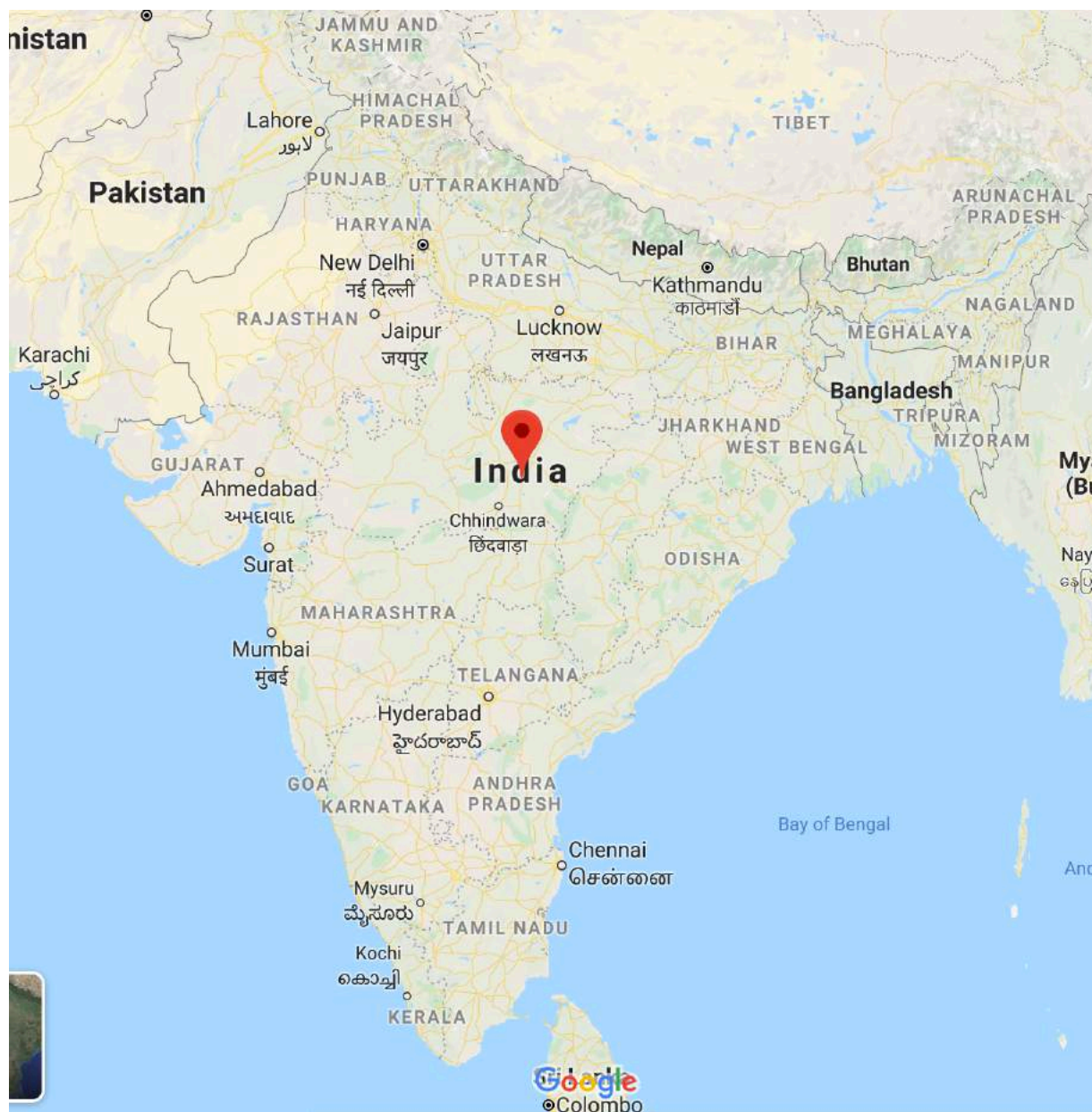


The Presbyterian Banner

November 2019



The red arrow marks the area of the Presbyterian Free Church of Central India

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FROM THE EDITOR

IS THE POPE A CATHOLIC?

31 October marks what many churches in the Reformed tradition call Reformation Day. It's the day that traditionally marks the nailing of Luther's 95 propositions to the notice board in Wittenberg – the door of the Castle Church – on 31 October 1517. There is some question whether he did that but he certainly wrote to his Archbishop. The 95 propositions were written in Latin and intended for scholarly debate, but the ultimate result was that by 1519 Luther was able to articulate the great truth that we are justified solely on the ground of Christ's merit imputed to us and received through faith alone. Later decades saw the reform spread.

It is right to remember the work of God in raising up those who sought to reform the church to the word of God, to remove the accretions and distortions of the ages that Jesus Christ might be seen in his true glory. However, we also need to remember that the church did not begin in the 16th century. Matters settled in early church councils concerning God the Holy Trinity and the Person of Christ were held in common with Rome by the Protestant Reformers and these precious truths are set out in the great Protestant Confessions of Faith including our own Westminster Confession.

Liberal Protestantism spiritualised away these truths or denied them outright. But there is a similar sapping of the foundations in sections of the Roman Church. Indeed, earlier last month the Vatican denied a report by a personal friend of the Pope who is an atheist that the Pope held Jesus to be a man and not God incarnate. One

hesitates to accept that the reported view is accurate, but the Pope is certainly regarded in conservative circles of Roman Catholicism as 'progressive' with his stance on family matters, divorce and LGBT issues. There is a restlessness in sections of the church reflecting disenchantment with existing structures. According to Cardinal George Pell in his debate with Richard Dawkins in 2012, atheists go to heaven, so one wonders if that same theological ineptitude (or is unbelief a better word?) also characterised the Pope who appointed him to the third highest position in the church in February 2014.

It's time a for a new Reformation but it will not be enough to go back to 1517 but to hold to the Bible – not exactly the Bible alone as claimed by every heretical cult, but the Bible rightly interpreted and thus along the lines set out in the great Protestant Confessions. #



Luther at the Diet of Worms, 1521

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AN OPTIMISTIC ESCHATOLOGY: CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE IN A HOSTILE WORLD

Rowland S. Ward

This is the first part of an address at the Asia-Pacific Conference of the International Conference of Reformed Churches held in Melbourne 1-3 October 2019.

This address is not aimed at creating controversy over the different approaches Christians have to eschatology (the last things). Nor is it an endeavour to make Scripture say what it does not say or to encourage the kind of triumphalism that brings about smugness and boastful pride. Nor is the optimism I'm speaking about a belief that ultimately hell is empty and all will be saved, a position that Scripture cannot possibly allow. Rather, I want to encourage you to see the positive message of Scripture from a Reformed perspective that can energise our faith and confidence in Christ even in the midst of significant difficulties and opposition.

I - Foundational Principles

I want to lay down a few inter-related principles to guide in this endeavour.

First, **the human being is the image of God** and this fact indicates the unique constitution of his nature and his special relationship to God from the beginning. The image of God does not consist merely in the exercise of dominion or in moral qualities but the whole person.¹ The material nature links humanity to the physical environment shared with other creatures. The earth

brings forth trees and plants (Gen 1:11-12) as well as all kinds of animals (Gen 1:24) and God forms the human from the earth too (Gen 2:7), so it is not surprising that there are some similarities whether in appearance or DNA. But only the human is the image of God, made with God's special deliberation to relate to God in a unique way. Adam is God's 'son' as Luke informs us at the end of his third chapter (Luke 3:37). He is to mirror God's character in the world in which he has been placed. He is placed in the sanctuary Garden 'to worship and obey'² – the better translation of the traditional 'to work and to keep it' (2:15) – so as to fulfil his task in the world beyond the Garden with all its rich potential (Gen 2:8-15).

Second, **there is an eschatology before there is sin**. This language, derived from Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), expresses the fact that God had a plan for his creation from the beginning, a truth that needs stress in a day when Christians too readily focus only on themselves, their sin and the need of Christ's forgiveness. In other words, we need the fuller context and the recognition of God's sovereign, eternal, holy and wise purpose to appreciate God's actions in history. Vos reminds us that the goal of God's purpose in history is revealed before the entry of sin.³ The goal of creation was (and still is) communion with God on the highest possible level and of this the tree of life in the Garden of Eden speaks. Its pledge is also seen in the creation sabbath, God's rest, a day not closed with the formula of evening and morning like the other days. God's image bearers, made like God but on a creaturely level, have life in the Garden, but a fuller and eternal life is to come as they obediently imitate God in their work and rest.⁴ And there are cosmic implications.

Third, **the goodness of creation in Genesis 1 is not absolute**. We must define goodness by what God has revealed and not by a philosophy that deletes creation in the interests of an evolutionistic position, or which elevates the pre-fall creation to a perfection it did not have. It appears

¹ The image is often defined too narrowly in terms of moral qualities which distinguish man from the other creatures and by which he knew God and his will. The Hebrew does not allow such a limitation and William Bucanus of Lausanne (d. 1603) rightly saw the whole man as created after God's image – thus his soul, body, gifts, dignity and lordship, *Institutions of Christian Religion* (London, 1606) 100ff. Similarly, Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) 554ff.; John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* Vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977) 39.

² The fitting translation in 2:15 is 'to worship and to obey' rather than 'to work and to keep it'. The standard Hebrew text reads 'to work her and take care of her' and the 'her' cannot be the garden since that is a masculine word. However, some Hebrew manuscripts lack the dot (mappiq) in the last letter and that makes the translation infinitive – 'to work and to take care' [See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1961), 122–123]; cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987) 67.

³ Vos writes: '... the eschatological principle is so deeply embedded in the structure of the biblical religion as to precede and underlie everything else' [*The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961) 66]; 'In so far as the

covenant of works posited for mankind an absolute goal and unchangeable future, the eschatological may be even said to have preceded the soteric religion' ['The Eschatology of the Psalter,' in *The Pauline Eschatology*, 325]. '... the Sabbath is an expression of the eschatological principle on which the life of humanity has been constructed' – G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975) 140.

⁴ The progress of development of covenant theology in the 17th century was such that there was not universal agreement among the Reformed as to the nature of the life, whether earthly or heavenly, promised to Adam. Cf. Rowland S. Ward, *God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Lansvale, NSW: Tulip Publishing, 2019), Chapter 14. One could also note the insight of Theophilus of Antioch as early as about AD 170 in *Theophilus to Autolytus*, 2.24, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2: 'And God transferred him from the earth, out of which he had been produced, into Paradise, giving him means of advancement, in order that, maturing and becoming perfect, and being even declared a god, he might thus ascend into heaven in possession of immortality. For man had been made a middle nature, neither wholly mortal, nor altogether immortal, but capable of either; so also the place, Paradise, was made in respect of beauty intermediate between earth and heaven.'

that creation as God made it was not fundamentally different from this present world. God created the animals that can be farmed but also the non-predatory animals⁵ and the wild creatures (Genesis 1:24). Psalm 104 describes a natural world including predatory creatures for which God provides, for he is righteous and loving to all his creatures (Ps 145:16-17). Reading the Lord's words in Job 38-40 reminds us of God's sovereignty, power and love to all he has made. It is not for us as limited creatures to prescribe what the Creator shall do. Goodness in Genesis 1 means free of moral evil and precisely as God intended. As regards man, all is not initially at the highest level. Herman Bavinck writes: '... Adam did not yet possess the highest humanity, a truth implicit in the probationary command, the freedom of choice, the possibility of sin and death.'⁶ In the world to come humanity no longer requires food (1 Cor 6:13) and has an eternal life that has moved beyond marriage (Matt 22:30). In the world to come, when Christ returns and the dead are raised, the redeemed bear the likeness of the earthy⁷ man no longer but of the heavenly man (1 Cor 15:47-49).

Fourth, *creation's goal after the entry of sin is out of mere human reach*.⁸ A regular pattern of earthly work and rest had been established at creation but eternal life in the unending heavenly sabbath rest of God - the fullest communion with God that is creation's goal - is unattainable for humanity once sin enters the situation. But not with God! In line with God's eternal plan, sin and death are dealt with by Christ, the Last Adam. The Son's perfect obedience, atoning sacrifice and resurrection in the power of an indestructible life (Hebrews 7:16), over which death has no more mastery, (Rom 6:9-10) transforms the situation for all whom the Father has given him. The promised new era has broken into the present! All authority now belongs to Christ, and the consummation of the kingdom of God will come at Christ's *parousia* or royal arrival from heaven (1 Cor 15:23-24).

Fifth, *redemption is thus not a mere restoration of Eden-like conditions for humanity*. Rather, the consummation brings total transformation for the redeemed in God's presence, which was and is the goal

of creation. The first man Adam, the natural man, was a living being made from the dust of the earth and dependent upon it, future glory only in prospect, death a possibility. The Last Adam, Jesus Christ, through his resurrection, has received the glory belonging to the world to come for all whom he represented. Endowed with the Spirit throughout his life on earth, so that even his self-offering was through 'the eternal Spirit' (Heb 9:14), the resurrection of Jesus as the 'Lord of Glory' (1 Cor 2:8) means his unique investiture with the Spirit so that he can bestow the Spirit on his people. Accordingly, Christ is termed the 'life-giving Spirit' (1 Cor 15:45).⁹ The Spirit animates believers first in quickening to new spiritual life and ultimately giving life to their mortal bodies (Rom 8:10-11). Therefore, 'just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man' (1 Cor 15:49). Called to eternal glory in Christ (1 Peter 5:10), the redeemed will be glorified with Christ, hence they will be made 'like him' (1 John 3:2); they will see God's face (Psa 17:15; Rev 22:4).

Sixth, *God's plan and purpose also has cosmic dimensions*. The entire material 'very good' creation is also to undergo change. Sin's entrance has meant God has subjected it to futility or frustration in a setting of hope with a view to the ultimate attainment of the end which it was made - to share the freedom of the glory of God's redeemed. Creation personified can be regarded as groaning due to the entry of sin delaying the realisation of its goal (Rom 8:18ff). There will not be a total ruin but rather a fiery purging and transformation through which, according to 2 Peter 3:10, 'the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare' (NIV) or 'be exposed' (ESV) or 'disclosed' (NRSV).¹⁰ Thus will there be a new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; and Rev 21:1). #

⁵ The traditional rendering is 'livestock, creepers [Heb: *remes*], wild beasts' but, contrary to the Septuagint, *remes* means creatures that move about and not only literal creepers such as reptiles. Note Ps 104:20: 'all the beasts of the forest creep about' [ESV]. In Genesis 1:24 land creatures other than the domesticated and the wild are meant, and creatures non-predatory to man or cattle appears the appropriate classification.

⁶ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, 566.

⁷ The Greek word frequently translated earthly in 1 Cor 15:47-49 is the rare *choikos* which describes physical composition (cf. Gen 2:7) hence the ESV captures the meaning: 'the man of dust'. In verse 15:40 the word translated earthly is *epigeios* which generally has a locative sense often in contrast to heaven or things in heaven. See N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003) 345.

⁸ The sabbath in the creation narrative should not be thought of as a memorial of creation, a looking back to something that cannot

be changed. Rather it is the climax of the narrative pointing forward to the purpose and goal of creation. Hence the grounds for sabbath observance in Deuteronomy 4:15 rest on the *new* creation brought about by the deliverance from Egypt.

⁹ Compare 15:22: 'so in Christ all will be made alive.' Note Richard B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 89: 'At his resurrection the personal mode of Jesus' existence as the last Adam was so decisively transformed by the Holy Spirit that Paul says he has become life-giving Spirit... Only by virtue of the functional identity of the Spirit and Christ, effected redemptive-historically in his resurrection, is Christ the communicator of life.'

¹⁰ There are several variations in the Greek MSS for 'will be laid bare' (Gk: *heurethesetai*, literally 'will be found'). As 'will be found' seemed a difficult reading, variations arose including *katakaesetai* (will be burned up) as in KJV, RSV, NASB. It is now rather generally recognised that the sense 'will be found out/discovered' fits the context.

The Book of Job Part 2 – Suffering and Surgery

Rev. Eddie Smith

So in this second and concluding part preached at Knox PCEA on 20 October our brother considers the surgery God employs so that Job complains no more. The Book of Job does not explain why good people suffer but it teaches us how God wants us to respond to suffering.

Then Job (Job 42:1-6 ESV) answered the Lord and said: “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted....” *‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’* “Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” *‘Hear, and I will speak: I will question you, and you make it known to me.’* “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job finally admits to God he had shot his mouth off before his friends; shot his mouth off about God and to God, judging God in the light of his afflictions when saying things he did not understand. Yet he is finally satisfied to know he now fully realises this. It is hard to express it better than Francis Anderson, a most able scholar, who says the following in the light of Job repenting before God at last –

“Job is satisfied. His vision of God has been expanded beyond all previous bounds. He has a new appreciation of the scope and harmony of God’s world, of which he is but a small part. But this discovery does not make him feel insignificant. Just by looking at ordinary things, he realizes he cannot even imagine what it must be like to be God. The world is beautiful and terrifying, and in it all God is everywhere, seen to be powerful and wise, and more mysterious when He is known than when He is but dimly discerned.”

Now, how is it that God could reduce Job to that kind of repentance when his friends could not? There was something more majestic and more penetrating when God spoke. It is true that both Job and his friends at numerous times spoke of God’s majesty but, as we noticed last time, there was more of a concern among Job’s friends with the *symptoms of suffering*. As we observed last time, a symptom or a set of symptoms does not necessarily lead to a right diagnosis.

Job needed surgery, as it were – surgery performed by God. Yes, God knew the symptoms – had even allowed Satan to visit Job with tragedy – but when He finally spoke God (at least at first) was not concerned with the outward manifestations of suffering but the inner disease that lay in Job’s heart, that found Job out in his fiery ordeal.

And do we not also concern ourselves with the symptoms, with the tragedies or trials, that come our way so that we focus on ourselves too much, without discerning what God is seeking to teach us? There are times when comfort lies in repentance, comfort resides in the sorrow of misunderstanding God. Yes, when we come to the point of saying: “I despise myself for thinking and speaking about what I did not understand.” The marvel of God brings me to repentance and sorrow, but it also brings me comfort.

Well, what effective surgery did God perform on Job? We move on from considering “Suffering and Symptoms” to “Suffering and Surgery.”

We have seen that after seven days in the beginning when Job’s three friends sat in silence, appalled at Job’s suffering, Job burst out with a curse on the day he was born, which curse gave rise to ever increasing anger towards Job, who in turn became increasingly stubborn with his occasional insistence that God had cast him off, even showing hatred for him.

Still, Job also appeared at times to possess hope in God finally vindicating him for the blameless life he had lived. The most well-known expression of hope (thanks to Handel’s “Messiah” in part) is found in the words following “Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!” – *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at last He shall stand upon the earth. And after my skin has thus been destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”*

Still, we asked the question last time: Was Job content with this hope only, wonderful though this hope may be? Indeed, is it always true that we Christians who believe in the same Redeemer and Ultimate Justifier as Job, are completely at rest in having the same hope if we are suffering intensely? Hope for the future may help to endure present suffering, but suffering is still suffering. See the northern Nigerian Christian woman, whose husband has been cruelly murdered, wandering around dazed in a Voice of the Martyrs’ safety house, so stricken with grief that she finds it hard to cling to belief in God. Suffering can leave us staggering in disbelief. Many weeks pass before our northern Nigerian sister comes out of her grief and is assured of God’s sovereign power and love.

Such a hope about the coming Redeemer does not end the book of Job, for, despite such hope, Job does not cease to be agitated by his friends’ assertion that all is cut and dry when it comes to justice in the world. It is not always that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. Bad men may prosper. Job’s friends cannot convince him it is entirely otherwise, and therefore they personally attack him. They no longer indirectly attack; they accuse him of definite acts of wickedness. Job still laments God is against him, while maintaining his integrity. We have an impasse: neither party will give in to the other.

At this point in the book of Job we have what is said by quite a few to be the calm words of the author of the book of Job (Job 28). The author breaks the tension and prepares us for what God will eventually in His own way say to Job. The author tells of men descending deep to mine for precious metals or stones, and tells us that although men may be skilful in such a thing, they are at a loss when it comes to finding wisdom. Wisdom, unlike precious metals and stones, is well and truly hidden. It is shrouded in deep mystery.

Our wonderful Creator is only known by fearing Him, by turning away from evil. When we say “known,” we do not mean He is known comprehensively. Francis Anderson is right: God becomes more mysterious when He is known. Ours is merely to fear Him and to turn away from evil. Job is yet to learn there are things too wonderful to take in.



The author of Job in his calm words of Job 28 is saying in effect we may not know all there is to know, but we know how to conduct ourselves despite what we face. Job cannot tell what the end of his troubles is. We turn the bend in travelling through the book of Job after the author’s defining word of wisdom, with Job’s concluding words and those of a certain young friend. This is before God finally speaks to Job, and before He reduces him to repentance, and before He also restores all Job has lost as it were.

In Job’s final words (Job 29-31) to his three friends, Job points out his actual acts of righteousness that he had carried out in blissful days gone by, and then points out by way of contrast the days of deep darkness he has known since then. He cries out for proof he had done wrong, but his friends do not respond.

After this, and prior to God actually speaking for the first time to Job, a certain young friend, Elihu, (Job 32) who had been previously quiet and unmentioned speaks out. You will find conflicting thoughts among scholars as to what contribution young Elihu makes after the fierce debating between Job and his three other friends. Does Elihu add anything new to the debate? Does he stand for the prosecution before Job, or does he lean a little in defence of Job?

Some see Elihu (Job 32-37) as an adjudicator rather than a prosecutor of Job, that is, he is viewed as weighing up the arguments on both sides and then makes a judgment as to who is in the right. It is also argued by some that if it were not for the book of Job ending with the words of God, then Elihu’s judgment would make a sound ending.

Yet Elihu’s judgment is not the final answer – God’s judgment is. Therefore, Elihu’s judgment must fall short of satisfaction in terms of why Job was suffering. I tend to say it falls short of *complete* satisfaction. Therefore we need to ask ourselves “Why so much space (Job 32-37) is devoted to young Elihu’s words, unless he is perhaps breaking new ground?”

Job is not seen as answering Elihu as he always did to his three other friends. It appears Elihu convinces Job in some way. (Also, we note Elihu is not condemned along with the three other friends at the end when Job is rewarded for his patience.) So what does Elihu say that is convincing? Elihu can be rough on Job, but I think he is more of an adjudicator than a prosecutor. He is gentler towards Job than the three other friends are. He is more reasonable than the others in showing Job how wrong he is about God. I believe it is right to say that young Elihu shows Job that God is not some impersonal arbitrary power bent on destroying Job but He is, as Elihu expresses it, a God of grace, in whose hand even the rod of affliction is a means of blessing. God is not bent on only reminding us of any little thing done wrong so as to seem to be over strict in all ways on we who believe; no, He is most gracious and only corrects us in order to bless us and bring about happiness through grace.

Pertinent to this are these words of Elihu (Job 36:15-21, ESV) – “(God) delivers the afflicted by their affliction and **opens their ear** by adversity.” [Now, did you ever hear Job’s three other friends say anything like that?]

[At this point of v.16 in Job 36: 16-21, I turn away from the ESV translation and quote the NIV, which makes more sense]. The words of Elihu: “(God) is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food. But now you are laden with the judgment due the wicked; judgment and justice have taken hold of you. Be careful that no one entices you by riches; do not let a large bribe turn you aside. Would your wealth or even all your mighty efforts sustain you so that you would not be in distress?..... Beware (v.19) of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction.”

I believe Job’s three other friends were saying in effect to Job: “You have gone too far. You are evil and that is why God has judged you as being among the wicked and has punished you,” whereas Elihu is saying in effect: “You have not gone too far, but you are dangerously close to incurring God’s great displeasure which the wicked know. You are close to danger. Ensure you do not get burnt. (God) is wooing you from the jaws of distress. You seem to prefer affliction, seem to want to accuse God falsely with injustice, but beware: turn from evil. God is a *teacher*, not a tyrant.” And beautiful is the way Elihu’s words melt into a coming storm, which storm finds God speaking finally to Job (Job 38:1).

Not a few have been puzzled by God’s words to Job. Some see them as irrelevant to Job’s plight, seeming to have

little to do with his suffering. God's words do not seem to answer the questions Job asked, in the presence of his friends or consider the questions his friends failed to answer. Moreover, God merely asks questions as if Job is under cruel interrogation and overbearing scrutiny. Job had fired questions at God but he is stranded by curious counter-questions – that's how some people view the matter. What's more, for some the sole appeal to creation, to nature has little to do with essential knowledge about God. God with His many questions does not refer to Job's suffering at all. (That is at least true).

Well, what is the surgery we are talking about? What does God do to cure Job of his complaints and reduce him to repentance? What does God do to comfort Job when his friends could not? What does God do to comfort him before Job's loss is recovered in possessions and family?

I said last time God does not forget Job's first words – his words of placing a curse on the day of his birth. Just what is often the thinking behind someone, anyone who wishes to no longer live, and who wishes to die. Is it not that the person wonders why he or she has come into this world? Is it not that he or she thinks all is chaos, that if there is a God He is not in control, or that He is cruel.

God compels Job to remove the curse he uttered first of all in front of his friends.

We see that God's words to Job are replete with allusions to Job's first words about wishing he was dead and wondering why he was alive. For God passes over all the wrangling and debate that took place between Job and his friends, returning to Job's first outburst. God compels Job to remove the curse he uttered first of all in front of his friends.

Here are some of the allusions God makes to Job's curse when He finally speaks to Job –

- (God says), “Where is the way to the dwelling of **light**, and where is the place of **darkness**, that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home? You know, for you were **born** then, and the number of your days is great!”
- “Have you commanded the **morning** since your days began...?” [38:12]
- ... “who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the **womb**...?” [38:8]
- “Who has let the wild donkey go **free**?” [39:5]
- “Can you draw out **Leviathan** with a fishhook...?”

Job in his cursing had said “*Let that day (of my birth) be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it.*” In return, God asks Job if he knows the way to the dwelling of light, the way to darkness, and sarcastically (and playfully) God suggests Job knows the

way of darkness and light because he was born way back then! It becomes comical to think Job could wish in darkness and light at his own command, as his initial outburst suggested.

Job in his initial cursing has wished his mother's womb had been shut to prevent his birth, and God so gently alludes to this when He asks Job if he knows who shut the sea with doors when the sea burst out of its womb?

Job in his cursing had pined for death, longing to be in the underworld where the slave is **free** of his master. God so gently asks in allusion to Job's initial pining for freedom: “Who has let the wild donkey go **free**?”

As well, God resorts to things that appear to be mistakes in His rather harmonious world. He awakens Job to the stupid ostrich, for had not Job considered his life a mistake, his birth a mistake? – “Why did I not die at birth, come out of the womb and expire?” Did God also make a mistake with the ostrich? “*For she leaves her eggs to the earth and lets them be warmed on the ground, forgetting that a foot may crush them and that the wild beast may trample them. She deals cruelly with her young, as if they were not hers; though her labour be in vain, yet she has no fear, because God has made her forget wisdom and given her no share in understanding.*” [39:14] As with Job's birth, there seemed no wisdom in the creation of ostriches. Yet, wait!...God goes on to say of the ostrich: “*When she rouses herself to flee, she laughs at the horse and rider.*” Look at the ostrich just one way and there appears no wisdom in it being created, and yet it is powerful in running away from horse and rider. There is a hidden wisdom known if only we could see all that is to be known.

Without digressing too much, let us say that in modern society we have lost touch with nature, and therefore the appeal of God to creation when speaking to Job may lose its force in convincing us that nature itself is compelling enough to ease us out of the despair brought on by suffering. About a year ago I remember one newspaper carried a prominent article about the vital contact we all should make with nature, that nature can nurture us and heal us mentally. A high-tech lifestyle is not good for our mental health, let alone for physical fitness. It is believable to me that a walk in a park raises our happiness level, while they say a shopping centre sees stress indicators rise, as some husbands may know when shopping with their wives!

If we profess to believe God is Creator, as well as believing Christ is our Redeemer, we ought to be awestruck by God's power and wisdom in the world He has wonderfully made, and see even through creation our birth and our life is not a mistake. Job in answering God says he has no answer. He is on the verge of truly removing the curse he placed on the day of his birth.

Job then is to imagine himself as God – “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity,” he is told [40:10]. He is commanded to do things God alone can do. If Job can, then God will acknowledge Job can save himself, or do what he wanted done when he sought to will away his birth! In brief, two great creatures – the Behemoth and Leviathan – are focused on, particularly the sea-creature Leviathan, as Job referred to Leviathan in the curse about his day of birth,

perhaps calling up those who had magical powers to rouse Leviathan to end his life.

The lengthy debate between Job and his three more senior friends is passed over. The accent falls on God's words, on the hope of reversing the curse Job placed on his life. At first when Job is confronted by the awesomeness of God, Job is somewhat evasive though somewhat subdued. It is only after the second time God speaks that Job can be said to confess His sin, when he in fact finally says [42:6]: "therefore I despise myself, and repent to my ease in dust and ashes."

It can also take some time for us to come to terms with suffering. We may not hear God all that well the first time round, particularly if we have reached the point when there seems no point in living. Let us take heart from this account of Job.

James the apostle tells us that in his time there were believing brothers among his fellow Jews who, no doubt because they believed Jesus was the Messiah, were cut off from family and means of living, forced to work for wealthy greedy employers, and cheated of wages, and in some cases were murdered because they believed. James, in writing to his persecuted brothers, tells them to be patient until the Lord comes. Cheer up; the Lord is near at hand. Among those who are models of patience is Job: "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

Job's patience was streaked with sin but it was patience, all the same. In God's eyes he was viewed as patient and there was an ultimate reward 'before the time,' as it were, in order to show the Lord's patience, the Lord proving to be compassionate and merciful to Job.

"You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord."

I like the way James expresses it: "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord." "You have heard, you have seen." We have heard about Job's steadfastness, now have we seen the Lord's purpose in it all? That is, are we true believers in Jesus and are seeing in ourselves that it is worthwhile and imperative to cling to hope even when we are suffering? James says "Be patient...until the coming of the Lord...establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

* Rev. Hiralal Solanki provided the substance and with his approval Dr Ward edited the whole with his most substantial contribution being in section (2). Those interested in early Indian

An Outline of Presbyterian Work in India

*Hiralal Solanki with Rowland Ward**

(1) Introduction

India, a land of 1.37 billion inhabitants (excluding over 360 million in Pakistan and Bangladesh), is known for its software engineers and call centres serving many countries. There is also a very large Indian diaspora (600,000 in Australia). In its journey to what India is today, churches have played a significant role although Christians form probably only 2.5-5% of the population (Hinduism is 75-80%, and Islam 14%). Starting with the arrival of the gospel - traditionally with Thomas, the Apostle - India has seen through 2000 years of church activities with its negative and positive aspects. However it is generally agreed that church has played a very positive role in development of an educated and free society.

Among others, Presbyterians have been serving since 1813 in Indian missions. They have served all across the Indian sub-continent although much of this work has been lost to liberalism and to wider church unions.

(2) First arrivals and making inroads

The missionaries entered India from different directions. Following is an outline of the entry of Presbyterians into India.

West India - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [ABCFM] sent two Calvinistic Congregational missionaries, Samuel Nott and Gordon Hall, who settled in Mumbai (ie Bombay) in 1813 after being refused entry to Kolkata (ie. Calcutta) by the British authorities. They established the Bombay or Marathi Mission as the first American mission station overseas.

Rev. John Wilson was sent out in 1829 by the Scottish Missionary Society who had already made some efforts beginning with Rev. Donald Mitchell in January 1823 although he had died soon after. Wilson transferred to the Church of Scotland in 1835 and continued with the Free Church of Scotland in 1843. His largely educational work in Mumbai in 1835 was extremely significant and included the establishment of the University in 1857.

The newly-united Presbyterian Church in Ireland commenced at Rajkot in Gujarat in 1841 with Rev. James Glasgow and Rev. Andrew Kerr. Surat was transferred from the LMS about 1846, Mahi Kanti in Gujarat (later Borsad) in 1857 and Ahmedabad from another mission in 1861.

Central India - In February 1845 Rev. Stephen Hislop began work in the central provinces for the Free Church of

Christian work will find B. H. Badley (ed.), *Indian Missionary Directory and Memorial Volume* (Lucknow, 1881) invaluable. It is available on-line at www.archive.org.

Scotland based on Nagpur in what became Madhya Pradesh State. In 1871 the northern part of the extensive field was handed over to the Original Secession Church and Rev. George Anderson of that church arrived in Seoni in January 1872 serving until 1890. The remarkable Rev. John McNeel, from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, served with the Secession mission for 56 years from 1898 but the Secession joined the Church of Scotland in 1956. Meanwhile the similar Free Church of Scotland gave support to the Secession work from 1901 and by agreement took responsibility for the northern part of the Secession work from 1924 based on Lakhnadon. The work so originated in due course became the *Presbyterian Free Church of Central India*. Miss Elizabeth MacLeod at Seoni in 1905, Dr. Annie Mackay, who came in 1921, labored in this mission field. Along with those from the Free Church of Scotland, there were from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland, Miss Annie J Dunlop, and Mr. W. Mervyn Oliver. Dr Helen M. Ramsay, a medical doctor, from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Manning River also served here 1955-70, 1976-85 as well as Nurse Heather Beaton from Newcastle (1963-76, 1982-85). From 1959 Indians were ordained for ministry; the first of them was Rev. Prakash Kumar.



PFCCI Assembly in session

In 1877 Rev. J. M. Douglas and Rev. James F. Fraser from the Presbyterian Church in Canada began at Mhow in the Indore District.

North & North West India – In 1831 the ABCFM sent Princeton-trained Presbyterian Rev. John Boggs to work in Mumbai (ie. Bombay). The Presbyterian Church in USA began work in 1834 with Rev. John C Lowrie (1808-1900). He established a centre at Ludhiana in the Punjab. Rev. Dr. and Mrs James Campbell, formerly of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Synod), came to Saharanpur (in what is now the state of Uttar Pradesh) in 1835.

The Associate Presbyterian Synod of North America, which merged into the United Presbyterian Church of North America upon its formation in 1858, sent Rev.

Andrew Gordon in 1854. He established the Sialkote Mission in the Punjab the following year.

Work spread to different parts of North India but also began to impact the culture and industry by developing dictionaries, and establishing printing presses etc. The pioneer Bible translator among the Presbyterians was the Rev. John Newton, who served from 1835 until his death in 1891. Rev. C. W. Foreman arrived in 1847 and by 1849 was based at Lahore. In 1835, they acquired a printing press. By publishing tracts, scriptures, dictionaries in Panjabi, Urdu, Persian, Hindi and Kashmiri, they helped the spread of the Word of God and standardised the languages of this region. In the 1860s the American Presbyterian Mission ran in a continuous line from Allahabad, Fatehpur, Fatehgarh, Mainpuri, Etawah, Muzzafernagar, Saharanpur, Roorkee, and Dehradun and included education, medicine, translation and printing in its work.

The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland worked in Rajputana from the 1860s.

The Presbyterian Church in New Zealand sent a medical missionary to the Punjab in 1908.

East India – In 1830 Alexander Duff (1806-78) pioneered mission work in Kolkata (ie. Calcutta) as the first overseas missionary for the Church of Scotland but upon the Disruption of that church in 1843 he worked on behalf of the Free Church of Scotland.

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church (ie. Presbyterian Church of Wales) had at first worked with the London Missionary Society but in 1840 sent out the first missionary in its own name. Rev. Thomas Jones and his wife arrived at Sohra in East Khasi Hills District on 22 June 1841 and from there the evangel spread to Sylhet (in present day Bangladesh) in 1850, and to Cachar District in Assam, the Lushai Hills (now Mizoram and majority Christian) and later on to Manipur and Tripura.

In 1862 the Presbyterian Church of England established a mission at Rampur Boalia in the district of Rajshahi, Bengal, India (now Bangladesh). The mission was started by Rev. Behari Lal Singh who was an agent of the Free Church of Scotland's mission in Kolkata.

In 1870 the Free Church of Scotland began working among the Santhals, of what is now Bihar, West Bengal and Assam and Bangladesh of the present day, and among the Konds and Pans of Orrisa.

Rev. William Macfarlane, missionary of Church of Scotland Missionary Society, arrived in Darjeeling in 1870 paving way for the evangelisation of the hills.

South India – In 1834 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions commenced work at Madurai, 450kms SW of Chennai transferring Rev. William Todd and Rev. Henry R. Hoisington from Jaffna in Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Significant work developed over much of Tamil Nadu. In 1836 Rev. John Scudder (1793-1855) of the Reformed Church in America was appointed to Chennai (ie. Madras). Scudder had given notable service in Sri Lanka since 1819. In 1851 his son Rev. Henry Martyn Scudder (1822-95) was appointed to Arcot, 115 kms west of his earlier place of service (1846-51) of Chennai. He moved a

little further west to Vellore in 1853 and took over work given up by the Society for Promoting the Gospel.

Rev. John Anderson founded Church of Scotland work at Chennai in February 1837 continuing with the Free Church in 1843.

Women in Mission

It is important to mention **Zenana** missions which sought to reach women who were not permitted outside their homes. Different denominations engaged in these efforts from the mid 19th century using women missionaries. For example, in 1891 Miss Mary McLean, a young schoolteacher from Berry in New South Wales became the first Australian missionary to India serving among women and children in Tamil Nadu, living west of Chennai at Sholinghur. In 1892 Helen McGregor was the first such missionary from New Zealand while Miss Morris of the Reformed Church in America initiated this work in the north in about 1912 with good results.

(3) Challenges and development

One of the major challenges was that the Gospel was packed in western culture and there was a lack of local evangelists. Although it was overcome by establishing seminaries, sharing of responsibilities with local leaders was rare. The resistance to accept them as equal Christians resulted in slowing down of their coming to church. In many groups the converts were not given adequate leadership. This hampered the further growth of Christianity in many of these groups, especially in North West India.

The years from 1800 to 1857 represent a period of small beginnings. The Sepoy mutiny in 1857 seriously disturbed Christian missions in the northwest. By 1857, there were still less than 200 native Christians in the region of Delhi.

The mass movements mainly remained in low caste groups as the high caste converts suffered heavy persecution and even martyrdom. Most of the dramatic mass movements were Avarna caste movements. That is, they originated from people who, deprived by the high caste Brahmins, turned in despair to the church to find identity. These conversions created caste problems. When people who projected themselves as higher than other caste converts in church began to discriminate, some missionaries resorted to the use of magisterial powers of the state. In one instance in 1834 in Thanjavur, when missionaries asked the district magistrate to flog the Hindu Christians, one person was so beaten that he required the professional help of a surgeon. These incidents were taken as intrusion of foreigners into the domestic systems and created an atmosphere of fear alienating further conversions in certain people groups.

(4) A few unsung heroes

When we look at the mass conversions in India, not limiting ourselves to Presbyterians, it was always a local native who reached out to his own and became catalyst in their communities to influence them to Christ. Two very special people in low-caste communities in Sialkote

district of the Punjab were Mastan Singh among the Megs tribe (a weaver community) and Ditt among the Chuhra (untouchables). Ditt was converted at age 30 in 1873. He has been described as, *A dark little man, lame of one leg, quiet and modest in his manner, with sincerity and earnestness well expressed in his face, and at that time about thirty years of age.* After his conversion he refused to move into the mission compound and went back to his village and family. He endured hardship and went around doing his regular work and preaching the gospel as he went. In time thousands were converted and the mindset of the missionaries was changed as previously they had contrasted on the higher classes in society.

Mass movements also occurred among the Madigas and Malas, low caste tribes in Andhra Pradesh. The catalyst for this movement was Yerragunthla Periah and his wife Nagama. In the 1860s and '70s Periah and Nagama went from village to village for 80 miles around telling the downtrodden Madigas that their only hope lay in Christ. A vast Baptist movement resulted among these Telegu speaking people, but other denominations benefited as well.

(4) The impact of Liberalism, and unions

Early 20th century saw the Liberalism sweeping churches and resulting in church unions. In India the Presbyterian and Reformed were losing their unique understanding of the Bible and began to move into Union churches. Many missionaries returned home without preparing successive leadership, leaving a vacuum. In South India all this work went into the Church of South India (1947) merging with Anglicans and others. Later in North India a majority of this mission work went into the similar Church of North India (1970). The Presbyterian mission work in North East India was largely unaffected by these movements. Free Church of Central India and Reformed Presbyterian work in North India also remained out, although a very small group. The establishing of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Dehradun in 1969 became a strong base for this work.

(5) From missionaries to locals – the rollercoaster, from downs to ups

Eventually the locals came into leadership, most of time losing financial assistance and facing lack of experience yet persevered and are thriving now. Missionaries had been supported by their mission boards or friends, while locals were to be supported by the church they pastored. In the earlier period believers had never learned to give as they did not see the need. The financial giving in churches is still a challenge but moving into positive direction.

(6) Present work, RPF and its constituents

The present work of Reformed and Presbyterian missions is spread all over India as surveyed below. They gather together for fellowship in the aegis of Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship. This usually meets once every two years.

Reformed and Presbyterian groups working in India:

1. Reformed Presbyterian Church of India – Historically drawn from AP and RP missions; It has some 14

churches and presence in UP, Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Rajasthan.

2. Presbyterian Reformed Church in India – The Presbyterian Church of Brazil started its mission work in Goa, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra in 2015 and now has eight church plants.



One of the house groups of PRCI

3. Evangelical Reformed Church of India - A new startup by Mission of Peace Making having its work in Himachal, Punjab and Chandigarh in north and Orissa in east.
4. Presbyterian Church of South India – began in 2002 and now has 37 ministers and 31 evangelists in partnership with Mission to the World (US), working in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
5. Presbyterian Church of India [Reformed] - Vung D. Tombing, the founder in 1984, started work among Paite speaking people in the north-east but has since spread. There are 41 local churches and 9 mission churches.
6. South India Reformed Church – a church working in Tamil Nadu, partnered by Reformed Churches in the Netherlands; schools, churches and health work.
7. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim – A very strong and vibrant denomination. It has very commanding position in the state of Sikkim.
8. Presbyterian Free Church – Kalimpong (West Bengal) – it started with a meeting of believers on 21 January 1973. Now a strong group of churches involved in various ministries of church. They have strong mission presence in Nepal.
9. Presbyterian Free Church of Central India is a historical denomination working in Central India a former mission field of Free Church of Scotland/Original Secession. It has now five main churches and several mission fields.
10. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India – started on 8 April 1979. It has 12,671 members and 58 ministers. Its mission outreach has spread to 11 language groups.
11. Christian Reformed Fellowship of India - Started in 2006 - with the help of Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and Reformed Church in the Netherlands (Liberated). Serving in the state of Gujarat and Maharashtra, also some places in

Rajasthan. Has some 80 evangelists leading 300 worship centers.

12. Covenant Reformed Assembly – a church group started from Ramchandrapuram in Andhra Pradesh with the help of URC in USA now in leadership of Rev. Moses.
13. Reformed Church of South Africa - began ministry in Gujarat state in 2010.
14. Protestant Reformed Church – Rev. Paul Raj has recently started this work with help from churches in USA. He runs educational, social institutes together with church planting efforts.

Non RPF affiliate works

1. Bible Presbyterians from Singapore - specially involved in education and social work.
2. United Church of North India - A union of old Presbyterian churches, still having a good presence in Ludhiana, Darjeeling, Kolhapur and some other areas.
3. Presbyterian Church of India - A major denomination based in Northeast India, doing serious mission work in North; not part of RPF.
4. North India Presbyterian Church - being sponsored and led by Korean missions mainly in Haryana.
5. Presbyterian Evangelistic fellowship – led by Dr Dasan Jayraj. It is working in partnership with Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

(7) Indian Reformed Fellowship Australia involvement

Indian Reformed Fellowship in Australia founded by Rev. Richard Wilson as pastoral Coordinator and Rev Hiralal Solanki as Associate Pastoral Coordinator serves among 11 of these denominations in the following fourfold ministry.

- Encouragement ministry, **the ministry of Word and fellowship**
- Assisting in preparedness for given challenges, **logistic support**
- Training, Motivation for self-propagation and self-reliance, **strategy**
- **Networking** and connecting with like-minded partners

The Gospel has been in India for about 2000 years impacting India and its people very significantly yet remaining an outsiders' faith. Time and again we have faced persecution and discrimination as a minority community. In spite of challenges, even unto death, the faithful continue to witness to the gospel and increase in numbers. Please remember us in your prayers for courage to witness and for the Holy Spirit to work in our country for the good of the nation. #

*Let peoples praise you, LORD
Let all the peoples praise!
O let the na-tions be glad,
in songs their voices raise!*

(Psalm 67:3-4)



Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship India Conference 2018 – 14 denominations represented



The Asia-Pacific regional Conference of the International Conference of Reformed Churches was held in the Robert White Hall within Presbyterian Assembly building, 156 Collins Street, Melbourne 1-3 October 2019. Interstate PCEA ministers Rev. John Forbes and Rev. George Ball were able to attend and Rev. Dennis Muldoon for the Tuesday Session when Rev. Dr Peter Adam spoke on the Trinity in preaching. Rev. Robin Tso had to cancel his planned attendance but was able to send down equipment which enabled the main addresses to be video recorded (the URL is below the adjoining picture). As well as Dr Adam’s address, Dr Martin Williams from the Reformed Theological College, Melbourne/Geelong gave a powerful address on the relevance of Luther’s Theology of the Cross from which hearers will greatly profit. The third main address was by the Editor. The Conference provided plenty of time for interaction and net-working. We had an attendance around 40 with a few casual visitors but people from South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, New Zealand. In addition, we had men from several Australian denominations including the Westminster Presbyterians, the Free Reformed, whose unofficial delegation made a great contribution, the Presbyterian Reformed, Reformed Presbyterian and, of course, joint hosts, the PCEA and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia.#

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeulzPxTcb6jOhSRpNFDibq9AnkJ0vq7J>