
**THE
AD HOC
REPORT
ON
WORLD
MISSION**

GENERAL
PROGRAM COUNCIL

REFORMED
CHURCH IN AMERICA

This booklet contains the report of the General Program Council's Ad Hoc Committee On Power In World Mission as amended and approved by the Council at its meeting November 13-14, 1980, at Star Lake Lodge, Bloomington, New Jersey. This report will be referred for study by RCA churches, for response from partner churches, and for implementation by the Division of World Mission and its staff.

Terms of Reference

The Ad Hoc Committee for power in World Mission was appointed "to assist the General Program Council in leading the Reformed Church in America toward a new responsiveness to God's power as he leads us in mission."

The purpose of the committee was to assist in:

- (a) reversing current trends (in the decline of missionaries serving outside the United States),
- (b) confronting continuing inflation and devaluation impact on the world mission endeavors, and
- (c) being responsive to new challenges and opportunities.

While moving in the directions indicated, the Ad Hoc Committee was reminded that it must be SENSITIVE to:

- (a) world trends,
- (b) the direction of sister churches and ecumenical agencies, and
- (c) an awareness of present programs and commitments.

General Synod Actions, 1979

R-1

To ask GPC, in consultation with GSEC, to review its present structure of program goal areas and explore the possibility of reorganizing in terms of a few major denominational tasks to report back to the Synod of 1980. Further, that this reorganization provide for a structure within GPC which would keep before the RCA the challenge of the unfinished worldwide mission task with special focus on cross cultural evangelism. (ADOPTED)

R-2

To ask the GPC to design and implement a program that facilitates our being partners with Third World churches in their cross cultural evangelistic efforts among unreached peoples; that the criterion for our involvement be whether or not our partnership makes an essential difference in their ability to reach effectively with the gospel people who would otherwise remain unreached for Christ. (ADOPTED)

Committee Members

George Crumley-Member at Large
Chairperson, Resigned from Committee, September, 1979

Eugene Heideman-Former Missionary
Chairperson from September, 1979

Jack Boerigter-GPC Member

Caryl Busman-Missionary
(Third-Fourth Meetings)

John Busman-Missionary
(Third-Fourth Meetings)

Margaret Doorenbos-Missionary
(Second Meeting)

Samuel Hofman-Missionary
(First Meeting)

Paul Kranendonk-Member at Large
(From September, 1979)

Russell Paalman-Member at Large

Lewis Scudder-Missionary

Richard Westra—GPC Member

Ann Zwemer-Former Missionary

Glenn Bruggers-World Ministries Staff

John Buteyn-World Ministries Staff

Harvey Hoekstra-Consultant to the Committee

John Walchenbach-Executive Secretary for Program
(Resigned from Staff, June, 1980)

Dates and Places of Meetings

March 28, 1979-O'Hare Airport

June 26-27, 1979-Elk Grove Village, Illinois

October 8-9, 1979-Elk Grove Village, Illinois

January 14-16, 1980-Stony Point, New York

June 25-26, 1980-Elk Grove Village, Illinois

September 15-16, 1980-Elk Grove Village, Illinois

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The Power of God Unto Salvation

A sense of urgency underlies this report about the world mission of the Reformed Church in America. Both the General Synod and the General Program Council have issued a mandate to develop a new awareness of the power which God is giving for mission through the Reformed Church in America.

The source of this re-awakening of awareness for the world mission of the church can be traced back to Pentecost Day itself, when the apostles, with the church, received the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the promise given at Jesus' ascension, "you shall receive power when the Holy Ghost has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That power which drove the disciples into the streets of Jerusalem is the source of our sense of urgency even today. There are five things which must be said about this power in mission before we consider in more detail future directions for Reformed Church participation in Christ's mission on earth.

A. Our power comes from the triune God.

In the Bible, the source of real power is identified with God rather than with any human persons or institutions. God is said to laugh and hold in derision those nations who challenge his power (Ps. 2:4). He does not have to calculate how much power he has, for no one can stand in his presence. When he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, the demons were cast out, the sick healed, and the dead raised (Matt. 11:4-5, 20ff.). The gospel of Jesus Christ is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Even the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1:25).

B. The power of God manifests itself in the mode of the servant.

It is "vulnerable power". In the Old Testament, God made his covenant with a semi-nomadic people and with a nation which was in slavery. In the New Testament, he again by-passed the mighty nations and sent his power into the world in the person of the baby Jesus. During his lifetime, even while fulfilling his Messianic function, Jesus reminded his disciples that "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He was the suffering servant, "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Is. 53:7).

In the New Testament, God's mission is carried out in the form of a ser-

vant rather than by military might, economic power, intellectual wisdom, or technological competency. Flowing through the New Testament there is a self-giving love, a spirit of witness and martyrdom, rather than a great crusade with military strategy and conquest at its center. The conversion of Paul, one of the first great missionaries for Christ, exemplifies the necessary transformation of worldly militance and wisdom into redemptive service and faith. For Paul, the despised, crucified one was the power of God and the wisdom of God. That power was often first accepted among the poor and weak who stood outside the power centers of the ancient Near East. "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:28-29).

C. This power of God is creative power.

In 1 Cor. 1:28-29, which we have just quoted, we are told that the gospel turns upside-down the power structures of the world. Those things and people who seem to be weak become strong while those who are strong are cast down. It was not by political alliances or international strategy that the demonstration of the Spirit and power took place (1 Cor. 2:4).

This creative power of the gospel represents the only true hope for the world. The Apostle Paul calls it "the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). It is the duty of the church in mission to bear witness to this unique saving power of Christ, even while confessing the emptiness of every human power which attempts to accumulate wealth for personal gain at the cost of righteousness and holiness among the people and nations of the world.

D. It is a power which is characterized by a sense of urgency.

People are called to repentance now. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). One senses the urgency of Paul as he writes, "But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14).

Yet, this sense of urgency is quite different from thoughtless haste. Jesus himself spent the first thirty years of his life in preparation for ministry. Christ entrusted his ongoing mission to the disciples after his resurrection with the command to "stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). For all of his desire to proclaim the gospel throughout Asia Minor and Greece, Paul takes his time moving from city to city, spending a year and a half in Ephesus, and often moving on to another city only because it had become too dangerous for him to remain where he was.

E. It is a power which is filled with the patience, gentleness, and mercy of God.

God manifests his power in mission according to the love and gentleness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who refused to call angels down from heaven. The gospel does not separate means from ends. God in the New Testament does nothing which would undercut the manifestation of his true nature. His methods are essential to the message of the gospel. He cuts no moral corners. He does not ignore injustice for the sake of conversions anymore than he yields to the temptation to give bread as a means to save bodies while ignoring the total person.

He respects those to whom he sends the gospel, speaking his Word in local languages. He does not demand that the Greek follow Old Testament food laws, practice circumcision, or even observe the Sabbath. He translates the Word into their cultures in order that they may be saved.

His power shuns all imperialism, colonialism, paternalism, nationalism, and exclusivism. It is a power which unites Jew and Greek, male and female, even master and slave, breaking down every human wall of enmity and oppression.

The Power of God's Kingdom in the Present Age

The New Testament speaks of God's power in terms of the "Kingdom of God." Jesus came preaching the gospel of God, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). This kingdom of God, or "reign of God" in which his will is done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10), is the "pearl of great price" for which everything else can be sacrificed. It is that kingdom of God which is to be sought above all else. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matt. 6:33).

This kingdom of God is not one which will be built with human hands. It comes only as a gift of God. In this age, we know it only through the event of Jesus Christ and the gifts and signs given by the Holy Spirit. It is present on earth only in a fragmentary way. We await its full coming on the Great Day of the Lord when Jesus comes to judge the living and the dead, even while we rejoice in the signs of its presence here and now as the fruits of the Spirit are present where the mission is carried out (Gal. 5:22-26; Acts 11:11-18).

In speaking of the power of the kingdom, then, one must not absolutely separate "this-worldly" and "other-worldly" salvation. Jesus refused to set priorities between these two. Both time and eternity, this age and the age to come, the earth and the heaven, are times and spaces which are to be filled with the mercy, justice, gentleness, and glory of God. God's mission on earth is summed up in the prayer of Jesus, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

As we participate in God's mission, we are caught up in the urgency of the prayer that the kingdom come and God's will be done. Although the world has changed and sensitivity to the feelings and thoughts of persons living on all six continents has grown immeasurably during the past two centuries, the historic goals for mission have continued relevance today. Just as in the present we work in partnership with brothers and sisters in the faith, so through historic ties with the past we experience the ecumenical, intergenerational mission which our mothers and fathers in the faith have experienced from ancient times. Thus the goals for mission stated by the 17th century Dutch Theologian, Gijsbertus Voetius, do have continued significance for the Church today. He stated the three goals to be:

- A. the conversion of individuals;
- B. the planting of churches; and
- C. the manifestation of God's glory in his kingdom.

These three goals were seen in ascending order, with God's own glory in his Kingdom as the focus of attention and the other two seen in relation to the third. As we examine these three goals more closely it seems necessary to revise Voetius' wording for the goal, "the planting of churches".

A. The conversion of individuals.

For the purposes of our discussion, we have chosen to speak of the "unreached," rather than the conversion of the individual. We recognize that there is a sense in which Christ must at times turn the missionary task inward, to call the covenant community itself to righteousness. In speaking of the world mission of the contemporary church, the "unreached" may be generally defined as those who have not yet heard the gospel in such a way that they have known themselves to be confronted by Jesus as Savior and Lord. These are people who do not yet know the winsome power of Jesus in their lives. These are the persons for whom missionaries in every generation cross oceans and give of their lives.

These are also the people whom the Student Volunteer Movement and John R. Mott had in mind when they stated the great slogan of the modern missionary movement, "The evangelization of the whole world by the whole church in this generation." Every person has a right to hear this gospel within his or her own lifetime. The church is called upon to send its people with the good news to the whole world in each generation. No other generation can do the task to which each generation is called in mission.

Because God's eternal will rules even in human history, he cannot wait for the great movements of nations and cultures before offering the gospel to those who are weak and despised, unnoticed and unloved among the people of the world. As Ruth was called out of Moab and as Rahab was saved from Jericho, so God's Word reaches out to those who are ready to hear even while their own families and people hesitate. In every land and people there are persons who are ready to hear and to believe, and the gospel must not be withheld from them. There are individuals waiting to be converted and come to the Lord in repentance. The stories of the early Reformed Church missionaries are stories of the changes which the Holy Spirit wrought in the lives of a few scattered individuals who were touched by the gospel and who were ready to endure the persecution and ridicule of their own friends and families.

In our times, it has become almost a slogan to say that there are still "three billion unreached people in the world". It becomes more important to note, however, that of the approximately four billion people on earth today, about one billion are Christian, another billion live as unreached but geographically near other Christians, while two billion live at some distance from Christians. One billion live in China; about 600 million live in India. A large number live in Africa, but at the same time Africa is the continent in which large numbers of peoples are in the process of becoming believers

in Jesus Christ. It is even possible that by the year 2000, the largest bloc of Christians in the world may be in Africa.

B. Assistance in establishing indigenous churches.

In the days of pioneer missions in the nineteenth century, missionaries who went to new lands found it necessary to plant churches where the Word could be preached and the sacraments administered. Often they simply attached the new churches to their own denominations in the West. Thus, for more than fifty years, the Reformed Church in America had the "Classis of Arcot" in India as one of its classes. In all other instances, missionaries refused to allow such a simple extension of the Western church. In China, for example, the Reformed Church missionaries established the "Church of Christ in China". In the twentieth century, these churches have become fairly large and are independent Christian denominations, recognized as partners of Western churches. Since such churches are now located in almost every land, mission activity has become ecumenical in character. The Reformed Church in America has historically been at the forefront of this movement in partnership with churches which have come into existence in other lands in recent centuries. More recently, this partnership has even bridged ancient divisions, as more and more cooperative ties have been established with churches of the Eastern tradition.

As a result of this growth of so-called "indigenous" churches around the world, the Reformed Church by itself seldom engages in establishing new churches today. Rather, it rightly recognizes that it is better to cooperate with the churches of other lands in the missionary task, working with other churches in proclaiming the gospel and building new congregations. Although this complicates the missionary task and calls for strategies and means of cooperation different in some ways from nineteenth century missions, one of the goals of Reformed Church international missions today remains that there should be a church in every village in the world and in every section of every city. The Reformed Church does not see this in terms of a sort of Christian imperialism, but seeks that in every place the servant ministry of Jesus Christ may truly be manifested, so that as people are creatively, gently, and lovingly confronted by the gospel, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that "Jesus is Lord" (Phil. 2:11).

C. The manifestation of the glory of God in his Kingdom.

Translated into contemporary language, our ultimate goal is that God's will be done everywhere on earth as it is in heaven. Although the evangelization of peoples and individuals cannot wait until the justice of God is established throughout the world, one cannot offer a truncated Jesus to the world. Justification by faith cannot be separated from justice on earth. Jesus in his own lifetime manifested the unity of purpose and action of God who both heals the sick and forgives the repentant, who converts the

woman at the well, and who calls for justice in the temple. The gospel today as always is caught up in the great movements of events in the world and the church ignores these at its peril. Ultimately, there is no non-political Christian.

The methods and concerns of those who communicate must be consistent with the gospel which they communicate. One cannot speak about love without being loving in politics as well as in personal relationships. One may not talk about God's will being done in heaven if one is not yet concerned about that will being done on earth.

In mission one may not underestimate the power and wisdom of God. It is easy to despair of the big scene and decide to concentrate on saving a few individuals. It is also tempting to ally oneself with an ideology of developmentalism or of liberation, of quietism or of revolution, when one has lost confidence in the power of God and the patience of God. We live with a sense of passion for justice among the peoples even while we humbly recognize that we ourselves can only be the servants of the Lord, not the messiahs of the race.

The power of the Holy Spirit unto salvation enters into the individuals, churches, and peoples who receive the gospel. This power does not remain concentrated in the hands of those who receive or preach it first. It does not establish one part of the world as dominant over another. It is a culture-changing and person enriching power. God is generous with his spiritual strength. When people come to faith, they sense that the power of the Lord is upon them. Their lives manifest a new joy, a new sense of dignity and self-worth, a new sense of freedom, and a new passion for justice coupled with love. To speak of "power in mission" is to recognize this creative freedom of the Spirit to empower the lives of people all over the world, and to recognize that it is revolutionary and evolutionary partnership-creating power rather than dependency-building autocracy.

Recommendation 1

***THE GPC REAFFIRMS AS GOALS FOR MISSION: THE
MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S GLORY IN HIS KINGDOM,
INCLUDING THE CONVERSION OF INDIVIDUALS AND
THE ESTABLISHING OF INDIGENOUS CHURCHES.***

Partnership in Mission With Churches on Six Continents

A. Partnership in a servant ministry.

Given its three goals in mission, the Reformed Church in America understands the mission task to be a "servant ministry." It is aware that the modern mission movement has often been rightly criticized for its western colonial attitudes and its lack of sensitivity to peoples of the Third World. The RCA believes that it is first of all a servant of Jesus Christ and can only work in humble obedience. The members of the Reformed Church and its missionaries sent forth from it go into the world as those who serve and who recognize that churches in nations where they serve have a greater understanding of the local culture and people than westerners have. It seeks to be a partner with Christian churches around the world. Insofar as possible, it avoids making unilateral decisions which imply lack of respect for the wisdom of other lands.

Such partnership entails mutual planning for all three goals of mission. The RCA recognizes that some of the "unreached" of this world live within the geographical boundaries of North America. It also recognizes that our blindness to injustices within our own continent and nation is often damaging not only to persons within our own nations, but also to peoples around the world. Therefore, the GPC encourages its staff to invite and utilize the services and personnel of churches in other lands to "come over and help us" (Acts 16:3). In seeking that God's will be done among the neglected of our society, help from partner churches is needed, both in locating and evangelizing the unreached and planting the church among the forgotten peoples in our own land.

In seeking the assistance of churches from other lands in the missionary task in our countries, we recognize that in every nation churches are often blind to the unreached people who are among their nearest neighbors. In every land, there are groups of people who are untouched by the gospel even while living in the shadow of the churches. The Reformed Church will seek to join with other Christians in other churches around the world in identifying those social groupings of people who are in need of someone with the gospel to bridge the gap across cultures, languages, and economic social classes. It seeks to develop means of implementing the living and the proclamation of the gospel among such peoples. It will be sensitive to their needs, their fears, their hopes, and their dangers whenever it sends a missionary to a people who have not yet effectively heard the gospel.

The Reformed Church believes that new programs in mission must, if at all possible, be carried out in partnership with churches already in the land. It does not seek to plant new denominations, but will always seek to work so that the unity of Christians around the world will be advanced. At the same time, such partnership and cooperation means neither that the Reformed Church must always wait upon the initiative of the church of another land nor that a partner church must wait upon the initiative of the Reformed Church to suggest means of reaching out to the unreached peoples in each other's lands. Partnerships between the Reformed Church and other churches should remain open to the possibility that the number of partner churches in mission become greater by mutual agreement and inclusion in the task of mission. In such partnership, the whole world is the parish of each church.

B. Our present task in partnership in the light of our history.

During the past two hundred years the Reformed Church in America has been undergoing changes in its perception of its missionary calling. In 1820, its official church order was basically inward looking, directed toward the maintenance of worship, pastoral care, and discipline. While many of its churches wanted to plant new churches on the American frontiers, and while a few were still interested in converting the Indians, the urgency of cross-cultural missions was scarcely felt. Some were becoming aware of the people in other lands, and others contributed to the work of mission societies, but the denomination had no organizations for sustained thought or action in mission. Moreover, few were criticizing the denomination for this situation.

During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the denomination's commitment to world-wide mission increased. Boards of missions were developed. Fields of missionary service overseas were opened. For a long time, China, India, and Japan were the center of interest. By the turn of the century, women's missionary societies in local churches were providing a channel of missionary information at the local level. From 1850-1947, the colonial powers of the West provided a stable political context for missionary labors in Asia, Middle East, Mexico, and Africa. Reformed Church missionaries developed a network of international and ecumenical partnership for missions.

After 1947, the world began to change. China became a Communist nation. Colonial powers were replaced by independent nations. Old mission structures needed new flexibility. Within the United States and Canada, local congregations and classes gained a new sense of the needs for evangelism, witness, and social concern at the local level. After World War II, the Reformed Church began to reorganize itself to meet new challenges.

During the past twenty-five years, the denomination has gone through

several modifications of its structure. Many persons are ready to devote considerable time, money, and effort to the task of improving the structures which we now have. Although many today say they are discouraged by the RCA's efforts, a comparison with the number of fields of a half-century ago shows the wider geographical spread which the RCA has today:

1929	1979
India	India
China	Hong Kong
Japan	Taiwan
Arabian Gulf	Philippines
Mexico	Japan
American Indian	Arabian Gulf
Brewton	Mexico
Annville	Venezuela
	Egypt
	Sudan
	Ethiopia
	Kenya
	American Indian
	Annville
	Brewton
	Lebanon
	Zambia

Since World War II, the mission of the Reformed Church in America has grown far beyond our ability to comprehend it. Although the number of missionaries has declined, the number of relationships to churches overseas has multiplied and the variety of tasks to which the denomination has committed itself have spread like a vine. Even while touching a far greater number of persons, the missionary task has been felt to have become depersonalized. As the unity of Christ's one mission was emphasized, the individual tasks of missions disappeared from consciousness and many began to feel that in trying to touch everything, we were in danger of accomplishing little.

In accepting God's Kingdom as the context and orientation for the Church's mission, we affirm the need to participate in the total task of Christian mission while emphasizing evangelism among the unreached. The desire of the Reformed Church to continue mission emphasis on pioneer evangelism should not be viewed as an exclusive focus at the expense of this total task. The history of our church's mission does not exhibit such exclusivity, even though evangelism has been the consistent emphasis. Physical healing of the sick, educational service in schools, and leadership training among indigenous churches are just a few of the many facets which the Reformed Church has displayed in its missions. Such acknowledgement of several dimensions to the Church's total task in mission must be sustained, even as the Reformed Church maintains reaching the unreached as its emphasis.

The Kingdom as orientation for mission provides the most comprehensive context for our partnership with other churches in mission. The programs of partner churches are thereby understood to be compatible with the mission emphasis of the Reformed Church. Furthermore, recognition of

the total task in mission allows the fullest respect and cooperation among partners in mission. The Reformed Church need not limit collaboration with partners to pioneer evangelism, nor need partner churches reject the Reformed Church's emphasis upon reaching the unreached as inconsistent with their own programs. What is crucial in mission today is not fulfillment of some *primary* task, but commitment to the *total* task. Nonetheless, the Reformed Church should require that evangelistic efforts among the unreached be an essential element of concern in all partnership relationships.

Recommendation 2

THE GPC REAFFIRMS THAT ITS BASIC STRATEGY IN MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO BE DEVELOPED IN FULL PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION WITH CHURCHES ON SIX CONTINENTS.

C. Four Contemporary Issues Facing Partners in Mission

Four issues arise when the emphasis is placed upon reaching the unreached effectively.

1. The relation of church/denominational missions to specialized missions

Specialized missions concentrate on doing one thing or a few things, such as carrying out Scripture production and distribution, literature evangelism, portable recordings, technical assistance, orphanage support, or study and research programs. They are usually the result of the vision of one or more persons, coupled with the financial support of like-minded people. Their budgets may dwarf denominational budgets. They are run by single-minded people whose strength is to do one thing well. They tend to avoid long-term commitments. They are able to enter new areas where the unreached live. They may be broadly ecumenical or narrowly sectarian, but modern missions could not do without them. Though structured relationships between church/denominational missions and specialized missions may prove too difficult and complex to be effective, yet serious effort should be given to seek ways by which these two kinds of mission could assist each other.

Church/denominational missions in partnership must be open to sharing in the church's *total* task in mission, rather than limiting itself to one specialized concern. Denominational missions, while offering a basic unity in the gospel and in one theological tradition, cannot avoid the differences of opinion existing in the churches. Even as they urge others to work in unity, they are not able to avoid serious discussions and debate which may impede their efficiency. Because of this necessary scrutiny and careful consideration, denominational missions in such partnership develop long-term sensitivities and commitments, and effective partnerships, but they do lose some flexibility.

The Reformed Church in America through its GPC cannot avoid being denominational. Its vital contribution will be made in its maturity as a denominational mission type.

(a) Its membership must be helped to know the difference between the two types of mission organizations and the relative role of each.

(b) As a denomination in mission, it recognizes that debate about mission is an important contribution to mission. Paul and Barnabas became more effective when they specialized and separated (Acts 13), but they remained effective only when the whole church debated its differences at Jerusalem (Acts 15). We regard it as a sign of strength that we engage in debate about priorities and styles of mission, about the relation of evangelism to revolution, and of "missionary go out" to "missionary go home". Through such debate the Spirit gives wisdom and long-term understanding.

(c) A contemporary denomination is a vital link in the only holy catholic church, standing between the ecumenical councils and the special mission agencies. It enables Christians to hear each other, and suggests possibilities for greater cooperation.

The Reformed Church is a Christian denomination in mission. It is essential that it facilitate study, debate, and action through its own programs, but also in partnership with other churches through the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches and other church agencies in the U.S. and overseas, on the one hand, and through cooperation with specialized mission agencies, on the other.

(d) The Reformed Church in mission consists of more than its official councils. All its members are called to participate responsibly as they are led by the Spirit in accordance with the Word and in unity with the whole church. The Reformed Church encourages and seeks to enable mission involvement for all its members and congregations.

Recommendation 3

WHILE RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY SPECIALIZED MISSION AGENCIES, THE GPC AFFIRMS THAT THE DENOMINATIONAL STYLE IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE REFORMED CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERS. THE MISSION BUDGETS AND OTHER BUDGETS OF THE RCA SHOULD CONTINUE AS THE DENOMINATION'S HIGHEST PRIORITY. AT THE SAME TIME THE GPC ENCOURAGES ITS STAFF TO DEVELOP NEW APPROACHES WHICH WILL ENLIST GREATER SUPPORT OF THE RCA MISSION AND ENABLE RCA MEMBERS TO MAKE WISE AND CAREFUL JUDGMENTS CONCERNING SPECIALIZED MISSIONS.

2. The relation of evangelism to civil rights and human freedom

Jesus began his ministry with "good news for the poor....and deliverance for the captives...." (Luke 4:15). Also, he taught in the Sermon on the Mount that we must in all things "seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Although the gospel, through the life and teachings

of Jesus, is very clear in its message regarding human rights and freedom, the Church is not always so clear in its message to the world. Christians from one perspective emphasize reaching the "unreached or hidden people" of the world, while those from another perspective emphasize "good news to the poor". While seemingly talking about two different groups of people, participants in the meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism at Melbourne, 1980, became aware that in most cases the "unreached or hidden people" and the "poor" are the same people. This suggests possible bridges for understanding among Christians who seem to be divided in their mission purpose. It gives hope of a new commitment to go into all the world together to the poor and unreached.

The attitudes of civil authorities toward Christian mission have had as much impact as has the action of churches in deciding the conditions under which the gospel may or may not be preached. Those who advocate evangelistic missions often forget that if there is no freedom to bear witness that it is difficult to reach the unreached. Expulsion of missionaries, persecution of local Christian citizens, and attacks upon church buildings and property have been commonplace in our century. Given this history of twentieth century mission, it is surprising that evangelical Christians have not been in the forefront as advocates of full civil rights around the world. Christians have been too ready to judge world leaders on the basis of their attitude to Christian mission rather than on their dedication to civil rights and human freedom. National and international ecclesiastical support has been too readily given to governments who for reasons of politics found it expedient to aid the churches and missionaries even while following obviously oppressive racial, economic, and political policies. Such support on the part of churches is not only morally wrong, but also is short-sighted. It easily eventuates in suppression of the churches and expulsion of missionaries when a change of government takes place.

The Reformed Church in America must avoid this short-sighted policy. Because of the gospel's central concern for human rights and freedom, and for the sake of reaching the unreached peoples of every generation, it must by word and deed encourage those persons and governments that support civil rights and human freedom. The Reformed Church in America must encourage Christians who feel led to oppose those who restrict freedom of speech, thought and assembly. Within the United States and Canada, it must defend the rights of other religious groups and secular (even anti-Christian) agencies to speak and publish. Only those who defend the rights of their opponents can be seen to be sincere in these matters.

Recommendation 4

THE GPC AFFIRMS THAT THE MISSION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA INCLUDES THE NECESSITY THAT THE CHURCH BY WORD AND DEED ENCOURAGE THOSE PERSONS AND GOVERNMENTS WHO SUPPORT CIVIL RIGHTS AND HUMAN FREEDOM.

3. The relation of mission to civil governments and international aid agencies

Because the gospel in its fullness is ultimately concerned that in everything God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven," effective reaching of the unreached requires profound concern for others. Nineteenth century Reformed Church missionaries who emphasized the priority of evangelism by word and literature found themselves unable to resist the imperative of the gospel to assist those who were sick, suffering, and impoverished. This compassion still motivates members of the Reformed Church in America.

(a) "Christian" vs. "humanitarian" assistance

When confronted by great human suffering, members of the RCA are often confronted by the need to decide whether to assist through specifically church-related agencies, such as Church World Service, through special interest "Christian" agencies, such as World Vision or Oxfam, or through more general "humanitarian" groups, such as the Red Cross. When the cup of cold water is given in the name of Christ, must the recipient be clearly informed that the gift is given in that name?

Recommendation 5

THE GPC APPROVES THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES IN PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

- (i) **THE DIGNITY AND WELFARE OF THE RECIPIENT ALWAYS HAVE PRIORITY OVER THE WISHES OF THE DONOR.**
- (ii) **THE DONOR HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO ALLOW THE RECIPIENT TO KNOW THE SOURCES OF THE AID. A CHRISTIAN USES EVERY APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY TO INDICATE THAT THE AID IS OFFERED IN JESUS' NAME.**
- (iii) **THE RECIPIENT SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM ANY PRESSURE BY DONORS WHICH WOULD PLACE THE RECIPIENT UNDER SPECIAL OBLIGATION. DONORS SHOULD NEITHER SEEK SPECIAL PRIVILEGES NOR FEEL THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPECIAL ADVOCACY FOR ANY CAUSE BECAUSE OF THEIR GIFT.**
- (iv) **BECAUSE DIGNITY AND WELFARE OF THE RECIPIENTS ALWAYS HAVE PRIORITY OVER THE WISHES OF THE DONORS, THE REFORMED CHURCH AND ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS ARE FREE IN SPECIFIC CASES TO USE THE AGENCY WHICH WILL BEST PROVIDE THE NECESSARY ASSISTANCE. THE BIBLICAL INJUNCTION IN CASES OF HUMAN NEED IS "HE WHO IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR US."**

Recommendation 6

MISSION EDUCATION MUST INCLUDE THE STUDY OF THE RELATION OF MISSION TO THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE OF GOVERNMENT AND SECULAR AGENCIES. SUCH EDUCATION MAY INCLUDE DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIALS AND PROGRAMS BY THE GPC WHICH WOULD:

- (i) ENCOURAGE ITS OWN MEMBERS TO VIEW AS A CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE ADEQUATE INTER-NATIONAL AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE TO MEET PRESENT NEEDS IN THE WORLD;**
- (ii) ADVOCATE STRONGLY THAT GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE PROVIDE ASSISTANCE THAT IS JUST AND APPROPRIATE AND WHICH IN THE LONG TERM WILL MUTUALLY BENEFIT ALL PARTIES CONCERNED;**
- (iii) DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP WHICH CONSIDERS NOT ONLY THE PROBLEM OF TITHING AND CHARITY, BUT ALSO TAXPAYING, BUSINESS ENTERPRISE, AND POSSIBLE FORMS OF INTERNATIONAL AID AS ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.**

(b) "Charity" vs. "taxation"

Most Reformed Church members are unaware of the extensive inter-action and mutual support of churches and governments in other parts of the world. They are unaware that mission and church schools have been largely financed by civil governments and that other mission and church institutions receive grants from governmental and para-governmental agencies. They have forgotten that many "mission service projects" have been started because missionaries and others were critical of governments which were failing to provide for the basic needs of their own citizens.

Missionary publicity has almost totally ignored this context in which such service was rendered. The result has been that Reformed Church members usually do not think in terms of the inter-action between churches and governments. They are not sensitive to the economic, educational, and medical changes taking place elsewhere in the world. Because they have been educated to think about Christian charity in isolation from governmental taxation, they do not see the relationship between Christian missions and civil tax-paying. Mission education must include the study of the relation of mission to the economic assistance of government and secular agencies.

(c) "Development" vs. "liberation"

During the post-World War II period, the Reformed Church joined with other churches and mission agencies as well as governments in supporting technological assistance to aid in "development" projects in cooperation with overseas churches. Although many persons were helped through these projects, the general result in Asia, Africa, South and Central America has been disappointing, especially among the poorest in societies around the world. Too often "development" has meant that priorities have shifted from the basic needs of the poor for land, nourishing food, and proper housing to the use of farmland for food which could be exported to gain foreign exchange, thus enhancing the power of the middle or upper classes over the poor, and giving further support to racist or self-seeking governmental leadership. This disappointing aspect of development is typified by a recent statement issued by Agricultural Missions, Inc.:

Even the much-heralded Green Revolution has failed to significantly improve the situation of the poor. What went wrong? 'Green Revolution' technology was not developed with the poor in mind. Moreover, development of indigenous technologies which have the capacity to help low-income people has been largely ignored. The decision to promote new agricultural technologies that are beyond the means of the poor dislocated the rural people from their lands and engendered a new poverty. From past experience, it is evident that the choice of technology is not neutral.

Foreign aid, with all its avowed purposes of helping the poor, has become the tool for maintaining the status of the wealthy elite. (Agricultural Missions, Inc. *The Christian Rural Mission in the 1980's: A Call to Liberation and Development of Peoples*. p.6)

Confronted by the fact that "developmental" missions have been used by powerful people and governments to strengthen their control over the poor, and by the fact that so little change has been wrought in the struggle for human uplift, Latin American, African, and other theologians have called for a mission of "liberation" which would directly confront the ruling authorities by a variety of means, including the use of violence and guerilla warfare or terrorist tactics. The World Council of Churches' Program to Combat Racism has at times supported with humanitarian aid political groups with Marxist members who use violence against racial injustice and oppression. The Reformed Church has thereby been called to make concrete decisions about its own stance regarding support of such liberation movements. Its dilemma in making a choice is very much complicated by the lack of knowledge and experience its membership has concerning the movement of events in Africa, South America and the Middle East, and the involvement of churches there over the past several decades. Moreover, many American Christians identify capitalism and private enterprise as the economic system most favored by God. Therefore, concentration on evan-

gelism, without making effective protest against injustice and oppression, has the practical effect of placing Christ on the side of civil authorities who maintain their position by police coercion, political favoritism, racial discrimination, and economic tyranny.

Recommendation 7

GIVEN THE HISTORY AND POLITICAL SITUATION OF CHURCHES AND MISSIONS IN OUR CENTURY, THE GPC APPROVES THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES FOR THE 1980'S:

- (i) THE GPC RECOGNIZES THAT THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED AND LIVED IN A GREAT VARIETY OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS. IT DOES NOT ADVOCATE THE ADOPTION OF ANY SPECIFIC ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL SYSTEM.**
- (ii) THE GPC RECOGNIZES ITS OWN FRAILTY IN MAKING JUDGMENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. IT SEEKS TO LIVE OUT THE GOSPEL CONCRETELY WITH THE BEST WISDOM OF THE MOMENT; IT WILL NOT MAINTAIN THAT ITS POSITION IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE "CHRISTIAN" POSITION OR THAT CHRISTIANS WHO DIFFER ARE NECESSARILY LIVING CONTRARY TO THE GOSPEL.**
- (iii) THE GPC DOES NOT SUPPORT THE USE OF VIOLENCE OR COUNTER-VIOLENCE IN CHRISTIAN MISSION. IT DOES RECOGNIZE AND USE MEANS OTHER THAN VIOLENCE AS VALID EXPRESSIONS AND ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF CHURCHES AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE IN OTHER LANDS WHO SEEK TO LIVE OUT THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST, WHO DESIRES TO SET PEOPLE FREE. THE CHURCH WILL, HOWEVER, BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMS FOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE AND GROUPS, EVEN GROUPS WHO MAY ENGAGE IN COUNTER-VIOLENCE TO ACHIEVE THEIR LIBERTY.**
- (iv) THE GPC JUDGES RULERS AND CIVIL AUTHORITIES BY STANDARDS OF THE GOSPEL RATHER THAN BY THE STANDARDS OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY AND SELF-INTEREST. IT WILL, IN DIALOGUE WITH OTHERS, SEEK TO GROW IN ITS UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WILL AMONG THE NATIONS, AND IT WILL MAINTAIN THAT BIBLICAL EXPECTATIONS FOR LOVE, JUSTICE, AND MERCY MUST BE ADVOCATED IN EVERY NATION.**

- (v) **THE GPC IN MAKING EVANGELISM TO THE UN-REACHED A PRIMARY THRUST IN MISSION DOES NOT INTEND TO USE THIS EMPHASIS AS AN EXCUSE FOR AVOIDING INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF JUSTICE AND FREEDOM.**
- (vi) **WHEN FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST'S MANDATE REQUIRES ITS MISSIONARIES AND/OR EXECUTIVE STAFF TO MAKE CONCRETE POLITICAL CHOICES, THE GPC MUST RECOGNIZE THEIR RIGHT TO MAKE SUCH CHOICES, EVEN WHILE RESERVING TO ITSELF THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL, SUPPORT, PRAISE, AND/OR REBUKE THEM IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.**

4. The relation of mission to the faiths of others

As we engage in mission—particularly when we purposefully address the faiths which other folk live by—we need to bear in mind that we are not dealing with intellectual postulates that may be reasoned against, argued away, or even modified or adjusted. We have to do rather with the very well springs of the identity of people, the focal point of their hope in life and death, and the fundamental sources in which they trust and from which they draw the spiritual nourishment to sustain them in the labors and loves of each day. When therefore, we have the audacity to be missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ, it must be with this awareness that we arm ourselves. We tread on holy ground. We must take off our sandals and approach with a certain sense of awe. For as surely as we have a certain thing to communicate, so surely also we will be spoken to from within the flames of another person's soul. Mission is perilous.

When the church reaches out to touch the unreached, it must expect to be touched as well. Such an expectation is the attitude of Christian liberty composed not just of courage but of equal parts of love and justice, of hope in the grace of God and respect for the worth of human beings. The faiths of other folks are not to be objectified and thereby desecrated, not to be belittled and thereby blasphemed against, but the whole person must be held in love. Only then can we hope to share with them our treasure.

In part this can only be cultivated in us by the inner working of the Spirit of God and our way there is prayer. But a dimension of work is also required. Historically the Church has studied other faiths with the clear purpose of demonstrating their inferiority to Christianity, examining their blemishes and weak points, and thereby discovering tactically effective means whereby they might be undermined and demolished. The results have been predictable: fear and enmity. The work involved in the new day is to seek compassionately to understand others in their faith, to place ourselves along side them, that in touching them gently where they hurt we too may share their wounds, and only thus speak truthfully the words of peace and

healing. For it is in the inner sanctum of spiritual life that the Gospel works its power and the lives of people are changed.

In our work in mission, we experience the tension between this profound respect for the faith of others even while confessing the truth of the unique salvation offered in Jesus Christ. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must saved" (Acts 4:12). "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). This tension between respect for others and the unique truth in Christ leads us to intend to carry out our task with profound love coupled with deep humility. We know that the two Great Commandments to love God above all and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40) are given renewed weight by the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20). Mission does not supersede love, but enhances and embodies love. We anticipate that as we grow both in faith and in our knowledge of the faiths of others, that Reformed Church missionaries and theologians will be able to render more guidance on the nature of the dialogue between Christians and persons of other faiths.

Recommendation 8

RECOGNIZING THAT IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE REFORMED CHURCH TO DEVELOP A MORE SENSITIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAITH AND IDENTITY OF THE PERSONS AMONG WHOM IT ENGAGES IN MISSION, THE GPC WILL DEVELOP STRATEGIES WHICH WILL ASSIST THE REFORMED CHURCH TO ENGAGE IN DEEPER AND CONTINUING ENCOUNTER WITH THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS.

Education For Missions in the 1980's

Several principles for the development of a program of education for missions are:

A. People will educate themselves for mission when they perceive a clear and compelling mandate and when they sense meaningful inclusion so that their support makes a difference.

Financial support remains minimal when people feel unrelated to missionaries and program. Reading the history of the Reformed Church mission, one discovers how closely related the contributors were to the missionaries and program throughout most of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. There was balance between the secretaries and dominant personalities in the board of missions and the local churches and supporters. While large scale strategies and long term plans were being proposed by the wider agencies, many of the short-range projects and individual programs were subjected to the decisions of missionaries and local churches. People at every level studied and educated themselves about the work going on, the need for their efforts, and the nature of the decision to be made.

The weak link in the process from 1800-1960 was the lack of involvement of Third World Christians in the decision-making process about mission. Almost all of the information was being supplied by Westerners; decisions were made in the United States on the basis of biblical pre-suppositions as interpreted from a western point of view. After 1960, this lack of involvement was remedied in part by insisting upon "church-to-church" relationships in which RCA boards or the GPC reacted to proposals and suggestions made by churches in other lands. Most RCA missionaries went abroad in a servant role only after being invited by the church of that land. Regional Christian councils such as the Christian Council of Asia and the All-African Council of Churches provided a broad forum for persons of those areas to counter-act purely western ways of Christian thought and action.

While applauding the leadership that developed partnership structure from 1960-1970, we recognize that these church-to-church relationships essentially excluded the participation of the average church member. A significant number of RCA members believe their voices are not being heard, and feel asked to support general budgets rather than specific people or programs. Missionaries also feel they no longer have significant input into the actions of the GPC. Even the leadership, which officially was placing more attention on the social, pastoral, and evangelistic efforts of Third

World churches rather than missionaries, found itself in a position where mission publicity still centered on the missionary because the missionary was almost the only "personal" element in the program.

When the budget prepared by the official leadership plays a central role and when many persons feel alienated from the decision-making process, it is only natural that many will seek other means than the official ones to re-enter the process. The result has been the growth of special-interest missions. Not only have American and Canadian members of the church founded their own para-church organizations and programs, but Asians, Africans, and South Americans have found means of developing programs which can utilize the resources and ideas being made available from the West. Persons of all theological persuasions are following this route in international missions, although at present the more narrowly defined "evangelical" missions may have the greatest visibility in this movement.

B. Education for missions today must bring people in touch with biblical principles and with specific situations for missions in particular areas of the world.

The message of the Bible is so great that we can never absorb all of it at one time. The mission situation of our time is so filled with opportunity, with the memory of past mistakes, and with the presence of challenges and needs in the face of powerful opposition, as well as pervasive apathy, that we can neither comprehend nor implement more than a small part of the task. It is too much to expect people to have balanced views or to study the whole picture. It becomes the duty of the whole church and individual denominations so to structure themselves and to study the Scriptures that the efforts of individuals, local churches, and larger groupings may work as a part of the body and so build up the whole body of Christ. Although the RCA is a denomination related to world-wide bodies of Christians, it still consists of individual Christians in covenant in local congregations. It must address itself to the task of providing opportunities for its membership to comprehend the whole while making specific decisions about particular situations.

1. Biblical education for mission in the '80's.

Mission education has traditionally been loaded with biblical proof texts, exhortations, and slogans. The basic missionary texts from the Bible have already been heard and are to a certain extent known by the people. The repetition of these basic verses seems to have minimal impact. What may be needed is a clearer focus on what the Bible is really saying to us today.

At the beginning of the '80's biblical education for missions will be served better by a careful study of a small part of the Bible than by another survey of the whole. The book of Matthew pays attention to matters central to mission discussion. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) has always

been central to the Reformed understanding of mission. The latest recommendation of the General Synod grows out of the Great Commission. It sets forth the nature of authority for mission, the imperative of making disciples, baptizing, and teaching to the nations all that Jesus had commanded in the book of Matthew. It is both specific and comprehensive. The members of the Reformed Church should ponder together the impact of the book of Matthew in their decision-making for mission.

Recommendation 9

THE GPC APPROVES THE PREPARATION OF A CAREFUL STUDY OF MATTHEW AS A TOOL FOR USE IN EDUCATING THE CHURCHES IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD MISSION.

2. Education for mission must focus more on the people to be reached than on the people who go to work among them or on the methods to be used in communicating the gospel.

The nineteenth century had the right idea in spite of its colonial and patronizing tendencies. Although Scudder and Abeel talked about the "600,000,000 heathen", they actually came to reflect about the persons whom they were meeting in their daily work. The expressions they used were rejected by the people of Asia and Africa in the post World War II era. At the same time there were tremendous challenges to rebuild destroyed facilities and to expand involvement. The RCA developed new methods of promotion emphasizing the missionary, specific projects and general needs while avoiding offensive terminology. Special interest missions have done basically the same thing, even naming their organizations according to missionary methods they are promoting, while the "Three Billion Unreached" remain a faceless mass to be reached by mass distribution of a standardized gospel.

The results of this approach to missions are mixed. While the missionaries are often loved and specific projects become vested interests, both in the East and the West, Christians in the various churches never learn to know and love each other. While the missionaries are honored and become personally known, the Murles, the Anuaks, and Nuers of the Sudan, the Arabs of the Gulf, and the Tamils and Telegus of India, the overseas Chinese, and the people of Chiapas remain abstractions today almost exactly like the abstractions they were twenty-five years ago. While the missionaries we know have financial needs, watch their children grow, and grow old themselves, the people among whom we work today continue to be abstractions to us, having no history, no culture, no abilities or gifts which count in our minds.

The present Partnership in Mission (PIM) share system of support, in spite of its intention, facilitates these abstractions. Education into support of missionaries and mission projects is not necessarily education into mission. The PIM share system must become a vital part of education into mission, as well as being the source of financial support.

Education in mission which focusses on the people to be reached must include several elements:

(a) Loving the people where they are and as they are rather than what we want them to be.

Often we love our own ideal for specific peoples far more than we love the people themselves. We are, however, to love Lazarus at the gate rather than the Lazarus who is potentially rich and the Centurion in his military uniform rather than Cornelius as a potential pacifist. To truly preach the love of Christ to a people is to love them before we preach and to come to know them as they want to be known.

Education in missions takes time. To love another is to take that one seriously, to come to know each other's life stories, and to appreciate each other's ideas and customs. As love grows, mutual learning takes place and the weakness of one is strengthened by the power and insight of the other. This kind of education in mission has happened between missionaries and local Christians in other lands. It has become commonplace at the level of international relations between leaders of churches. Although in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it could not happen between Christians living in countries far from each other, today it is possible. Efforts need to be made, with the resources and opportunities available, to insure that it happens wherever possible.

Recommendation 10

THE GPC APPROVES THE PRINCIPLE THAT EDUCATION FOR MISSION SHOULD FOCUS FIRST ON THE PEOPLE TO BE REACHED, THEN ON THE PEOPLE WHO WORK AMONG THEM, AND ON THE METHODS BEING USED IN COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL.

(b) Education in mission today requires that a sufficient number of Reformed Church members become acquainted with contemporary understanding of missiology as a discipline.

The international missionary movement has been at its best when there has been healthy inter-action between career people and the zealous interest of the people in the churches. The best example of this inter-action was the Student Volunteer Movement under the leadership of persons such as John R. Mott. The Inter-Varsity event at Urbana is a contemporary example of a single interdenominational event. The RCA's Mission Festival in 1971 brought together missionaries, people from local congregations and participants from overseas for several days of interaction. This inter-action should be promoted in the RCA. We need more people informed about the current state of international missions. We need more events and occasions when informed discussion coupled with mutual inspiration can take place.

It is not easy to promote solid consideration of the issues within the busy membership of busy churches. Yet the success of the Bethel Bible series

indicates that well-prepared materials taught by competent teachers provide satisfying study and great rewards for many in the RCA. We need materials for the study of international missions comparable to the Bethel material. We need means of developing teachers so that they can understand the material before they teach it. Both the teaching and the materials must be at a level which allows members of local churches to think and act in the task of missions at a level comparable to that which they achieve in their daily work.

We must not underestimate the difficulty of this task, for an openness to other people and understanding of Christians in other lands does not come easily to us. It calls for theological and religious study of our own faith and other faiths in such depth that we will be forced to break new ground in seeking ways to proclaim the Gospel. It takes time away from other activities. Yet, without such an effort, all missionary presentations are processed through nineteenth century filters, mission promotion sounds like nostalgia for the past, talk about conversion sounds like colonial proselytism, and the end of missions seems to be the same as the beginning.

C. Education into mission requires that the church provide adequate opportunities and resources for the study of mission.

The Church's desire to engage in "cross cultural mission" is laudable, but it will not be in a position either to execute or account for such an engagement unless it cultivates the discernment to guide its actions. One of its very first steps should be to develop a fund of wisdom in intercultural matters. This fund of wisdom will be those people in its midst for whom such matters are their life interest.

There are two main sources for such people: The first is furloughing or retired missionaries for whom the intercultural experience has been both first-hand and long-term. The second source for people with intercultural perception is the native curiosity in our own society about peoples and lands outside our culture. There are many people within the Reformed Church who exhibit this curiosity without ever considering a missionary vocation. At present such individuals either gravitate toward centers where their curiosity will be fed, or they abandon that curiosity. In either case, they have been treated as of little consequence by the Church.

We propose that resources be made available whereby the Church will cultivate both these sources of wisdom. It can find ways to substantially encourage the curiosity of those individuals who will devote themselves to the study of cultures other than their own. This may be done through encouraging our educational institutions to develop in their curricula the courses and academic facilities which respond to such curiosity. It may be done through scholarship incentives for those who will be studying such things elsewhere.

But, finally, it is necessary, once these people have come into "wisdom",

to utilize them to expand the horizons of the whole church and deepen its perceptions. Missionaries and informed people should be enabled to meet together regularly under the Church's auspices to study and discuss key regions or world phenomena and the results of their deliberations employed to sharpen the Church's involvement in those regions and developing events. Greater access should be given to such people to the publications of the denomination. They should be known and utilized by national and local speakers' agencies for work in local congregations and regional gatherings. Not least of all, they should be on a reference list for decision-making bodies for consultation on relevant matters.

Recommendation 11

THE GPC APPROVES THE PLANNING OF PROGRAM AND FUNDING THROUGH THE NORMAL BUDGET PROCESS TO ENCOURAGE A NUMBER OF REFORMED CHURCH MEMBERS TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH A CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF MISSIOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE.

Recommendation 12

THE GPC RECOMMENDS THAT THE RCA SEMINARIES ADJUST THEIR CURRICULA TO ENLARGE THEIR EMPHASIS ON THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN MISSION THEOLOGY AND IN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PASTOR'S PLACE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH IN RELATION TO WORLD MISSIONS.