



**MINUTES OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF PRESBYTERY**

**OF THE**

**CONFEDERATION OF REFORMED  
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES**

**LANCASTER, PA**

**OCTOBER 13-15, 2004**

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2004

At 10:00 a.m. the 2004 (Eighth Annual) Presbytery was called to order by Moderator Randy Booth.

Joost Nixon led the invocation and Dave Hatcher led the singing of Psalms 34 and 100.

Jeff Niell delivered the exhortation from Scripture.

Moderator Randy Booth called the roll of member churches and certified a quorum.

### **Delegates Present:**

1. All Saints' Presbyterian (2002) — Brownstown, PA — Gregg Strawbridge, Marlin Detweiler
2. Christ Church (1997) — Moscow, ID — Douglas Wilson, Chris Schlect
3. Christ Church (2001) — Spokane, WA — Joost Nixon
4. Christ Covenant Church (2000) — Lynnwood, WA — Steve Brown
5. Christ Covenant Church (2000) — Langley, BC — Garry Vanderveen, Rob Liedl
6. Christ Reformed Evangelical Church (2000) — Annapolis, MD — Eric Sauder
7. Christ Reformed Church, (2003) — Albion, ME —Rick Young, Ryan Young
8. Christ the King Church, (2003) — Eugene, OR — Kevin Gowen
9. Church of the King, (2003) — Santa Cruz, CA — James Ratliff
10. Cornerstone Reformed Church (2000) — Carbondale, IL — Burke Shade, Wayne Southerland
11. Eastside Evangelical Fellowship (1997) — Kirkland, WA — Dave Hatcher, Gregg Kniss
12. Emmanuel Covenant Church (2000) — Phoenix, AZ — Jeff Niell, Richard Klaus
13. Grace Covenant Church (1998) — Texarkana, AR — Mark Duncan, Sean Mahaffey
14. Grace Covenant Church (2002) — Nacogdoches, TX — Randy Booth, David Alders
15. Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, (2003) — Hockley, TX — Gene Franklin, Mike Chaney
16. Immanuel Presbyterian Church (2002) — Fallon, NV —Ed Iverson
17. Providence Church (2002) — Lynchburg, VA — Virgil Hurt, Wayne Latham
18. Reformation Covenant Church (1999) — Oregon City, OR — Dennis Tuuri, John Shaw
19. Tanglewood Baptist Church (2002) — Sand Springs, OK — Rogers Meredith
20. The King's Congregation (2003) — Boise, ID —Alan Burrow
21. Trinity Church (1997) — Wenatchee, WA — Gene Helsel
22. Trinity Reformation Church (2003) — Salem, OR — Chori Seraiah

The member churches of the CRE presented their reports.

During church reports, after a recommendation by Chris Schlect, the agenda was changed by general consent to consider the preliminary reports of the examination committees just before adjournment on Wednesday and to consider the status of Mitaka Evangelical Church following the presentation of foreign church reports at the end of Wednesday's agenda.

After receiving reports from member churches, Moderator Booth, by general consent, moved the preliminary reports of the examination committees to immediately precede the recess for lunch.

04/10/13/11:48 Motions to receive reports from Ordination Exam Committees 1-5, which unanimously recommended their respective candidates for ordination.

- Committee 1, for Sean Mahaffey of Texarkana, AR—Burke Shade, Mark Duncan, Doug Wilson, Richard Klaus, Mike Chaney
- Committee 2, for Lonn Oswalt of Clinton, MS—Jeff Niell, Joost Nixon, Gene Helsel, Ed Iverson, Kevin Gowen
- Committee 3, for David Queener of Knoxville, TN—Gregg Strawbridge, Chori Seraiah, Chris Schlect, Rogers Meredith, Alan Burrow
- Committee 4, for David Givler of San Antonio, TX—Garry Vanderveen, David Alders, Eric Sauder, Gene Franklin, Marlin Detweiler
- Committee 5, for Virgil Hurt of Lynchburg, VA—Dave Hatcher, Dennis Tuuri, Robert Liedl, Wayne Latham, Jeff White

Burke Shade led in prayer

12:06 Presbytery recess for lunch.

14:02 Presbytery reconvened.

### **Consideration of Candidate Churches**

04/10/13/14:12 Motion (Tuuri/Shade) accept Covenant Bible Church of Anchorage, AK, into membership in the CRE. After Jack Phelps answered several questions from the presbytery and distributed a church report including the congregation's qualifications to the Westminster Confession, the motion passed without dissent.

04/10/13/14:31 Motion (Hurt/Iverson) accept Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church of Knoxville, TN, into membership in the CRE. Representing Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church was David Queener, who explained the congregation's exceptions to the Westminster Confession 1647, and answered several questions from the presbytery. Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/14:53 Motion (Shade/Schlect) to extend the candidate status of Christ Church, Searcy, AR.

04/10/13/15:14 Motion (Wilson/Niell) to accept Ancient Hope Reformed Church, Mission Viejo, CA, into membership in the CRE. Representing Ancient Hope Reformed Church was elder David Hagopian, who answered several questions from the presbytery and affirmed the Westminster Confession of 1647 and the Three Forms of Unity as the church's confessional standards. Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/15:37 Motion (Schlect/Mahaffey) to accept Christ Church, Cary, NC, into membership in the CRE. After Gene Liechty answered questions from the presbytery and affirmed the Westminster Confession of 1647 (with an exception pertaining to “worthy recipients” so that all members of the covenant community are eligible to participate in the Lord’s Supper). Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/15:43 Motion (Shade/Niell) to recognize Christ Covenant Fellowship of Chicago, IL, as a visiting delegation. Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/15:57 Motion (Duncan/Helsel) to accept Christ Church Presbyterian of Branchville, AL to candidate status in the CRE. After brief discussion, the motion passed without dissent.

04/10/13/16:00 Dennis Tuuri recommended that consideration of the three Russian Churches proposed as candidate churches be moved on the agenda to follow the Foreign Church reports. By general consent it was so ordered.

### **Introduction and Consideration of Mission Churches**

Tuuri introduced Church of the King, Sacramento, CA as a Mission Church of Reformation Covenant Church, Oregon City, OR, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Wilson introduced Providence Reformed Evangelical Church, Grand Junction, CO, Trinity Reformed Church, Moscow, ID, and Covenant of Grace Church, Elk, WA as Mission Churches of Christ Church Moscow, ID, and they were so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

04/10/13/16:11 Motion (Shade/Iverson) that Christ the Redeemer Church, Pella, IA, a Mission Church of Cornerstone Reformed Church, Carbondale, IL, be accepted into membership in the CRE. Shade introduced Elder Doug Roorda and Pastor Jeff Harlow and affirmed that the church’s confessional standard is the Three Forms of Unity. The elders answered various questions from the presbytery. Passed without dissent.

Strawbridge introduced Christ Church of Livingston County, Howell, MI, as a Mission Church of All Saint’s Presbyterian, Lancaster, PA, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Niell introduced Christ the King Church of Springfield, MO, as a Mission Church of Emmanuel Covenant Church, Phoenix, AZ, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Alders introduced Christ Covenant Church, San Antonio, TX, and Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Clinton, MS, as Mission Churches of Grace Covenant Church, Nacogdoches, TX, and they were so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Franklin introduced Heritage Covenant Church, Weatherford, TX, as a Mission Church of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, Hockley, TX, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Helsel introduced Trinity Covenant Church, Wichita, KS, as a Mission Church of Trinity Church, Wenatchee, WA, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Sauder introduced Holy Trinity Reformed Evangelical, Greenville, SC, as a Mission Church of Christ Reformed Evangelical Church, Annapolis, MD, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

Hurt introduced Providence Church, Greenville, NC, as a Mission Church of Providence Church, Lynchburg, VA, and she was so recognized by consent of Presbytery.

### **Foreign Church Reports**

04/10/13/16:23 Pastor Blake Purcell, Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg, Russia made a presentation summarizing the mission work he performs in St. Petersburg, Russia.

04/10/13/16:51 Motion (Tuuri/Duncan) that the Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg, Russia should be accepted into candidate status in the CRE. Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/16:56 Motion (Tuuri/Schlect) that the Reformed Church of the Flame of the Holy Spirit (Russia) should be accepted into candidate status in the CRE. Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/17:01 Motion (Tuuri/Helsel) that the Presbyterian Church of Pushkin should be accepted into candidate status in the CRE. Passed without dissent.

04/10/13/ 17:03 Pastor Ralph Smith, Mitaka Evangelical Church, Tokyo, Japan, discussed the church and missionary effort he oversees in Tokyo, Japan.

04/10/13/17:23 Motion (Wilson/Nixon) The Mitaka Evangelical Church, Tokyo, Japan should be accepted into membership in the CRE. Their confessional standard is the Three Forms of Unity. Following several questions from members of the presbytery. Passed without dissent.

The oath of membership for new and existing presbyters was administered by Moderator Booth.

Douglas Wilson led in prayer

17:30 Presbytery recessed for the day.

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2004

Presbytery reconvened at 8:00 am.

Elder Bill Monnette from the Trinity Church in Wenatchee, WA was added to the delegates.

The presbytery meeting opened the day with a special examination, requested by the session of Christ Church, Moscow, ID, of their pastor, Douglas Wilson, by a committee comprised of Jeff Niell, Burke Shade, Gregg Strawbridge, Dennis Tuuri, and chairman Garry Vanderveen. The examination was opened with an introduction and prayer by Moderator Randy Booth and continued with questions, primarily concerning issues of soteriology and sacramentology, from the committee directed to Pastor Wilson.

The following introduction was read by Moderator Booth:

### Welcome

At times, presbyteries have taken on a life of their own, losing sight of the fact that they exist for the purpose of serving both their member churches as well as the broader Church. In governing and serving the Church of Jesus Christ, presbyteries are ministers of God. Moreover, their service encompasses both ordinary and extraordinary tasks. From time to time a particular need arises in the Church that calls for special action on the part of a presbytery. These actions are important because they offer assistance in a variety of forms including, but not limited to, assessment, judgment, guidance, discipline, affirmation, and declaration.

This confederation of churches, the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals, has received a specific request by one of her member churches to assist her in a controversy. No church is immune from controversy. God's people take seriously their faith, and thus they do have differences and their differences are often seen by the world. We cannot make light of the smallest truth. As a result, we find that conflicts arise among us, whereas the ungodly differ little over religious things because there is little to differ about. This is not a unity or a peace that is to be desired. Church historian William Cunningham observed:

It holds almost universally true in the history of the church, that until a doctrine has been fully discussed in a controversial way by men of talent and learning taking opposite sides, men's opinions regarding it are generally obscure and indefinite, and their language vague and confused, if not contradictory. [William Cunningham, *Historical Theology* (Carlisle, PA, Banner of Truth Trust [1862], 1979). 1:179.]

There is a current controversy that has been brewing in Reformed circles for several years. It involves numerous people with a variety of views and motives. Like most controversies the waters are quickly muddied with accusations, misrepresentations and shrill voices being raised. Thankfully, most of Christendom is blissfully ignorant or willfully ignoring this “tempest in a teapot.” Nevertheless, it is our teapot and our desire is to see the tempest calmed, if possible. We are not so naive as to think we can stop all the troublers of Israel or satisfy every possible concern. However, it is our hope and prayer that perhaps we can answer some questions and bring greater clarity to the issues at hand and in the end be of genuine assistance to Christ’s Church.

One of the principle persons involved in this current controversy is the pastor of Christ Church, Moscow, ID. Douglas Wilson has not only been a prominent pastor in his own church and community, but has also gained a much broader following across the country by way of his writing, speaking and many other ministries. As a result, his influence and reputation impact many. He has recently been under attack from a variety of quarters, including those on the other side of the current controversy known as “The Federal Vision.” He was a speaker at the 2003 and 2004 Auburn Avenue Pastors’ Conference in Monroe, LA where a variety of speakers addressed a number of topics related to the covenant. Pastor Wilson has subsequently written and spoken extensively on these subjects.

Therefore, the session of Christ Church, Moscow, ID has formally requested that our “Confederation conduct an examination of Douglas Wilson, a minister in good standing, before presbyters, in the broad doctrinal areas of soteriology and sacramentology—especially as they connect to the recent controversy among our Reformed brethren.” The Christ Church session offered, as part of their rationale for such an exam, the following:

“...our brothers in the RPCUS Presbytery have formally requested that we, the Christ Church session, charge Pastor Wilson before a tribunal. The RPCUS has also denounced Pastor Wilson as a heretic. (We believe their grounds for this charge are badly justified and their pronouncement ill-founded, based upon their neglect of basic biblical norms of inquiry and process. Nonetheless, the RPCUS is a communion with whom we want to enjoy fellowship.)

The RPCUS pronouncement has led to a deplorable situation. Their pronouncement has circulated widely and has bred a culture of misinformation and ungodly suspicion against our Pastor. Now there are some who have followed their lead and have taken up the cry of heresy. It has reached a point somewhat analogous to what Paul faced in his ministry, and we believe Paul’s example justifies our request. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem he was informed by James that, among God-fearing Jews, false reports were circulating about his teaching (Acts 21). Though it would have been permissible for Paul to let the matter lie (he is innocent until proven guilty), he still followed James’ counsel and went out of his



way to vindicate himself against false reports. On several other occasions Paul defended his ministry even though the accusations against him were frivolous (e.g., Gal. 1:11ff., 1 Cor. 9, and 2 Cor. 11; he says in another place, “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed, but in all things we commend ourselves as ministers to God...”—2 Cor. 6:3-4)...Paul did not remain silent. Instead, Paul mustered positive evidence that would clear his name and his ministry in the face of accusations against him.”

I want to make a few things clear from the outset of this examination:

1. Pastor Douglas Wilson, having already been properly received by this body as an orthodox, ordained minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is presumed to be such unless proven otherwise. There have been no charges brought against him, thus this is not a judicial trial. It is a voluntary examination requested by the Christ Church session.
2. The CRE is a broad confederation of Reformed churches and thus it represents a variety of views within the scope of historic Reformed thinking. In this examination, it is the goal of the presbytery and her examiners to evaluate, determine and declare whether Pastor Wilson’s views are within that historic scope. Members of the CRE may disagree with Pastor Wilson’s answers at various points and yet both views might still be within the pale of historic Reformed theology.
3. While Christ Church of Moscow, ID and her pastor Douglas Wilson are members of the CRE, and are thereby entitled to the care and service of our confederation of churches, nevertheless, the particular views of Christ Church, Moscow and her pastor do not necessarily represent all the views held by the other member churches and pastors of the CRE. Our constitution and confessions define the parameters of our confederation.
4. The committee’s questions have been compiled by the moderator and the examining committee, drawing from a variety of other sources and points of view, including some from those hostile to the Federal Vision. Moreover, several prominent opponents to the Federal Vision were invited to offer questions but declined to participate in this process. Our desire is to be thorough and fair.

We have no illusions that this will satisfy everyone. Nevertheless, it is our hope that by Pastor Wilson’s willingness to submit to his ministerial peers and also by establishing a record of his responses to the various questions of the committee, that many will be helped and that the peace of Christ’s Church will be advanced.

11:00 Presbytery recessed for lunch.

13:04 Presbytery reconvened.

Rector Eberle of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, which hosted the meeting, was recognized and thanked, and he briefly addressed the delegates.

Gene Franklin opened the meeting with an invocation and Dave Hatcher led in the singing of Psalm 138.

### **Foreign Church Reports**

04/10/14 Dennis Tuuri introduced Pastor Bogumil Jarmulak, of Poland, to report on the Reformed mission and church planting work in Poland.

04/10/14/13:31 Motion (Tuuri/Hurt) that we enter into a fraternal relationship with the Confederation of Reformed Churches in Poland. Passed without dissent.

04/10/14/13:33 Chris Schlect introduced Csaba Leidenfrost to report on the Reformed mission work and prospective church planting efforts in Ivory Coast.

### **Old Business—Committee Reports**

04/10/14/13:42 Moderator Booth, chairman of the Credentials Committee reported on his committee's activities and introduced Chris Schlect, chairman of the Constitution Committee, who recognized the members of his committee: Booth, Hatcher, Shade, Tuuri, and Vanderveen.

04/10/14/13:45 Strawbridge, representing the subcommittee on Ordination Procedures, reported on his subcommittee's deliberations. Committee members are Booth, Strawbridge and Nixon.

04/10/14/13:50 Motion (Strawbridge, on behalf of the Committee on Ordination Procedures): that presbytery receive the "Guidelines for Ordination" as an approved guide for use by the Moderator and member churches. [See Appendix A]

04/10/14/14:21 Motion (Strawbridge, on behalf of the Committee on Ordination Procedures); amended 14:39 (Mahaffey/Schlect): to amend the Constitution Article VI. D.: "The presbytery may also request the examination of the candidate." Passed without dissent.

04/10/14/14:40 Motion (Strawbridge, on behalf of the Committee on Ordination Procedures); amended 14:51 (Schlect/consensus; further amended 14:55 Burrow/consensus): to amend the Article I of the Book of Procedures, following the Statement of Purpose, be replaced with the following language:

### **Ordination Examination Process**

The examination process and related matters is described fully in the document Guidelines and Instructions for the Presbytery Ordination Exams and Related Matters of Ordination available from the Moderator.

The examination process for ordination to the office of pastor (teaching elder) is divided into three phases: a) Preliminary written exam from the Moderator administered in the context of the local church; b) A second written examination overseen by an Ordination Committee from the Presbytery appointed by the Moderator, and c), An oral examination administered at Presbytery by the Ordination Committee.

### **Recommendation Procedures**

At the end of the (c) oral examination (phase three), the Evaluation Committee will, by majority vote, recommend or not recommend the candidate for ordination at that time. The Committee will report their decision and any other recommendations to the Moderator of the Presbytery and to the elders of the local congregation. If the Committee does not recommend ordination and the session determines to proceed with ordination against the recommendation of the Committee, then the session is to indicate in writing to the Moderator their reasons for disregarding the recommendation. The Moderator will, in that case, evaluate the criteria of the session to determine if there is egregious sin involved on the part of the session, and then proceed as per article 3(R) of the constitution.

### **Previously Ordained Men Entering the CRE**

While we believe in the holy catholic Church and therefore accept the ordination of ministers outside of the CRE, it is both wise and proper for their credentials to be examined. It is recommended, though not obligatory, that CRE churches seek the wisdom of the broader church in assessing these credentials. Assessing the credentials and views of an ordained minister is not the same process as an ordination examination and is not to be as comprehensive. The aim in examining a transferring minister is to assist the local congregation in confirming orthodoxy and competency.

1. When the church desires to call a man to the office of pastor one who was ordained outside of the CRE or who is not a minister in the CRE, the elders of the church shall inform the Moderator.
2. The Moderator will facilitate the ministerial credentials examination by appointing a committee composed of three CRE presbyters. This may take place at a time determined by the Moderator, in coordination with the local church elders.
3. The Committee will provide a report of their decision and any other

recommendations to the Moderator of the Presbytery and to the elders of the local congregation. If the Committee recommends the call of the minister, the church may proceed with the call. At the next Presbytery, the minister will then be received into the CRE as an ordained minister with a report from the Committee and an opportunity for a brief examination on the floor of the Presbytery. If the session determines to proceed with the call against the recommendation of the Committee, then the session is to indicate in writing to the Moderator their reasons for disregarding the recommendation. The Moderator will, in that case, evaluate the criteria of the session to determine if there is egregious sin involved on the part of the session, and may proceed as per article 3(R) of the constitution.

This process of assessing the credentials of a minister being called to a CRE church is described fully in the document Guidelines and Instructions for the Presbytery Ordination Exams and Related Matters of Ordination available from the Moderator.

### **The Ordination of Elders Not Recognized in the CRE as Pastors (“Ruling Elders”)**

The Presbytery is not involved in the process of a “ruling elder’s” examination or ordination. Nevertheless, since all elders are required to perform the same primary function of ruling and overseeing the church as do pastors, a similar standard of Biblical and doctrinal knowledge should be encouraged.

Gregg Strawbridge initially presented for discussion the published “Inquiry on the Nature of Ordination and the Relationship to Presbytery.” Moderator Booth closed the discussion citing the need to move on to more pressing items of business. The topic and discussion were tabled until the next day.

04/10/14/15:00 Motion (Schlect, on behalf of the Constitution Committee): to adopt plan for Organizing Separate Presbyteries. Passed without dissent.

### **Plan for Organizing Separate Presbyteries and First Council**

In order to create the first distinct presbyteries (two in number) and to initiate the first meeting of Council, the CRE will follow the procedure outlined below. Though the procedure calls for four separate meetings, these meetings will take place at the same site over a continuous span of time. Regular CRE business will take place at the final meeting of presbytery. The first meetings of the two presbyteries, and the first meeting of Council, should limit their agendas to those tasks that are needed to get these new bodies underway.

### **SESSION 1: FINAL MEETING OF UNITED PRESBYTERY**

A. Agenda items will include:

1. Regular business of the CRE
2. Determine which churches will be in which presbyteries
3. Settle how many delegates from each presbytery will be seated at Council
4. If the current moderator's term expires, then select a moderator for Council. If current moderator's term does not expire, then appoint the current moderator to begin a new, fresh term as moderator of Council.
5. Note: Moderator will already have appointed a secretary and officiants in order to carry out the Council agenda as prescribed below.
6. Commission the initial presbyteries
7. Adjourn.

B. After adjourning, all delegates retire to separate quarters and convene in presbyteries.

## SESSION 2: FIRST MEETING OF EACH OF THE TWO PRESBYTERIES

A. Two separate meetings, one for each Presbytery.

B. Agenda items for each meeting will include:

1. Select Moderator and Vice-Moderator of Presbytery
2. Appoint a secretary to take minutes
3. Appoint delegates from presbytery to First CRE Council
4. Determine time and place of next meeting of presbytery (next meeting in one year)
5. Adjourn.

C. After adjourning, delegates from the presbyteries will convene for the first meeting of Council. Each church will be represented as observers.

## SESSION 3: FIRST MEETING OF COUNCIL

A. Conduct of the Council Meeting:

1. Note: Secretary takes minutes; secretary has been preappointed by Moderator of the last united presbytery
2. Agenda: Exhortation from the Scriptures, prayer, song (officiants have been preappointed by moderator of the last united presbytery)
3. Note: Moderator of Council is charged with responsibility to determine a specific time and location of next meeting of Council, and to publish time and location at least 12 months in advance of that meeting.
4. Adjourn

04/10/14/15:08 Motion (Burrow/R. Young) the CRE should split into separate presbyteries in 2005. Passed without dissent.

04/10/14/15:10 Motion (Schlect/Nixon) that a committee be appointed to propose rosters of two presbyteries of the CRE. Passed without dissent.

04/10/14/15:15 Motion (Shade/Detweiler) that the Moderator appoint the committee at his leisure from those who volunteer to serve. Passed without dissent.

04/10/14/15:33 Motion (Vanderveen, on behalf of the Constitution Committee), that the Report on the Reorganization of the CRE Constitution be adopted. [See Appendix B] Passed without dissent.

04/10/14/15:34 Motion (Wilson/Detweiler): Insert a new Article II. A. before the proposed Article II. A. reading, “The CRE takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3- or 4 -office view of church minister.” Passed without dissent.

14:43—Break

04/10/14/16:04 Motion (Schlect, on behalf of the Constitution Committee), to adopt and insert into the record of the 2004 Presbytery the Committee Report on “Handling Accusations and Evidence.” Passed without dissent. [See Appendix C]

04/10/14/16:06 Motion (Schlect, on behalf of the Constitution Committee), to adopt the chart below as the mechanism for determining representation at Council. Passed without dissent.

The chart below illustrates the CRE Constitution’s requirement for representation at Council, given the number of presbyteries within the CRE.

Number of presbyteries in the Confederation	Number of council delegates per presbytery	Total number of delegates at council
2	5 to 9	10 to 18
3	4 to 6	12 to 18
4	3 or 4	12 to 16
5	2 or 3	10 to 15
6	2 or 3	12 to 18
7	2	14
8	2	16
9	2	18
10	2	20
11	2	22
12	2	24
and so on...		

04/10/14/16:08 Motion (Schlect, on behalf of the Constitution Committee), moved that the Presbytery receive and insert into the record the Constitution Committee's report on the Moderator. By general consent, the report was received.

The Committee reports to presbytery as follows:

The Committee discussed this matter at some length and failed to reach consensus on several particulars. Nonetheless, the discussion moved forward significantly in that we were able to identify key questions to pursue. (A summary is presented below.) Having identified these questions, the Committee determined by consensus that the matter will require a good deal of further study, and therefore recommends that the CRE take no formal action at this time.

The Committee remains persuaded that the term "moderator" needs to be replaced for reasons that have already been presented to the 2003 Presbytery. But the Committee has not reached consensus on a suitable replacement for the present term.

A majority of Committee members prefer the term "bishop," but we have reached a general consensus that further study is needed before we settle upon this term. Like the term "moderator," "bishop" carries connotations that we need to be aware of. And because various church traditions incorporate an office called "bishop" in their polity, the term's meaning is subject to troubling ambiguity. Therefore we need to study the use of this term in various traditions, and such a study may lead us to discover another term that suits us even better.

Tied to the question of what title we assign to this officer is whether we need to clarify his role and responsibilities in our Constitution and/or Book of Procedures. Many good questions have been raised in this connection. Do the duties of the office call for special gifts—so special, in fact, that we might consider extending the term of office to be far longer than three years? Is it too much for the same man to pastor both a local congregation and an entire presbytery—much less the whole CRE? If so, what are the obligations of the CRE member churches for sustaining him in his office?

These are some of the questions we need to consider. The Committee recommends that time be set aside on the Presbytery agenda for open discussion on these matters. Such discussion will help the Committee carry on its work over the next year.

04/10/14/16:11 Motion (Shade, on behalf of the Constitution Committee), that Presbytery approve the Committee's proposed Memorial on Worship as a draft statement for review and study by the constituent churches over the next year, to the end that a final version may be presented for adoption by the 2005 Presbytery. Passed without dissent.

### **Memorial on Lord's Day Worship**

1. We believe that Lord's Day worship is our highest privilege, our greatest duty, and our deepest joy. God has created us for just this purpose: to worship Him,

and to be transformed by that worship.

2. We believe that in worship the people of God are engaged by the Spirit and drawn into the Father's presence as living sacrifices in union with Christ. In Lord's day worship, God renews His relationship with His people by serving them and them serving Him; He draws near to us to draw us near to Him.

3. We believe that in Lord's Day worship, we are gathered together in a glorious assembly of angels, the church militant on earth, and the church triumphant in heaven.

4. We believe that each week in worship, through the divine service, our Creator and Redeemer gives us the covenant gifts of glory, knowledge, and life, in and through the assurance of our forgiveness, the preaching of the Word, and the partaking of the Lord's Supper. At the same time, He graciously accepts our praise and thanksgiving of Him. In re-orienting us in terms of His covenant, He empowers and calls us to live in terms of the new creation.

5. We believe that worship changes us and the world. We are transformed by the grace of God's presence, and leave with a renewed sense of, and commitment to, mission, discipleship, and community. Biblical worship results in changed lives, Spirit-empowerment, and impacts the world for Christ. Further, God is pleased to hear and answer our prayers, particularly those that ascend in the Lord's Day worship of the Church. He hears our prayers for the nations and makes manifest His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

6. We believe that worship should be informed and governed by the Bible in its entirety. In constructing our liturgies, we are to pay particular attention to those portions of God's Word that are specifically given to inform us of what God desires in worship. These portions include descriptions of patriarchal worship, Levitical worship, and Tabernacle of David worship, all pointing towards the glorious advent of Jesus Christ, whose self-offering accomplished our salvation. This final work of our Savior provides the basis for the resultant transformation of worship spoken of by the Apostles in the New Covenant.

7. We believe that these portions of the Bible give us a divinely ordained sequence of worship, and provide us a detailed understanding of the benefits of Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. These benefits include purification from our sins, transformation of our persons, acceptance of our work and tribute, and peace with God and men. Biblical worship assures us of the forgiveness of our sins, the ongoing work of renewal in our lives by the Holy Spirit, the requirement and acceptability of vocation, and the promise of the maturation and growth of Christian community.

8. We believe that these portions of the Bible also teach us that each of these glorious aspects of worship are to be set in the beautiful context of music that is



maturing in both voice and instrument, to the praise of Christ the King.

9. We believe that the proper implementation in love of the above statements requires a practical understanding of all that Scripture teaches, including an understanding of lesser and greater matters, Christian forbearance with weaker brothers, liberty in worship which is not self-willed, an avoidance of an over scrupulous zeal, and a desire to maintain a Biblical catholicity as we build on the work of the historic church.

Chris Schlect delivered for information and comments a subcommittee report on the writing of the "History of the CRE."

04/10/14/16:20 Motion (Duncan/Gowen) that the report be entered into the record of the 2004 Presbytery. Passed without dissent. [See Appendix D]

### **New Business**

04/10/14/16:30 Motion (Schlect/Helsel) that Pastor Peter Leithart be allowed to remain a member of the Presbyterian Church in America and minister in the CRE. Laid on the table at 16:35 (Helsel/Seraiah).

04/10/14/16:31 Motion (Helsel/Hurt) that the sentences from Article II.C. of the old Constitution, viz., "Within the CRE each elder must be a member of the local congregation which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery." be added to Article II of the revised Constitution. Passed without dissent. Moderator Booth directed the Constitution Committee to propose the appropriate location for the insertion and to report back to the Presbytery on the following day.

04/10/14/16:30 was removed from the table and amended as per 04/10/14/16:35 (Helsel/Iverson) and amended as per 04/10/14/17:11 (Schlect/Shade): that Peter Leithart be allowed to remain a member of the Presbyterian Church in America and minister within the CRE, and that the allowance remain in effect for a period not to exceed three years. Passed without dissent.

Presbytery recessed for the day at 17:13.

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2004

The Presbytery reconvened at approximately 9:00 am with prayer by Mark Duncan, GCC-Texarkana.

Dave Hatcher led the delegates and visitors in singing Psalm 103 and Psalm 20.

After several announcements, Moderator Booth announced his desire to facilitate fraternal relations with other Reformed denominations and asked Presbyters to supply him information on existing positive relationships they enjoy with those bodies.

Moderator Booth proposed amendments to the agenda. Ordered by consensus.

04/10/15/21:27 Moderator Booth read a request from former Moderator Brett Baker. Motion (Schlect/R. Young) to receive Moderator Baker's report and insert it in place of the existing report on the church in Sechelt, BC in the record of the 2003 meeting. Passed without dissent.

04/10/15/21:30 Motion (Shaw/Duncan) that the CRE act as an 'Endorsing Agency' to examine and recommend men to the chaplaincy in the US military. The Moderator is authorized to appoint a three member examining commission to represent the presbytery and recommend to 'endorse' or 'not endorse' a man for service in the military chaplaincy. Each candidate must be a member of a local CRE congregation and sponsored by his local session." Passed without dissent.

04/10/15/21:45 Motion (Vanderveen, on behalf of the Special Committee to examine Pastor Douglas Wilson): "Having noted Pastor Wilson's exceptions and clarifications to the Westminster Confession of Faith, we find him to be fully orthodox; that is, we find him to be in agreement with the system of doctrine contained in the reformational confessions. We find his teaching to be in conformity to the Reformed Evangelical Confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Three Forms of Unity, which are faithful statements of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures." The motion passed without objection and with the abstention of the delegates of Christ Church of Moscow, ID.

By consent the Moderator ordered that the written answers provided by Pastor Wilson be appended to the minutes of the 2004 Presbytery. [See Appendix E]

04/10/15/21:55 Motion (Iverson/Hatcher) that the CRE undertake the affirmation and approval of the final report. Such affirmation and approval will be signified by a delayed vote of the delegates here assembled. This vote will be taken by correspondence directed to the moderator. No vote will be considered by the moderator if received after 5:00 pm, CST, Friday, December 17, 2004." The motion passed without objection and with the abstention of the delegates of Christ Church, Moscow, ID

Moderator Booth directed the Special Committee to produce the final report within two weeks following the adjournment of Presbytery. [Report is attached to the minutes as Appendix F]. Passed without dissent (Christ Church Moscow abstained).

04/10/15/22:00 Motion (Vanderveen/R. Young) that the name of the Confederation be changed to "Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches." (CREC) Passed without dissent.

04/10/15/22:02 Motion (Vanderveen/Meredith) that memorials be eliminated from the CREC Constitution and collected in a Book of Memorials/Position Papers.

04/10/15/22:34 (Schlect/Chaney) Referred to Constitution Committee for report to Presbytery in 2005. Ordered by consensus.

22:35—Break

04/10/15/22:58 Motion (Wilson/Meredith) that text of the Apostles' Creed in Article XII of the CREC Constitution be amended to conform with the ancient text of that Creed to include the words "from the dead" after the words, "On the third day He rose again." Passed without dissent.

04/10/15/23:08 Motion (Schlect/Niell) that the Book of Procedures be amended to include the policies regarding the formal recognition of ordained ministers in CREC churches as set forth in the attached Appendix G of these minutes. Passed without dissent.

04/10/15/23:40 Motion (Tuuri/Hatcher) that the 2005 Presbytery and Council meeting be set for October 12-14, 2005 in Oregon City, OR and hosted by Reformation Covenant Church. Passed without dissent.

04/10/15/23:50 Motion (Schlect/Wilson) that the Presbytery commend the Moderator as well as All Saints' Presbyterian Church for their efforts in preparing for and hosting the 2004 Presbytery. Passed without dissent.

23:51—Break

04/10/15/24:01 Gregg Strawbridge opened a discussion pertaining to the "Nature of Ordination and the Relationship to Presbytery."

04/10/15/24:25 Garry Vanderveen, on behalf of the Constitution Committee, reported to the Presbytery that the last two sentences from the old Article II.C. which were approved on Thursday, October 14, 2004, to be added to the reorganized Constitution be added to the new Article II.B. to the effect that Article II.B. will read, "Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14), often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session. Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established church. Within the CREC each elder must be a member of the

church which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.” The report was approved by Presbytery without dissent.

04/10/15/24:28 Chris Schlect led a discussion pertaining to the office of Moderator of the Presbytery and of Council. Under consideration were the appropriate name for and function of the office presently called “Moderator”.

Dave Hatcher led the presbyters in singing Psalm 110.

Ed Iverson led in prayer.

04/10/15/1:07 Motion (Gowen/Schlect) to adjourn. Passed without dissent.

## APPENDIX A

### GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESBYTERY ORDINATION EXAMS AND RELATED MATTERS OF ORDINATION

The character and situation of one who is preparing for the Sacred Office, are interesting beyond the power of language to express. Such an one, like the Master whom he professes to love and serve, is “set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” In all that he is, and in all that he does, the temporal and eternal welfare not only of himself, but of thousands, may be involved. On every side he is beset with perils. Whatever may be his talents and learning, if he have not genuine piety, he will probably be a curse instead of a blessing to the Church. But this is not the only danger to which he is exposed. He may have unfeigned piety, as well as talents and learning; and yet, from habitual indiscretion; from a defect in that sobriety of mind, which is so precious to all men, but especially to every one who occupies a public station; from a fondness for novelty and innovation, or from that love of distinction which is so natural to men; after all, instead of edifying the “body of Christ,” he may become a disturber of its peace, and a corrupter of its purity; so that we might almost say, whatever may be the result with respect to himself, “it had been good for the Church if he had never been born.”

Hence it is, that every part of the character of him who is coming forward to the holy ministry; his opinions; his temper; his attainments; his infirmities; and above all, his character as a practical Christian; are of inestimable importance to the ecclesiastical community of which he is destined to be a minister. Nothing that pertains to him is uninteresting. If it were possible for him, strictly speaking, to “live to himself,” or to “die to himself,” the case would be different. But it is not possible. His defects as well as his excellencies; his gifts and graces, as well as the weak points of his character, must and will all have their appropriate effect on every thing that he touches.

—Samuel Miller. D.

D.

Samuel Miller, D. D., *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions*, (Presbyterian Board of Publications, Philadelphia: 1839) [reprinted by A Press, Greenville, South Carolina: 1991.]

#### SECTION 1: THE NATURE OF ORDINATION

##### Ordination for Those Recognized as Pastors Within the CREC

What is ordination? The ordination of a minister (pastor or teaching elder) is the act of conferring and confirming ministerial gifts (1 Tim. 4:14). It implies qualifications and competencies (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Eph. 4:11). The pattern established in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:1-2) is that Timothy was to commit the things he had learned to those faithful

men who would be able to teach others. Having established elders in every city, it was also the pattern that this process of succession was perpetuated by those already established in the office (Titus 1). This task clearly requires that a determination be made as to whether a man is characterized by a faithful life and whether he is skilled in teaching others.

### **The Purpose of the Examination Process**

The examination process is designed to evaluate the ministerial competencies of the candidate. Churches cannot rise above the level of the competency of their leaders. Given the responsibilities an ordained man will assume for the flock of God, and the authority that will be conferred upon him, it is essential for us to have substantial knowledge or assurance of these four things before he is ordained to the office:

1. Who the man is [character].
2. What he knows [knowledge].
3. What he believes [understanding].
4. What he will do [wisdom].

The overseer of God's flock must possess the necessary character and skills along with the knowledge, understanding and wisdom in the Scriptures in order to adequately fulfill his calling. He must be able to feed Christ's sheep (John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4); convict those who oppose the faith (2 Tim. 2:24-26); make a good confession before men (1 Tim. 6:12).

The ordination examination process is designed to be demanding. It will take a considerable amount of time and effort on the part of the candidate. Nevertheless, having passed the examination, the *value* of the ordination is increased for everyone involved. When a man is examined and approved by the broader church, several benefits flow from that process that will better equip him for his public life of service to Christ and His Church.

The ordination process seeks to protect the Church by holding back those who are not called or who are not yet ready for the important work of overseeing God's people. When the Presbytery approves a man, it inspires confidence in the candidate, in the local church, in the broader church, and in those outside the Church. It is prudent for the session of a local church to seek the accountability of the Presbytery as a protection to the flock, and it is a good testimony when they do so. Ultimately, the session is charged with faithfully considering the wisdom of the Presbytery and is responsible before God for the ordination of a candidate.

### **The Role of the Presbytery and Local Church Session**

The purposes in the ordination examination process are twofold: first we must examine a teaching elder candidate's manner of life and doctrine and secondly his ability to teach scripturally, along with his ability to provide wise pastoral care. The local session carries

the primarily burden of this critical determination, and the Presbytery's role is to assist them in the process. The Presbytery works with the local church and session of the candidate to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the candidate's readiness for office. The Presbytery recommends that the local church session establish a process for the formal evaluation of the candidate in light of the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus. These areas should cover:

1. His knowledge of the Bible and theology.
2. His family life, including his marriage relationship, childrearing and personal finances.
3. His interpersonal relationships with those inside the church (not a brawler, ability to work with others, ability to resolve conflicts, etc.).
4. His reputation outside the local church, both with other churches and with those outside the church.
5. His maturity and wisdom (not a novice).
6. His ministerial gifts i.e., pastoral and teaching.

### **The Candidate for Ordination**

The candidate should see the examination process as *the time* for him to put his best foot forward theologically. Both for the glory of God (whose truth he is privileged to represent) and for the assuring of the church (to which he promises to minister), anyone who wishes to undertake the consecrated office of elder-teacher should aim to display the best understanding of the system of biblical doctrine that he can.

The Presbytery will be interested in evaluating the candidate's effort in terms of:

1. Knowledge of the Bible.
2. Theological understanding.
3. Historical perception.
4. Christian orthodoxy.

## **SECTION 2: THE PROCESS OF ORDINATION TO PASTOR**

### **Ordination Examination Process**

The examination process for ordination is divided into three phases: a) Preliminary written examination from the Moderator administered in the context of the local church; b) A second written examination overseen by a committee from Presbytery, and c), An oral examination administered at Presbytery by committee.

- I. Phase One: The Preliminary Written Examination (Appendix C).
  - A. After the local session of elders is confident of the proper qualifications of the candidate, they are to make a written request to Moderator of the Presbytery to begin the process of ordination.

- B. The Moderator, in coordination with the local church, is to set a date for the Preliminary Written Examination and appoint a local proctor.
  - C. The Moderator of the Presbytery is to grade, or appoint someone to grade, the examination in a timely fashion and report back to the church and the candidate (in writing) the results of the exam. A score of 80 percent is necessary in order to pass the exam. If a candidate fails to make a score of 80 percent, the examination must be retaken. A passing score is required before moving on to phase two of the C.R.E. Presbytery examination process.
- II. Phase Two: The Written Ordination Examination
- A. The Ordination Committee: Upon the successful completion the Preliminary Written Examination, the Moderator of the Presbytery will appoint a five-member Ordination Committee for the candidate. Each member will be from a separate session. The session putting forth the teaching elder candidate is allowed only one seat on the Ordination Committee. This Ordination Committee will oversee the remainder of the Presbytery examination process.
  - B. The Written Ordination Examination is to be prepared and administered under the direction of the chairman of Ordination Committee, in coordination with the local elders. The local session may add questions to the written examination but may not remove any of the standard, approved questions. The examination is to be completed within eight hours, with as many breaks as needed.
  - C. The components of the Written Examination.
    - 1. The candidate shall translate a passage from the Hebrew Old Testament (to be selected by the Moderator) and translate a passage from the Greek New Testament (to be selected by the Moderator). The candidate is permitted the use of one Hebrew and one Greek lexicon.
    - 2. The candidate shall write a brief historical and theological summary of 20 books of the Bible (to be selected by the Moderator).
    - 3. The candidate shall write brief answers to the Ordination Questions (included in Appendix B).
- III. Phase Three: The Oral Examination by the Ordination Committee.
- A. The candidate shall provide the Ordination Committee the following documents at least thirty days prior to the Oral Examination which will ordinarily take place during the days of Presbytery.
  - B. A written biographical statement explaining his Christian experience, including an explanation of his call to the ministry, confessional views (including exceptions to his confession).
  - C. The Exegesis Paper (see the guidelines below).
    - 1. One recorded sermon (in audio format) with a written outline.
    - 2. The Written Examination (of Phase Two).
  - D. The oral examination will take place before or during the annual Presbytery meeting and be open to all in attendance (visiting and fraternal delegations). An audio record of the oral examination will be archived as part of the Presbytery records.
  - E. At the discretion of the Committee Chairman, the Committee members will examine the candidate within the allotted time. The Committee will use the written work submitted as a foundation for questioning for clarification, assessing



weaknesses and strengths, and probing the depths of the candidates knowledge and ministerial competencies.

### **Recommendation for Ordination Procedures**

At the end of the oral examination, the Presbytery Committee will, by majority vote, recommend or not recommend the candidate for ordination. The Committee will report their decision and any other recommendations to the Moderator of the Presbytery and to the session of the local congregation. If the Committee does not recommend ordination at this time, and the session determines to proceed with ordination against the recommendation of the Committee, then the session is to indicate in writing to the Moderator their reasons for disregarding the recommendation. The Moderator will, in that case, evaluate the criteria of the session to determine if there is egregious sin involved on the part of the session, and then proceed as per article 3(R) of the constitution.

### **Schedule for an Ordination Process**

The schedule requirements for this process may be modified by the Moderator. Ordinarily, churches should comply with the following:

1. Churches must request an examination for a candidate no later than four months prior to Presbytery meeting.
2. Phase One of the examination process must be completed by the candidate no later than three months prior to Presbytery meeting.
3. Phase Two of the examination process must be completed no later than two months prior to the Presbytery meeting.
4. Given extenuating circumstances, exceptions to this schedule may be requested of the Moderator.

## **SECTION 3: ORDINATION TRANSFER AND “RULING ELDER” ORDINATION**

### **Previously Ordained Men Entering the CREC**

We live in days where irregularity in every aspect of church life is prevalent. The Presbytery seeks to bring regularity and order to the Church. While we believe in the holy catholic Church and therefore accept the ordination of ministers outside of the CREC, it is both wise and proper for their credentials to be examined. It is recommended, though not obligatory, that CREC churches seek the wisdom of the broader church in assessing these credentials. Therefore, the following process is recommended.

Assessing the credentials and views of an ordained minister is not the same process as an ordination examination and is not to be as comprehensive. The aim in examining a transferring minister is to assist the local congregation in confirming orthodoxy and competency.

1. When a CREC church desires to call as a pastor who was ordained outside of the CRE or who is not a minister in the CREC, the elders of the church shall inform the Moderator.
2. The Moderator will facilitate the ministerial credentials examination in the following manner: A Credentials Committee composed of three CREC presbyters will be appointed by the Moderator to examine the ordained man's credentials and confirm his orthodoxy. This may take place at a time determined by the Moderator, in coordination with the local church elders.
3. The Committee will inquire concerning the minister's experience, training, ordination, and doctrinal views. This may be accomplished through a variety of means, including correspondence, telephonically, and through electronic mail, etc. The Committee will, by majority vote, recommend or not recommend the calling of the minister to the local church.
4. The Committee will provide a report of their decision and any other recommendations to the Moderator of the Presbytery and to the elders of the local congregation. If the Committee recommends the call of the minister, the church may proceed with the call. At the next Presbytery, the minister will then be received into the CREC as an ordained minister with a report from the Committee and an opportunity for a brief examination on the floor of the Presbytery. If the session determines to proceed with the call against the recommendation of the Committee, then the session is to indicate in writing to the Moderator their reasons for disregarding the recommendation. The Moderator will, in that case, evaluate the criteria of the session to determine if there is egregious sin involved on the part of the session, and may proceed as per article 3(R) of the constitution.

### **The Ordination of Elders Not Recognized in the CREC as Pastors (“Ruling Elders”)**

The C.R.E., in a desire to assist local congregations, makes the following *recommendations* for their own examination of candidates for elders who are not recognized by the CREC as pastors. These are often called “ruling elders”:

1. The Presbytery is not involved in the process of a “ruling elder’s” examination or ordination. Nevertheless, since all elders are required to perform the same primary function of ruling and overseeing the church as do pastors, a similar standard of Biblical and doctrinal knowledge should be encouraged.
2. Use of the CREC Study Guide and exams are useful tools to assist those seeking to become elders. These may be used in an “open book” exam.
3. It is not the expectation that elders who are not pastors will have the same competency in Biblical languages.

### **Guidelines for Exegesis Paper (As Required in Phase Two)**

1. Three Bible passages will be selected for the candidate by the committee in which there are at least two conflicting interpretations. The candidate will then choose one of them on which to do his paper, selecting the passage they think will best serve to demonstrate their proficiency in hermeneutics and exegesis.

2. The paper is to be typed, single spaced, and no more than 5000 words.
3. The candidate will employ at least ten different scholarly sources in his research that will be cited in the body of the paper (sources such as lexicons, commentaries, journal articles, theologies, specialized books on a subject, books on manners and customs, etc.).
4. The paper should adhere to the following general format.
  - a. Statement of the problem.
  - b. Proposed solutions
    - i. View A
      1. Statement of view & major proponents
      2. Hermeneutical factors in favor of View A
      3. Hermeneutical factors against View A
    - ii. View B, C, D—and so on
  - c. Preferred solution—the last view to be stated in the paper should be the solution that you think has the greatest merit. Again, state the view and its major proponents. List the factors for and interact with the factors against your preferred view, and the decisive exegetical reasons for maintaining your position.
  - d. Pastoral applications—How does the proper exegesis of this passage bear on the lives of God's people?

## Ordination Questions

### Personal

1. Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Do you live in a manner consistent with this profession?
3. Is there anything in the pattern of your life which this body needs to know in order to prevent scandal in the Church?
4. Why do you believe you are called to the ministry?
5. Do you believe that you meet the biblical qualifications with regard to personal character? (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9, and 1 Pet. 5:1-4.)
6. Do you believe that you meet these qualifications with regard to personal ability? (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9, and 1 Pet. 5:1-4.)
7. What is the spiritual condition of your marriage?
8. Does your wife support you in your call to the ministry?
9. What is the spiritual condition of your household? What is the spiritual state of each of your children?
10. What is your understanding of the covenant household, and the varying roles of husband, wife, and children?
11. What is your approach to the training and education of your children in the Lord?
12. Why do you believe Christian education for your children is a necessity?
13. What is your educational background?
14. Describe your relationship with your parents and particularly with your father.
15. Describe your personal ministry.
16. Describe and explain your personal devotional life.

### Biblical

17. What translation of the Bible do you use? Why?
18. Which text or text tradition do you follow? Why?
19. Do you hold to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*? How do you understand that doctrine?
20. What is the difference between infallibility and inerrancy?
21. What is the canon of Scripture, and why?
22. What is your familiarity with Hebrew?
23. What is your familiarity with Greek?
24. What is apologetics? What is its importance?
25. What is the difference between presuppositionalism and evidentialism?
26. Why is apologetics important to a minister of the Word?
27. How would you refute a denial of scriptural authority?
28. Explain and defend your basic hermeneutical approach to the text.

### Theological

29. Define and defend the doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture.
30. What is the difference between a communicable and incommunicable attribute of God? Illustrate with examples.
31. What is meant by the economical Trinity and ontological Trinity?

32. What is the difference between the *opera ad extra* and the *opera ad intra*?
33. Why do you hold that the heavens and earth were created in six ordinary days?
34. Why do you believe this doctrine is important?
35. What is the nature and importance of the Creator/creature distinction?
36. Define and defend the deity of Christ from Scripture.
37. Discuss and explain the three Christological offices of prophet, priest, and king.
38. What is the hypostatic union?
39. Define and defend the full deity of the Holy Spirit.
40. Why do you hold that the revelatory or sign gifts given by the Holy Spirit in the first century have now ceased?
41. What is the function of spiritual gifts in the church?
42. Define and defend the doctrines of grace —man’s death in sin, sovereign election, efficacious atonement, resurrecting grace, and the preservation and perseverance of the saints.
43. What is the importance of these doctrines of grace?
44. What is justification?
45. What is sanctification?
46. What is glorification?
47. Compare and contrast the covenant of creation before the fall and the covenant of grace afterwards.
48. Discuss the history of the covenant of grace throughout all Scripture.
49. What are the practical applications of covenant theology?
50. What is the foundation for all Christian ethics and ethical theory?
51. What is the relation between the Christian church and the law of the Mosaic economy?
52. How would you show from Scripture that abortion is a sin?
53. How would you show from Scripture that capital punishment is not a sin?
54. How would you apply the requirements of the Fourth Commandment today with regard to practical observance?
55. Why do you believe Christians gather on the first day?
56. What is your view of eschatology? What position do you take?
57. Do you believe in a literal return of Christ at the end of the world, at which time He will judge the living and the dead?
58. What is the future of the gospel in the world prior to the return of Christ?
59. What is the purpose of the church?
60. Do you hold to a presbyterial form of church government? Why?
61. Do you hold to it as a requirement *jure divino*?
62. How many offices of ministry are there in the Christian church? What are they?
63. Do you hold to an official distinction between a minister and ruling elder? Why?
64. Are women qualified to hold the office of eldership in the church? Why not?
65. How should the worship of the church be governed? What is your application of the regulative principle?
66. What is a sacrament?
67. How many sacraments are there? What are they?
68. Explain and defend your position on the baptism of infants.

69. Explain and defend your position on admission to, frequency of, and elements in, the Lord's Supper.
70. What is the reason for church discipline?
71. How should church discipline be practiced and applied?
72. What is your doctrine of prayer?
73. Explain the biblical use of laying on of hands.
74. Are women qualified to be deacons in the church?
75. What is your doctrine of Christian liberty?
76. What is your doctrine of heaven and hell?
77. What happens when you die?

### **Creedal/Confessional**

78. Do you affirm and believe the *Apostle's Creed* without any mental reservation whatever? Any exceptions?
79. Do you affirm and believe the *Nicean Creed* without any mental reservation whatever? Any exceptions?
80. Do you affirm and believe the *Definition of Chalcedon* without any mental reservation whatever? Any exceptions?
81. Which reformational confession do you wish to affirm?
82. Do you affirm and believe the [appropriate confession] without any mental reservation whatever? Any exceptions?
83. What is the importance of confessional Christianity?
84. What is the value of Church history in the consideration of doctrinal views? What is the role of the early church fathers? The reformational fathers?
85. Explain and defend a Protestant doctrine of church tradition which is consistent with *solo Scriptura*.

### **Pastoral**

86. What is your understanding of pastoral counseling? What is your approach?
87. What is your understanding of pastoral confidentiality?
88. What safeguards do you believe should be in place when counseling women?
89. What is your view of the working relationship between a minister and the elders?
90. What is your view on reconciling the demands of the office and the time required to maintain your household?
91. How do you rate your ability to oversee and maintain a church office?
92. How much time do you intend to reserve for study?
93. After considering these questions, do you still believe yourself called to the ministry?
94. Are you in general agreement with the polity of the CRE constitution?

NOTE: Candidates should be prepared to answer questions concerning case scenarios of practical pastoral theory/skills.

Preliminary Written Exam (See attached Study Guide)

**APPENDIX B**

**CONSTITUTION OF THE  
CONFEDERATION OF REFORMED EVANGELICAL CHURCHES**

**Constitution and By-Laws of**

**The Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches**

[Revised October 2004]



**Moderator:** Pastor Randy Booth  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches.....	31
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	32
Preamble .....	32
Article I. Authority of Scripture .....	33
Article II. The Offices .....	33
Article III. Local Congregations.....	34
Article IV. The Broader Assemblies .....	37
Article V. Meeting Protocols.....	41
Article VI. Missions .....	41
Article VII. Confessional Standards and Revision.....	42
Article VIII. Amendments .....	42
Article IX. Memorials.....	43
Article XII: Reformed Evangelical Confessions.....	48

### Preamble

The name of this confederation of churches is the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches [CREC]. As a *confederation*, we intend to form a broad connection between churches which, with respect to polity, is representative, being neither hierarchical nor autonomous. By *reformed*, we call to mind the need to restore the church from many contemporary abuses, as well as testify that we stand in the stream of historic Protestant orthodoxy. As *evangelicals*, we desire to confess the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in both love and doctrinal integrity. Our gathering of *churches* is not intended as a separation from other orthodox believers who confess the name of Christ, but rather as a gathering *within* that broader church, in order to work together effectively for reformation.

With patterns of church order and confessional standards, one of the fundamental requirements of Scripture is honesty (Ex. 20:16). Consequently, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we charge you, the generations who will follow us in this confederation, to submit to the Scriptures with sincere and honest hearts, and to the standards of this confederation as consistent with the teaching of Scripture. When a portion of our order and confession is found to be out of conformity to Scripture, we charge you to amend it honestly, openly, and constitutionally, as men who must give an account to the God who searches the hearts of men. We charge you in the name of the Lord to abhor all forms of ignoring our intentions in what we have set down through dissembling, reinterpretation, dishonesty, relativism, pretended explanations, presumed spiritual maturity, assumed scholarly sophistication, or outright lying, so that the living God will not strike you and your children with a curse. We charge you to serve Him in all diligence and honesty, so that the blessings of the covenant may extend to your children for a thousand generations.



Our desire is to acknowledge, preserve and manifest unity, preserve purity, and advance Christ's kingdom in an orderly and reasonable way, resulting in mutual edification, accountability, and spiritual discipline. Membership in this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, fraternal, and working relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage formal, non-binding, fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries and denominations.

### **Article I. Authority of Scripture**

- A.** The Scriptures are always the ultimate and inerrant court of appeal (Ps. 18:30; 119:89; Matt. 4:4; John 16:12-15; Rom. 3:1-2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Because this is a constitutional document, a certain emphasis must be placed on creeds and confessions in what follows (Acts 15:1-31; 16:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7). However, in no way is it our intention to set such confessions of faith above or alongside the Scriptures. Our expectation is that all our churches will routinely teach and preach the whole counsel of God as expressed in Scripture (Acts 20:27; Matt. 4:4), and in all matters of doctrinal discussion and debate, an appeal to Scripture will always be the first resort. In accordance with our creedal and confessional standards, we acknowledge the pre-eminence of Scripture.
- B.** Our intention is to submit to all those principles regarding church order, which are clearly required by Scripture, or required by deductions from Scripture, which can be understood through good and necessary consequence. For the rest, we desire to operate in terms of a sanctified Christian prudence, with all things done in good order and biblical decency. We make no claim that every detail of our confederated order is found in Scripture. At all times, we seek to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:3,13).

### **Article II. The Offices**

- A.** The CREC takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3- or 4 -office view of church minister.
- B.** Within the CREC each elder must be a member of the church, which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.
- C.** Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14), often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session. Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CREC church.
- D.** Each congregation will be served as possible by a plurality of deacons (Acts 6:5-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

**E.** The CREC affirms the need for spiritually-disciplined, well-educated pastors, qualified in their households, grounded in rigorous and wise handling of the Scriptures, and exhibiting a thorough understanding of the biblical world and life view (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).

**F.** Any candidate for pastor, minister, or teacher regardless of his level of formal education, will be examined before ordination (See Article IX.C). The candidate will be examined by a local session of elders with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery will also examine him with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery may or may not recommend his ordination to the session of the local congregation. The local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. If a local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may or may not initiate proceedings according to Article IV.P.

**G.** If a minister or teacher has already been ordained within the CREC, he may not be required by presbytery or council to undergo another presbyterial examination. Such an examination may occur if both the calling church and the candidate agree to it. If a man has been ordained outside the CREC, the local congregation may seek the wisdom of the presbytery in the examination of his ministerial credentials, or the presbytery may also request the examination of the candidate.

**H.** Any institutions and processes of ministerial education and training that are formally associated with the CREC must be under the authority and supervision of a local session of elders in a local CREC church (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

### **Article III. Local Congregations**

**A.** We hold the local congregation has primacy in the structure of biblical church government (Heb. 13:7, 17) without denying the important blessings and obligations which come from broader connections and fellowship.

**B.** Each church will adopt into its statement of faith the *Apostle's Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon* in the form found in the *Reformed Evangelical Confession* below (1 Tim. 6:12). Forms of the following creeds which have been modernized for spelling and usage are acceptable. Forms which have been altered with regard to doctrinal content are not.

- C.** Each church will adopt into its statement of faith at least one of the following:  
Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)  
American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788)  
Three Forms of Unity:  
    Belgic Confession (1561)  
    Heidelberg Catechism (1563)  
    Canons of Dort (1619)  
The London Baptist Confession (1689)  
The Savoy Declaration (1658)  
The Reformed Evangelical Confession (see Article X)
- D.** Before a congregation can be accepted into CREC membership it must have its own constitution, been in existence for at least two years, have at least two elders, and have enough support from members to meet all regular expenses. Congregations seeking membership with the CREC which do not meet these criteria must come under the care of an existing CREC church and will be characterized as mission churches. Mission churches may have non-voting delegations at presbytery and church council meetings. When such a mission church comes to meet the criteria for a particularized church, they may be accepted into voting membership of the CREC by a two-thirds vote of presbytery.
- E.** Elders of CREC member churches must declare their honest subscription to the confessions adopted by their church. A candidate church must declare any exceptions to its confessional standards prior to becoming a CREC member (Ex. 20:16; Col. 3:9). If a member church modifies its confessional standards in any way, including amendments and exceptions, the church must notify presbytery immediately. If presbytery determines that the modification places the church at odds with CREC standards, it may initiate proceedings according to Article IV.P.
- F.** All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.
- In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.
- G.** Controversies within a local congregation regarding matters arising from differences between our various confessions will not be adjudicated beyond the local church level. All churches agree to work cheerfully and carefully in their

study of doctrinal differences, and to strive for like-mindedness with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

- H. The worship and work of each local congregation is ultimately to be governed by the teaching and godly examples supplied throughout all Scripture.
- I. After sending at least one candidate delegation to a stated meeting of presbytery, churches may be admitted to membership in a presbytery through a two thirds vote of the presbytery at its next stated meeting. The presbytery shall normally examine the pastor-elder delegation, especially with regard to their confessional status, sound doctrine, submission to CREC authority, and desire to uphold other CREC churches with all peace and love. They may remove themselves by whatever means their respective constitutions allow. When a church joins the CREC, this entire document through Article X must be adopted into that church's constitutional documents, according to the constitutional processes and standards of that church. The membership of the local church in the CREC is finalized at that point, and not before. New members shall make vows to the faithfulness and commitment to the churches and standards of the CREC. Likewise, current members should pledge to uphold the new church in prayer and love.
- J. In making a motion to seat a candidate church, a sponsoring church needs to be prepared to answer questions concerning the general health of that church and the likelihood of that church being able to embrace the CREC constitution when considered for full membership. The church which makes the motion to seat the candidate church must be the church which moves to receive the church into full membership when that issue comes before presbytery. The church which moves to receive the church into membership must be prepared to answer questions related to the doctrinal integrity of the church's confession, and the moral, spiritual, and covenantal health of the families of the officers.
- K. The candidacy of a church will not be allowed to extend beyond the third presbytery meeting from which that church was first seated—that is, two years after their first seating as a candidate church - unless a two-thirds vote by presbytery to override and extend the status beyond two years occurs.
- L. When a church joins the CREC, the existing ordination of all its officers is thereby accepted, and does not necessitate a formal examination as with other candidates. Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning current pastoral and elder qualifications may occur in the discussion of that church's potential admission.

#### Article IV. The Broader Assemblies

- A. There are two broader assemblies in the CREC: the Presbytery and the Church Council. A minimum of two local churches is necessary to establish a presbytery (another term in common use is *classis*). Geographical boundaries of presbyteries may overlap, but in considering this presbyteries are urged to remember the law of Christ (Matt. 7:12; 3 John 9). A minimum of two presbyteries are necessary to form the council (Acts 16:4). New presbyteries may form only with the approval of council.
- B. Each congregation in a presbytery will send two elders as voting representatives to each meeting of presbytery – one a teacher or minister, and the other a ruling elder. In the absence of a teacher or ruling elder, a second ruling elder may serve.
- C. The various presbyteries will each send an equal number of delegates to council, not including the moderator of council among the number sent from his presbytery. Each council shall determine the number of delegates that will represent the presbyteries to the subsequent council; the number will be so determined as to create a council of between ten and eighteen delegates in all, not including the moderator of council. If there are more than nine presbyteries, each presbytery will be represented at council with two delegates.
- D. The presbytery will have a stated annual meeting. If three quarters of the churches submit a written request to the moderator, an *ad hoc* presbytery meeting will be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the presbytery cannot be made at presbytery.
- E. The council will have a stated meeting every three years. In the year that the council meets, presbyteries must have their annual meeting at the same place and time. If three quarters of the presbyteries submit a written request to the moderator of the council, an *ad hoc* council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the council cannot be made at council. The requirement that presbyteries convene at the same place and time as council does not apply to *ad hoc* meetings of council.
- F. Broader assemblies will elect a moderator from among the assembled delegates when that office is vacant. The moderator will be elected at the end of the assembly meeting. The moderator will chair the following meetings, and will be the assembly's moderator, representative and spokesman for the next three years (Rev. 2:1; Acts 19:10, 20:28). The moderator will be the spokesman for the assembly upon his election. All nominations for the position of moderator must be pre-posted on the agenda. The assembly will also elect a moderator *pro*

*tempore*, to serve in cases of the moderator's absence, or to fill out the term of the moderator if the office of the moderator becomes vacant.

- G.** At votes of the broader assemblies, each delegate has one vote. The moderator may not vote, and so in those cases when a church has only one vote because one of their delegates has been elected moderator, the church may put forth a new delegate to take the place of the moderator. If the church cannot put forth a replacement, the remaining delegate has two votes.
- H.** No moderator may serve two consecutive terms as moderator (1 Peter 5:1-4). Each moderator must be concurrently serving as a pastor, ordained teacher, or ruling elder in a local church. If a moderator ceases to serve in such a local office, then his term as moderator ceases at that time. Before his term is completed, a moderator may resign his position, or may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the assembly.
- I.** As representative of that assembly, the moderator may encourage and spiritually strengthen the sessions of elders within his broader assembly. The moderator also has the authority to meet with the moderators of other broader assemblies to encourage them or to be encouraged, as well as to inquire about the spiritual and doctrinal health of the churches within the other assemblies. This should in no way be interpreted as a judicial or prelatical authority. The moderator has the authority to call an *ad hoc* meeting of an assembly, with the issues related to the stated reasons for calling the meeting being the only agenda items.
- J.** A visiting delegation of a church, forming church, or interested group may be seated at the discretion of the moderator. Such seating is not part of the process of joining the CREC. Visiting delegations may not participate in the debates of the assembly.
- K.** The voting status of new member churches shall begin the next presbytery meeting following their acceptance into membership. The delegates can still make motions but cannot vote.
- L.** After a fair and open judicial hearing at presbytery, a congregation may be removed from membership in the presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery. Upon such occasions, the removed congregation retains the full right of appeal to council.
- M.** Issues relating to the local congregation which may lawfully be brought before the broader assemblies are specified in this section. All matters not itemized here must be adjudicated and resolved at the level of the local church.

Before any appeal is made, a matter must be first addressed at the local church level. Appeal may be made (1) when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of participating in or tolerating grievous dishonesty

in subscription to the doctrinal or constitutional standards of the local church; or, (2) when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of gross misbehaviour. In any case where at least two witnesses are from the same household, three witnesses are required to hear the case. The broader assemblies must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals.

Appeals to council do not necessarily have to first be heard by presbytery. However, council may choose to remand the case to presbytery.

- N.** When an appeal comes to presbytery, a simple majority at presbytery is necessary to decide the issue; the decision of presbytery shall be considered settled and binding unless and until it is proved by a council to be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the CREC. The matter may be appealed further to the council by the appellant. The council must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals. A simple majority at council is necessary to decide the issue; the decision of council shall be considered settled and binding unless and until it is proved by a future council to be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the CREC. Decisions of council can be appealed to a future council, though the future council is not obligated to receive such an appeal.
- O.** The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are spiritually authoritative, but practically advisory. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the broader church, they may do so without deprivation of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, they may be removed from membership in the CREC, in accordance with Section M and O.

If a complaint against a member session is brought by someone who is not a member of a CREC church, the CREC, in presbytery, Church council, or through its appropriate moderator, can agree to hear the case if all of the following conditions have been met. (1) The moderator has a letter from the accused session in question declining to hear the case, or a letter advising him that the case was heard and rejected. (2) The moderator has a letter from the government of the church where the complainant is a member saying that the church affirms the truth of the Apostles' Creed, and agrees to hold the complainant accountable if the decision goes against him. If the complainant is an independent church, the moderator must have a letter of commitment from that church expressing their willingness to give due weight, respect and consideration to the decision of the CREC, and agreeing not to pursue the matter beyond the CREC decision. (3) The charges as framed have two or three available and accountable witnesses listed for each specified complaint. (4) The complainant has not overtly discredited himself in his manner of bringing the charges.

- P.** The assemblies may form no standing committees or boards. Every committee must be *ad hoc* and automatically dissolve when it completes its assigned task, or submits its assigned report to the assembly. Assigned tasks may not be open-ended, allowing for *de facto* standing committees.
- Q.** A simple majority of an assembly may seat candidate and fraternal delegations. Such delegations are encouraged to come as observers and friends, or as prospective members of the CREC. Such delegations may not vote, although they may address the assembly at the invitation of the moderator. They may not participate in debate without unanimous consent of the assembled delegates.
- R.** Assemblies may from time to time address issues not included in the historic creeds and confessions by means of overtures, memorials (see Article IX), or confessional statements.
- S.** The broader assemblies shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of an assembly. The broader assemblies are informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should an assembly act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must be acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of an assembly. The various presbyteries may modify their respective Books of Procedures between meetings of council. Each meeting of council will review these various modifications and determine one uniform Book of Procedures for use by all the presbyteries. Presbyteries may then approve further modifications for their own use, to be followed in turn by conciliar review. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the moderator.
- T.** No broader assembly may own property. All property within the CREC will be owned by the local congregations. General costs associated with hosting a broader assembly will be borne by the host church of the broader assembly. Specific costs (e.g. food and travel) will be borne by the delegates or sending churches.
- U.** All retirement or pension plans for CREC ministers, teachers, missionaries, etc. will be under the authority, management and oversight of the local churches, and will not be the responsibility of the broader assemblies.
- V.** The moderator of the church council (or the sole presbytery until the formation of the church council) shall bear the responsibility for maintaining a true and accurate copy of the CREC's constitution reflecting all amendments and additions thereto. The moderator will bear the responsibility for making the constitution available by means of electronic publishing.



## **Article V. Meeting Protocols**

- A.** Broader assemblies act properly when either (a) in a duly constituted meeting, the measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes; or (b) the act is declared in writing by the moderator and then included in the moderator's written report to the next duly constituted meeting of the broader assembly. At the meeting, the relevant portion of the moderator's report must be received by the broader assembly through the process described above.
- B.** Motions to amend the agendas of an assembly in session require a unanimous vote.
- C.** Full minutes of all the assembly proceedings will be kept. The public minutes and records of the assembly will be published on a public electronic page maintained by the church of the moderator, with the moderator responsible for its contents. Minutes of confidential proceedings will be distributed in hard copy to all the member churches in the presbytery. The costs associated with this process will be borne by the church of the moderator. Minutes must be posted within two weeks of their approval.
- D.** The minutes of the broader assemblies will be approved when the moderator has circulated a draft of the minutes within two weeks of the adjournment of the assembly. All suggested corrections must be made by the delegates within a week, and a revised copy of the minutes will be circulated for final approval. The minutes require a two-thirds majority to be approved. Lack of response from a delegate will be considered an affirmative vote. The final approval of assembly minutes must occur within one month of the adjournment of the assembly.
- E.** The quorum for the broader assemblies will be two thirds of the voting delegates. [Motions to amend the agenda at the meeting require a unanimous vote.

Setting time limits for floor debate or to calling for the question requires a three quarters majority.

The broader assemblies have the authority to call for an executive session at their discretion by a simple majority vote.

## **Article VI. Missions**

- A.** All supported international or domestic CREC missionaries will not be sent by the presbyteries or church council, but rather by the local church. As appropriate, the other churches in the presbytery can offer encouragement and

financial support, but the accountability of the missionaries will only be to the congregation, which is the sending body. As circumstances warrant, missionaries may seek a transfer of the sending authority from one local church to another, with the details to be worked out between the missionary and the elders of the respective congregations involved.

## **Article VII. Confessional Standards and Revision**

- A.** The CREC holds as its foundational confession of faith the *Apostles Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon*. These confessions are included in Article X of this document.
- B.** The CREC holds generally to the system of doctrine reflected in the great creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the Reformation, and consequently requires all confederated churches to hold to at least one of the particular statements listed in Article III.C.
- C.** Revisions to any portion of these confessions of faith must have a first reading at a stated meeting of the church council, and may then be brought to a vote at the subsequent stated meeting. Three quarters of the presbyteries are required to propose revisions to this confession of faith. Such proposed revisions will be placed on a list of potential revisions maintained by the moderator, to await consideration at the appointed time.
- D.** Three quarters of the presbyteries may remove proposed revisions to the confession of faith at any time prior to the council when they are to be voted on. A proposed change in the confession requires a three quarters majority in order to pass. This process of revision applies only to the confessional statements, and not to other portions of this constitution.
- E.** If a church's standing in the CREC is potentially affected by the process of confessional revision, that church has five years within which to make their first appeal to presbytery.

## **Article VIII. Amendments**

- A.** This constitution of the CREC, excluding the article containing the confessions of faith, may be amended at any time by a three quarters majority at any regularly scheduled meeting of the church council, or by the sole presbytery at any time prior to the formation of the first council.

### **Article IX. Memorials**

Memorials are intended to state the position of the CREC on issues which cannot be addressed effectively in constitutional language, but on which some sort of constitutional statement is desired. Memorials are intended to state the position of the CREC on issues which do not rise to a confessional level, or on issues concerning which a confessional statement has not yet been made.

- A.** A local congregation within the CREC is not excluded from membership if it is incorporated, but churches are strongly urged to avoid such status. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only rightful Head of the church (Eph. 1:22), and incorporation blurs that truth in that a corporation is judicially a creation of the state (Matt. 22:21).
- B.** In questions about candidates for ordination, the local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. But when the local church has sought the wisdom of the broader church, agreement with such recommendations is strongly encouraged.
- C.** While a formal seminary education *may* prepare a candidate for ordination, our confederation strongly prefers ministerial training, under the oversight of local church elders, which maintains high academic and theological standards (including training in the original languages of Scripture), and yet at the same time incorporates an apprentice or internship approach within the context of the local congregation.
- D.** Our process of confessional revision is established so that the differences between our churches may be resolved over time by a careful striving for like-mindedness. The process is established to work in a slow and deliberate fashion so that we will be less susceptible to various fads and winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).
- E.** All things are to be considered and conducted under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, including education, and especially the education of our covenant children. God has neither charged nor authorized the state to educate children within its civil jurisdiction. God has commanded parents to bring up their children in the education and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4, Deut. 6:7). Given the importance and enormity of the task (Ps. 127:3-5, Deut. 6:7-9), and the impossibility of neutrality in education (Prov. 1:7, Matt. 12:30, Luke 6:40, Col. 2:1-10, 2 Cor. 10:3-5), we do heartily affirm the necessity of educating our children in a manner that is explicitly Christian in content and rigor.

Government schools are, by decree and design, explicitly godless, and therefore cannot be considered a legitimate means of inculcating true faith, holy living and a decidedly Christian worldview in the children of Christian parents.

Parents who do not fully understand the indispensability of Christian education should be warmly received into membership. However, the leaders of Christ's church must thoroughly understand and plainly teach the divine imperative to disciple our children, the divine prohibition of rendering unto Caesar those who bear God's image (Matt. 22:20-21), the divine warning to those who cause their little ones to stumble (Matt. 18:6) and the divine promises to those who raise their children in faith (Deut. 7:9, Ps. 102:5-7, Ps. 103:17-18, Prov. 22:6, Luke 1:48-50, Acts 2:39).

The doctrine of creation lies at the heart of Christian living, deeply embedded within our assumptions about worship, knowledge, faith, celebration, beauty, and redemption. In recent decades, many conservative evangelicals have been moved by the science of the day to oppose the historic view of creation in six sequential days of common length, several millennia in the past. Instead, they hold that the bare ideas of creation presented in Genesis have little to do with the actualities of creation. Falsely pitting poetry and symbolism against history, they distort the text of Scripture and divorce ideas from the created order in ancient Gnostic fashion.

Science changes like the wind, and therefore its authority ought to pale beside the Spirit-led, traditional exegesis of creation in six days of common length. Intimidation by apparently more sophisticated non-Christian knowledge-priesthoods is not new. Over the centuries, God has regularly tested the Church's courage to stand loyal to His revelation over against the ever-changing sciences of the day, those "profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge."

Following the acts of terror perpetrated against the United States of America on September 11, 2001, the member churches of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches—being situated in Canada and the United States of America—affirm the following:

1. Because God is God (omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, triune, etc), all of history is under His control. Nothing happens apart from His knowledge and without His divine decree. Therefore, we must view these recent events in the light of God's sovereignty rather than from the carnal point of view. It is God who has brought this disaster upon the United States (Amos 3:6). While not denying that wicked individuals committed these acts, we affirm that God was active in these events for His glory and honor.
2. Both the United States of America and Canada continue to sin against the true and living God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and have slipped into wholesale idolatry and polytheism. Our countrymen have done this in the name of tolerance and acceptance, tolerating everything except the truth. Our civil and religious representatives tell damnable lies when they say that the faiths of Abraham and Mohammed are the

same, that Yahweh and Allah are the same, that the living God wants His people to commune with infidels, and that we regard as enemies those who believe in such a thing as truth (Ex. 20:3, John 4:22, Eph. 4:3-6). These are the lies we and our countrymen bid our leaders to tell us, lies which we believe to our own destruction. Therefore, God has brought this judgment upon the United States as a warning to her and to any nation that turns its face against the living God. The only faithful response is confession of sin, drawing near to Jesus Christ, and repentance (Joel, *passim*).

3. Apart from repentance we will find no blessing for our nations in these events. God is not blessing our lands in this attack by drawing the people of the United States together, and the people of Canada and of other nations together, in furthering some sort of humanistic neighborhood. Being an American, or a Canadian, is not the same as being a Christian.
4. It is appropriate for the United States to respond to this terrorist attack by using military force in order to bring the terrorists to justice. Furthermore, it is lawful for believing Christians to participate in this military response.
5. It is not lawful for women to be mustered for combat service, for our Lord has declared it an abomination for women to don the martial attire of a man (Deuteronomy 22:5). Christian fathers must protect their daughters from being seduced or coerced into such a circumstance, and the Church must support them as they do so.
6. It is not lawful to respond in the name of the false gods we currently worship, with a proud and arrogant spirit. The United States and her allies have no right whatever to expect God to bestow blessing upon any military responses so long as our peoples embrace the idols of pluralism, protect the carnage of abortion, muster our daughters for combat service, and honor the perversions of sodomy. Though it is lawful and right for the United States to respond militarily, if her people continue to protect these and other corruptions as a way of life, they cannot expect to enjoy God's blessing upon such endeavors, or anything other than continued judgment both on the battlefield and off.

Therefore, mindful of this judgment of God, the churches of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches set aside September 11, 2002, as a day of prayer and fasting, that we may unite in confessing the sins of our respective nations.

## **Worship**

This requires a practical understanding of *all* that Scripture teaches, including an understanding of lesser and greater matters (Matt. 23:24), Christian forbearance with weaker brothers (Rom. 14:1), liberty in worship which is not self-willed (Col. 2:20-23), and an avoidance of an over scrupulous zeal (1 Sam. 21:6; 2 Kings 5:18-19; Luke 4:16). We hold that in our corporate worship we are to be governed by the Word of God in its entirety. In this context alone, and with these constraints, we hold to what has been historically called the “regulative principle” (Deut. 4:2; Lev. 10:1-2; 2 Sam. 6:6-7). Specifically, we hold that worship is to be centered on the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17, 4:2), the faithful administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26), with both Word and sacraments protected and promoted by conscientious, biblical church discipline (1 Cor. 11:17, 20).

### **F. Homosexuality—Courage, Clarity, and Charity: A Phoenix Declaration January 2003**

As Christian ministers standing in the stream of historic Christianity and rooted in the Evangelical heritage, we believe it is time to speak with courage, clarity, and charity to the issue of homosexuality that is besetting the Church at large. Confessing the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God (Isaiah 40:8; Luke 4:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), we believe that God has spoken clearly and sufficiently to the issue of human sexuality. In accordance with this belief, we must state that homosexuality in its varied forms, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, is out of accord with God’s design for human sexuality and is sinful, therefore, in the eyes of God (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25; 19:1-28; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; 2 Peter 2:6-8). The only remedy for this, and all other sin, is found in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). As ministers of this glorious gospel of God’s grace, who are striving after faithfulness to God and His Word, we state the following as a call to the Church to return to faithfulness in a spirit of repentance.

## **Courage**

In our time, many who are recognized as clergy are calling for and promoting a revision of the historic Christian understanding of God’s Word concerning homosexuality. This teaching is out of accord with the Bible and leads the flock of Christ astray. Such teaching arrogantly overturns God’s holy standard dealing with human sexuality. Love for Christ and His Church compels us to speak truthfully about that which is false. Courage is needed to refute those who would call evil good and good evil. The example and teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles show clearly that false teachers are to be exposed and refuted so that the Church is protected (Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 1:9; 2 Peter 2:1-3). In an age that tolerates everything but the truth, courage is needed to speak the truth in love in an uncompromising manner.

### **Clarity**

The Bible provides a clear and consistent teaching in opposition to homosexuality. Modern attempts to subvert this clear teaching are without substance. The Word of God must not be held prisoner to alien philosophical or cultural agendas. If allowed to speak with its own authority, the Biblical teaching is seen to be utterly opposed to homosexuality and its attendant practices. Furthermore, the historic testimony of Christian interpretation is in perfect harmony with this position. Contrary to popularized agendas, the Bible and those who have officially taught Christianity throughout the ages have recognized the sinfulness of homosexuality. The interpretations of such teachers as Athenagorus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Augustine are unanimous. The modern attempt to revise the Biblical teaching, claiming Biblical and interpretive support, is a theological and moral novelty.

### **Charity**

Love for neighbor compels us to remind those who are caught in the depths of sin that God in His holiness will not be mocked—He will bring judgment against sin. It is not an act of oppression or hate to point out the Divine condemnation of homosexuality. Rather, it is an act of kindness. We are opposed to the ill-treatment that many people in favor of homosexuality have experienced; yet we deny that our disagreement and presentation of the Bible's teaching with regard to this subject constitutes ill treatment, hatred, or bigotry. In speaking the truth about the nature of homosexuality and God's opposition to it, we simultaneously hold forth the message of God's grace. God can and does forgive those who forsake the sin of homosexuality. God can and does bring freedom from bondage and cleansing of conscience to those who turn to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 3:21-26; 6:1-14; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 10:19-22). It is false compassion to accept and affirm those who are unrepentant in homosexuality. Charity demands that we speak the truth about God's holiness and His gospel.

## **Article X: Reformed Evangelical Confessions**

### **CREEDAL STATEMENTS (THE REFORMED EVANGELICAL CONFESSION)**

#### **A. The Apostles' Creed (2nd century)**

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

#### **B. Nicene Creed; Constantinople (381 AD)**

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin, Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church; acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

#### **C. Definition of Chalcedon (451 AD)**

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanity; truly God and truly man, with a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father according to His deity, and consubstantial with us according to the humanity; like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before the ages He was begotten of the Father, according to the deity, and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, He was born of Mary the virgin, who is Godbearer according to His humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, to be acknowledge in two natures; without confusing them, without interchanging them, without dividing them, and without separating them; the distinction of natures by no means taken away by the union, but the properties of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one



subsistence; not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as from the beginning the prophets have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the symbol of the fathers has handed down to us.

### **A Westminster Creed**

(A modern selection from the 17th century Shorter Catechism)

I believe man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever;

I believe God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth;

I believe there is but one true and living God; that there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory;

I believe God has foreordained whatever comes to pass; that God made all things of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good; and that God preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions.

I believe our first parents, though created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, sinned against God, by eating the forbidden fruit; and that their fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery;

I believe God determined, out of His mere good pleasure, to deliver His elect out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer;

I believe the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever;

I believe Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king.

I believe Christ as our Redeemer underwent the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, the cursed death of the cross, and burial; He rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended up into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father, and is coming to judge the world at the last day.

I believe we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit;

I believe God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin;

I believe by His free grace we are effectually called, justified, and sanctified, and gathered into the visible church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation;

I believe that we also are given in this life such accompanying benefits as assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; that at death, we are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory; and our bodies, being still united in Christ, rest in their graves, till the resurrection; and at the resurrection, we shall be raised up in glory, we shall openly be acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

### ***An Evangelical Statement***

(Adapted from the National Association of Evangelicals)

We *believe* the Bible to be the only inerrant Word of God. It is our only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice.

We *believe* that there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is omnipresent, that is, He is present throughout all Creation but not limited by it. He is omniscient, that is, nothing is hidden from His sight. In all things He is limited by nothing other than His own nature and character.

We *believe* the God we serve is holy, righteous, good, severe, loving and full of mercy. He created the heavens and earth, and everything in them, in the space of six ordinary days, and all very good. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of everything that has been made.

We *believe* in the true deity and full humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and in His personal return in power and glory.

We *believe* in the full deity of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging Him together with the Father and the Son in the works of creation and redemption.

We *believe* that because of Adam's sin all mankind is in rebellion against God. For the salvation of such lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary.

We *believe* that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and that faith without works is dead.

We *believe* in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We *believe* in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; those who are saved to the resurrection of life, and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ratified November 6, 1997  
Amended in Presbytery January 30, 1998  
Amended in Presbytery November 12, 1998  
Amended in Presbytery September 30, 1999  
Amended in Ad Hoc Teleconference December 3, 1999  
Amended in Presbytery September 28, 2000  
Amended in Presbytery October 19, 2001  
Amended in Presbytery October 18, 2002  
Amended in Presbytery October 16, 2003  
Amended in Presbytery October 14, 2004

## APPENDIX C

### HANDLING ACCUSATIONS AND EVIDENCE

by Christopher R. Schlect

We find ourselves in a season of slander, of unwarranted accusations, and of false reports against leaders and churches within our Confederation. Many of these reports have been circulated nationwide. If ever there was a time for us in the CREC to distinguish between true charges and false ones, and between substantive accusations and frivolous ones, that time is now. How shall we handle accusations? What should our response be?

First, we welcome these trials in all joy, as the Apostle instructs us (James 1:2), and we rejoice especially in this particular kind of trial. “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Luke 6:22-23).

Second, we must set aside our individualism, each of us dying to ourselves. We are not separate individuals, but members of one another, *in* one another, even as we are in Christ and Christ is in us (John 17:21, Eph. 4:1-6, etc.). We in this Confederation must not react to accusations as Peter did; rather than identifying himself with Christ, Peter played down his association with Christ. Indeed, Peter dissociated himself from the Church, the company of Christ, His body (“You are not one of this man’s disciples, are you? ...Did I not see you in the garden with him?” [John 18]). This was Peter’s sinful attempt to shield himself from an unjust attack against the Church. His action was hardly harmless or “neutral.” Distancing oneself from an accused brother sunders Christ’s body, which is tantamount to joining with the accuser. Consider Peter again: “And the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them and warmed himself” (John 18:18). In distancing himself from Christ, Peter stood with Christ’s accusers.

Christ was accused falsely. Of course, Peter was not guilty of what Christ was being accused of. In order that his innocence would be clear to everyone, and to avoid any misunderstanding, was Peter right for distancing himself from Jesus? Was it proper for him to say, in effect, “Christ is one individual, and I am another. Do not confuse us.”? God forbid. Let us be true to one another. In this season of slander, we in this Confederation must bury our identities onto one another. Has not Jesus Christ placed His name upon us? Hasn’t He done so knowing full well that, by associating Himself with us, His name will be unjustly defamed and misunderstood? Yet He claims us nonetheless.

Third, we must study and practice what the Bible teaches about dealing with accusations and charges. What follows is the beginning of such a study.

## I. DEFERENCE TOWARD THE ACCUSED

We know that the Bible expressly prohibits judging inconsistently. In Malachi, for example, unfaithful priests are chastised for having “accepting faces before the law,” that is, applying the law differently depending upon whom the judge is “facing” (2:9). Judges may not privilege (or deprive) a man before law because the man is rich or poor, or from a certain family. This kind of partiality has no place in godly judgments. But this does not mean that opposing parties within a dispute are treated in the same way. In Biblical law, accuser and accused do not stand on equal footing. The Bible *requires* judges to be predisposed in favor the accused and against his accuser. It is an accuser who must bring forward two or three witnesses, but no such obligation rests on the person he accuses (Deuteronomy 19:15). The standard of two or three witnesses is what we sometimes call a “burden of proof,” and when we consider the two sides in a dispute, this burden is placed on only one side—the one who brings the charge. No such burden rests on the accused; he need not make a case for his own innocence. He does not need to prove anything, nor does the accused even need to say anything in his own defense. Returning to the earlier point, we must hold all accusers to the same standard regardless of whether they are rich or poor, and likewise all defendants must be held to the same standard regardless of their family tree. But within any given dispute, the accuser is held to a different standard than the defendant.

Someone may ask you to produce evidence for why you believe a brother is *not* corrupt. Remember this standard; the Bible forbids you to think that you must produce reasons—unless, and not until, the accuser has first carried his burden of proof. The presumption of innocence is a biblical requirement. In a dispute between accuser and accused, the Bible permits us to work toward a judgment only after showing deference toward the accused.

## II. PROPER AND IMPROPER ACCUSATIONS

In deferring to the accused party, we find in the Bible several important principles of propriety that an accuser must follow. A failure to abide by any one of these principles, so long as the failure remains unremedied, results in the disqualification of the accuser. An accusation from a disqualified accuser may not be received or adjudicated.

### A. Proper accusations come with two or three *qualified* witnesses

The Bible sets forth standards for witnesses, standards which deepen the burden of proof that is placed upon an accuser.

(1) First, a qualified witness testifies to what he *observed* rather than to *judgments*, *conclusions*, or *arguments* concerning the event he observed. The Bible describes a witness this way:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we

have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you... (1 John 1:1-3a).

This text reminds us that we must not confuse the roles of witness and judge. For example, if a witness says, “I heard the pastor speak with malice,” he is not really behaving like a witness. We must distinguish what the witness *witnessed* from what the witness *judged*. The witness can rightly be used to establish what it was that the pastor said, provided he was there to hear it. But his evaluation of the pastor’s remark cannot be used to establish that malice took place. The witness may privately think that malice took place, but whether it did is for the judges to decide.

A ludicrous example would be to call up a long line of witnesses, each of whom says only this, “I saw Pastor commit a murder last night,” and nothing further. Here we have testimony from two or three sources, so shall we convict? Not at all; what we have are two or three *judgments*, not two or three *witnesses*. We are interested not in the witnesses’ opinions, but in what the witnesses actually *observed* (e.g., did they see the pastor point a gun at someone’s head and fire it? did they see him put a corpse in a van or bury a body?). The witnesses’ job is simple; he must describe what he saw and heard. The judge considers such testimony from two or three witnesses and then returns his opinion, a judgment. It is only a judge, and not a witness, who may render an opinion such as, “The pastor committed a murder last night.”

(2) Second, a qualified witness testifies to *his own personal experience* rather than *passing on the reported experience of someone else*. The common term for testifying to another’s experience is “hearsay.” Christ was careful to distinguish first-hand testimony from second-hand reports, or hearsay. This formed the basis for His challenge to Pilate: “Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you this about Me?” (John 18:34). Judges must therefore set aside any claim that fails Christ’s challenge. Claims such as these have no place in a godly hearing of testimony:

“My husband told me, and I swear to it, that he heard the Pastor say such-and-such.”

“I read in the paper that someone said that Pastor is anti-semitic.”

(3) Third, a qualified witness offers testimony that is capable of being scrutinized—that is, his testimony is capable of being inquired into further by the judges.

And the judges shall make diligent inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness... (Deuteronomy 19:18a).

This principle reinforces point (1) above: subjective arguments and private judgment-calls cannot be investigated or “inquired into further” by judges.

This principle also reinforces point (2) above: when someone reports hearsay, all he does is pass on what a third party (we’ll call the third party “Enos”) alleges as fact: “Enos told me that he saw and heard such-and-such.” With such testimony no judge can possibly “make diligent inquiry” as the Bible requires, for the judge has no access to this Enos character. But it is Enos, and not the person testifying, who supposedly saw and heard something.

We may add a word about affidavits under this point. Affidavits are written statements that allege something. *In themselves*, affidavits do not establish a fact. Why? Because judges cannot cross-examine affidavits; a judge cannot “make diligent inquiry” into them. Affidavits are really just hearsay in written form. Does this mean that there is no place for affidavits (or other forms of hearsay, for that matter)? No, they do have a limited place. An affidavit may be received for a purpose *other than* to establish a fact. For example, when cross-examining a witness, the witness’s credibility may be impeached by pointing out that his present testimony contradicts what he stated earlier in an affidavit. In this example, the affidavit is used not to establish any fact, but rather to point out that the witness is either confused or contradicting himself.

A similar use of hearsay is also admissible, as seen in this example: Last Friday Jack told Enos that he had seen Pastor do thus-and-such. But today Jack claims that what he had seen the Pastor do was *not* “thus-and-such,” but something different. Here it is legitimate to bring Enos forward to testify about Jack’s earlier story, and asking him to repeat Jack’s story is hearsay. But we do admit this hearsay, but only for a limited purpose: it shows that Jack’s story changed. We consider what Enos says *not* for the purpose of determining what it was that Pastor did, but in order to reconsider the credibility of Jack’s testimony.

A second permissible use of hearsay (including affidavits) is to establish the state of mind of the one making a statement. This sort of hearsay corroborates whether the claimant acted (or responded) out of intent, fear, or duress, etc. A witness may testify that he heard the pastor yell, “Ouch!” which is technically hearsay, but could still be admissible as evidence that the pastor was experiencing pain. Similarly, in some situations we may receive a witness’s testimony that he heard the pastor say, “I’m going to murder that guy.” This is hearsay, but we can receive it as evidence of the pastor’s intent. But be careful: it is relevant to disclose the pastor’s intent *only*. Such hearsay can *not* be used to establish that a murder took place; rather, only *after* we have established the fact of a murder *by other evidence* (e.g., a dead body) may we hear this testimony in support of the allegation that the one who committed this murder was the pastor.

A third legitimate use of hearsay (including affidavits) is for preliminary investigation. An affidavit may be used to decide whether or not a charge is credible and ought to be brought before a tribunal. Hearsay can reveal what a witness might say in an upcoming trial. For this purpose affidavits can be very helpful: an accuser can present an affidavit as a way of showing the judges that he is capable of bringing a witness. This helps the judges determine whether or not to allow an accusation to come to trial. But remember the distinction: hearsay *may* be received to make a tentative, preliminary assessment of whether a witness is willing to present certain testimony, but it *may not* be received in order to establish or confirm an allegation. In the hearing itself, hearsay—affidavits included—is generally not admissible.

This leads us to an important corollary. A judgment based on hearsay alone is a perversion of justice. The Bible requires that, before a judgment may be rendered, “the judges shall make diligent inquiry,” and an affidavit cannot be cross-examined. Remember also,

The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him (Proverbs 18:17).

Therefore, those who pronounce judgments against a brother on the basis of affidavits alone (or worse, on the basis of circulated reports or reputations), have overlooked this clear biblical requirement. This is so regardless of what the affidavit or the informal report may assert.

(4) Fourth, in order to be qualified, a witness must be accountable to the tribunal.

...if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done unto his brother; so you shall put away the evil person from among you.  
(Deuteronomy 19:18-19)

The principle is easy enough to understand. Those who are not members of a church, or who are not accountable to any authority, may not be called as witnesses.

Some may complain that this is insufficient basis for dismissing an accusation, that we would be dismissing on the basis of a technicality. But do the Scriptures regard it as a “mere technicality”? Bear in mind that justice is hard and earthy work, work to be done within the context of covenant community, and it is a service the whole community. This is clear in the next verse:

And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. (Deuteronomy 19:20)

Are issues of justice *nothing but* the guilt or innocence of the accused? Are they *nothing but* the truth or falsehood of this or that testimony? Clearly not; justice administered in a particular case has application will beyond the immediate parties involved. The Christian community is a body, bound together in covenant union with Christ, and the whole body has an interest in a dispute between two of its members. Were we to downplay this requirement as a mere “technicality,” we must first swallow unbiblical categories that are laden with individualism and the notion that truth is a disembodied, dissectible, context-less “idea-in-itself.” Against this, we must be steadfast in proclaiming that Truth is a Person, and that we are His body. For the good of the whole community, a false witness must be prosecuted. A witness’s loyalty and accountability are critical, especially in the context of church discipline.

Once again, remember what we learned about burden of proof. An accountable witness is a biblically-mandated protection for the accused. Not just any witnesses will do; we burden an accuser to bring *accountable* witnesses. What’s more, the accusers themselves must also be accountable.

Having now developed this principle, it needs some qualification, for Christians must guard against wooden applications of a principle such as this. For example, do we disregard a police report about the drunken, brawling pastor who was hauled out of a bar, simply because the arresting officer was not a church member? What about the security guard who caught the pastor with the bank teller’s money pouch? The hard answer is, it depends. There’s no one-size-fits-all solution. In our backslidden culture, sometimes we must depend upon the common-grace faithfulness of unbelievers, who do have accountability in our society, as we labor to hold one another accountable. (Remember that police officers and security guards do have some form of accountability: they can be fired, or worse, prosecuted for perjuring themselves.)

We have now discussed what a qualified witness is. A qualified witness is (1) one who testifies to his own sensory observations, not to his own opinions or arguments. (2) Nor does he testify to what someone else may have observed, but only to what he has observed himself. (3) The testimony he offers is factually probative and capable of being scrutinized or cross-examined. And finally, (4) he—together with the accusers for whom he testifies—is capable of being held accountable for false testimony.

What does the Bible tell us to do with charges that lack qualified witnesses? The answer is clear, especially when such charges are brought against elders: *do not receive the charges*.

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)

## **B. “Dogpile” accusations must be dismissed**

The Bible requires that charges, before they are even heard, must be formulated with clarity and specificity. Charges may not be offered in the form of a disorderly list of complaints smeared against the accused. Notice that Christ refused to defend himself in the face of accusations that were brought in a convoluted way. Consider his answer to the Jews:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone me?” (John 10:31-32).

Here, Christ demands that his accusers specify the particular event in which he sinned. How could he possibly answer a charge when his accusers do not specify what it is that they are holding against him? (This is the basis for the common-law notion of *habeas corpus*: it is unlawful to incarcerate a defendant without clearly stating what it is that he has allegedly done wrong.)

Now consider Christ’s response to the high priest:

The high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine. Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”

And when he had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, “Do You answer the high priest like that?”

Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?” (John 18:19-24).

Here Jesus reminds the High Priest that he may not adjudicate a matter for which charges are raised a hurly-burly fashion. Christ demanded that his accusers formulate a charge that has handles on it which can be grasped. The principles are these: (1) the alleged sin must be named (“bear witness of the evil!”), (2) the event of sin must be specified (“For which of those works do you stone me?”), and (3) qualified witnesses



must be brought for each specification (“Ask those who have heard me...bear witness of the evil”)—and we know from elsewhere that one such witness is not enough.

Reflect upon the practicality of Christ’s standards for formulating charges. In John 8, John 10, and John 18, Christ was barraged by people whose criticisms festered against him. As their malice gathered steam, they attempted to convict him. Had a particular wrongdoing been specified against him, Christ might have been able to muster a defense. But how could Christ possibly defend himself against an amorphous onslaught of festering sentiment and malice? Christ demanded that his accusers identify, in a very clear way, what it was that he had supposedly done wrong. He demanded clarity as to when, where, with whom, and before what competent witnesses he had done something wrong. In the absence of a clear and straightforward charge, plainly set forth, there can be no just opportunity for defense. Therefore, it is part of the accuser’s burden to bring a well-formulated charge.

What Christ demanded were accusers whose intent was to get at the bottom of a matter. Christ had no tolerance for accusations that start in one place, then shift to another, and then shift to yet another, heaping and piling on more and more charges, always raising more suspicion but never providing opportunity for resolution. Such accusations wage war against biblical clarity. These ungodly dogpiles are uncharitably designed to spread foul sentiment; they are convoluted bottomless pits. Accusations formulated in this fashion hope for *anything but* a clean conviction or a clean acquittal. Rather, their design is to smear. Christ recognized this sort of thing when he saw it, and we should recognize it for what it is. It is divisive sin.

### **C. Anonymous accusers must be dismissed**

Slanders and false reports can circulate until their point of origin is forgotten. In many cases the source of such reports is deliberately kept hidden. Those who originate anonymous reports, together with those who pass them on, are taking a case before an illegitimate court: the at-large court of public opinion. This is sometimes done in newspapers or on the internet: the less personal the court, the better. Anonymous accusers usually choose the same medium that enables a sixty-year-old man to successfully impersonate a twenty-year-old girl in his cyber-dating life. Such charges, and perhaps even documentation, are published to a watching world. They name the accused, but not the accuser. What is the Christian response? Jesus demands an answer to this question:

Which of you convicts me of sin? (John 8:46)

For their failure to answer this question, anonymous accusations must be ignored.

Of course, a related concern here is that an anonymous witness or accuser has no accountability to the tribunal, which we discussed above.

Another point in this connection is the violation of Matthew 18 process. Anonymous accusers prefer to bring their charges not “to the church,” but instead to the watching world. To these accusers, judgment begins on anonymous web sites and in back room whispers, but not in the house of God.

Anonymous accusations must not be heeded. Neither do they deserve a response from the accused.

## **D. Hypocritical accusers must be dismissed**

Christ refused to hear hypocritical witnesses.

He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first. (John 8:7)

Sometimes accusations are raised regarding sins of which accusers themselves are demonstrably guilty, as it was with those who accused the woman caught in adultery. For example, a session's counsel is refused a hearing in some quarters (i.e., "don't listen to what *they* say"), when the justification for not hearing is that the session is supposedly closed-minded to those who disagree with them. Or, a Pastor is accused of diverting attention from the truth by an accuser who refuses to state clearly where and when it was that the Pastor did so. A session is accused of using malicious intimidation tactics by someone who threatens a lawsuit against the church.

Our Lord does not give these accusations the time of day. Neither should we.

## **III. FINAL PASTORAL DIRECTIVES**

### **A. Do not even listen to unsubstantiated or frivolous accusations.**

An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue (Proverbs 17:4).

The Bible teaches that someone may lie without even saying anything. A liar can be someone who merely listens. Do not even give heed to false lips. Do not listen to a spiteful tongue. Unwarranted accusations need to be confronted; we may not be content to simply leave them alone, allowing them to circulate to the next eager ear.

### **B. Do not make idle conversation about unsubstantiated or frivolous accusations.**

He who repeats a matter separates the best of friends. (Proverbs 17:9)

The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts. (Proverbs 17:14)

A fool's lips enter into contention... (Proverbs 18:6-8).

Where juicy accusations circulate, people want to pay attention. This is a temptation that must be resisted.

### **C. Learn these lessons in your homes.**

We in the CREC should be teaching these lessons in our homes: husbands and fathers to our wives and children. We need to apply these principles of Christian brotherhood in our churches, in business, in social gatherings, wherever. Do not listen to idle reports about what goes on in your brother's household. Do not concern yourself about, or even allow yourself to take an interest in, what so-and-so did—*unless you are in a position to address the (alleged) problem*. We should teach our children not to give heed to false lips on the playground. Teach them that listening to gossip is a form of lying. Remind

them that passing on unsubstantiated reports is hateful and stirs up strife, that it sows dissention among the brethren, which the Lord hates.

Our lives, lived out before one another in our families and in our communion, are the Lord's training ground. It is in these little daily things where we learn how to deal with larger falsehoods and malicious reports. It is here where we become equipped to deal with the big-time slanders that come against us.

#### **D. Pray for one another.**

Our congregations need to know that elders need prayer. Elders bear responsibility before God, for their sakes, to discern between true and false charges, between upright and corrupt witnesses. Elders are also responsible to attend to the distress and hurt and destruction that are caused by false reports.

#### **E. A charge to Moderators within the CREC**

Being informed by the principles set forth above, moderators within the CREC are hereby charged to insist upon biblical standards in the following areas: (a) a biblical loyalty and deference must be shown toward the accused, while insisting that an accuser meet the burden of proof; (b) witnesses must be biblically qualified; (c) charges must be clearly and properly formulated, with two or three qualified witnesses needed for each specification; (d) accusers must be neither anonymous nor hypocritical; (e) any accusation or circulated report that does not meet the standards of (a) through (d) immediately above must be dismissed, which means that they will not even be given the tacit approval resulting from either circulating the charges further or from investigating the charges.

## APPENDIX D

### REPORT ON THE HISTORY OF CREC PRESENTED TO THEIR EIGHTH PRESBYTERY

by Christopher R. Schlect

Like all created institutions, the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches is a community that abides in time. An inquiry into our history is an inquiry into what the CREC is; it is a search for our Confederation's identity. Who are we? We move toward an answer by going back to our first presbytery meeting in 1998. But that's not enough; our Confederation is shaped by a past that is larger than our own collective ecclesiastical experience. You see, the world was already turning when the CREC came into being. Our identity has been shaped by factors which God in His providence had set in place well before 1998. Today my purpose is narrow; I will comment on the ecclesiastical world into which our Confederation was born. This, I believe, is one important aspect of our identity.

In the opening decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Presbyterians softened their reformed distinctives by modifying the Westminster Confession and uniting with the Cumberland church. These developments appalled traditionalists like Benjamin Warfield. Presbyterians also played a leading role in forming the Federal Council of Churches in 1908. Their Old School Calvinism was being eclipsed by a more pragmatic view of the church's mission; the Christian gospel had less to do with reconciling hopeless sinners to a just and holy God than it did to solving social problems related to industrialism and urbanization. Analogous trends were just as evident in other communions.

The tendency toward doctrinal broadness concerned conservatives in the Presbyterian Church. In order to guard their communion from running off the rails, they influenced the 1910 General Assembly to hand down a doctrinal affirmation that set identified five points as being "essential and necessary" to the Presbyterian faith: the inerrancy of Scripture, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the substitutionary character of His death, His bodily resurrection, and the authenticity of His miracles.

These "five points" became a bone of contention over the next two decades. Critics charged that the General Assembly had reduced the confessional position of the church down to five propositions, which in practical effect supplanted the fullness of the church's confessional standards. Over the course of these discussions, the General Assemblies of 1918 and 1923 formally reiterated these same five points of doctrine.

These debates spilled out beyond the Presbyterian fold as American Protestants in this era sought to codify the "fundamentals" of the Christian faith. The five points became one way Protestants defined the emerging term "fundamentalism," both within and outside of Presbyterian circles. The term was also shaped in common discourse through the publication of a famous series of articles entitled *The Fundamentals*, which

appeared in twelve paperback volumes from 1910 to 1915. The articles were written by leading Christian thinkers from various backgrounds, including Presbyterians. Southern California oil millionaire Lyman Stewart, together with his brother Milton, covered the costs for distributing these volumes free of charge to every pastor, missionary, theological professor, theological student, YMCA and YWCA secretary, college professor, Sunday School superintendent, and religious editor in the English-speaking world. Many of the articles challenged the “higher criticism” of scripture, and others defended the supernatural character of Christianity. *The Fundamentals* became a touchstone for the growing fundamentalist movement in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

Significantly, neither the five points nor *The Fundamentals* were distinctively Presbyterian. In fact, their appeal crossed over familiar denominational lines. People who identified themselves with any of a variety of traditions, as diverse as Lutherans, Anglicans, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Roman Catholics, could heartily affirm every one of the five points. But there were also persons in each of these traditions who were concerned about the fundamentals. By the close of the 1920s, the labels “fundamentalist” and “modernist” carried greater meaning for classifying an individual Christian than denominational labels such as Methodist, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian. Many who called themselves “fundamentalists” sensed a deeper kinship with fellow fundamentalists *in other communions* than with non-fundamentalists *within their own*. Fundamentalism was a sort of ecumenical movement in the sense that it brought together Christians from diverse denominational backgrounds. But in another sense it was divisive because it defined itself over against “modernists” or “liberals,” those who downplayed supernaturalism, and thus they stood against people they found within their own denominations. Fundamentalists and modernists struggled against one another within Protestant denominations, and joined forces with their respective cobelligerents in other denominations. The net effect of all this was a thorough destabilization of the traditional sectarian categories by which American Protestantism had been organized.

Fundamentalists bound themselves to one another through Bible conferences, retreat centers, Christian colleges, common literature, and in other ways. But by and large they did not organize themselves into churches. And when they did form into churches, they tended to be self-starting, independent of one another and, most importantly, independent from communions that had real history. They had little concern for creeds, confessions, liturgy, and church polity; these matters took a back seat, and in some instances, they faded entirely into oblivion. These were circles where “true spirituality” could be defined without any reference to the church.

But we are talking about what historians rightly refer to as “the progressive era.” This was an age of robust activism and “making a difference.” If the sociological expression of “true spirituality” happened without reference to the church, where did it take place? The Progressive impulse—including the fundamentalist movement itself—was born out in the public sphere: mass media, education, commerce, and politics.

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<sup>1</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): 117-123 and *passim*.

These were the venues where Christians located true piety; if it had no practical effect in these areas, then it was not true piety.

And this presents an irony, for fundamentalists and modernists shared the same notion of piety. Presbyterians who reorganized Princeton seminary along modernist lines, who questioned the Virgin Birth and the resurrection, and who put J. Gresham Machen and his colleagues out of the church, were the very same Presbyterians who advocated legal prohibition of alcohol, legal prohibition of divorce, membership in the League of Nations, restrictions on child labor, and a movie rating system—all as issues of basic Christian principle. These principles were embraced in General Assembly overtures that carried by huge majorities in the 1920s and 30s—majorities proportional to the overtures which reorganized Princeton Seminary and which sustained the judicial action against Machen. In other words, fundamentalists and modernists were indistinguishable when it came to social activism; they shared the same public marks of true piety.

While fundamentalists and modernists grasped after the same headlines and took up common cause for the Christianization of America, there were some Protestants who weren't playing their game. These faithful Protestants still cared about creeds and confessions and liturgies and church polity, and they did not define piety according to public success. They rejected both fundamentalism and modernism—that is, they rejected *pietism*. These were what Darryl Hart calls “confessionalists.” They did not make the front pages, they did not seek out the front pages, they did not grasp after numbers and were, by mid-20<sup>th</sup> century standards, profoundly impractical. But they were true churchmen. In the middle of the century the confessional heritage was strong in the Christian Reformed Church and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

We in the CREC are recovering from 20<sup>th</sup> century fundamentalism and pietism. As pietists, we tried to be relevant to culture and to make a difference, but we learned that the more relevant we tried to become, the more shallow and fragmented, and at last, the less relevant, we became. As fundamentalists, we wanted to hold up the Bible as our standard of truth, but we came to learn that without owning the church as the “pillar and ground of the truth,” a high Bible is no longer a precious Covenant document, but Gnostic emptiness.

God protected us from ourselves. He protected us through all our silly political lobbying, our taste for Contemporary Christian music, and our media-frenzied vision for ministry, even as we neglected the church. He has been kind to show us our folly, and to restore us to our mother. We in the CREC are in love with our creeds and confessions and liturgies and our church government. For our merciful God has rescued us out of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## APPENDIX E

### WRITTEN EXAMINATION QUESTIONS FOR PASTOR DOUGLAS WILSON

#### Personal

- 1. Why did you request that your session request this questioning?** *While we believe (strongly) that ministers who are in good standing with their church and presbytery should not have to “prove their innocence” in any setting, we also believe in the law of charity. This means that we recognize that there is a controversy that has grown to a level where many well-meaning individuals have been unsettled. We see ourselves in a similar position to the apostle Paul who, when he visited Jerusalem, agreed to pay the Nazarite vows of four young men so that the broader church could be assured that the slanderous things being said about him were false. For that reason, I asked my session if they could request such an exam. They agreed to do this and made the request of the moderator. He consulted with a number of CRE ministers, and then granted the request. And here we are.*
- 2. It seems like one result of Federal Vision is blurred definitions of terms that were once clear and thus comforting. Terms such as justification, Christian, election, salvation, and regeneration seem now to be used in ways that are unknown, unclear and discomfoting. Are you concerned that you may have contributed to this loss of certitude and comfort, and thus caused some to stumble?** *Yes, I would have to say so. Whenever a controversy of this magnitude and extent breaks out, it would be arrogance to maintain that all the fault has to lay with the other side entirely. At the same time, I can say that this sort of thing was not done deliberately. The controversy that has come about is not something we were trying to create in any way. I am not so naïve as to believe that everyone would have been satisfied had we conducted ourselves perfectly, but I do believe that many honest Christians have been unsettled by this. To the extent that we bear responsibility for any of this, we want to acknowledge it, and correct ourselves where we can. That, incidentally, is one reason for an examination such as this. At the same time, there are some important doctrinal issues we are dealing with as we seek to be faithful to all of Scripture. And faithfulness to Scripture is also a confessional requirement, one that sometimes requires us to ask uncomfortable questions.*
- 3. Have you vowed to uphold and defend the system of doctrine contained in the WCF? Have you taken any exceptions to the WCF? ... Other than these exceptions, you agree with everything in the WCF?** *I currently subscribe to the Reformed Evangelical Confession. But Christ Church is in the process of adopting a Book of Confessions, which includes the 39 Articles, the Three Forms, and the original Westminster Confession of Faith. I have not yet subscribed to the Westminster Confession, but my subscription to the original Westminster Confession is therefore likely. When that happens, my exceptions will be the same as what*

follows. These are the exceptions noted in our proposed Book of Confessions: **1. Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant with Man**— Para . 2: (cf. Chp. 19, para. 1, 6). We would clarify that the “covenant of works” was not meritorious and we deny that any covenant can be kept without faith. Good works, even in this covenant were a result of faith, as illustrated by the Sabbath rest which was Adam's first full day in the presence of God. **2. Chapter 21: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day**— Para . 8: We believe that along with works of piety, necessity, and mercy, the command also calls us to rest our bodies on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 16:30 ; 31:15-17). We do not believe the intention of Scripture was to exclude recreation, especially in the context of the fellowship of God's people. **3. Chapter 24: Of Marriage**— Para 4: Delete the last sentence, which reads, “The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred, nearer in blood than he may of his own: nor the woman of her husband's kindred, nearer in blood than of her own.” **4. Chapter 25: Of the Church**— Para . 6: Though we believe the Pope of Rome to be anti-Christian, we do not believe him necessarily to be the Anti-Christ, Man of Lawlessness, or Beast of Revelation, etc. **5. Chapter 27: Of the Sacraments**— Para . 4: Ministers of the Word should ordinarily lead in the administration of the Sacraments, yet we believe that it is permissible for the sacraments to be administered with the oversight of any elder, lawfully ordained. **6. Chapter 28: Of Baptism**— Para . 3: We believe that the proper modes of baptism include sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. Para . 4: Being a church composed of both paedobaptists and those holding to believer's baptism, we expressly allow men otherwise qualified to serve as elders, but who hold to believer's baptism, to make an exception to WCF XXVIII. 4, which states, “Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.” **7. Chapter 29: Of The Lord's Supper**— Para . 7: We would clarify that “worthy receivers” of the Lord's Supper may include all baptized covenant members who are able to physically eat and drink the elements, including very young children being raised in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (provided that they are not under discipline). We deny that an artificial standard of age or mental capacity is consistent with the biblical basis for partaking of the Supper. We defer to the heads of households in discerning the capacity of their young children to partake in the Supper. Other than these exceptions, I agree with everything in the Confession.

4. **In your view, what historic confession of faith most faithfully expresses the system of doctrine taught in the Bible?** Taking this as a limited question, I would answer with the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Westminster Confession, I believe, most faithfully expresses the system of doctrine taught in the Bible. But at the same time, I believe that the Bible teaches far more than just a “system of doctrine.” The poetry, history, literature, liturgy and wisdom of Scripture do not exclude biblical doctrine, but they do go far beyond it. The Westminster is nevertheless a great synopsis of the great doctrinal themes of the Bible. It is not a great synopsis of the Bible itself, and I do not believe it was ever intended to be by thoughtful people.
5. **Do you have any exceptions, qualifications, or scruples to that confession in the areas of this examination? Please explain.** No, I do not have any exceptions



*in any area dealing with the federal vision controversy. However, one qualification I would like to note is that I believe the covenant of works mentioned in Chapter VII is badly named. I would prefer something like the covenant of life (WLC 20), or the covenant of creation. I believe that this covenant obligated Adam to whole-hearted obedience to the requirement of God. The one stipulation I would add is that, had Adam stood, he would have been required to thank God for His gracious protection and provision. And had Adam stood, he would have done so by believing the Word of God. In other words, it would all have been by grace through faith. Since Adam was not fallen, the nature of the grace would have been different than it is when dealing with mankind in sin. But it would have been gracious nonetheless.*

6. **In each of the following specific areas of doctrine, which of the historic confessions do you think presents the best treatment? (justification, covenant, church, and sacraments).** *I am not well-versed enough in all the reformational confessions to say which one represents these topics the best. But I know the Westminster Confession fairly well, and I agree with what it teaches on justification, covenant, church, and sacraments. The one point of comparison I am willing to make is that while the Westminster Shorter Catechism is strong on definitions, I think the Heidelberg Catechism is more pastoral. In Christ Church, we teach our children both catechisms, which I think provides a good balance.*
7. **Which theologians have most influenced your understanding of covenant and the sacraments?** *John Calvin, by a long shot. Some years after I became a soteriological Calvinist, I also became a sacramental Calvinist.*
8. **Have you read the RPCUS resolutions “With reference to the ‘New Perspective on Paul’ Movement”? If so, with which of the resolutions do you disagree? Please explain the nature of your disagreement.** *Yes, I have some acquaintance with that document. Out of the eighteen statements made there, I agreed with fifteen of them. The three I differed with (or differed with what was probably intended by them) were as follows: I differed with their statement that “any doctrine that denies the Covenant of Works is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.” My reasons for this were explained above. I do believe Adam was in covenant with God, but I do not believe that Adam was required to fulfill this covenant by any works apart from faith responding to God’s gracious word. I also differed with their statement on paedocommunion. I believe that very young covenant children may be faithfully admitted to the Table. And I differed with their last statement where they said that the Westminster Standards are “Biblical Christianity in its purest human expression.” I would prefer to say that the Westminster Standards are a faithful systematic statement of certain key biblical doctrines. Biblical Christianity in its purest human expression would have to be found in things like visiting widows and orphans in their affliction.*

## **Justification by Faith Alone**

9. **What is justification?** *The justification of an individual occurs when God imputes to that individual the complete obedience of Jesus Christ. This imputation reckons to a sinful and imperfect individual all the perfections of Jesus Christ. The ground of this imputation is the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, both active and passive, and the instrument of receiving it is faith alone, a gift of God to the individual, given so that no one can boast.*
10. **How may a person be made right with God?** *By believing in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.*
11. **What is the nature of living faith?** *It contains the elements of notitia, assensus, and fiducia. We know the one who promises, we assent to what is said or done, and we trust.*
12. **What is the relationship of faith and works?** *Works are the necessary fruit of godly faith.*
13. **Do you believe that justification is by faith plus works? What is the relationship between works and justification? How are justification and sanctification related?** *No, I do not believe that justification is by faith plus works. A man is justified by faith alone, and just in case someone might want to take credit for his faith (as though it were a work of his own), God even gives the gift of faith. Justification and sanctification are related in that faith is the instrument for receiving both. After a man has believed God to the saving of his soul, that same man believes God to the ongoing renewal of his soul. We are justified by grace through faith. We are sanctified by that same grace through that same faith. God does not ever give His elect the gift of momentary faith. The faith that He gives remains with us, and so we continue to believe God.*
14. **Can someone who is justified become unjustified?** *No. Someone who is justified in the sense described in answer to question #9 cannot become unjustified.*
15. **Does justification include the imputation of the good works of obedience to the law by Christ to the one who is justified? If so, is justification by works or faith?** *Justification is by works in the sense that Christ's obedience is the foundation for it. When I say we are not justified by obedience, I mean that we are not justified by our obedience. We are most certainly justified by the obedience of Jesus Christ.*
16. **Have you read Westminster Seminary's "Our Testimony on Justification"? With which part do you disagree? Please explain the nature of your disagreement.** *Yes, I have read that document also, and my objections are two-fold. First, as a treatment of false doctrine that threatens the gospel, it was far too general. They lumped together and attacked ecumenism, the New Perspective, and certain unnamed persons within the Reformed world. They said the purpose of the testimony was primarily directed at this third group, and outlined nine distinctive features of this teaching, with no citations. Though I was obviously included by them as a member of this group (as is clear by listening to the Westminster conference*

tapes on this subject), I only recognized my position in one of the nine doctrines they identified. That one place where they accurately identified my position was #5, “that the idea of merit as a way of explaining the work of Christ for us is unbiblical.” And as far as that goes, I agree with Calvin’s statement in the Institutes, where he said, “I ask, what need was there to introduce the word merit, when the value of works might have been fully expressed by another term, and without offence?” (3.15.2)

17. **Do you accept the teaching of the imputation of the active righteousness of Christ? Why or why not?** *Yes, I accept it. All that Jesus is, has, and has done is reckoned to us.*
18. **Define “imputation,” “active obedience,” and “passive obedience.” Do you uphold these concepts? Is Christ’s active and passive obedience imputed to believers? Imputation describes how God “reckons” within the confines of a covenant. He imputes the guilt of Adam’s transgression to us. He imputes the guilt of the elect to Jesus Christ. He imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the elect. “Active obedience” refers to Christ’s life of perfect obedience—His resistance to temptation, His obedience to the law and so on. His “passive obedience” refers to His passion, His suffering on the cross. Yes, I uphold these concepts as expressing the teaching of Scripture. Christ began to identify with His elect long before His suffering on the cross. This, in part, is the meaning of Him receiving the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance.**
19. **How is “union with Christ” related to “imputation”?** *For the elect, they amount to the same thing. For covenant members who are not elect, their union with Christ is distinct from the fruitful union enjoyed by the elect. One of the central reasons for their fruitlessness is that they do not enjoy the benefits of imputation.*
20. **Do you believe in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as necessary for our acceptance in the Beloved? [Follow up questions, perhaps].** *Yes, I do.*
21. **At what point in their lives are covenant children justified? If they are elect, are they justified before birth? Are they justified at their baptism? Are they justified through faith alone, or on some other basis? Explain.** *It depends upon who they are individually, and not just what category they are in. Every person’s story is different. Some elect children are justified before birth. Some elect children grow up in a covenant home, but get converted at a youth camp when they are sixteen. Some may be justified at the moment of their baptism, but it is important to emphasize that the grace of baptism is not tied to the moment of administration. I believe that all justification is by grace through faith, but that God gives faith that is appropriate to the age and condition of the recipient. John the Baptist was capable of joy in the mother’s womb, and Scripture teaches that it is possible to trust in God from your mother’s breast. Not all saving faith is mature faith, thank God.*
22. **With which of the following statements do you agree?**

- a. **Justification is thus the declaration of God, the just judge, that someone is (a) in the right, that their sins are forgiven, and (b) a true member of the covenant family, the people belonging to Abraham” (N.T. Wright in “The Shape of Justification”).** *As this stands, I agree with it. But I have to say I do not agree with all of N.T. Wright’s teaching on justification.*
- b. **In our relationship to God [justification] must mean that we are reckoned in his judgment as free from guilt and sustaining an upright relation in terms of the criterion of his judgment, that is to say, we are reckoned as sustaining a relation which meets the requirements of the law and justice, and pronounced to be such (Murray, Vol. 2: 205).** *I agree with this.*
- c. **Adoption cannot be said to be a different act or grace from justification (Dabney, 627).** *I would have to differ with this. They are obviously related, but to make them absolute synonyms seems problematic to me. For example, St. Paul describes our adoption as sons as being the redemption of the body, which I take as including the resurrection.*
- d. **Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God’s merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals. (Catechism of the CC, 1990).** *I differ with this. Justification never occurs apart from an infusion of righteousness, but it cannot be understood as an infusion of righteousness. God does give us a new heart, but that gift is not justification. It is the new heart that repents and believes, and that faith in turn is the instrument of justification.*

**23. How does eschatology shape your understanding of justification? Are there past, present, future aspects of justification?** *When we are talking about the theological justification of an individual sinner, we are talking about a punctiliar event in the life of that individual. But this is a particular stipulated (theological) definition of the word justification. If we want to talk about justification more broadly, we would have to include the demonstrative sense that James uses, the justification of Jesus in His resurrection, the apostates falling away from the “way of righteousness,” and so on. I believe that Christ’s resurrection was His vindication, His justification. I believe that we will have such a vindication in our resurrection, and that a biblical way of describing this would be to say that it will be our justification, our manifestation as the sons of God. But this use of the word, while not disconnected from individual justification, is certainly to be distinguished from it.*

**24. Is there any sense in which we are justified by works? Please explain.** *Yes, in the sense that James means. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. In James’ illustration, works is the animating principle and faith is the body. Without works, faith is just a corpse. But such a dead faith is not saving faith.*

*Paul and James do not have an identical theological vocabulary. What James calls works, Paul calls fruit. I would call it life.*

- 25. Are non-elect members of the church justified? If so, how does their justification differ from the justification of the elect? Are there two kinds of justification?** *No, non-elect members of the church are not justified in the sense I have already described. They have not had the perfect obedience of Christ credited to them. But when they fall away, they do fall away from the “way of righteousness,” or rendered another way, the “way of justification.” Such individuals are unjustified members of a justified people. Some of the sons of Sarah turn out to be sons of Hagar. Are they sons of Sarah? Yes. Are they sons of Sarah? No.*
- 26. When are the elect justified? Is a person justified in his baptism? Is a person justified when he comes to faith? Is one “justified by faith alone”?** *The elect are justified in accordance with God’s purpose for them. Sally was justified when she was ten. Henry was forty-five, and they were both baptized in infancy. Each of them, however, are justified whenever God gives the gift of faith. And yes, they are all justified by faith alone.*
- 27. Was Jesus justified? How was he justified? What is the relationship between his justification and ours?** *Jesus was justified in the Spirit by His resurrection from the dead. But when Jesus was justified, God was not imputing the righteousness of someone else to Him. Rather, God was vindicating Him, and declaring Him to be the Son of God. Because all that Jesus is, has, and did is imputed to us, this glorious vindication is imputed to us as well. He was raised to life for our justification as St. Paul says in Romans. This means that His justification is the basis for our justification, although they are distinct.*
- 28. What is the relationship between justification and adoption? Are these two distinct acts of God?** *I believe that they must be distinguished if we are talking about individual justification in the theological sense. And that is because of the role adoption has in the resurrection. According to St. Paul, “we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). This means that adoption certainly has an eschatological element. If adoption is simply equated with justification, then justification has that element also. I would want to carefully distinguish what happens during an individual’s justification and what happens at the “manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19)—although this latter manifestation is certainly a vindication and justification in another sense.*
- 29. Do you take any exceptions the Westminster Confession’s statement on justification?** *No, I do not. I believe that the full-orbed teaching of the Bible on justification includes more than what is found in the Westminster Confession, but I believe the teaching of the Confession is accurate.*
- 30. In WCF 11.2 when it speaks of imputing the “obedience and satisfaction of Christ” – how do you understand this?** *I understand this as saying that faith is not the ground of our justification, but rather that the ground of our justification is the*

*obedience and satisfaction of Christ. It is possible to see obedience here as “active obedience” and satisfaction as “passive obedience.” And I agree with this distinction, although it is possible that the Confession is not referring to it. The Confession was a consensus document, and not all the delegates were agreed on this subject.*

**WCF 11:2 Those whom God effectually calleth He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone: nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness, by faith: which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.**

**31. Does our faithfulness keep us in the covenant of grace?** *No, the covenant of grace keeps us in our faithfulness.*

**32. Do you agree with the following statements?**

- a. **“We are not justified by faith by believing we are justified by faith.”** *I agree. Justification is by faith in Christ alone, not by faith alone in this particular sentence or that one.*
- b. **“There is nothing we can say, do, or believe that makes us acceptable with God.”** *I agree. We can say, do, or believe nothing that “makes us” acceptable with God. However, when He offers to make us acceptable to Him in Christ, we can believe Him. When we do, He uses that as His instrument for applying the obedience of Jesus Christ to us.*

**33. Is there anything we can say, do, or believe that can make us unacceptable with God? (give examples from Scripture?)** *Everything we say, do, or believe outside of Christ continues our unacceptability with Him. It does not “make us” unacceptable to Him, for we were conceived this way. But it certainly is unacceptable to Him. From Scripture, the one who does not believe is condemned already (Jn. 3:18).*

**34. How would you refer to a person who professes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, while, at the same time, confesses that the grace of justification is one and the same with the grace of sanctification and that the protestant distinction between them is incorrect?** *If he is baptized, I would describe him as a confused covenant member. If the fruit of the Spirit is evident in his life, I would describe him as a converted and confused covenant member. He would be like a toddler who knows how to turn on the lights, although I would never support such a toddler becoming a licensed electrician. In the same way, I would not support such a person’s ordination. But the lights are still on.*

- 35. How would you refer to a person who professes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and, at the same time, clearly rejects the teaching of justification by faith alone; founded and grounded upon the perfect and completed work of Jesus Christ?** *If he is baptized, and he is not just ignorant, but obstinately teaches contrary to the truth, then I would describe him as a false brother. Such teachers afflicted the apostle Paul, and that is how he described them.*
- 36. Series of questions pertaining to the relationship of faith and works, their relationship, their source, and in what sense (if any) works are considered “indispensable” in our salvation.** *Works are the fruit of faith, God gives them both, and God never gives faith without also giving the resultant works. Therefore works are indispensable in the sense that they must be present. Apples must be present on an apple tree, but apples are never the trunk.*
- 37. Possibly some questions on the corporate aspects of justification...** *That would be fine with me. Christ is our corporate head, and He was justified in His resurrection. That resurrection, and everything else that He is and has done has been imputed to us.*
- 38. What is the relationship between grace and law? Is this a hermeneutical issue?** *Grace and law are not antithetical in the mind and heart of God. The Bible should not therefore be divided up into “law” portions and “grace” portions. The Word of God is not divided. The human race, however, is divided. That is why the unregenerate heart sees all of Scripture as condemnation, both law and gospel (2 Cor. 2:16). And that is why the obedient, regenerate heart sees Christ in the law, Christ in the gospel, and Christ throughout all Scripture (Rom. 10:4). I do reject one particular grace/law hermeneutic, where the Bible is divided up into different categories. At the same time, when a person is in transition between unbelief and belief, the law is added to increase transgression (Rom. 3:20; 5:20). This brings conviction of sin. Once the person is converted, he sees the grace of God in the gospel. Then after his conversion, he looks back and sees that the law which once terrified him is holy, precious, and full of grace. The preamble to the Ten Commandments put it this way—God is the one who delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, from the house of bondage. That is grace.*

### **The Covenant of Works**

- 39. Define covenant. Is the covenant conditional or unconditional? Unilateral or Bilateral?** *A covenant is a bond of love, with mutual obligations of love. God Himself is a covenantal triune Being. When covenants are made with creatures who are fallen, or who are capable of falling, covenants are a bond of love, with mutual obligations of love, with stipulations and blood sanctions for covenant-breaking. Within the New Covenant, the covenant is unilateral for covenant keepers, and bilateral for covenant breakers. When we keep covenant with God, it is because we are working out our salvation with fear and trembling, because God is at work in us to will and to do for His good pleasure. In other words, He keeps covenant, and He*

*works in us so that we keep covenant by the faith He gives to us. For covenant breakers, God graciously offers the terms of the covenant, and on his side the covenant breaking covenant member contributes all the unbelief and sin.*

**40. Was the covenant of works a gracious covenant? How is it to be distinguished from the covenant of grace? What is your view of the “covenant of works”?**

*Yes, the covenant of works was gracious in that Adam was surrounded by the goodness of a giving God. And if Adam had stood, even that standing would have been a gift from God, which he would have received by faith. But while all gifts are gifts, not all gifts are the same. The gift of preservation to an unfallen Adam is quite different than the gift of forgiveness to a rebellious and iniquitous race. The fact of giving is the same. The content of the gifts is different. I may give my wife a string of pearls one Christmas, and a coffee table the next. My desire and disposition to give is the same. But pearls are not a coffee table.*

**41. Do you have any reservations or qualifications about the words of WCF 7.2, “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”**

*Yes. At least in modern times, the phrase “covenant of works” is ambiguous and misleading. It calls Pharisees to mind, but their problem was covenant breaking, not covenant keeping. If by “covenant of works,” it is simply meant that Adam was obligated to obey God fully, and that we were represented in his obedience (or disobedience), then I have no problem with it. But if it is asserted (contrary to the historic development of this doctrine), that the covenant of works was grounded on the idea of autonomous merit, then I strongly differ with it. It is my assumption that my difference with the Confession here is a verbal one. However, my difference with certain modern writers is not merely semantic. I agree with Rowland Ward’s comments here: “Unhappily, even those who come from the Presbyterian and Reformed community often have a poor perception of the historic teaching on the covenant of works. One does not object to mere verbal differences, but it is very disturbing to see that quite a number of orthodox writers have the notion that the covenant of works is a merit-based arrangement, the reward being wages earned” (Rowland Ward, *God and Adam*, pp. 13-14)*

**42. What is the “Covenant of Works”? Does the Westminster Confession of Faith teach a “Covenant of Works”? Do you believe in the “Covenant of Works”?**

*The covenant of works was God’s covenant with Adam, promising him perpetual access to the tree of life after he passed his probationary test. The Westminster Confession does teach it. I hold to it, but would prefer to call it a covenant of creation, and I would insist that the covenant of creation was not to be conducted on the basis of raw autonomous merit from Adam. Had Adam stood faithfully, he would have had occasion to thank God for preserving him from sin.*

**43. What is the relationship between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace? Is Moses a “Republication of the Covenant of Works”? Do you believe that the law-grace hermeneutic as defined by certain faculty members of Westminster Seminary (West) as essential to a proper understanding of the**



**Westminster Confession? Why or why not?** *The covenant of grace in the second Adam was designed to restore and repair the damage caused by the first Adam in his rebellion against the covenant of creation. Christ paid the penalty required by that first covenant, and He also established a second covenant that enabled us to be brought back into fellowship with God through Him. The law of Moses is not a republication of the covenant of works. God heard the cry of the people in Egypt because He remembered His covenant with Abraham (Ex. 2:24-25). And the Westminster Confession clearly identifies the Mosaic economy as an administration of the covenant of grace (7/5). Those who see Moses as a republication of the covenant of works are therefore out of conformity with the Westminster Standards. Of course, worse things than that have happened. I do not see this particular law/grace hermeneutic as essential to a proper understanding of the Westminster Confession, and in fact I see it as a positive hindrance. Among other things I object to this approach because a hermeneutic ought to contain those things which are proper to us. In this case, I see that all Scripture can only be interpreted in one of two ways—either in faith or in unbelief. The division is therefore in the human heart, and never in the divine heart.*

**44. Define “merit.” Could Adam have “merited” our salvation? How did Christ “merit” our salvation?** *My skittishness about the word merit has to do with my rejection of certain medieval assumptions about merit, in which merit practically becomes a quasi-substance. But as a general term of praise, I have no problem with it (as in, “that argument has merit.”). I agree with John Frame in his foreword to The Backbone of the Bible, when he says that “although I prefer to speak of ‘desert’ or ‘justice’ to speaking of ‘merit,’ Shepherd has not convinced me that the last term is simply wrong.” Had Adam obeyed he would have obtained our salvation, and it would have been a fulfillment of the terms of the covenant, and therefore just and right. The same is true of Christ’s obedience. Christ purchased us, and it is just and right that this happen. My problem with merit is that it tends to drag autonomy behind it. Remove that, and I would not want to quibble over words.*

**45. Please comment on the following quote by John Piper:**

**...I am hesitant to call Jesus’ obedience in life and death the fulfillment of a “covenant of works.” This term generally implies that “works” stand over against “grace,” and are not the fulfillment of faith in grace. Thus works implies a relationship with God that is more like an employer receiving earned wages than like a Son trusting a Father’s generosity.... I see God’s grace as the basis of his relationship with Adam and Eve before the fall. I see this Christ, the Second Adam, fulfilling this covenant of grace (not works) perfectly by trusting his Father’s provision at every moment and obeying all his commandments by faith. His relationship to the Father was one of constant trust. His obedience was the effect of this trust. “Grace” toward Jesus was not exactly the same as grace toward fallen sinners. He never sinned (Heb. 4:15). Yet, in his human life he was dependent upon God similar to the way we are. Not only that, he took our sin on himself (Is. 53:6). Thus God exerted a kind of “grace” in overcoming his curse on sin in order to exalt Christ (*Future Grace*, 413). I agree with this fully.**

**46. Please comment on Lee Iron's definition of merit:**

**The measure of merit is defined by the terms of the covenant, which itself is the only possible revelation and definition of divine justice. There is no such thing as non-covenantal, condign merit because merit is by definition constituted by fulfilling what is stipulated in the covenant. And there is no such thing as congruous merit which, since it is covenantal, is supposedly not based on strict justice, because the covenant is by definition the revelation of God's justice. Neither merit nor justice exists apart from covenant (Quoted in Ralph Smith, *Eternal Covenant* p. 64). As much as I might be wary about doing so, I agree with this too. If merit is simply covenantal faithfulness, then let us all have far more merit than we currently do.**

### **The Church and the Objective Covenant**

**47. How do you understand the visible and invisible church?** *I believe that such a division, if used in conjunction with other divisions, can be helpful. But in common usage, it has come to refer to two different churches. And then of course, the "true" church is the invisible one, and we are left with a disparagement of the visible church. I agree with John Murray's critique of this usage.*

**48. Briefly define and distinguish between church militant, church triumphant, "historic church," "eschatological church," invisible church, and visible church.** *The church militant is the church on earth. The church triumphant is in heaven. The historic church is the church on earth, in history. The eschatological church is that same church at the culmination of history, at the Eschaton. My terminology for this is historical/eschatological, but it answers to Augustine's division of pilgrim/eschatological. And if by invisible/visible you mean the church on earth, and the company of the elect, I can certainly live with that.*

**49. Do you agree with the Westminster standards that it is proper and correct to speak of both an Invisible Church and a Visible Church? Is it correct to say that baptized children of the Covenant are in either the Visible or Invisible Church? Explain.** *It is proper so long as the language is not absolutized. But at the same time, I would prefer to simply say that baptized children are in the Church. The problem lies in any particular application we might make. Imagine a church business meeting in which it is declared that only those who are members of the invisible church can vote. We have this same kind of problem in bringing our little ones to the Table. But this is the Church, we are the Church, this Table belongs to the Church. So come. Some baptized children (and adults) are not numbered among the elect. They will not be present in the visible Church as she appears at the great day. But they are in the visible Church now.*

**50. What is the "objectivity of the covenant?"** *This phrase simply means that membership in the covenant with Christ is objective and visible. We can know someone is covenantally bound to Christ the same way we know a certain man is married to a certain woman. We were at the baptism; we were at the wedding. This*

*does not mean that we automatically know if the person will be objectively faithful to that covenant. Time will tell.*

51. **Are there subjective elements of the covenant? If so, what are some? Yes, certainly. The most important would be faith.**
52. **John Calvin, in the same section he calls Jesus Christ the “Author of election” also says that Jesus “numbers Judas among the elect, although he is a devil” (*Institutes*, III.22.7). Do you agree with this usage of the term “elect/election,” and if so, why? Yes, I do. Calvin refers to a temporal election, by which he shows that he is dealing with some of the same issues we are seeking to deal with. Someone who does not belong to the elect (decretally understood) may still be a member of an elect body. He is a partaker for a time.**
53. **Can you help us understand whether there are any distinctions in the Biblical usage of the word elect/election? The Bible refers to Jesus Christ as the Elect One, and to us as elect in Him. St. Paul tells the Colossians, as the elect of God, to put on tender mercies. This is not found to be false if one of those Colossians turned out to be reprobate. But Paul also uses election in the strong sense, the decretal sense. Who will lay a charge against the elect? It is God who justifies. The triumphalism of the latter portion of Romans 8 makes absolutely no sense if it is possible for the elect here to fall away.**
54. **It seems as if many of the problems that have surfaced regarding your teaching comes from a failure, by many, to strive to understand what you have been teaching, preaching, and writing. Furthermore, it seems as if some of the problems come from a failure to recognize the distinction between God’s eternal decree and the historical outworking of that decree. Do you recognize a distinction between God’s eternal decree and the historical outworking of that decree? If so, what difference does it make for Bible reading, pastoral care, & the responsibilities of the saints with one another? I agree with the first part of the question. I do not believe we have been read carefully. And I also agree that part of the problem is the tendency we have to try to harmonize everything at once. But the secret things belong to God, and the things revealed to us (Dt. 29:29). What this means is that the fact of decretal election is plainly taught in the Bible. But the roster of names is hidden from us, hidden in such a way as that we have to make our calling and election sure. In doing this, we are making it sure to us, not to God. It has been certain to Him from before the foundations of the world. One of the ways we make our calling and election sure is through covenantal faithfulness. It is in the life of the covenant people (historical outworking) that the decrees are worked out and manifested over time.**
55. **If the lesbian, Eskimo bishop lady is a Christian, would you take communion from her hand? No, I would not. She is a false Christian.**
56. **Should we partake of the Eucharist while attending the Roman Catholic funeral of a departed friend? No, we should not. Nothing is more insulting to**

*conservative Roman Catholics than this kind of Rodney King ecumenism. We should refrain in the first place because we want to be faithful to what we confess and believe. And, we should also refrain out of charitable respect for the requirements of the Roman church.*

- 57. If the daughter of one of your parishioners desired to marry a committed Roman Catholic, would she be marrying “in the Lord?”** *She would be marrying inside the covenant. She would also be marrying unwisely and sinfully.*
- 58. John Calvin recognized a distinction between the individual and the institution; would you say that the Roman Catholic Church is a true church? (elaborate).** *In the same way that an adulterous husband is a “true” husband, I would say that Rome is a “true” church. But in the same way that this same husband is being untrue, I would say that Rome is being untrue. Rome is still covenantally bound to Jesus Christ, and consequently she needs to stop cheating on Him. And incidentally, to acknowledge that a lying, cheating husband is still legally married is not to approve of the lying and cheating.*
- 59. Would you list some areas of deficiency within the Roman Catholic Church?** *Let me state it more strongly. These are not areas of deficiency—they are areas of covenantal rebellion. I would include on this list the idolatry of the Mass, Mariolatry, the worship of images, the papacy, their system of works/righteousness, purgatory, and much more.*

### **Individual Salvation**

- 60. Define the word “Christian”? Are all the baptized “Christian”? Are all the elect “Christian”?** *I would want to use the word in at least two senses. In one sense, a Christian is someone who would go to heaven if he died. Just as a true Jew is one who is one inwardly, the same is true of a true Christian. In another covenantal sense, a Christian is someone who has received Trinitarian baptism, and who is therefore covenantally obligated to repent and believe. Unconverted people may be Christian in this second sense, but not in the first. And someone numbered among the elect may be still unconverted, and not be a Christian yet in either sense.*
- 61. Do you believe in the necessity of the new birth?** *Only if you want to go to heaven.*
- 62. If so, what is the new birth?** *The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit, whereby He takes away the heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh.*
- 63. Would you please explain your understanding of John 3:1-11?** *I see Jesus admonishing Nicodemus on two levels. Jesus was teaching the absolute necessity of heart regeneration for individuals, and He was also talking about the coming rebirth of Israel, which happened at Pentecost, and which Ezekiel foretold.*

64. **Do all Christians go to heaven?** *In the first sense described earlier, yes. In the second sense given above, no.*
65. **Are all Christians saved from eternal damnation?** *In the first sense described earlier, yes. In the second sense given above, no.*
66. **Are all Christians regenerated?** *In the first sense described earlier, yes. In the second sense given above, no.*
67. **If someone has been born again, may they still end up in hell?** *Absolutely not.*
68. **Can the elect lose their salvation? Can a “Christian” lose his salvation? Can an un-baptized believer lose his salvation?** *No, the elect cannot. A covenant-member Christian can fall from grace, be cut out of the vine, and can apostatize. No, a regenerate person who is not baptized cannot lose his salvation.*
69. **If a person apostatizes, does he lose salvation – justification, sanctification, etc. – or does he demonstrate that he was never saved?** *He does not lose something that was never his personal possession to begin with. This means he does not lose the imputed obedience of Jesus Christ, which he never had. But he does lose something. The Scriptures speak of this with different metaphors, some emphasizing the discontinuity all the way back—wheat/tares, brothers/false brothers, washed pig/dirty pig. Others emphasize the covenant continuity all the way back—Vine/branches, olive tree branches, etc. So such a person was never individually justified, effectually called, etc. But he is falling away from grace in some way. He was enlightened. He tasted the heavenly gift. He trampled underfoot the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified.*
70. **Do you believe it is proper and Biblical for the Church to evangelize baptized children of the Covenant, and seek their conversion?** *It is proper to do so if they are unconverted. But if we simply assume they are all unconverted, then what we are probably doing is teaching them to be unconverted. So we should nurture our children in the covenant, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6: 1-4). If any prove rebellious, we must bring the terms of the covenant to bear, and remind them that they have a solemn covenantal duty to love Jesus Christ. Children who do not grow up in a love for God and neighbor need to be evangelized, absolutely. He that loveth not, knoweth not God (1 Jn. 4:8).*
71. **Should the Church encourage children of the Covenant to repent and believe in Christ, or should the Church encourage Covenant children to simply be faithful to the Covenant they are already in? Explain.** *We must all repent and believe, and this includes our children. There is no such thing as covenantal faithfulness without repentance and belief. So from the youngest age, we are to teach our children to turn away from sin and to turn to Jesus. Children who cannot do this are showing (over time) that they never have. Children who do this may not be able to recall the first moment when they were born again to God (it may have*

*happened in the womb). But you don't have to know the minute the sun rose to know that it is up.*

- 72. How does the doctrine of Effectual Calling relate to Covenant children and infant baptism?** *Among covenant children, those who are elect are effectually called in accordance with God's good pleasure and will. This can happen at any point in that person's life, depending on God's purpose for him.*
- 73. Is it strictly necessary for baptized Covenant children to be converted? Explain what you mean by the term "conversion."** *Yes, it is necessary for all children of Adam to be converted. By nature they are objects of wrath. They are descended from Adam, and they need the forgiveness of Christ. At some point in their life, whether in the womb, at birth, at their baptism, when they are five, or when they are sixteen, they must be converted to God. They must be born again. They must receive a new heart. If they do not, then they are lost eternally.*
- 74. Do baptized Covenant children have a right to be called "Christians" before they put their faith in Christ?** *Yes. They are federally holy, and therefore Christian, to use the language of the Westminster Directory. That is why we baptize them. If it becomes evident that one such child, growing up, does not believe in Christ, then he may be called Christian in one sense and not in another.*
- 75. Is it possible for a Covenant child to be of the elect, yet eventually prove himself to be non-elect, and lose his salvation? How does your opinion about this relate to Jesus' discussion of the vine and the branches in John 15:1-6?** *No, that is not possible. Such a covenant child was in the Vine, and was cut out as a fruitless branch. He was not numbered among the elect, by definition.*
- 76. Is Christ's atonement completely efficacious for all who are ever in Christ, including Covenant children, or are there some who are in Christ, but who will not persevere, and who will be damned? Explain.** *Christ's atonement is completely efficacious for all the elect branches, but not for all the branches. There are some who are in Christ, if our Lord's words have meaning, who will be cut out of the Vine and burned. They were in Christ, and now they are not. Those who are elect cannot be removed from the Vine.*
- 77. Is anyone for whom Christ died in hell?** *No.*
- 78. What is the relationship between corporate and individual election? Are all members of the church saved?** *Christ is Elect, and His bride is elect in Him. That elect bride is made up of both elect and non-elect individuals (at present). The bride is predestined to be presented at the end of history without spot or any other blemish. The spots and blemishes are foreordained to be gone by that time. At the Eschaton, we see a perfect and final harmonization between corporate and individual election. All the elect are in the Bride, and no one who is not elect remains.*

## The Sacraments

79. **Do you believe that water baptism joins an infant to Christ, extending to him the benefits of union with Christ, including the remission of sins?** *Water baptism joins every infant to Christ by covenant, and to the elect infants, all the benefits of union with Christ are really exhibited and conferred (to use the language of Westminster), although not necessarily at the time the baptism was administered.*
80. **Is it your position that infant baptism joins the infant to Christ, and regenerates the infant?** *No. It is my position that infant baptism joins an infant to Christ covenantally. It should be noted that the infant in a believing home was already federally holy, and that is why he was baptized in the first place. Whether that infant is regenerate depends on God's counsel and will concerning that individual. Some baptized infants are regenerated before, some during, some after, and some never.*
81. **Is a baptized person to be regarded as a Christian in the sense of being joined to Christ? Can such a person joined to Christ commit apostasy and end in hell?** *Yes, a person joined to Christ in the sense described in John 15 can wind up in Hell. But a person joined to Christ and all His benefits, which occurs through the instrumentality of God-given faith alone, cannot commit apostasy and cannot wind up in Hell.*
82. **The Westminster Confession of Faith, speaking of baptism and the Lord's Supper, says: "neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained." Do you think it's proper for the elders of the institution of the church to turn over to parents, and thus, the institution of the family, the right to either admit or not admit children to the Lord's Supper?** *I believe that the minister and elders of the church have the responsibility for the keys of the kingdom. I do not believe that family government (considered as such) has that responsibility at all. At the same time, I believe that wise pastors will always work with fathers and mothers in the shepherding of children. Pastors and elder boards who do not take into consideration the evaluation of the parents are guilty of hubris.*
83. **Are the only benefits of baptism sociological?** *No. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, both sacraments are salvific for worthy receivers. Worthy reception is on the basis of genuine faith. But for such worthy receivers the benefits of baptism are really exhibited and conferred through baptism, which is obviously the work of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, both sacraments are effectual in the work of salvation (WLC 161). In this sense, baptism is one of the "outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation" and so baptism (along with the Word, the Lord's Supper, and prayer) is "made effectual to the elect for their salvation" (WLC 154).*
84. **Does "baptism" save? If so, in what sense? Is there a sense in which baptism does not save?** *Yes, baptism saves in the sense described in Scripture. Peter tells*

*his listeners to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and Ananias tells Paul to wash his sins away (Acts 22:16). At the same time, Paul tells us that God sent him to preach the gospel, and not to baptize (1 Cor. 1:17). Baptism does not save (but rather increases covenantal condemnation) when it is not found in concert with the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21).*

- 85. What is the difference between “water” and “Spirit” baptism?** *The separation is created by unbelief. So a person who receives the water but not the Spirit is separating what ought never to be separated.*
- 86. Does baptism graft us into Jesus Christ or is it sign of being grafted into Christ?** *It depends upon who we are. For worthy receivers, the benefits of baptism are really exhibited and conferred at the moment of their effectual calling.*
- 87. Please define Baptismal Regeneration? Do you believe in Baptismal Regeneration?** *Baptismal regeneration, as popularly understood, means that the grace goes in when the water goes on. No, I do not believe in baptismal regeneration. As understood and embraced by the superstitious, it is a damnable doctrine. And as opposed by the superstitious, it is almost infinitely murky.*
- 88. What is the Lord’s Supper? Who may partake of the Lord’s Supper? How to we partake of Christ in the Supper?** *The Lord’s Supper is a memorial to God of Christ’s death, a renewal of our covenant with God, and a partaking of the Lord’s body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16). That body of the Lord is totus Christus, head and body together, which is why St. Paul says that we are one loaf (1 Cor. 10:17). All who are bread, therefore, should get bread. Faithful partaking of the Supper involves receiving all that God teaches us on the subject, in faith, and discerning the body of Christ around us in the sanctuary in a demeanor of love. We must not reject from the Supper any whom Christ has received, otherwise we are not discerning the body.*
- 89. Is it your position that little children who have not yet been examined by the Session for a credible profession of faith should be welcomed to the Lord’s Table? Does their admittance to the Lord’s Table have any relationship to whether or not they received infant baptism? Explain.** *Yes. That is my position. But at the same time, children who have not been baptized must be held back from partaking of the Supper until they have been baptized.*
- 90. Do you believe the Passover practices of the Old Testament, or other meal observances in the annual celebrations or sacrifices, justify baptized Covenant children partaking of the Lord’s Supper prior to a formal reception as communicant members by the Session? Would 1 Corinthians 11:29 forbid this?** *I do not believe that the Passover practices by themselves require this because the Passover was one of the festivals of obligation in which the head of the household went to Jerusalem, and it was lawful for him to go there alone. At the same time, the Passover celebration, taken in conjunction with the rest of the Old Testament, including the promises of God for our children, do justify such an inclusion. 1 Corinthians 11:29 does not forbid this. St. Paul tells us that the church is*



*the one loaf, and when we are called to discern the body, we are being called to discern the Lord's body in one another. All who are bread should therefore get bread. This means that elders who hold back true Christians from communion because of their height are not discerning the body as they ought.*

91. **Do you believe the officer officiating at the Lord's Supper should fence the table in such a way to exclude persons of any age (including Covenant children and persons with Alzheimers and other such age-related complications) who cannot mentally discern the Lord's body and blood? Why or why not?** *Discerning the body is a matter of being with the body, being identified with the body, and not disrupting the unity of the body through sinful attitudes and behavior, which such persons can certainly do. As they do it, they should be included in the life of the congregation. And for the elderly, if the Supper is withheld from them, the session should formalize their stand by excommunicating them.*
92. **Do you believe Covenant children should be required to make a formal public profession of faith prior to being received by the Session as communicant members in our churches? Why or why not?** *No, I do not. Such an approach with young children is almost guaranteed to tell the session almost nothing about the spiritual health and condition of such a child. Further, partaking of the Lord's Supper is a profession of faith.*
93. **Do the sacraments communicate grace?** *Yes, they do, to worthy receivers. They exhibit and confer saving grace to worthy receivers.*
94. **Richard D. Phillips, as he contends with the Federal Vision, offers a distinction within grace, referring to the grace of the sacraments as "sanctificational grace" ("Covenant and Salvation, or What is a Christian?" in *the Auburn Avenue Theology: Pros and Cons*, p. 82). What do you think of this distinction?** *I do not know how to make sense of it theologically. What is the sense in applying the grace of the sacrament of initiation to everything except that moment of initiation? And such a distinction is certainly not in keeping with the language of the Westminster Standards (WLC 154, 161).*
95. **If the sacraments do not communicate grace in the way that a "hot iron burns," how do they communicate grace?** *They communicate grace through the instrumentality of faith. Worthy receivers have that faith because it was given to them by God, lest any should boast. Unworthy receivers do not have faith, and hence they are under the weight of a greater condemnation.*
96. **Please explain 1 Peter 3:21 with particular attention to the phrase, "which now saves us, baptism," and how your interpretation aligns with historic Christian doctrine.** *I take it as meaning that there is some sense in which baptism saves us. Peter conjoins it with an appeal of a clear conscience to God. And thus you have both elements insisted upon in the Westminster Standards. Baptism saves worthy receivers, and worthy receivers only.*

97. **Is there any Scriptural precedent for appealing to (pointing to) the signs and seals of the covenant of grace in order to encourage obedience among the people of God (exhortation, reproof, rebuke, etc.)? Yes.** *Paul does this when he tells the Galatians that they do not have to be circumcised as the false teachers were saying. And why? “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ . . .” (Gal. 3:27). His ethical exhortations in Romans 6 follow the same basic pattern.*

98. **Does your church also subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity?** *We are in the process of adopting a Book of Confessions that will include the Three Forms. It is not yet done, but it is likely to happen.*

99. **Please explain how you understand the following quotations from the Belgic Confession:**

**We believe, since this holy assembly and congregation is the assembly of the redeemed and there is no salvation outside of it, that no one ought to withdraw from it, be content to be by himself, no matter what his status may be (BC 28).** *I believe this is a faithful statement of the scriptural teaching that God does not save His people in isolation. At the same time, I prefer the Westminster qualification—no ordinary possibility of salvation.*

**....He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with plain water, into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. By this He signifies to us that as water washes away the dirt of the body when poured on us, and as water is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled on him, so the blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does the same thing internally to the soul. It washes and cleanses our soul from sin and regenerates us from children of wrath into children of God (BC 34).** *I believe this is presupposing a faithful use of the sacrament, and encourages us to look at what is happening with the eyes of faith. If we do, then all this is true. If we do not, then we are guilty of awful sacrilege.*

**We believe and confess that our Saviour Jesus Christ has instituted the sacraments of the holy supper to nourish and sustain those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His church (BC 35).** *[In context, who are the regenerated?] In context, the regenerated are the baptized, again assuming a faithful use of this sacrament.*

100. **Please comment on the “Form for the Baptism of Infants” used in the Reformed Churches (See “Exam Appendix,” below)** *I believe that this is a glorious and orthodox statement of baptismal doctrine. Those who make baptismal vows when these words have been spoken have a solemn and delightful obligation to believe what is said. If they do, then the Lord is gracious to them according to their faith. If they reject the gospel spoken here through unbelief, then let God be true and every man a liar. But it is more than a little odd that ministers who use such*

a form of baptism would attack other ministers for believing these words.

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

**[NOTE: these questions were asked for the sake of clarity after the oral exam and were not part of the original written answers]**

101. **If you say that covenant members are members of a justified community, and one becomes a member through baptism, do you agree that justification in some sense occurs at baptism?** *I believe that a child in a believing home is federally holy before baptism, and that is the reason he is to be baptized. When he is baptized, his organic inclusion among the covenant people is being ratified in some sense. He is formally and sacramentally joined to "the way of righteousness." When an adult convert comes in by means of baptism, he is also being joined to the way of righteousness, or, if you like, the way of justification. Peter speaks of the apostates departing from this way. So yes, in some sense, the word justification could legitimately be used to describe what occurs at baptism. But such a use of the word is likely to be confused with the sense of justification as it applies to men who are actually being declared right with God. Consequently, I would generally want to avoid talking this way unless there was some pressing reason for it (like having to exegete 2 Pet. 2:21). I have no problem with the same word having different uses and definitions, but we do have an obligation to keep the various uses from getting all jumbled up. That is why, when I address things like this, I speak of "an unjustified member of a justified community." I would rather speak in paradox than in equivocation or confusion. Not all the sons of Sarah are sons of Sarah.*
102. **You seem to be using "imputation" in a broader sense that is normal in Reformed theology. Is that correct?** *Not exactly. Strictly speaking, imputation is one thing, and God's declaration of righteousness based on that imputation is distinct from it.*
103. **Does justification equal imputation? Or is justification based on imputation?** *This refers to the distinction in the previous question. I believe that properly speaking, justification is based on the imputation, and is not identical to it. But I have no problem with saying that "justification is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ," which is just a synecdoche for "justification is a declaration of righteousness, based on the imputation of the righteousness of Christ."*
104. **What spiritual benefits belong to the non-elect member of the covenant? Does Hebrews 6 speak of the experience of all covenant members? Some? All?** *All covenant members are enlightened, all taste the heavenly gift, and the powers of the age to come. The non-elect members of the covenant share in these experiences, along with the elect, but they do so under the cloud of an approaching doom. Oedipus gets to be king through the whole play, but no one who knows the end of the play envies him this. To whom much is given, much is required, and all the*

*blessings received by non-elect covenant members serve only to increase their condemnation. So all the spiritual benefits they share with the elect are actually despised benefits, and when sinners despise God's goodness this way, they soon come to regret it. Elect covenant members and non-elect covenant members share the privileges of the covenant the same way Judas and John shared the privileges of discipleship, and it would have been better for Judas had he never been born. I think the same is true of all non-elect covenant members, and while we can speak of "benefits" for anyone in this class, we have to keep it all in perspective. Because they receive these "benefits" in unbelief, hell is that much hotter. This is why Capernaum was going to catch it worse than Sodom did.*

**105. When speaking of regeneration you used the phrase "infused righteousness." This is not customary "regeneration" phraseology, though in the light of John Murray's "definitive sanctification" it seems legitimate. What do you mean by the expression "infused righteousness" and how that relates to justification. Does God justify because in regeneration a new heart has been given to us and we have been changed? Does the "infused righteousness" have anything to do with the judicial declaration of righteousness that constitutes justification? My use of infused righteousness as descriptive of regeneration was a deliberate tweaking of some who ignore the implications of the traditional categories. Regeneration is certainly not imputed righteousness, and it certainly is an internal change of the sinner's heart. So "infused" seem accurate enough, and it does line up with Murray's definitive sanctification. But this highlights a problem with the way many among the Reformed have understood all this. Our faith is imperfect, even though it is genuine and God-given. This means that God can use the imperfect instrument of faith to enable us to receive the perfect gift of Christ's righteousness. The new heart is not the ground of justification any more than faith was, which we have to understand as the instrument of justification. Instead of saying "faith is the instrument (not ground) of justification," we may now say "the regenerate heart believing is the instrument (not ground) of justification." But the reason it tweaks us at all is that we are accustomed to give pride of place to imputed righteousness, all the while not recognizing that in the traditional Reformed ordo salutis, the pride of place actually goes to a type of infused righteousness (regeneration). There is nothing new here. I am saying nothing that cannot be derived (by good and necessary consequence) from the traditional ordo.**

## **EXAM APPENDIX [cf. question 100 above]**

### **"Form for the Baptism of Infants" used in Reformed Churches**

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ

The doctrine of holy baptism is summarized as follows:

First, we and our children are conceived and born in sin and are therefore by nature children of wrath, so that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again. This is what the immersion in or sprinkling with water teaches us. It signifies the

impurity of our souls, so that we may detest ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek our cleansing and salvation outside of ourselves.

Second, baptism signifies and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. We are, therefore, baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

When we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father testifies and seals to us that He establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us. He adopts us for His children and heirs, and promises to provide us with all good and avert all evil or turn it to our benefit.

When we are baptized into the Name of the Son, God the Son promises us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins and unites us with Him in His death and resurrection. Thus we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God.

When we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit assures us by this sacrament that He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ, imparting to us what we have in Christ, namely, the cleansing from our sins and the daily renewal of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without blemish among the assembly of God's elect in life eternal.

Third, since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation, we are, through baptism, called and obliged by the Lord to a new obedience. We are to cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to trust Him, and to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and mind, and with all our strength. We must not love the world but put off our old nature and lead a God-fearing life. And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sins, we must not despair of God's mercy nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

Although our children do not understand all this, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism. Just as they share without their knowledge in the condemnation of Adam, so are they, without their knowledge, received into grace in Christ. For the LORD spoke to Abraham, the father of all believers, and thus also speaks to us and our children, saying, *I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.* Peter also testifies to this when he says, *For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him.* Therefore, in the old dispensation God commanded that infants be circumcised. This circumcision was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith. Christ also *took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them.* In the new dispensation baptism has replaced circumcision. Therefore, infants must be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant; and as they grow up, their parents have the duty to instruct them in these things.

## APPENDIX F

### REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE PASTOR DOUGLAS WILSON

November 3, 2004

Christ Church  
PO Box 8741  
Anselm House  
Moscow, ID 83843

Dear Congregation,

Greetings in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

We are writing you on behalf of the 2004 Presbytery of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches. In late August, your session requested that our Presbytery examine Pastor Wilson “in the broad areas of soteriology and sacramentology – especially as they connect to the recent controversy among our reformed brethren.”

We want you to know that the elders of Christ Church did not initiate this examination. The session did not have suspicions about his orthodoxy. They did not think that he needed to defend himself or prove to the world that he was a faithful minister of the gospel. Rather, Pastor Wilson himself brought the matter to their attention. Given the recent controversy over the objectivity of the covenant, he was convinced that such an examination would contribute to the peace of the churches. The session agreed with his assessment, and filed the request with Pastor Randy Booth, moderator of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches. It should be clear, therefore, that this examination was not a trial in any way, shape, or form. At his own initiative, Pastor Wilson voluntarily put himself forward to be examined by his fellow presbyters.

In response to your session’s request Pastor Booth assembled a committee to examine Pastor Wilson. Pastor Booth also put together a list of questions. Pastor Wilson answered these questions in writing. At the presbytery meeting, we gave him an oral exam which included questions from the list, as well as many follow-up questions. All of his oral and written answers can be found at <http://www.crechurches.org/>.

The purpose of this examination was not to determine whether we, as a committee or as fellow presbyters serving in the CREC, agreed with all of Pastor Wilson’s formulations of various points on doctrine. Furthermore, we did not seek to examine his personal views on which the Reformed Confessions are silent. Our purpose was narrow

in scope: Are Pastor Wilson's views on the covenant, salvation, church, and sacraments consistent with the Reformed Evangelical Confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Three Forms of Unity? Does he believe anything which contradicts the fundamental system of doctrine contained in those confessions?

Before the examination began, Pastor Booth reminded the delegates of presbytery of the purpose of the examination:

I want to make a few things clear from the outset of this examination:

1. Pastor Douglas Wilson, having already been properly received by this body as an orthodox, ordained minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is presumed to be such unless proven otherwise. There have been no charges brought against him, thus this is not a judicial trial. It is a voluntary examination requested by the Christ Church session.

2. The CREC is a broad confederation of Reformed churches and thus it represents a variety of views within the scope of historic Reformed thinking. In this examination, it is the goal of the presbytery and her examiners to evaluate, determine and declare whether Pastor Wilson's views are within that historic scope. Members of the CREC may disagree with Pastor Wilson's answers at various points and yet both views might still be within the pale of historic Reformed theology.

3. While Christ Church of Moscow, ID, and her pastor Douglas Wilson are members of the CREC, and are thereby entitled to the care and service of our confederation of churches, nevertheless, the particular views of Christ Church, Moscow and her pastor do not represent all the views held by the other member churches and pastors of the CREC. Our constitution and confessions define the parameters of our confederation.

### **The Preliminary and General Report of the Committee**

Following the examination the committee met and discussed Pastor Wilson's answers. We judged that his views are in complete harmony with the teaching of the reformed tradition. At presbytery we read our preliminary finding which reflects our general conclusion:

Having noted Pastor Wilson's exceptions and clarifications to the Westminster Confession of Faith, we find him to be fully orthodox; that is, we find him to be in agreement with the system of doctrine contained in the Reformational confessions. We find his teaching to be in conformity to the Reformed Evangelical Confession, the Westminster Confession, and the Three Forms of Unity, which are faithful statements of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures.

## **Pastor Wilson's Confessional Views and Exceptions**

Since Pastor Wilson, as your minister, is in the process of subscribing to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Three Forms of Unity it may be helpful for you to know that his exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith clearly fall within the pale of orthodoxy. It is important to be reminded that given the historical circumstances of the Reformed confessions and new circumstances and insights into doctrine, exceptions often need to be taken (E.g., the pope is the antichrist). There is a longstanding tradition within American Presbyterianism, including the PCA, that officers may in good faith take exception to certain particulars of the Westminster Standards, if such particular exceptions are not inimical (i.e., hostile or injurious) to the more comprehensive system of doctrine. For example, the PCA's Book of Church Order (21-4) permits a man

to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the Confession of Faith and Catechisms in any of their statements and/or propositions. The court may grant an exception to any difference of doctrine only if in the court's judgment the candidate's declared difference is not out of accord with any fundamental of our system of doctrine because the difference is neither hostile to the system nor strikes at the vitals of religion.

While our committee is not such a court, we see that our task is somewhat analogous. We are to judge whether these exceptions or clarifications "strike at the vitals of religion."

## **Clarification on the Covenant of Works**

Pastor Wilson stated that "the 'covenant of works' was not meritorious." In answering Question 44, Pastor Wilson wrote that his concern is not with the word "merit" but with certain medieval conceptions of merit. He denies a "treasury of merit" as a container of a merit substance. If merit is "defined by the terms of the covenant," he whole heartedly embraces the notion. Technically speaking, Pastor Wilson's understanding is not an exception but a clarification of the Westminster Confession of Faith. He is willing to speak of merit and the covenant works so long as these concepts function within the context of God's grace and favor. In his written answer, he pointed out that he is in agreement with Calvin's statement in the Institutes, where he said, "I ask, what need was there to introduce the word merit, when the value of works might have been fully expressed by another term, and without offence?" (3.15.2)

Furthermore, even if Pastor Wilson had explicitly rejected the Westminster Confession's teaching on the Covenant of Works, we would not *necessarily* find him to be outside the reformed tradition. Prof. Jelle Faber was a professor theology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. He noted that the Covenant of Works is not essential to Reformed theology. The Covenant of Works is absent from the Three



Forms of Unity, the confessional standards of most reformed churches in the continental tradition. Faber wrote,

But the question must arise: Can man ever earn anything in relation to God? The Belgic Confession states in Article 24, speaking about man's sanctification and good works: Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?); nay, we are indebted to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He who worketh in us both to will and to work, for His good pleasure. Would this confession be valid only for the life in the covenant of God's grace and not also for the covenant in the Paradise situation? The question "For what can we merit?" is a strong and striking rhetorical statement concerning the basic structure of the relation between God and man, Creator and creature. Each and every breath was a gift of God of life, and the creation of man as the image of God was fruit of God's favour.  
([http://spindleworks.com/library/faber/cov\\_works.htm](http://spindleworks.com/library/faber/cov_works.htm)).

## **Justification**

This committee is aware of the widespread misrepresentation of Pastor Wilson's adherence to the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith alone. Pastor Wilson took no exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith on justification, and readily insisted that justification is by faith alone. He was clear in his affirmation that no works or merit enter into our standing before God. The work of Christ alone is the ground of our justification, and faith is the alone instrument.

## **The Sabbath**

Pastor Wilson took a very minor exception to the Westminster Confession's view of the Sabbath. In answering Question 3, he stated that he does not believe "that the intention of Scripture was to exclude recreation, especially in the context of the fellowship of God's people." Again, this exception falls well within the stream of reformed thought. Many within conservative Presbyterian denominations have taken a more substantial exception to the Westminster Confession of Faith's exposition of the Fourth Commandment.

Further, it is interesting to note that the reformed tradition allows for differing views on the Sabbath. For example, the Hiedelberg Catechism does not prohibit recreation,

103. Q. What does God require in the fourth commandment? A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained and that, especially on the day of rest, I diligently attend the church of God to hear God's Word, to use the sacraments, to call publicly upon the LORD, and to give Christian offerings for the poor. Second, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, let the LORD work in me through His Holy Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal sabbath.

Also, the lesser known Genevan Catechism, written by Calvin, states just as clearly that "the observance of rest is part of the old ceremonies, it was abolished by the advent of Christ" (Q 170); "it is ceremonial" (171); and that what is "beyond ceremony" is that it is "to figure spiritual rest; for the preservation of ecclesiastical polity; and for the relief of slaves" (172-173). This is the very three-fold purpose discussed in the Institutes. In answer to the question (181), "What order, then, is to be observed on that day?" He says merely, "That the people meet to hear the doctrine of Christ, to engage in public prayer, and make profession of their faith." He maintains strongly, "In regard to the ceremony, I hold that it was abolished, as the reality existed in Christ (Col. 2:17)." Finally he asks (185), "What of the commandment then remains for us? Not to neglect the holy ordinances which contribute to the spiritual polity of the Church; especially to frequent sacred assemblies, to hear the word of God, to celebrate the sacraments, and engage in the regular prayers, as enjoined."

Pastor Wilson's view of the Sabbath is clearly within the bounds of the reformed confessional tradition. Indeed, his view only slightly differs from the Westminster Confession.

### **Visible and Invisible Church**

Is Pastor Wilson's understanding of the visible/invisible church distinction true to the Westminster Confession? It should be noted that Pastor Wilson did not take an exception to the Confession on the language of visible/invisible Church (Westminster Chapter 25). His only exception on Chapter 25, "Of the Church," is found in paragraph 6:

Though we believe the Pope of Rome to be anti-Christian, we do not believe him necessarily to be the Anti-Christ, Man of Lawlessness, or Beast of Revelation, etc.

This is not a controversial exception and is often taken within conservative Confessional presbyteries.

In the oral exam, Pastor Wilson made clear that he accepted the Westminster distinction on the visible/invisible Church. He embraces the theological reality that all the elect from all ages are an invisible church.

His concern, however, was with absolutizing the distinction between the visible and invisible church to the point that we view them as two different entities. This division leads to many practical and pastoral aberrations. He repeated that a distinction between the visible/invisible distinction should not lead to a disparaging of the visible church. He did not deny the theological reality of all the company of the elect as an invisible Church, but that we cannot by believing in that deny the reality of the current/visible/actual church.

In this he is simply following the thought of Prof. John Murray of Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia) who warned against the dangers of turning a legitimate distinction into an absolute separation. There are not two churches, visible and invisible. There is one church with visible and invisible aspects (Murray, *Collected Works*, 2:231-236).

Pastoral wisdom must admit great abuse of this distinction which has now become a division. Many evangelical Christians are not, *de facto*, members of the visible church. They waft from church to church with no stability. **The Westminster Confession clearly states that “the visible Church ... is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (WCF 25:2).** Moreover, to the “catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God ... and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto” (25:3). The abuse of our own day is that many believe the effectual working of the Spirit is outside the visible Church.

Pastor Wilson’s clarifications suggest the need for additional distinctions, such as the historical and the eschatological church. The eschatological church and the invisible church have the same roster. The one church, insists Pastor Wilson, has visible, invisible, historical, and eschatological aspects which we can distinguish. The Confession acknowledges an eschatological dimension of the Church saying, “there shall be always a Church on earth, to worship God according to His will” (25:5).

In light of the Confession’s full teaching (chapter 25), we judge that Pastor Wilson’s clarifications and pastoral admonitions are not only consistent with the Westminster Confession, but are quite consistent with the early Reformed Confessions (Belgic Confession, Second Helvetic Confession, etc.) that know no visible/invisible distinction. Moreover, the cautions of Pastor Wilson are a helpful reproof in light of the denigration of the visible Church. The Bible makes plain, there is “one body” (Eph. 4:4 , 1 Cor. 12:12).

## **Paedo-Communion**

Pastor Wilson clarified “that the ‘worthy receivers’ of the Lord’s Supper may include all baptized covenant members who are able to physically eat and drink the elements, including very young children being raised in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (provided that they are not under discipline.) He holds to a form of paedo-communion. Many of the churches of the CREC not only hold this view but also practice it.

It is interesting to note that many presbyteries in the OPC and PCA allow ministers to take an exception here to the Westminster Confession. Though neither of these denominations allow children to partake of the Eucharist in virtue of their baptism, many of their churches allow young children to commune at the table. Although we recognize that few Presbyterian and Reformed Churches practice paedo-communion, the members of this committee are convinced that it is an obvious application of Covenant

Theology. Communion is a sign and seal of the covenant for all covenant members.

## **Conclusion**

Brothers and sisters, we want you to know that Pastor Wilson is a faithful minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He loves Jesus. He loves the church of Jesus Christ. We have personally witnessed his dedication to gospel ministry. We are pleased to serve our Lord together with him within the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches. We are delighted to call him our brother. All of us can say – without any hesitation - that Pastor Wilson’s teaching has greatly influenced our ministries. He is a great blessing to us all.

Congregation, receive Pastor Wilson with all joy and thanksgiving. We encourage your continued confidence in Pastor Wilson as he watches over your souls with the other elders of Christ Church. He is a minister in good standing in the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches and he is robustly orthodox. We are convinced that Presbyterian and Reformed churches can learn much from him. “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.... Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive to them, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:7, 17).

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be upon you!

Yours servants in Christ,

Jeffrey Niell, Pastor of Emmanuel Covenant Church, Phoenix, AZ  
Burke Shade, Pastor of Cornerstone Reformed Church, Carbondale, IL  
Gregg Strawbridge, Pastor of All Saints' Presbyterian, Lancaster, PA  
Dennis Tuuri, Pastor of Reformation Covenant Church, Oregon City, OR  
Garry Vanderveen, Pastor of Christ Covenant Church, Langley, BC, Canada

## **APPENDIX G**

### **FORMAL RECOGNITION OF ORDAINED MINISTERS**

#### **IN CREC MEMBER CHURCHES**

1. Any CREC member church that wishes to have her minister(s) ordination formally recognized by the CREC shall submit such a request to the moderator (in writing).
2. Ordained ministers who are members of a CREC church and duly installed as a minister of that church shall be added to the list of recognized ordained men under one of the following conditions:
  - a. A previously ordained man, upon entering the CREC along with his church, was received by the presbytery and thus had his ordination formally recognized by the presbytery.
  - b. Any man who sat for a CREC ordination exam and was recommended by the examining committee, ordained by his local CREC church, and installed as a minister.
  - c. Any previously ordained man who was called by a CREC member church to be their minister, and is duly installed; subject to final approval at the next presbytery meeting.
3. The moderator shall establish and maintain a list of recognized ordained ministers in the CREC. Upon request, the moderator may issue a letter to an inquiring body stating that the minister in question has been formally recognized by the CREC as a lawfully ordained minister of the gospel.

## **ROSTER OF MEMBER CHURCHES, 2004**

### **CONFEDERATION OF REFORMED EVANGELICAL CHURCHES**

1. All Saints' Presbyterian (2002) — Brownstown, PA
2. Ancient Hope Reformed Church (2004) — Mission Viejo, CA
3. Christ Church (2004) — Cary, NC
4. Christ Church (1997) — Moscow, ID
5. Christ Church (2001) — Spokane, WA
6. Christ Covenant Church (2000) — Lynnwood, WA
7. Christ Covenant Church (2000) — Langley, BC
8. Christ Reformed Evangelical Church (2000) — Annapolis, MD
9. Christ Reformed Church, (2003) — Albion, ME
10. Christ the King Church, (2003) — Eugene, OR
11. Church of the King, (2003) — Santa Cruz, CA
12. Christ the Redeemer (2004) — Pella, IA
13. Cornerstone Reformed Church (2000) — Carbondale, IL
14. Covenant Bible Church (2004) — Anchorage, AK
15. Covenant Reformed Presbyterian (2004) — Knoxville, TN
16. Eastside Evangelical Fellowship (1997) — Kirkland, WA
17. Emmanuel Covenant Church (2000) — Phoenix, AZ
18. Grace Covenant Church (1998) — Texarkana, AR
19. Grace Covenant Church (2002) — Nacogdoches, TX
20. Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, (2003) — Hockley, TX
21. Immanuel Presbyterian Church (2002) — Fallon, NV
22. Mitaka Evangelical Church (2004) — Tokyo, Japan
23. Providence Church (2002) — Lynchburg, VA
24. Reformation Covenant Church (1999) — Oregon City, OR
25. Tanglewood Baptist Church (2002) — Sand Springs, OK
26. The King's Congregation (2003) — Boise, ID
27. Trinity Church (1997) — Wenatchee, WA
28. Trinity Reformation Church (2003) — Salem, OR

## **ROSTER OF MISSION CHURCHES, 2004**

### **CONFEDERATION OF REFORMED EVANGELICAL CHURCHES**

1. Mission Church of Reformation Covenant Church, Oregon City, OR: Church of the King, Sacramento, CA
2. Mission Churches of Christ Church, Moscow, ID:
  - a. Providence Reformed Evangelical Church, Grand Junction, CO
  - b. Trinity Reformed Church, Moscow, ID
  - c. Covenant of Grace Church, Elk, WA
3. Mission Church of All Saints' Presbyterian, Lancaster, PA: Christ Church of Livingston County, Howell, MI
4. Mission Church of Emmanuel Covenant Church, Phoenix, AZ: Christ the King Church, Springfield, MO
5. Mission Churches of Grace Covenant Church, Nacogdoches, TX:
  - a. Christ Covenant Church, San Antonio, TX
  - b. Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Clinton, MS
6. Mission Church of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, Hockley, TX: Heritage Covenant Church, Weatherford, TX
7. Mission Church of Trinity Church, Wenatchee, WA: Trinity Covenant Church, Wichita, KS.
8. Mission church of Christ Reformed Evangelical Church, Annapolis, MD: Holy Trinity Reformed Evangelical Church, Greenville, SC.
9. Mission Church of Providence Church, Lynchburg, VA: Providence Church, Greenville, NC.

## **ROSTER OF CANDIDATE CHURCHES, 2004**

### **CONFEDERATION OF REFORMED EVANGELICAL CHURCHES**

1. Candidate Church sponsored by Cornerstone Reformed Church, Carbondale, IL:  
Christ Church, Searcy, AR
2. Candidate Church sponsored by Grace Covenant Church, Texarkana, TX: Christ  
Church Presbyterian, Branchville, AL
3. Candidate Churches sponsored by Reformation Covenant Church, Oregon City,  
OR
  - a. The Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg, Russia—Blake Purcell, pastor
  - b. The Reformed Church of the flame of the Holy Spirit—Maxim Fokim, pastor
  - c. The Presbyterian Church of Pushkin—Oleg Volkov, pastor