 1: 12.

When these confessional formulations are understood together with those brief references to the believer's adoption in Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 13, Q/A 33 and Lord's Day 46, Q/A 120, it seems clear that adoption is a biblical distinctive emphasized mainly (though not exclusively) by the Reformed confessions.

We note that the apostle Paul used the term *huiiothesia* (adoption as sons; *huios* = son + *tithēmi* = to place) on five occasions: Rom.8.15, 23, 9.4, Gal.4.5, and Eph.1.5. Moreover, there is no corresponding use of *huiiothesia* in the LXX. This is only one of several terms Paul used to denote the filial relationship with believers and God, since he also used

phrases like “sons of God” (Rom.8.14,19, 9.26, 2 Cor.6.18, Gal.3.26, 4.6), “children of God” (Rom.8.16-17, 21, 9.21, Phil.2.15), “children of promise” (Rom.9.8, Gal.4.28), and “daughters” (2 Cor.6.18). The word *huiiothesia* was one of the most common terms for adoption in Hellenistic Greek (see Scott). There is no other term in either Pauline or biblical usage which has the same connotations as “adoption.”

The apostle John did not use this term. His most frequent phrase to describe believers was *tekna theou*, or “children of God” (1 John 3.1, 2, 5.2), whereas John usually employed the term *huios* in reference to Jesus Christ. This term *tekna* relates to the verb, *tiktein*, to beget, engender, procreate, give birth to. These words emphasize origin, where “child” has implications for family likeness.

Thus, we may observe that the soteriological idea of *huiiothesia* (adoption) is related to, but different from, that of *tekna theou* (children of God). The latter involves the idea of birth into the family/kingdom, along with the concept of family likeness. The former involves the idea of adoption into the family *and focuses more on the status and freedom of an adopted son or daughter within the family*. The importance of this difference lies in the fact that so often the Pauline usage has been conflated with the Johannine usage, such that adoption comes to be identified with regeneration. This ambiguity often leads in turn to the individualistic application of a term whose very essence consists in relationships that transcend the individual! To echo John Murray (2: 226-228): “[I]t is quite apparent that adoption is quite distinct from regeneration. We may never think of sonship as being constituted apart from the act of adoption.”

With the metaphor of adoption, Scripture provides a comparison picture of reality. This soteriological metaphor communicates the gospel in terms accessible to us. The key to its “success” lies in its Christocentricity, since this reality of adoption consists not first of all in a new existence, but in a new filial liberty through Jesus Christ. Only in Christ is adoption effectuated. Only through participation in Christ’s Sonship do we come to a knowledge of God the Father, and only in possession of the Spirit of Christ can we call upon God as our Father (Gal.3.26-28, 4.6). As Gal.4.4-6 makes clear, it is through the sending by the Father not only of the Son into the world, but of the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, that we are enabled to cry “Abba, Father!” Thus, adoption is fully Trinitarian: “Adoption proceeds according to the eternal purpose of the Father, upon the merits of the Son, and by the efficient agency of the Holy Ghost” (Hodge, 519). Sonship is the focus of the Father’s work in creation, the goal of Christ’s work in redemption, and the telos of the Spirit’s work in sanctification. In the covenant of grace, adoption depends on union with Christ. Especially

in Gal.3-4 and 4.1-7, Paul sets *huiiothesia* within a redemptive-historical perspective, one in which the Old Testament provides the key to a clear understanding of the connection between redemption and adoption as displayed in both the first and the second exodus. Israel is described in Gal.4.1-2 as *nēpios* (infant, baby) during their Egypt sojourn; as *nēpios* Israel was also a slave, little more than a minor. Yet at the same time, Israel was Yahweh's son, heir to the Abrahamic promise. The redemption of Israel was activated by God's calling Israel out of Egypt to experience the blessings of the relationship of sonship (cf. Hos.11.1): redemption *from* bondage and adoption *to* sonship (Rom.9.4). Similarly, in Jesus Christ the new Israel is both son and heir, redeemed from bondage to sin and adopted into God's new humanity.

Summarizing conclusion: redemption and adoption are correlative, and each ought to be considered a primary metaphor of the gospel, especially given that adoption, in completing redemption, serves as its climax or apex. Adoption always presupposes redemption, and we cannot fully understand redemption apart from adoption. Too often, the direct link between the two has been severed. The atonement has both a *retrospective* aspect (what we are saved *from*) and an equally essential *prospective* aspect (what we are saved *to*).

This has great benefit for our understanding of, and living as, the church of Jesus Christ. Preaching, counselling, pastoring, and living the Christian life are all informed by the communal, family identity supplied with the Bible's teaching on adoption. This teaching on adoption deepens our filial experience and communal enjoyment of salvation, and therefore a thoroughgoing doctrine of adoption provides an antidote to religious individualism. The gospel creates personal identity in union with Christ Jesus and his people. The church as family of God shares the features of creational human families, where structure provides security, where individuality is nurtured within relationships, where service and sacrifice pave the way to fulfilment and happiness.

3.2.2 *The communion of saints (communio sanctorum) and the church's body life as the integration of the self within the life of God's people*

The second doctrinal truth that we select as part of our confessional response to the challenge of individualism belongs to the Apostles' Creed: "I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints" (*credo . . . sanctam ecclesiam; sanctorum communionem . . .*). Once again we seek our orientation to Scripture's teaching by reviewing several Reformed

confessional statements. The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, Q/A 55, teaches:

What do you understand by the “communion of saints”?

First, that believers, one and all, as members of the Lord Jesus Christ, are partakers with Him in all His treasures and gifts;[1] second, that each one must feel himself bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and welfare of other members.[2]

(1) 1 John 1: 3. (2) 1 Cor. 12: 12-13, 21; 13: 5-6; Phil. 2: 4-6; Heb. 3: 14.

Similarly we find this fulsome confession in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 26, Of the Communion of Saints:

I. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory:[1] and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces,[2] and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.[3]

(1) 1 John 1: 3; Eph. 2: 5-6; 3: 16-18; John 1: 16; Phil. 3: 10; Rom. 6: 5-6; 8: 17; 2 Tim. 2:12. (2) Eph. 4: 15-16; 1 Cor. 3: 21-23; 12: 7, 12; Col. 2: 19. (3) 1 Thess. 5: 11, 14; Rom. 1: 11-12, 14; 1 John 3: 16-18; Gal. 6: 10.

II. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification;[4] as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.[5]

(4) Heb. 10: 24-25; Acts 2: 42, 46; Isa. 2: 3; 1 Cor. 11: 20. (5) 1 John 3: 17; 2 Cor. 8-9; Acts 2: 44-45; 11: 29-30.

III. This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of his Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous.[6] Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away, or infringe

the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.[7]

(6) Col. 1: 18-19; 1 Cor. 8: 6; Psa. 45: 6-7; Heb. 1: 6-9; John 1: 14; 20: 17. (7) Exod. 20: 15; Eph. 4: 28; Acts 5: 4.

We begin with the observation that especially in the New Testament, the church's "fellowship" (*koinōnia* and related words: *koinōnos*, *koinōneō*, *syngkoinōnos*, and *syngkoinōneō*) is a Christ-given, Spirit-driven reality, pointing to the common life that believers share by virtue of their union with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, rooted in grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit of fellowship (1 Cor.1.9, 2 Cor.13.13, 1 Jn.1.3, 1.6-7). In the church it consists additionally in fellowship or partnership in the gospel (Phil.1.5), fellowship in Christ as Jews and Gentiles (Rom.3.29-30, 11.17; Gal.3.26-29, 4.28-31), along with fellowship in suffering for Christ's sake (2 Cor.1.7; Phil.3.10) and sharing with the saints for Christ's sake (2 Cor.8.4). The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a fellowship in the body and blood of Christ (2 Cor.10.16). Notably, the early church spent much time in fellowship (Ac.2.42, 44).

In this connection, perhaps the most instructive passage dealing with the integration of the one and the many within the life of the church is 1 Corinthians 12, especially verses 12-26. Already in verses 4-7 we are taught that this integration is a sovereign and spiritual gift of the Triune God, who enlists everyone (v. 6) in service to the common good (v. 7).

The apostle's argument consists of three sections: (1) vv. 12-14, (2) vv. 15-20, and (3) vv. 21-26. The first section sets forth the basic teaching or premise, emphasizing both diversity amid unity, and unity amid diversity. Verse 13 picks up the opening claim that the body is one, and explains how the many members became one body: they drank of the one Spirit. Verse 14 then picks up the second notion of unity as context for diversity. Then follows the second and third paragraph sections (vv. 15-20 and 21-26, respectively), which illustrate and apply the two concerns of the first section, viz., diversity and unity.

We may identify and summarize several important and relevant teachings from this passage for meeting the challenge of individualism.

1. According to v.12, there is no such thing as true unity without diversity; hence, unity is essentially different from uniformity. A human body consists of many different members, whose differences do not contradict the essential unity of the body. Note that the body is Christ himself—he is the Head of the church and the church is the body of *Christ*.

2. According to v.13, this unity originated from the Holy Spirit; it is thus a Spirit-given and a Spirit-driven unity, symbolized by the sacrament of baptism. The same Spirit, the one Spirit, dwells and works within each Christian and within all Christians together.

3. According to v.18, the composition of a congregation's diversity (foot, hand, eye, ear) originates from God's sovereign arrangement. The church's composition, in terms of diversity, is not haphazard, but heaven-originating.

4. According to vv.24-25, the goal of God's sovereign composition of the congregation's diversity is that the members may have the same care for one another (*to auto huper allēlōn merimnōsin*). Notice that within these verses we encounter the nearest thing to an exhortation or command, softly introduced by the phrase "in order that"—the divine composition and arrangement of the body aim at the unity and mutual care of its members.

5. Verse 27 presents the summary: "Now you [plural] are body of Christ and members in particular." No individual is the whole, and the whole excludes no individual.

Summarizing conclusion: In contrast to self-centered religious experience, Scripture enjoins the self-giving and self-denying mutuality of living in the family of God, the body of Christ, the church. Among the most powerful biblical metaphors that can help us address the challenge of individualism in church life today is the word picture of *the church as the family of God*. As in every well-functioning family, in the family of God mutual relationships embodying accountability and service are inescapable. This reality is found already at creation (Gen. 1.27-28, 2.18-24) and forms an essential thread in the story of Scripture. The church as the family of God, the new humanity born of water and the Spirit (Jn.3.5-8), is the goal and crown of divine redemption.

What this generation (whether Gen X or Gen Y, whether Baby Boomers or Millennials) needs is what every generation needs: the kind of caring, serving, discipling community that is to be found only in the church of Jesus Christ. Every activity of the church must be intentionally directed and serviceable to *community*, to family life. The best response to the challenge of individualism is to be(come) an Acts 2.42 church: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Of course, doctrine and worship belong to the church's identity and essence, but so do fellowship and festivity, communion and celebration. These are not automatic by-products of the Christian faith, but rather activities to be cultivated for the sake of the

formative blessings they impart. Fellowship fosters accountability, communion serves collaboration, and the church-as-family provides the necessary religious socialization of the individual believer.

The church-as-communion lives together as a teaching/learning, worshiping/serving, discipling/mentoring, and needy/caring community. The family of God celebrates baptism as the sacrament of *incorporation*—literally, the in-body-ing of the one baptized into the body of Christ. The Lord’s Supper is celebrated intentionally (with form and format) as a sacrament symbolizing not only union and communion with Christ, but also union and communion with other believers.

The church-as-communion invents and manufactures activities that foster and enhance the *belonging* of each member to all other members. By means of such historic practices as home visiting (cf. Acts 5.42, 20.20), small group ministry, congregational meals (cf. Acts 2.47), and mentoring relationships (cf. Titus 2.3), the church-as-communion will seek to foster “one anothering” and “togethering.”

Attending to the sociology of the church will aid the pulpit in applying the Word of God concretely to those diverse relationships in the congregation. With all of the strains and demands being placed today upon the home, the school, and the public square, the church-as-family must assist by intentionally cultivating Christian virtues (self-denial, sacrifice, suffering, service) as part of the church’s witness to the watching world. Within the church-as-family, the confession that “each one must feel himself bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and welfare of other members” must be translated into conduct. Members are obligated to give, to serve, to match resources to needs—and for this the office bearers must provide leadership, counsel, and example.

Conclusion

What shall we say then, brothers, of the emergent church, of postmodernism, of globalization, and all such movements that impact the debate between individualism and collectivism? Time would fail us to tell of recent theories in sociology, anthropology, psychology—to say nothing of religion and ethics.

Many Christian thinkers are comparing today’s situation to that faced by the early church, and are emphasizing the church’s calling to live in pilgrimage, to suffer, and to witness by lifestyle. The challenge of individualism in church life must and can be met only when the church of Jesus Christ demonstrates its unique identity in the world in terms of

solidarity among its members. The church is God's new creation, where diversity serves unity and unity is enhanced through diversity, and where our old natural fear of differences among people (varieties of languages, cultures, backgrounds, habits, etc.) is replaced with the Spirit's gift of fellowship in Christ. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of his Spirit, within the church authority can dwell peaceably with authenticity, diversity will serve community, and the integrative life of our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, may be exhibited in our time and space.

Note: Group discussions of this paper identified two additional fruitful trajectories for discussing the challenge of individualism, namely, those of the divine Trinity and of the covenant. Biblical teaching concerning each of these offers essential and useful insights for integrating both the individual and the community. Space limitations prevent us from supplementing the original address, however.

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Paper 2: Appendix 1

Propositions for Discussion

1. To respond effectively to the challenge of individualism in church life, we must recover and teach a fully biblical doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit as confessed in the Apostles' Creed, especially regarding "a holy catholic church, the communion of saints, and the forgiveness of sins."
2. To respond effectively to the challenge of individualism in church life, we must distinguish clearly and carefully between uniformity and unity in the church.
3. To respond effectively to the challenge of individualism in church life, we must identify and forsake common alternatives to Spirit-given and Spirit-driven unity in the congregation.
4. It would be helpful to discuss "fellowship" as a mark of the true church, in order to nurture fellowship as an indispensable component of the church's life for integrating the church's worship, service, and witness.
5. For the sake of healthy church life in our time, we must cultivate a biblically balanced assessment of evangelicalism.

Committee Report

Discussion of Paper 2

Individualism

1. Consensus
There is consensus among the delegates regarding the problem statement, the diagnosis of the challenge and the doctrinal points which voice the response to the challenge.
2. Exploration
Certain points caught our attention:
 - 2.1. To challenge individualism, great care should be taken with the individuals involved. Although it is important to work in a group, the specific needs of an individual should not be neglected.
 - 2.2. Practical teamwork is a necessity, not only because that is the way a church as body is functioning, but also because that is the most effective way to achieve goals in modern society.
 - 2.3. Focus on true repentance in an instance where pride or self esteem play a role. It should be clearly stated that self-centred behaviour is a sin and typical fruit of the flesh.
 - 2.4. We must distinguish the wrong emphasis on the individual that came about with the Enlightenment from the proper biblical emphasis that was recovered at the Reformation.
3. Practical implications
The practical application of the principles are of importance.
 - 3.1. We must confess that the Holy Spirit creates true community, where individuals are incorporated and receive their Spirit-given identity.
 - 3.2. To distinguish between unity and uniformity, it may be helpful to use the distinction between elements and circumstances, as this is applied to worship.
 - 3.3. In evaluating the experience of “community” outside the Christian faith, perhaps we might distinguish between the concept of *sunousia*, or co-existence, and *koinonia*, or community. There is a sense in which unbelievers experience togetherness, but always in a way less than what God has intended and designed for human beings.
 - 3.4. A clear view of what true *koinonia* is and what it is not is important. For example, *koinonia* is not the same as togetherness, a cosy atmosphere or a natural friendship.

- 3.5. The focus should fall on *ministry* – towards a relationship with Jesus Christ and, following that, with one another.
- 3.6. The importance of ministry within covenantal parameters should be stressed.
- 3.7. Individualism is an identity-problem. The church as covenant community suffers on account of this. It should be addressed by a covenantal approach to identify personal sin to ensure the individual becomes part of the body as covenant community (*koinonia*).
- 3.8. Churches should avoid an approach where groups are ministered to while the body is being ignored.
- 3.9. In preaching, the application should not only address the heart and life of the individual, but also the covenant community as a whole.

Rev. Dr Nelson Kloosterman

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The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Islam

Rev. P. Frank Van Dalen

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Synopsis

Numerically speaking, Islam is the world's second largest and fastest growing religion. It controls most of the people who live in the "10/40 Window" – the least evangelized area of the world. Muslim leaders are increasingly radical and outspoken in their demands for Sharia (Islamic Law) to be implemented in Muslim-majority countries as well as within Muslim-minority communities in other countries, especially in the West. Humanly speaking, Islam is the greatest threat to the Christian faith at the present time.

How can the Reformed community respond to the challenges of Islam? This paper will focus on two areas: (i) the response of Reformed churches to opportunities to reach Muslims in their own countries; and (ii) the response of Reformed churches to Muslim penetration into the "Christian" West. Much of the material will be practical and will rely on examples from ministries in which the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is involved. The goal will be to use these examples as illustrations of principles which can be applied more universally within the Reformed community.

The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Islam

Rev. P. Frank Van Dalen

1. The Response of the Reformed Community to Opportunities in Muslim lands.

World Witness, the Foreign Missions Board of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, has recently completed a strategic analysis of its fields. The Board believes that our focus over the next ten years should be on outreach to the Muslim world, specifically in three countries: Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Each of these countries provides separate challenges and opportunities which will be outlined in this paper.

1.1. Pakistan

World Witness has served in Pakistan since 1906 and currently has two main ministries which are focused on Muslims in that country: the Christian Hospital in Sahiwal; and the Karachi branch of the Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute. The Christian Hospital began as a clinic in response to medical needs in the south-central region of the Punjab province of North-West India (now Pakistan) during the early part of the 20th Century. “Between 1901 and 1911, over eight million people died in the Punjab from epidemics of cholera and bubonic plague.”²⁸ A local hospital was sorely needed. In 1917, the Nancy Fulwood Hospital (often colloquially called “the Christian Hospital” or “the Mission Hospital”) was dedicated. The hospital has been rebuilt several times on the same basic footprint and reaches approximately 30,000 patients and their family members each year – 98% of whom are Muslims.

Although it is becoming increasingly difficult to be involved in public evangelism in Pakistan, there is complete freedom to share the Good News within the walls of the hospital. World Witness has responded to this opportunity in two ways: (i) developing a credible platform for verbal witness by providing high-quality medical care and distinctively Christian behavior on the part of the hospital staff; and (ii) training all our hospital staff in a method of evangelism (Evangelism Explosion) which directly addresses the most profound spiritual needs of the Muslim community.

²⁸ Emily Van Dalen, *A Brief History of World Witness*, 2003, 12.

There is a dedicated Spiritual Life team in the hospital made up of both men and women under the supervision of an ordained pastor. A team representative visits patients with the doctors during their morning rounds in order to establish credibility as a part of the medical team. They then go back to the patients and offer to pray with them and their families “in the Name of Jesus.” Members of the Spiritual Life Team report that 98% of patients and family attendees respond favorably to this offer. It is my personal understanding that this is because Muslims believe that Allah will hear prayers made through the prophet Jesus who was known for His healing miracles, whereas prayers made directly to Allah are those which are simply required.²⁹ Allah, despite being “merciful and gracious” (*raheem-o-kareem*), is also distant and detached from his subjects on earth.

The Jesus film, produced by Campus Crusade for Christ and translated into several languages is one of several movies shown on a central in-house system and is well received by about 70% of Muslim patients and relatives in the hospital. A smaller number (closer to 40%) are interested in literature. The percentage continues to decrease to about 20% who are interested in serious discussions with the ministry team. But given the large number of patients who attend the hospital, this amounts to approximately 6,000 people per year – a significant number in any Muslim ministry and especially in a country where public evangelism is generally discouraged.

At the end of the day, however, what matters is the number of people who make professions of faith in Christ. That amounts to approximately 2% of patients who come to the hospital – about 600 persons. A high percentage of these conversions are from the nominal Christian community in Pakistan. Even so, of the 600 people who make professions of faith, at least 200 would be from the majority Muslim community. What happens to them next? That is where we face a major problem. Because of overt persecution (generally, in the Punjab this is limited to ostracism and severe pressure brought upon them by family and community members), many converts remain secret believers.³⁰ So far no Muslim Background Believer

²⁹ “Muslims are highly receptive to prayer in Jesus name since Jesus was a great miracle worker in the Qu’ran.”, <http://www.vineyardusa.org/site/task-forces/blessing-muslims>, A Vineyard Approach to blessing Muslims.

³⁰ Note that the Muslim believers have to look no further than the Christian community to see how a convert will be treated. A recent news article stated that, “Christians in Pakistan are suffering escalating and intensifying persecution. Writing in Pakistan’s “Daily Times” (21 September), commentator Syed Mansoor Hussain said he believed recent attacks on Christian communities are part of a new strategy by Islamic fundamentalist organizations. The Taliban has lost a lot of grassroots support through its widespread killing and repression of Muslims. So

(MBB) congregations have been established through the ministry of the hospital. And attempts at developing this part of the ministry has often led to serious complaints being brought by the Police against the hospital authorities and missionaries for the crime of proselytizing – which can result in immediate expulsion of any missionary involved in this work. For that reason, most converts are referred to the relative anonymity of the Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute.

The Karachi office of the Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute has a long and illustrious history. Over the past twenty five years at least 100,000 Certificates for the study of God's Word have been issued to Christian and Muslim students (about half the students are Muslim). The aim is to "let the Word speak for itself." Bible Study lessons are provided which ask simple questions about the passage and focus on the Holy Spirit guiding the mind and heart of the Muslim to understanding. There is little actual teaching provided in addition to the questions about the passage of the Word of God. It is more a "journey of discovery" led by the Holy Spirit. Approximately 94% of Muslim-background believers in Pakistan have a series of Bible Correspondence courses as a part of their pilgrimage to the Christian faith. However, the ministry is now in decline. Whereas there were 700 Muslim students at any one time during the 1990's, this figure has currently declined to about 130 Muslim students at any one time. The other four centers of the Bible Correspondence Institute have experienced a similar decline. The reasons for this decline need further exploration.

1.2. Iran

World Witness's ministry to Iran began in the US through a former missionary who was forced to return to the US after the Islamic revolution of 1979. He became the pastor of an ARP congregation in Washington, DC, and began planting an Iranian congregation within the same church building where his Anglo-American congregation was worshipping. Many of the Iranians attending the Farsi language services were first-generation

now the fundamentalists are inciting their militants to launch Islamic campaigns specifically targeting Christians. This fires up Islamic zeal and keeps the radicalized followers engaged whilst not threatening or offending the general Muslim population. And as Hussain notes, while Islamic apologists 'keep repeating the mantra that Islam is a tolerant religion', too many politicians, police and lawyers are either too intimidated by, or too supportive of, the militants to bring them to justice. So the killings in Islam's name continue with impunity." Pakistan: Islamic Fundamentalists Target Christians." Elizabeth Kendal, Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin, Assist News Service, September 23, 2009

immigrants to the US. Growth was dramatic as the Iranians have become the most responsive Muslim community in the world today.

The Iranian/Persian work then expanded to more of a teaching/ training/ mentoring ministry to Iranian pastors serving the Iranian Diaspora around the world. Louis Berkhof's *Introduction to Systematic Theology* has been translated into Farsi. A bi-monthly magazine, *Shaban* (Shepherd), is produced for Church leaders and this can be downloaded from the Internet.³¹ Further, a "model house church" meets monthly in California and its meetings are broadcast into Iran by satellite. Iran has the highest rate of television viewing in the world (despite a legal ban on satellite dishes in Iran) and this has led to a number of ministries taking advantage of this opportunity. In order to strengthen the Reformed understanding of the Scriptures in Iran, World Witness has focused on recruiting Farsi-speaking theological teachers as missionaries for this ministry.

1.3. Turkey

World Witness ministry in Turkey began approximately 15 years ago. The work began with one missionary family and has grown to five missionary families focused on aggressive church planting. World Witness has taken advantage of the desire for Turkey to join the European Community and the consequent desire to demonstrate openness and freedom of religion in that land. A 5-storied ministry center has been established in the city of Izmir. The top floor is a worship hall in which approximately 100 Turkish MBB's meet for worship every Sunday. I have personally attended a worship service at this center in which 10% of the attendees were first-time or recent visitors to the church. A testimony given by one Muslim was that he wished that hundreds would be able to come and experience the worship and fellowship that he was able to see at that time.

However, this encouraging response from an inquirer must be balanced with the fact that there is still significant opposition to Turks becoming Christians. Many professed believers come to the point of baptism (generally regarded as the final step for entry into the Christian community) and then back away. As in Pakistan and Iran, persecution is very real and powerful. It is very difficult to remain an "anonymous believer" and much of the opposition appears to come not, as might be expected from Muslim fundamentalists, but most often from Turkish nationalists. "In Silivri a town west of Istanbul two converts are currently on trial for the uniquely Turkish crime of 'insulting Turkishness' and for

³¹ <http://www.farsinet.com/talim/shaban/>

‘incitement of religious hatred,’ both considered crimes under the notorious Article 301 of the country's penal code.”³²

Still, the fact that there are converts willing to endure persecution in order to receive their eternal reward in Christ is exciting. The Lord is working in Turkey and it is incumbent on the Church to take advantage of the relative freedom to share the Gospel in this land. The ARP team is expanding especially to those towns and cities which have no missionary presence and, despite official and unofficial opposition persistent efforts have been met with success. In addition, the church planting work has been supplemented by the Anatolian Theological Institute which provides Turkish-language theological and biblical courses for the nascent Church in Turkey. The Church is being re-established in the “land of the seven churches.”

1.4. Summary

These ministries show that there are significant opportunities for Reformed church planting in Muslim lands. The work is sometimes dangerous and the Muslim governments are often capricious in their actions vis-à-vis the Christian and missionary communities. However, the situation is no different from that experienced by the Early Church and simply requires the zeal, commitment and focus which were demonstrated by the Apostle Paul and his fellow missionaries.³³ There is a desperate need for Reformed

³² “Christian Converts Live In Fear in Intolerant Turkey.” Annette Grossbongardt (“Der Spiegel,” April 23, 2007) “The danger does not come -- as one might expect - - from the usual fundamentalist Muslims. Instead, it is an unholy alliance of nationalists ranging from the left to the Islamic right that is inciting hatred against free thinkers and those of other faiths.”

“Turkey: Trial For ‘Insulting Turkishness’ Still Hounding Converts”, (“Compass Direct News”, March 17, 2008) Turan Topal and Hakan Tastan, who were searched, detained and then charged in October 2006 under Turkey’s controversial Article 301 restricting freedom of speech, have been on trial for 18 months. Turan Topal converted to Christianity in 1989 whereas Hakan Tastan converted in 1994. The men were accused of insulting Turkish heritage and inciting hate against Muslims while allegedly trying to convert other Turks to Christianity. The three plaintiffs, identified as Fatih Kose, 23, Alper, 16, and Oguz, 17, claimed the two Christians had called Islam a “primitive and fabricated religion” and had described Turks as a ‘cursed people.’ They also accused the defendants of opposing the Turkish military, encouraging sexual misconduct, procuring funds from abroad to entice young people in Silivri to become Christians and secretly compiling data on private citizens for a local Bible correspondence course.

teaching within the context of cooperative ministry with other evangelical mission agencies and denominations.

2.0. The Response of the Church to Muslim Penetration into the “Christian” West.

Islam has increasingly penetrated the West. This is more so in the case of Europe than the USA. However, the goals and methods of Islamic evangelists seems to be similar in both cases: The goal is to dominate.³⁴ The method involves: neutralizing any opposition (fear, debate, dialogue); exploiting democracy’s preference for the rights of a minority; insisting on the special right of Islam to its own legal, educational and social culture within the context of a larger society; and then unashamedly promoting Islam as the solution to cultural and moral anarchy in the West.

2.1. Islam’s goals in the West

There is no doubt that Muslim strategists have just as zealous a vision of penetrating the West with Islam as we Christians have of penetrating the Muslim world with the Gospel.³⁵ In fact, it could be argued (and Muslims definitely feel this) that Muslims are even more zealous about achieving their goals that we are. They boast of their zeal and the lack of it amongst Christians.³⁶

³³ Romans 8:35 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?”

Hebrews 10:33 “Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated.”

³⁴ “Islam isn’t in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant.” Council on American Islamic Relations, Chairman Omar M. Ahmad, July 1998.

³⁵ The following article appeared in the email newsletter, “Presbyterian-Week” 22 July, 2009. “Chicago Conference on The Fall of Capitalism and the Rise of Islam.” *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, the international movement to re-establish an international Islamic Caliphate, met in Chicago, Illinois, on 19 July 2009 in a conference to begin a new campaign to win American recruits to Islam One speaker suggested that modern industrial powers could fall to Muslims the way that Mecca, Saudi Arabia, fell to Mohammed nearly 1,400 years ago. Another speaker said that “if they offer us the sun, or the moon, or a nice raise, or a passport, or a house in the suburbs or even a place to pray at the job, on the condition that we stop calling for Islam as a complete way of life - we should never do that, ever do that - unless and until Islam becomes victorious or we die in the attempt.” Yet another called for the replacement of the U.S. Constitution with Sharia Law.”

³⁶ Premier Christian News (www.premier.org.uk) Monday, August 24, 2009A Muslim scholar has accused Christian leaders of not doing enough to prevent Christian persecution around the world. Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al Hussaini has been speaking exclusively to Premier. He suggests that the church does little to

2.2. ARPCConnect: Building Bridges to Islam

After 9/11/2001, the ARP Synod in the US mandated that its home and foreign missions agencies respond together to the challenge of Islam in the USA. A joint ministry called ARPCConnect has been established and has functioned effectively since that time. There is a two-fold stated purpose to this ministry: (i) equip and resource the ARP denomination in contact, outreach and ministry to the Muslim community; and (ii) lead the ARP denomination in direct outreach to Muslims in the US. We believe that the reason why the Lord allowed Muslims to come to the West is so that they can have the freedom to openly respond to the Gospel, a freedom that does not exist in most Muslim countries.

2.2.1. Equipping the Church to Understand and Respond to Muslims

The equipping task includes: a web site (<http://www.ARPCConnect.org>); training seminars for churches which cover both the historical development of Islam as well as its current forms. Governments in the West focus primarily on the more violent forms of “radical Islam” and try to separate this from the more “moderate” Muslims. However, it is our contention that, although the vast majority of Muslims are non-radical and certainly non-violent, the training in outward conformity that is integral to Islam means that the moderate majority will not stand up to the radical minority. The whole community is therefore radicalized. This results in the Islamic communities in the West being alienated and isolated from the Christian and secular communities among which they reside.

We begin with the Christian community in the US. Courses are offered in Churches which explain what Islam teaches and helps to de-mystify some of the concepts that people have about Muslims. An important part of this is the yearly short-term mission trip to Dearborn, Michigan, one of the centers of Islam in the United States. This past summer 27 ARP’s were exposed to Muslim culture during “Arab week” in Dearborn and were given many opportunities to present the Gospel in personal evangelism.

react against persecution in comparison to the Muslim community: “One thing that we Muslims can absolutely rely upon is that where the tiniest thing kicks off in the Gaza or West Bank, there are protests in Muslim cities all the way from Jakarta to Timbuktu. In the case of persecuted Christian minorities, horrendous machete attacks take place in Nigeria, Christians in Iraq are burned out of their houses, and Christians in Pakistan are stoned or attacked on the slightest pretext. In all cases what we will hear is just a whimper.”

2.2.2. Direct Missionary Outreach to Muslims in the West

The isolation of the Muslim community demands an aggressive response from the Reformed community in the West. We cannot expect Muslims to come to our churches and worship services by themselves. Instead, because the cultural differences are so great, we believe that the most effective method of outreach is to appoint missionaries who are not only resources for the Church in the West, but also focused on training others in cross-cultural outreach to the Muslim community in the West. The Muslim community is a mission field (a cultural context which requires specialized training) no matter where it is geographically located.

World Witness has responded to this need by placing one of its missionaries in Dearborn, Michigan. Joseph Alghrary, an American of Iraqi descent, has been seconded to the Aramaic Broadcasting Network which, despite its name, airs television programs focused primarily on the Arabic-speaking community in the US (approximately 2 million people). Joseph hosts a *News and Views* program which challenges Muslim claims about Islam (e.g. the purity of the Quran³⁷) and the response of Christians to those claims. The potential satellite audience is around 2 million in the US. However, the program is also broadcast live on the internet giving it a much larger potential audience around the world. The number of regular viewers is growing receives about 40 to 50 phone calls during the 1.5 hour program. Of the callers, about 20% are Muslim. Because its primary language is English, the program reaches non-Arabic speaking Muslims as well as second-generation Muslims.

³⁷ There are several articles challenging this claim on the www.answering-islam.org website For example: (i) Samuel Green, "The Different Arabic Versions of the Qur'an" and "How and Why the Qur'an was Standardized." (ii) Arthur Jeffrey, "Texts Unchanged, Texts Unchanging." (iii) Sam Shamoun, "Variant Readings of the Quran."

One of the most fascinating challenges to the Islamic claim that the Quran was pure and unchanged from the original manuscripts is "The 1972 discovery of the earliest surviving Quranic manuscripts in the Great Mosque of Sana'a [which] conclusively shows that the present Quran is different from the early manuscripts." The article by Sujit Das is rather optimistically titled: "Would the Ancient Quranic Manuscripts of Sana'a Spell the Downfall of Islam?" (http://www.islam-watch.org/iw-new/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46:earliest-quranic-manuscripts-of-sanaa-downfall-of-islam&catid=78:sujit&Itemid=58)

None-the-less, this discovery must be regarded as on the same level as that of the Dead Sea Scrolls which had the opposite effect of confirming faith in the dependability of our present-day Bible vis-à-vis the original manuscripts.

However, this public outreach to the Muslim community is also matched by a more direct person-to-person evangelism. This reflects the gifting of the missionary involved, Ali M. He arranges *Meetings For Better Understanding* between the Muslim and Christian communities so that friendships can be established and the Gospel shared within that context.³⁸ It has been observed that many Muslims in the United States expect a reaction of fear and rejection when they are met by a member of the evangelical Christian community. A response of friendship and openness can be quite disarming and lead to many opportunities to share the Gospel, as much by deed as by Word. Muslims are observant and will many times see the Gospel lived out in a person before they are prepared to listen to it.

3.0. Summary

The ARP denomination believes that its focus on the Muslim community is a strategic use of its resources at a time in history when the evil one is using Islam to attack and cause serious harm to the Christian community around the world. Islam, like other religions, is spiritual slavery. Those who are perishing must be rescued from him who holds them in his evil grip. As Reformed Christians we rejoice that “the gates of hell will not prevail” against the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Humanly speaking, the battle is hopeless. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, who works through the witness of Christ’s people, and the clear teaching of His Word, the world of Islam will face spiritual defeat and many will be brought into the glorious Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

³⁸ Bruce A. McDowell and Anees Zaka, *Muslims and Christians at the Table: Promoting Biblical Understanding Among North American Muslims*, Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 1999

Paper 3: Appendix 1
How Do We Respond To The Challenge Of Islam?
How Can We Reach Muslims For Christ?

How can I overcome my fears?

- Immerse yourself in the Word
- Read MBB testimonies
- Pray for Muslim people
- Interact with friends of Muslims
- Take steps of faith toward meeting Muslims
- Concentrate on just a few Muslim friends
- Team up

How can I meet Muslim people?

- Pray for divine appointments
- Learn how to recognize Muslims
- Look for Muslims in your stores, restaurants, schools, etc
- Go to Middle Eastern and
- Take a tour of a mosque
- Go to dialogues, open houses, cultural and community events (e.g. Iftar)
- Hospitality for students
- Language partner

How can I be culturally sensitive?

- Show respect for the Bible and Quran
- Show respect for the prophets
- Show respect for elders
- Use the right hand
- Avoid pork and alcohol
- Defer to sensitivities about dogs
- Show modesty in dress
- Show modesty in eye contact
- Show modesty in physical contact
- Focus on your own gender
- Send Eid cards

How can I show hospitality?

- Have an open home
- Invite Muslims to come into your home
- Serve something every time
- Serve without asking
- Remember what is halal
- Introduce Muslims to your family
- Assess degree of conservatism
- Ask about prayer times/washing
- Don't rush visits
- Walk people to the street

How can I start a spiritual Conversation?

- “What is it like to be a Muslim in this country?”
- “How is Ramadan different here from Ramadan in a Muslim country?”
- “What are some special challenges Muslims face in this country?”
- “What is the single biggest problem mankind faces?”
- “Do you think most people in Muslim lands are good Muslims?”
- “What makes a person a good Muslim?”
- “Is that enough to assure a person of God's forgiveness?”
- “Have you ever been on the Hajj?”
- “Have you ever read the Injil?”
- “Would you like to study the Injil?”
- “What are people talking about in your home country these days?”
- “What things do you think are most important to talk about?”

How can I express biblical truth?

- Illustrations
- Parables
- Poetry
- Personal testimony
- Searching questions
- Life witness
- Not just statements of doctrine

How can I express biblical truth?

- Shame and guilt: Luke 18: 11-32, Parable of the Lost Son
- Sacrifice: Genesis 22 :12, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son
- Forgiveness: Luke 23: 34, Jesus on the cross
- Love: Luke 7: 36-47, Jesus anointed by a sinful woman
- Submission to God's will: James 4: 13-15, "If it is the Lord's will..."
- Honor: Proverbs 22: 1, "A good name is more desirable than great riches..."
- Obedience with faith: Daniel 3:1-30, The fiery furnace
- Self-righteousness: Luke 18:10-14, The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector
- Purity: Matthew 5: 1-20, The Pharisees rely on rituals and tradition
- Humility: John 13: 1-17, Jesus washes the disciples' feet
- God's sovereignty: Genesis 50: 15-21, "... but God intended it for good."

How can I explain the gospel?

- Make godly choices (actions speak louder ...)
- Open the Word and let them read it themselves
- Show how Jesus fulfills O.T. prophecy
- Show how Jesus is the perfect sacrifice
- Talk about shame, purity, and fear
- Use everyday illustrations
- Give the Bible as a precious gift
- Send people to www.muslimsletstalk.com

How can I pray for Muslims?

- Use the "30 Days Muslim Prayer Focus"
- Use "Global Prayer Digest" online
- Use "Operation World"
- Use missionary prayer letters
- Pray for felt needs in people's lives

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you... This is

the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.” (Colossians 1: 21- 23)

Committee Report

Discussion of Paper 3

Islam

1. *“Humanly speaking, Islam is the greatest threat to the Christian faith at the present time.” What is your response to this statement? How does Islam particularly affect Reformed churches?*

Responses: Although we recognize that Islam (especially radical Islam) can be a threat to the Christian church in the same way that Communism set itself against Christianity and declared itself to be an enemy of Christ, we also recognize: (i) secularism may be a more significant threat in some areas of the world. Indeed, Muslims in Europe see secularism as a threat to Islam as well. (ii) Perhaps it would be better to see Islam as a challenge rather than a threat. (iii) Islam is itself divided and should not be regarded as a unified threat. Conversely, however, Islam does unite against a common “enemy” and Christianity is perceived as that enemy.

We note the historical practice of Muslims that when they have approached approximately 40% of a population (with Indonesia as an example), they have engaged in aggressive “Jihad” to implement Islam and Sharia and to establish a permanent Muslim majority. Those of us who live in Muslim minority nations need to be aware of this danger.

2. *How valid is a ministry that records individual conversions but is not yet able to plant a Muslim Background Believer (MBB) congregation?*

We believe that, although our ultimate goal is the planting of churches, there are circumstances where this may not be possible for a period of time. Patience is a virtue in ministry to Muslims. However, although we may have to anticipate up to 15 years of ministry before we see fruit in some communities, it appears that the Holy Spirit is working significantly within the Iranian and Turkish communities which are currently very responsive to the Gospel.

3. *How do we respond to the persecution of Christians in Muslim lands: prayer or protest? Should Reformed churches support “justice ministries” which speak to political leaders and call for freedom of religion as a human right?*

We need to both pray for our persecuted brethren as well as to protest to the relevant authorities about this persecution. We also need to not only be aware of the Protocol for Implementing Mandate 5: Assistance to Persecuted Christians, but also to ensure that we act upon it.

4. *“There is a desperate need for Reformed teaching within the context of cooperative ministry with other evangelical mission agencies and denominations.” What is your response to this statement? What parameters would you set to cooperative ministry?*

We should cooperate with other evangelical agencies in bringing the basic Gospel message to Muslims. We need to demonstrate our unity in Christ as much as possible. However, the deeper we get into teaching, the more the differences between denominations appear and the more difficult it is to have cooperative ministries. The boundaries between cooperation and distinction are not ‘hard and fast’ and have to be determined in each situation.

The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Asian Context

Rev. Dr Mohan Chacko

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The theme of our Conference is given as “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith,” and I am assigned to speak on the subject specifically with reference to the Asian-Pacific context. Three “challenges” facing the Reformed faith have been identified for us, namely Charismatic movement, individualism in church life, and Islam.

What constitutes the Asian-Pacific context, and what are the specific challenges arising from that context are matters that need further consideration. It is legitimate to ask whether these indeed are challenges in Asia, and if so they are challenges with some priority for the Reformed faith. If we survey the issues facing Christianity in Asia, it will become obvious to us that there are many other challenges facing Asian Christianity, and perhaps even more urgent ones, such as the growing persecution faced by Christians in many Asian countries.

However, since what would be expected and helpful would be an Asian reflection on these issues, I have chosen to deal with two of the identified challenges – the Charismatic Movement and Individualism in Church Life – and add another, namely, mission and ecumenicity.

It must be clarified at the outset that not considering Islam here is not because I consider Islam to be less of a challenge in the Asian context. That would truly be a mistake. Like some other religions of Asian origin, Islam has found deep roots in the Asian soil. Millions of Asians are swayed by its doctrines, philosophy and way of life. The only reason I have left it out is because of the complexity of the subject, and my own inability to deal with it within limits.

The origin of Reformed and Presbyterian (these terms are used interchangeably in this paper) churches in Asia can be traced to the missionary work of three sources: the churches in continental Europe and in the British Isles; the churches formed out of their immigrant

communities in the United States and other places; and the Asian churches in the Reformed Presbyterian tradition. Today these churches that are of Reformed/Presbyterian origin are at different levels. Some have lost their reformed identity or character altogether. There are those who have more or less abandoned their tradition altogether through the influence of theological liberalism, ecumenical unions, doctrinal indifference, nationalistic spirit, or influence of other theological traditions. The Church of North India (CNI) and the Church of South India are examples of this category. It is not well known that the Reformed/Presbyterian components in these ecumenical churches are considerable. Another category of churches maintain their Reformed identity through subscription to recognized confessional standards and by adapting a form of Presbyterian government. In addition to the historic Reformation creeds, some of these churches have their own Declarations or Affirmations that seek to address contemporary and contextual concerns. The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan is an example of this category (Hsu, 675). A third category of churches are those that maintain traditional standards, form of government, worship styles, etc. without much variation in what they received from their mother churches (Roxborough, 672-75).

In the following pages, I will take up the proposed issues one by one, attempting to focus my reflection particularly in the light of the Asian context.

The Charismatic Movement

When we speak of Pentecostalism, it must be kept in mind that it is not a monolithic, universal institution. Rather, it is a movement or a set of movements. The Pentecostal Movement is often described as consisting of three waves. The First Wave is also known as Classical Pentecostalism, which traces its origin to the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States. Glossolalia as evidence of Spirit baptism is the characteristic mark of Classical Pentecostalism. The Second Wave is the Charismatic Movement of the 1960's, which saw Pentecostal renewal making inroads to Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions. The Charismatic Movement emphasizes the use of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and renewal of worship. The Third Wave, also known as Neo-Charismatics, includes thousands of indigenous and independent groups. (In this paper, we will use Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movement interchangeably and as referring to all three strands, except when the differences among them need to be pointed out.)

A study of the Christian population in Asia will reveal the growing prominence of Pentecostals in Asia. It is estimated that out of

approximately 200 million professing Christians in Asia (2000 statistics), two-thirds (about 135 million) are of Pentecostal-Charismatic persuasion. Within this number, the Neo-Charismatics or the Third Wave form the largest group with 79%. They are followed by Charismatics with 16%, and Classical Pentecostals with 5%. The majority of Christians in Chinese house churches are said to be Pentecostals. Four per cent of the population of Indonesia, a Muslim-dominated country, are Pentecostals. Singapore has three mega-churches which are Pentecostal-Charismatic. The Full Gospel church in Seoul, Korea, is the largest Christian congregation in the world.

We are conscious of the fact that numbers alone do not tell the whole story. We are also conscious of the fact that it is extremely difficult to count Pentecostal-Charismatics with accuracy because of the nature of Pentecostalism. Many churches do not maintain membership registers and other such records. To make things worse, many attending Charismatic worship services are members in traditional, established churches. In spite of these, there is enough credible statistical evidence to show that Pentecostalism is a rapidly growing movement in Asia.

The beginning of Pentecostalism in Asia is traced to the first decade of the twentieth century. In other words, its history in Asia covers the same period as its history in the west. However, as Pentecostal historians point out, it is not easy to pinpoint with any precision the beginning of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is more a *movement* than an organisation. A movement is not strictly limited to ecclesiastical or other such structures. Revivals with manifestations similar to that of Pentecostalism have come and gone throughout history, both within the context of the institutional church or outside of it. Pentecostal historians, in fact, claim that in many Asian countries such as India and Indonesia, Pentecostalism can be traced to the middle of the nineteenth century, roughly half a century prior to the revivals in Topeka or Azusa Street in the United States.

It may be questioned whether certain similarities in manifestations (speaking in tongues, prophecy, etc.) truly indicate that such revivals marked the beginning of Pentecostalism. How the manifestations were assessed and utilized also is important in deciding whether a particular movement can be judged to be Pentecostal. Be that as it may, the point that Pentecostal historians are making is an important one. That is, Pentecostalism in Asia is not an import, but rather something indigenous to Asia that pre-dated Pentecostalism in the west, and independent of western missions (McGee, 647-48).

The question is not merely of academic or historical interest. It makes no difference to our present discussion whether Pentecostalism “began” in

Asia or North America, or whether Asian and western Pentecostalism are similar but unrelated and independent movements. The point of significance for us is its indigenous character. It has been argued that the indigenous character of Pentecostalism is a significant factor in its popularity and phenomenal growth. That is to say, one of the reasons Pentecostalism has been hugely successful in Asia is due to the fact that it belongs to the Asian soil. Its forms, expressions and style (if not substance) reflect Asian characteristics. Adaptability to culture is pointed out as another factor in the growth of Pentecostalism. In a book on Pentecostalism, with a suggestive sub-title, “*A Religion Made to Travel*,” Byron D. Klaus asserts that adaptability is a quality that belongs to Pentecostalism in general. “Pentecostalism has been the quintessential indigenous religion, adapting readily to a variety of cultures. As a religious movement it has taken on the likeness of a particular cultural of people” (Klaus, 127).

The impact of Pentecostalism is felt in one way or another in all the historic denominations in Asia, including Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. In my analysis, this impact could be further delineated in the following four paradigms:

1. Members of Reformed/Presbyterian churches leaving their folds to join Pentecostal churches. It has often been alleged that Pentecostals grow through “sheep stealing”. Some studies I have seen about the growth of Pentecostal churches seem to confirm such a suspicion. In many Pentecostal congregations, baptisms of people from other religions are negligible compared to those who were previously members of other congregations. I do not think we have sufficient data to assert conclusively that this is the pattern of growth in all Asian Pentecostal churches. Further, a few other factors need to be kept in mind. One is that Pentecostalism considers itself a “renewal” movement, and so it is natural that they would consider as their primary mission “converting” the “nominal Christians” and correcting the theology of those who have been allegedly misled by traditional churches. Secondly, we may note that Reformed/Presbyterian churches do not consider it wrong to draw people of other churches to their perspective. Though we do not have reason to think this is happening in large scale, or that a strategy of bringing Pentecostals to Reformed/Presbyterian fold is consciously applied, we cannot deny that such mobility exists. I am told that in the Indian state of Sikkim, while Pentecostals are growing, sooner or later many of them become Presbyterians. This is partly due to the historically dominant position of Presbyterians in that state. But that some of this flow is also due to people’s disillusionment with superficial experientialism and dissatisfaction with answers that do not satisfy. A third factor we need to

consider in this context is that this movement towards Pentecostalism is not entirely unacceptable. In fact, we have reason to rejoice in this because many in traditional churches have found genuine, new life in Christ through Pentecostal mission work. We need not deny that many traditional churches do not exhibit the Reformational marks of the true church. There is no sign of life in many mainline churches, and members living with no assurance of salvation, or are under a false sense of security in these churches, need the gospel as much as non-Christians outside. Finally, we can rejoice in the fact that the Charismatic Movement has served as a catalyst for renewal in mainline churches. Pentecostal zeal in proselytizing has provoked the mainline churches and their leaders to attend to their duties – to teach and defend their faith to their own members.

2. *Members, while retaining their membership in their churches, becoming active participants in Pentecostal churches.* In some respects, this is a symbiotic relationship. It is not unusual in many cities to see people attending the early service or mass so that they can rush to the Charismatic service in the mega-church nearby. The difference between this syndrome and the previous one is that in this model, people do not actually leave their own congregations and memberships, but depend on a renewal church for their spiritual nourishment and fellowship. Some may even go to the extent of being (secretly) re-baptised to become part of the new fellowship. But they want to do all these without breaking their old ties and loyalties. We may conjecture that the reason for retaining the old ties is mainly social or economical – wanting to be part of the right social crowd, not losing conveniences such as cemetery privileges (often controlled by mainline churches), getting benefits such as admission and job reservations for their children, etc. (These may be considerations particularly Asian or Third World, but their importance cannot be overlooked.) The mainline churches accommodate (or at least close their eyes to) these practices because it may be counterproductive to force the issue as far as they are concerned. One may suspect that, if forced, many such in two pales will declare their loyalty to be with the Charismatic groups. That will be a certain loss for mainline churches that are already dwindling in numbers and income. Charismatic churches, on the other hand, accommodate such people by convenient worship times, taking a “spiritual” view of church membership, etc. In fact, Charismatics are eager not only to steal but also to woo the mainliners. Crusades of well known Charismatic evangelists are graced by bishops and other respected church leaders. As I said, it is very much a symbiotic relationship.

3. *Charismatic style and pattern of worship becoming more common in Reformed/Presbyterian churches.* This model is perhaps the one in which the Charismatic impact is most clearly visible and felt. Since the

Charismatic renewal movement of the sixties, all over the world, and in Asia too, this is a reality. Reformed/Presbyterian churches are not exempt from this effect. It is noted that out of fourteen mega-churches in Korea (with 12,000 plus attendance), seven are Charismatic Presbyterians (Tong-Hap and Hap-Dong) (Burgess, 132). We may not be amiss in stating that this influence is felt not only in mega-churches but even in small congregations, though the hype may not be so evident in the latter. To assess the Charismatic influence in Reformed/Presbyterian worship in Asia we may need to distinguish between two types of influences. Many churches have become “Charismatic” in worship style through ignorance, by imitation, or a combination of both. The Charismatic Movement of the 1960’s, and to an extent the Third Wave as well, were primarily worship renewal movements. Following this, worship resources from these groups became commonly available and popular in Asia as in other places. (It is to be noted that most of these resources come from the west, and have nothing of Asian context in them.) Many churches without theologically trained worship leaders and pastors began to use such resources without discernment. This is one way in which Charismatic worship patterns became popular in Asian Reformed/Presbyterian churches. But there is another, more historical, explanation of the influence of Charismatic style or (something similar) in Reformed/Presbyterian churches. That is by way of revivals (which may be distinguished from renewal movements). It is an undeniable fact that historically, Reformed/Presbyterian churches are not strangers to revivals as sovereign movements of the Holy Spirit. Neither can it be denied that revivals often resulted in “Charismatic-style” manifestations, and even (sinful) excesses. The revival tradition, and the accompanying results and effects were often continued in some Reformed/Presbyterian churches. The Mizo Presbyterian church in Northeast India is a case in point. This Church was affected by a series of revivals in its history, and their impact can be observed in their worship even today. The Revival of 1919, which resulted in the growth of the Church by the thousands, also saw certain excessive, emotional tendencies and questionable practices. One historian notes that excessive use of the traditional drums (previously disallowed in worship by missionaries) almost forced out prayer and preaching. Continuous dancing, limping, rolling on the ground, speaking in tongues, and other ecstatic activities were commonplace (Lloyd, 191-95).

4. The Charismatic doctrine of Christian life becoming more and more accepted in Reformed/Presbyterian congregations. Though perhaps less obvious or evident, this impact is real, and is in some ways a greater threat to Reformed/Presbyterian theology. Again, this should not be seen as a brand new challenge. It has been noted that well known Presbyterian missionaries such as John Nevius and Jonathan Goforth practiced exorcism

during their ministry in China (McGee, 647). Distinctly Charismatic teachings are becoming accepted doctrines among many non-Charismatics. Neo-Charismatic (Third Wave) teachers and preachers are influencing non-Pentecostals including those of the Reformed faith. This is happening largely through the influence of various television programs and channels, mostly of western origin. Health and healing is the area where this influence is most strongly felt. Ill health is a universal and most basic concern of mankind. In Asia, with its many pockets of poverty and lack of medical care, ordinary people are dependent on God's direct intervention in healing. So it is natural that those who emphasise healing would receive much attention and very little evaluation. Evangelists with the "gift of healing" are often sought out by people. This is not necessarily a rejection of the leadership of local pastors and elders. But it is assumed that they are helpless in this matter, not possessing the gift. Thus the Pentecostal theology of healing becomes implicitly accepted in our churches. Also present, but perhaps not so commonly, are such things as casting out demons, curses and blessings, and a utilitarian idea of God.

How shall we assess the impact of Pentecostalism on Reformed/Presbyterian churches? An evaluation of Pentecostalism or even Asian Pentecostalism as such is not what is mainly in view here. Rather, the main question for us now is: What shall we think of the impact? How serious is its challenge? What response shall we give? Our response to Pentecostalism cannot be, need not be, merely negative. The vitality of the Reformed faith in facing the challenge of Pentecostalism in the Asian context is not by simply rejecting it, but by engaging it on the authority and basis of the Scriptures. In that spirit, I would like to raise a few points for a Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue. Such a dialogue would involve not merely a criticism of the other, but also a self-introspection.

It goes without saying that our primary concern is not with numbers. Such a concern is less than worthy of the glory of God, and may even be considered idolatrous. To an extent, we can even be thankful to God that the gospel is preached and people are being saved (cf. Phil 1:15-18).

Our concern, rather, is a concern for the dilution/adulteration of the truth of God's Word, and the danger it poses for the life of God's people, the Church. I would highlight the following general dangers. 1) The perception many faithful saints have that they are ordinary or even second class Christians because they lack one or another spectacular gift. Pentecostal theologians themselves have acknowledged that within Pentecostalism there is a sense of spiritual pride and tendency to look down upon "ordinary" Christians whose worship and life are more prosaic. 2) The tendency to use gifts selfishly. Catering to the hunger for power through

the misuse of gifts was a concern in Paul's day, as is evident from his discussions on spiritual gifts and the body (1 Cor. 12-14). The tendency continues even today. Asian evangelists selling holy oil blessed by them for healing power, collecting money for intercessory prayer, and other such things point to a return to pre-Reformation practices. Without doubt, these are a gross misuse of one's (alleged) gifts. 3) Even more serious is the damage caused by superficial, and even deliberately false teachings propagated, such as lack of faith is the main reason why miracles are not happening. Many thronging to healers return empty-handed. Not only is the compassion of Christ withheld from them, they are also blamed apparently for not having something they cannot earn. 4) We must also view with great concern the emergence of a class of modern-day "super-apostles". Like in Paul's day and throughout church history, they are misleading God's people. But not only that, they are in effect usurping the ministry and authority of ecclesiastical leadership authorized in the Scripture, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles. The responsibility given to the elders (James 5; Acts 20), and the caring-sharing-nurturing local fellowship of believers are in very real danger of being taken over by itinerant evangelists and mega-churches. 5) The ministry of this class of "crusade evangelists" benefits primarily their own organizations rather than local churches. Further, in the present politically-sensitive atmosphere in Asia, their activities are causing great damage to the church in Asia. Many of these evangelists are from the west, and insist on a show. Their mega-conventions, executed with great hype and noise, attract the attention of everyone. Asian people do not see the efforts of these evangelists as humble witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, but as neo-colonialist expressions of naked money power intended to convert them. After they leave, the local churches are left to bear the ill will and persecution. 6) The methods used by these Charismatic preachers are affecting the mission and witness of the Church as unbelievers see them exploiting the weak and unlearned. While we need not doubt the genuineness of all, sufficient fraud has been exposed in these ministries. Ordinary people view with suspicion many claims of healings, casting out of demons, etc. We are not talking of a mere embarrassment here. Like in the days of the apostles, there will always be those who will ridicule the genuine movements of the Spirit. But trickery and deception are things strongly condemned by the Apostles, for they wished to persuade people by the open statement of the truth (2 Cor. 4: 1-3). 7) The anthropocentric and experience-oriented worship is another area of great concern. Even Pentecostal theologians are beginning to recognize the dangers of a utilitarian God and consumerist religion. 8) While the indigenous element in Pentecostalism is much lauded and recognized as a reason for its popularity, syncretistic tendencies also are operative in it. Animistic, Buddhist and Confucian influences in Pentecostalism have been acknowledged by many Pentecostal theologians. In fact, some Pentecostal

theologians, following the guidance of Harvey Cox, stress the need to “incorporate elements of pre-existing religions to the faith” (Eng and Shah, 69). 9) In some respects, the claims of indigeneity are wildly exaggerated. “Due to lack of adequate tools and training, the teaching of smaller independent groups in particular is often determined by the latest trend in North American or European Pentecostalism as expounded by a visiting evangelist or itinerant preacher” (Satyavrata, 209).

The challenge of Pentecostalism is also a challenge to re-examine our doctrine and life more carefully under the authority of God’s Word. Some potential areas where such re-examination can take place may be mentioned below.

At the very least, there should be the acknowledgment that Pentecostalism has brought to Reformed Christianity an awareness that our love for God expressed in worship and life must be with the totality of our being. As spirit-body beings, we need to praise God not only with our intellect but also with our bodies and emotions. It will not be incorrect to say that at times in our (western) Reformed thinking there is still too much left over paganism of medieval Christianity. The bias towards the rational/intellectual aspects of man, and its counterparts, distrust of emotions and suspicion of body, are evidences of this. Such a bias can be seen from John Calvin to Gordon Clark, and is not consistent with the rest of our theology. Perhaps this is one reason why Pentecostalism appeals to the Asian temperament. Confessing our faith as “intellectually affirming a set of propositions as true” is reductionist and simply alien to Asian spirituality, and to the Bible. Raising our hands in worship or genuine emotional or bodily expressions need not be ruled out as “Charismatic,” provided they do not become artificial, means of spiritual pride or new legalisms. Sometimes out of a wrong interpretation of worshipping in spirit, or out of concern for “decency and order” we have sought to make worship the least appealing to senses and affections. At times, the concern for orderliness in worship comes across as performance, whereas what seems to be chaotic appeals to Asian believers as sincere expressions of piety.

Pentecostalism challenges us to re-consider our theology of spiritual gifts. As a result of Charismatic renewal, there is a greater emphasis on the role of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. This emphasis has democratized the church, with its understanding that all the people of God are gifted by God, and are equipped for ministry. It has brought to greater fulfillment the Reformation principle of priesthood of all believers. Classical Pentecostalism erred grievously in elevating one gift particularly over all the others and making it a test of spirituality (now conceded as an error even by other Charismatics). Pentecostals also have sometimes given into

the error of eliminating offices in the church (“anyone may preach so long as gifted”), or making offices in an unbiblical manner (designating some as “Apostles,” for example). As pointed out earlier, the overemphasis on gifts has resulted in misuse and imbalance. The work of the Spirit in salvation, for example, is almost drowned out by the amount of attention paid to gifts. Notwithstanding these, it is fair to say that Charismatic renewal has brought a needed corrective, which is a true and proper part of Reformed theology.

Connected to the discussion on gifts is the question of Cessationism. The issue is whether certain gifts known as “extra-ordinary gifts” or “revelatory gifts” such as prophecy and speaking in tongue continue even today or whether they ceased with the close of the apostolic age. Charismatics are non-Cessationists, holding the view that all gifts are still extant. Reformed/Presbyterian theology, generally speaking, favours Cessationism. The division exists in Asia as in other parts of the world along the same lines. One cannot say that there is any serious dialogue on this matter at present in Asia. Certain hard questions need to be raised: 1) Is there biblical justification for dividing the gifts into “ordinary” and “extra-ordinary”? Or, do these categories betray our historical prejudices or embarrassment concerning manifestations that cannot be explained rationally or by natural explanations? Is it wrong to assume that certain gifts (even offices, such as the office of “apostle”) that may have had a unique function in the apostolic age can continue in modified forms (instead of ceasing to exist) in the post-apostolic age? 2) Do our confessions teach cessation of certain gifts or cessation of authoritative revelation of which the canonical revelation is the inspired and infallible record? We can be certain that the confessions teach the authority of Scripture as God’s Word and the sufficiency of Scripture. It is clear that “new revelations of the Spirit” are not to be added to the Scripture, and that “private spirits” are to be judged by the Scriptures. But do such “revelations” exist, and if they do, what is their validity? 3) Without denying the once-for-all “event” character of Pentecost, can we also see it as an “experience” that can be repeated (as seems to be the case in Acts 8, 10 and 19) as the church expands? In other words, is a repetition of the experience possible without a repetition of the event? Can the recurrence of Pentecost-like experience be explained as part of the Holy Spirit’s work in the context of new frontiers as the church grows?

Individualism in Church Life

Some justification is necessary before we consider “individualism” as a challenge facing Reformed Christianity in the context of Asia. The concept of individualism is so closely linked with western political and social

thought. It is often considered alien to the Asian ethos. Superficially viewed, individualism may not be considered as an issue for church life in Asia. So, in analyzing this problem in the Asian context, we may need to approach it from a different angle than one would from the west – considering whether individualism is gaining ground in Asia, and even asking whether it is necessarily a bad thing.

Although the general traditional picture of Asia and the west can be seen as opposites, it is no more correct to say “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” (Kipling). They have been meeting for quite some time. Through colonialism and other interactions in the political-social realm, the west has been confronting Asia, challenging its values, claims and attitudes. (The reverse also is true, but that is not a concern in this context.) Indian nationalism, for example, had its beginnings in the influence of western liberalism, which was both individualist and egalitarian (Gray, 9-12). The gospel and western culture were responsible to a large extent in raising the awareness of the rights and duties of the individual. Many architects of contemporary Asia (such as Jawaharlal Nehru) were educated along the lines of western liberalism. Christian mission also played a part in this process through its preaching of the God-given dignity of the individual. More recently, globalization has impacted traditional Asian culture resulting in a certain amount of cultural “homogenization” (Francis Fukuyama’s term). Some social scientists even question the very notion of “Asian values”. It has been suggested that the very concept of Asian values is reactionary, politicized, and too generalized to be of any analytical use. Other social scientists (such as Samuel Huntington) reject any such tendency. Most of the discussion on this subject has been with regard to economic realities.

Similar to the above impact on Asia by colonialism, liberalism, globalization, etc. in the political and social spheres, there has been a corresponding impact in the spiritual realm also. The nineteenth century missionary movement was a crucial factor in this impact. The missionary movement may not have been a “success” in the sense that it resulted in the conversion of Asia. But it most certainly made an impact on Asia’s spiritual values, challenging them at their core. The gospel preached by the missionaries contained the message of dignity for the individual, which helped many to challenge oppression by dominant groups as well as slavery to one’s own traditional (group) identities and values. More recently, individualism has been entering Asian church life through the widespread influence of American evangelicalism of various stripes. Through Television ministries or through more traditional missionary activities, evangelical agencies are influencing Asian church life to a large extent. The spirit of competition is no less evident in mission agencies than

in the economic sphere. The influence of Pentecostalism in Asia itself is probably the best example. Pentecostalism has elevated “individual experience” to such an extent that other factors that used to hold religious communities together – such as a common historical tradition, denominational loyalty, etc. – are being abandoned without hesitation. Such an emphasis on “personal experience and on individual interpretation of experience” is worrying even Pentecostal theologians to the point of asking whether what we are witnessing is “the globalization of Pentecostalism or globalization of individualism” (Pluess, 170, 78). Others see ‘ecclesiocentrism’ and submission to strong leadership (“a structure of leadership hierarchy”) as necessary to avert “pride and individualism” (Eng and Shah, 89-90).

What we may conclude from the above discussion is that Asian cultures and values are not at a standstill. Individualism is increasingly going to be a part of social life, and correspondingly, of church life in Asia. Churches are also beginning to take note of this shift as a factor in their ministry. However, it is certainly premature to think that Asian values are going to disappear in the near future and will be replaced by western values.

It is well-known that traditionally, Asian cultures were considered more collective-oriented than western cultures. If so, it is only natural that this trait will be reflected in church life as well. Group orientation of one sort or other can easily be demonstrated in Asian cultures. This could be in the form of family, clan, language, tribe, caste or other such identity. Such a pattern of social structure is usually cemented by three related factors: a pyramidal, authoritarian style of leadership; a high value placed on discipline; and the concept of shame. These elements are more or less present in almost all Asian societies in varying measures. Perhaps Confucian cultures fit the pattern the most, but tribal cultures as well as caste-based societies also display this combination. From authoritarianism to dictatorship, from guided democracy to people’s democracy, post-colonial Asian history has many examples of such cohesions.

The interesting thing is that, generally, such group orientations are showcased as a matter of pride by Asian leaders, and envied by those in the west. Superficially at least, one must admit, they have a certain attraction. Members of a society working together for the common welfare, even willing to sacrifice one’s interest for the sake of the group has a certain idealistic, altruistic ring to it. The economic success of ASEAN nations has been attributed to these values.

We will leave aside the question whether these “Asian values” are the key to the success of East Asian economies. But we must ask how this social

structure has affected church life. Has this been a better model for the church than, say, western individualism?

In the context of the church also, traditional Asian values are looked at as something positive. Pentecostal theologian Jungja Ma gives an accurate perception of the Asian culture.

Asians are group or family oriented. Maintaining dignity, respect, honour, and harmonious relationships are highly important. The most valued human qualities are those which help preserve group loyalties and which maintain congenial social relationships. Asians, in general, view the group, and not the individual, as the building block of the society. People do not see themselves as autonomous, but as members of the groups to which they belong (Jungja Ma, 190).

Then he bemoans the fact that “the mindset of the people is shifting from a group-orientation to an individualistic and task-orientation” (Jungja Ma, 184). Free market economies will result in the loss of the “relational orientation” of people. Self-worth will be based on success. Affluence will be sought after. He concludes: “This new and emerging work ethic has a profound impact on the social life of the people. Coupled with individualism, the spirit of competition is everywhere, including the churches. Everyone is viewed as a competitor rather than a co-worker” (Jungja Ma, 190).

Reflected in the above response, which may be considered typical of many churches, is an anxiety in facing modernity. Modernity inevitably will shake up traditional patterns of society, and the temptation of the church is to retreat to the traditional patterns with their theological justifications we are so familiar with – the loss of community, competition, greed, etc. Without losing sight of the concerns raised, the church must also recognize that the traditional patterns of society have not always been consistent with the values of the Kingdom of God. They have often resulted in oppression, injustice, poverty, and stagnation.

In spite of appearance to the contrary, these traditional values have been detrimental to church life in Asia. No one has argued this thesis better than M.M. Thomas, the well-known ecumenical theologian who had an intimate knowledge of Asian realities. Some of his theological evaluation of such group identities may be mentioned here. 1) These group identities, (commonly called communalism in India, with parallels such as tribalism, casteism, and regionalism) are no less idolatrous than individualism because they elevate and absolutise narrow identities. The only difference is that instead of the individual self, it is the collective self that is on the

throne. 2) They have an appearance of community without really being so. One's caste, tribe or language becomes the criterion for fellowship. They do not correspond to the *koinonia* of the Kingdom of God. They do not reflect the New Humanity in Christ, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female. 3) They are a real barrier to ecumenism. 4) Further, they are a hindrance to the mission of the Church. A Church that is tied to one's ethnicity or other such factor cannot have an openness to the world, without which there cannot be any mission. Asian group orientations in many contexts make the church introverted, with a minority consciousness that prevents it from engaging the world (Chacko, 125-50).

How this group consciousness, with related factors, affects ecclesiastical life can be illustrated with numerous concrete examples. Violent conflicts between Christian tribes, churches that refuse to admit dalits ("untouchables") to their membership, strong resistance to local ecumenism even among churches that affirm the very same doctrinal standards, all are consequences of group-consciousness in Asia. Echoes of authoritarianism in society can be heard in ecclesiastical leadership as well. Many Asian church leaders consider Presbyterian form of church government as an unworkable model for Asia. "We need strong leadership" is their cry. It is interesting that many Pentecostal and evangelical churches have consciously adopted Episcopalian form of government, in spite of the widespread corruption and abuse of power in mainline Episcopal churches. Presbyterian churches are not without their own problems. Moderators are often expected to act like bishops, and authoritarianism is often misunderstood as strong leadership. Because of the traditional pyramidal order brought in from society, leadership in the church stagnates with the same people continuing in office for long stretches of time. Youth and others are hesitant to voice their opinion or are not taken seriously because of this social structure. Strong group identity, and the culture of shame associated with it, makes it almost impossible for individuals to follow Christ from other religious communities. The hindrance in people converting to Christian faith is more often sociological than theological. Being ostracized from one's community or village or caste is a shame too heavy for many to bear. But these are true not only with regard to conversions, but also in the church, in following one's theological convictions or living according to one's ethical convictions.

In summary, we may observe that group loyalty and identity are still values that are predominant in Asia. Individualism in social and church life can be expected to be a growing reality in the future. However, this trend need not be looked at as an entirely negative development. In fact, much of it is the

result of the impact of the gospel itself. It is to be welcomed to the extent that it challenges the idolatry of the group identities.

Mission and Ecumenicity

In recent years we have seen two trends in missionary activities in the context of Asia. One is the emergence of missionary activity from within Asian countries. This is a significant shift from the earlier model, where the missionary almost by definition was a white westerner. The second trend that I have observed is the increase of westerners entering Asia as missionaries in non-traditional modes. Both of these trends are significant for Reformed Christianity in Asia, though other churches also are affected. Therefore, a few comments on these are in order.

Missionary activity from one Asian nation to another is a welcome shift in many ways. It indicates the “coming of age” of Asian churches which, until recently, were at the receiving end. Asian churches are slowly awakening to the fact that the Great Commission is for them also, and that they have a responsibility in making the gospel known in Asia. Asian missionary interest in Asia is not completely of recent origin as witnessed by the Back-to-Jerusalem movement of the churches in China. However, this interest has grown along with the growth in resources and other capabilities of Asian nations. India is a leader in indigenous mission movements with thousands of cross-cultural missionaries, most within the country, but increasingly more and more in other Asian countries. The Presbyterian Church in Mizoram has a very ambitious cross-cultural program, including work in Nepal and in other Asian countries. The Philippines is another nation that is taking on the responsibility of sending out missionaries. Without doubt, the most remarkable growth of missionary movement in Asia is taking place in Korea, which is set to be the most missionary-sending church in the world. It is estimated that there are about 18,000 Korean missionaries in about 180 countries around the world (Hwa Yung, 2; Julie Ma, 4). Since a large number of Korean missionaries are from Presbyterian churches, this is of special interest to us.

The phenomenon of Asian mission to Asia needs more scientific study to reach firm conclusions. But some observations and concerns may be raised here. The following observations will show that in some respects, contemporary Asian missions are following the wrong paths followed by previous generations of missions and missionaries.

1. There is great deal of emphasis on numbers both with regard to missionaries sent and churches planted. This is consistent with mission

practices of contemporary evangelicalism in general, and need not be seen as wrong in itself. However, a deeper analysis would show that the overemphasis on numbers is not without its dangers. Mission strategies are often borrowed uncritically from the Church Growth movement and other evangelical agencies, without examining how they measure up to Reformed understandings of the gospel and salvation. Such schemes have often led not only to un-Reformed but even unethical practices, including manipulation of figures either for recognition or fundraising. The quality of converts and churches is rarely examined. Even Reformed Christianity has bought into this whole philosophy of mission as setting targets and meeting quotas.

2. Generally speaking, the flow of mission resources has been from the more advanced or developed Asian nations to the less advanced ones. In this respect, the present trend parallels the nineteenth century missionary movement. Though there is nothing inherently wrong with this, Asian missionaries also are subject to the dangers of triumphalism and arrogance that sometimes characterized western missions in the past. Ethnocentrism, cultural arrogance, paternalism, etc. are ever-present dangers in contemporary Asian mission. “The danger today is that Asian churches, with all their newfound riches, will repeat the same mistakes of mission history” (Yung, 2).

3. A third observation is that Asian missions are very rigid in their approach to mission. There is very little understanding or appreciation of the unique factors in the receptive cultures. This is the way the church grew at home, so let us repeat the same here is the usual justification. Missionaries insist on local workers slavishly following their way of evangelism and training whether or not they are suitable in the new context. The opinions of local workers is rarely sought or practiced. The emphasis on the practice of prayer as essential to church growth is an example. In a certain Seminary in India run by certain Asian missionaries, students will not be served meals unless they have participated in the early morning prayer. While no one would disagree with the emphasis on prayer, the insistence on when, how and how long one should pray often leads to legalism.

4. Doctrinal indifference is another concern for Reformed Christianity. The concern for church growth dominates all other concerns, and as a result theology is often downplayed. There are many “Presbyterian” seminaries where there are no faculty members holding to the Reformed faith. Their chapel time is no different than that of the Charismatic seminary next door. Often the hidden assumption is that a generic form of Christianity is adequate in the Asian situation, or that Calvinistic Christianity is a luxury.

In this respect also, the work of Asian missions parallels missionary work of the past. The gospel that was preached in Asian cultures even by Reformed missions often brought about only superficial change in the lives of the converts. Transformation of cultures or worldviews was not considered significant. This approach has resulted in churches that are more “fundamentalist” than Reformed. The lack of a deeper understanding of what it means to be “Reformed” has resulted in indifference to doctrines. As a result, many churches were easily swallowed up by theological liberalism and ecumenical unions, and lost their Reformed identity within a generation. If contemporary Asian missions continue in the path of doctrinal indifference, the outcome cannot be any different.

5. Lack of cooperation with existing churches is another concern. Asian missionaries, sent out either by churches or parachurch organizations, ignore churches that already exist in the area. Instead of cooperation, they tend to distance themselves from established churches. This could be due to a number of reasons including theological or spiritual feeling of superiority.

These are matters of serious concern for the life and work of Reformed/Presbyterian churches in Asia. In some respects, Asian missionaries seem to be in a hurry to repeat all the mistakes made by nineteenth century missionaries.

The second major trend in contemporary Asian Mission is the entry of a large number of “non-traditional” missionaries from the west. Traditional missionaries who were sent by a church or a mission board, did not hide their missionary identity, had a long-term commitment to the place of their calling, and were linked with the local church from the very beginning. Contemporary non-traditional missionaries do not share these characteristics.

Political and other factors were instrumental in changing the traditional patterns of mission. Many countries in Asia are “closed” to mission work. This reality forced the church to adopt new strategies such as the use of non-traditional missionaries. The category of non-traditional missionaries includes a variety of personnel ranging from freelancers to short term visitors. Some are “tent-makers” or those who work “under cover”. Some simply employ national workers as surrogates, their own involvement in mission limited to managing and writing reports. They are reluctant to associate with the local church, lest their true identities be revealed.

While we must be careful not to generalize or to be uncharitable, the presence of this new class of missionaries and their strategy need

examination. Unlike the traditional missionaries who identified with the people and became involved in the life of their people through numerous services, the non-traditional missionary keeps his distance from the people, apparently to protect himself. Long-term commitment and sacrificial spirit of the traditional missionary, as evidenced by multiple terms of service in a field, are lacking in the non-traditional missionary. The most serious charge that may be laid is their total lack of accountability to the national church. Agencies and missionaries function often with very little consultation with existing churches. Without being unsympathetic to their predicament, we may also state that ecclesiological and missiologically, this is a very unhealthy state of affairs.

Ecumenism in the Asian context, or the lack of it, is another challenge to Reformed Christianity in Asia. Ecumenism in the past was often motivated by indifference to our theological traditions. While we must reject such kinds of ecumenism, cooperation and unity among churches that affirm the same confessions and the evangelical faith is an urgent need.

What is working against meaningful cooperation and fellowship among Reformed/Presbyterian churches in Asia is not theological differences but our sinful spirit of competition, dependency and selfishness. Our churches in Asia, especially in the developing nations, are still dependent on resources from the west. They do not see the need to work together and share local resources for the glory of God. Perhaps they will not see this need unless they are encouraged to do so by their supporting churches.

In this respect, the churches in the west are not without blame. Whenever possible, church and mission agencies must initiate and encourage common efforts in a certain region. Theological education, training of elders, development of liturgical and other resources for the church, sharing of expertise, and a number of other activities can be promoted through ecumenical structures instead of developing them individually for each church. It is not necessary to lose one's denominational identity or unique ties with one's ecclesiastical tradition. But refusal to cooperate in areas where cooperation is possible and desired, only promotes a spirit of competition and disunity resulting in wasting precious resources that could be used for other important tasks.

The challenges that face Reformed Christianity in Asia are numerous. But our biblical, historic faith is not without resources to confront them. As Reformed Christians we need to see how we can adapt more to the Asian context without becoming syncretistic. We need to affirm that Reformed Christianity offers a richer, more solid alternative to fundamentalism and

experientialism. Our practices in mission and inter-church relations have to become more conformed to a Reformed ecclesiology.

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Committee Report

Discussion of Paper 4

The Asian Context

1. The growth of Charismatics may be due to a number of reasons: indigenous factors, less emphasis on structure, media exposure, meeting the need for emotional outlet, it allows for concessions to human nature, strong leadership.
2. Generally the group was unwilling to make a distinction between impact on worship and life. Both were perceived to be more or less equally dangerous.
3. Mass prayer (all praying loudly at the same time) was discussed in detail. Possible biblical principles and practices were looked into (1 Cor. 14; Acts 4). Questions were raised whether mass prayer violates the principle of order in worship. It was also pointed out that corporate prayer should be intelligible to all. Another concern was that mass prayer emphasizes individualism. But, on the other hand, silent prayer also is individualistic rather than corporate. The believers' prayer also seems to suggest that all believers prayed at once. However, it was pointed out that perhaps what they did was sing Psalm 2.
4. There was general agreement that the Charismatic emphasis on gifts has brought a needed corrective. However, the term "Charismatic" is understood differently by different people.
5. Considering that we were agreed on the cessation of special revelation, some held that there had been an over-focus on the cessation of gifts. Others held that the extraordinary gifts were revelatory and confirmatory of the Apostles, and thus could not be discussed separately, and in fact that these gifts had ceased with the close of the apostolic age. This position could be called absolute cessationism. Some held a qualified cessationism since they wished to allow for the possibility that certain gifts may continue in a modified form that is non-binding and non-foundational. Much common ground was evident. The defining issue seemed to be this: "Can we rule out on the basis of Scripture that the 'extraordinary' gifts have completely ceased?"

6. We agreed that general revelation continues and that special revelation is now inscripturated. God's providence does not provide guidance to us apart from reference to God's word. Language such as 'God told me' is not really proper.
7. We agreed that as the Gospel goes forth God often gives demonstrations of his power. Such demonstrations are not limited to mission situations and are not comparable to what happened at Pentecost. Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 are not normative.
8. The dignity of the individual in Asian societies has been enhanced somewhat by Christian gospel, but one must remember that it is individuality in the community of the church.
9. The group identity in communities is often abused, resulting in clash of interests and wars between communities.
10. Authoritarian leadership is commonly found in Asia. This may be partly due to ignorance of the community and partly due to the selfish interest of leaders.
11. There was a common feeling that several mistakes in history are being repeated in the current situation as well.
12. There should be good analysis of the community needs and situation where mission work is planned.
13. We should not neglect "saving of souls" but the concept that the gospel is for the whole being must be preached and demonstrated.
14. Non-traditional missionaries should be required to attest themselves with local church.
15. All assistance coming from other countries should be to the church, not to individuals. It should be fully for transparency.