

# PREPARING FOR “THE ORDS”

16<sup>th</sup> Edition



Office of Student Relations  
and Senior Placement  
Princeton Theological Seminary

To: PTS Presbyterian Students  
From: Office of Student Relations & Senior Placement  
Re: Ordination Exam Preparation

Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to offer you this Ordination Exam Preparation Manual. It consists of the combined wisdom (and ordination exams) of many years, and many PTS “ord” takers. It is due to their generosity that we are able to share this information with you.

The manual is basically an introduction to the exams themselves, with some advice on how to interpret what is being asked, and how to answer the questions with pastoral sensitivity.

We also recommend the “Candidate’s Handbook for Ordination Examinations,” produced by the PCUSA Cooperative Committee on Examinations and found online at: <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/handbook-ordination-examinations/>.

The ordination exams are only one step in the process of growing into what you have been called to be – an ordained minister in the PC(USA). May God’s rich blessings be upon you as you prepare to take this step.

Grace and Peace,

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .**

### **Some suggestions from the 1997-98 Seminary Resource Team**

The Office of Presbyterian Ministries/Student Relations put together a team of seniors this year to ask for their input and advice about taking the ordination exams. We also asked seniors that took the exams to write down some comments about the exams and how they prepared for them. So, here are some suggestions, not in any particular order.

Many of the seniors expressed how this preparation for the exams was truly a faith-building experience. Our sense of call was confirmed and refined through delving into Scripture, theologians, and most surprisingly for some of us, the *Book of Order* and the *Book of Confessions*! We were not aware of how rich a tradition the Reformed tradition is! Throughout preparation, our excitement for serving in this denomination grew as we realized that the church that is committed to the things outlined in Scripture, our Confessions, and the Book of Order, will be a church that truly brings glory to God.

Remember, you are preparing for this as a community. Support one another. Pray for one another. Help one another.

Now, to the preparation for these things we call ORDS!

You will be told this from a variety of people, and even on the day of the exam. But we cannot stress this enough. **READ THE QUESTION, and ANSWER THE QUESTION THAT IS ASKED.** We may have all used another strategy in test-taking (or in life); namely, if you come across a question you really don't know much about, instead twist the question into something you do know something about, and in this way show that you do know something. Remember, these are real pastoral situations with real people; people will be frustrated if you turn their honest question into an opportunity to show your knowledge. Graders will be looking for how well you address the question that is asked, so make sure you understand the question fully.

Several students made **Theology** their #1 priority, making study sheets for important doctrines (see the guide), complete with Scripture, confessional references, and theologians' quotes. The work in Theology then can ground your work for the Worship and Polity exams.

Don't worry so much about quoting theologians, but instead draw upon more general themes from Reformed theology – the sovereignty of God, election for service and salvation, the primacy of Scripture, etc.

With the **biblical exegesis** exam, the exegetical method you use does seem to make a difference. Here may not be the place to be creative! Also, be aware that both elders and pastors will be reading your exam. You will want to show your knowledge of the original language (Hebrew or Greek), but do it in a way that is fully understandable to one unfamiliar with the languages. The end of the exegesis should form the basis for your sermon/Bible study. Keep a balance between the exegesis and the congregational analysis/sermon. They should show equal attention.

For a book that puts Reformed theology into the language of the layperson, look at [A Christian Primer: The Prayers, the Creeds, the Commandments](#), by Albert Curry Winn. Alistair McGrath's [Introduction to Christian Theology](#) is also helpful. See other resources under the Theology Section in "Student Advice."

For the **Worship/Sacraments Exam** – **READ THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP.** Many times! Over and over. Reviewing the Book of Common Worship is also good, and if you can find the Supplemental Liturgical Resources published by the PC(USA) on various liturgical rites (baptism, the Lord's Supper, marriage, etc.), they can be a great help.

Also, [Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers](#) by Joyce Tucker is an excellent resource.

## **PREPARING TO WRITE ORDINATION EXAMS**

An informal, practical guide based on experience with readers

### **Things to remember about the Exams:**

1. These exams test entry-level readiness for ministry. The exams test how one does ministry, not just what information one can remember. Presbytery committees receive graded exams with reader comments to help them determine whether to ordain a candidate.
2. Exams are read anonymously by colleagues in ministry – pastors and laypersons. Readers evaluate only what is written in the booklets supplied. Readers care for both candidates and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Readers are asked to tell how they arrived at the grade assigned. In cases of unsatisfactory grades, readers indicate ways the paper could be strengthened.
3. The exams provide situations that call for pastoral response, frequently dilemmas that require a background of theological and ecclesiastical awareness, and sensitivity to human concerns. How one approaches such situations demonstrates readiness for ministry.

### **General Tips on Preparing:**

1. Review copies of previous exams from your seminary or presbytery committee to be familiar with the style of the questions. Verbs signal the desired response. Old ordination exams can also be found on [www.lpts.edu/Academic\\_Resources/ordexamsnewaccess.asp](http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ordexamsnewaccess.asp).
2. Know the current Instructions Sheets, especially the emphasis and structure of each exam. Note when each exam is administered, and how much time is allotted. Check what resources you may (and may not) use for each exam. Instruction sheets are available from seminaries. Those requesting a Special Proctor are advised of whether or not one has been assigned with their confirmation letter.

### **General Tips on Test Taking:**

1. Read the question and follow directions.
2. Write legibly.
3. Check over your citations.
4. Organize your thoughts before beginning to write. Readers grade simple, concise, clear, crisp, well organized responses higher than rambling essays. Don't put in extraneous information.
5. If English is your second language, so indicate on your exam.

## **SUGGESTIONS AND REASSURANCE FROM LISA NICHOLS (1997)**

This past fall I attended the October Reading Group of the Ordination Exams. I wish I had come back with a foolproof plan to share with you, but if that were the case then I would breathe a sigh of relief as well!

What I can give you is a little reassurance and a few suggestions, some very practical, some much more general.

First, let me reassure you that the grading system of the ordination exams is incredibly thorough and fair. As you are talking with students who have already taken the exams you might hear otherwise. But as I observed the system, it works remarkably well and has for many years. As graders turn in graded exams, there are several people who monitor them to watch for grades that are inconsistent.

Secondly, a few very practical suggestions: use inclusive language, since graders are very observant of this. Be mindful of spelling and grammar; while graders cannot give you a lower grade for incorrect grammar or spelling, they can comment on it. Don't identify yourself in any way by stating your name, home church, presbytery, or seminary.

Third, if there is one piece of advice that I would give you, it is that the graders are looking for pastors. They want to know if the candidate can apply what she or he has learned, if the candidate would make a good pastor for their children, themselves, and their parents.

So, with some humor, in honor of the upcoming ordination exams, I present the top ten things that PTS never taught us about being pastors.

### **10. Pastors don't get bogged down with the details!**

When working on your exegesis or your theology exams in particular, readers want to see that you know what material to eliminate or to spend just a little bit of time on and what material is really important. For example, do not spend a full paragraph on the tense of a Greek verb or whether it is a first or second class conditional statement unless it is important for your sermon and congregation.

### **9. Pastors don't panic, but are thoughtful, thorough, and organized!**

During the ordination exams we have the luxury of being able to gather our thoughts in outline form before we begin the exam (we will not always have that extra time in the parish!). Use this time to become focused and organized.

### **8. Pastors understand the question, the issue at stake.**

You would be surprised by how many people answer the wrong question or leave out important parts of the question. Make sure that you understand what the question is asking and that you address all of its parts in your outline before you even begin to write.



**7. Pastors take themselves out of the books and into the situation.**

If you are answering a question about infant baptism, suicide, a difficult session meeting, or whatever, move beyond theory and words to the feelings of the other people who are involved in the situation.

**6. Pastors see possible outcomes.**

Make sure to acknowledge the various possibilities for action in various situations. Again, you do not need to spend a lot of time on this, but acknowledge them.

**5. Pastors understand the feelings and concerns of others.**

Again, what are the feelings and concerns of the people in the session meeting? The funeral? The crisis situation?

**4. Pastors know how they feel and what biases they might bring to the situation.**

This is where that CPE training pays off. What are you bringing to the situation? Don't belabor this point, but acknowledge it.

**3. Pastors are biblical.**

Pastors are biblical not by proof texting, but by using the Bible to support and undergird what they are saying.

**2. Pastors are practical.**

Pastors do not get caught up in theory or theology, but in being a pastor.

**1. Pastors are PASTORAL.**

This is my one piece of advice to you, be pastoral in your answers. The readers are concerned with theology, but also with how a pastor makes loving decisions in the context of faith, in other words, with how theology is used pastorally.

There is a Russian proverb that states, "Let your mind be loving and your heart be wise." This is what I am going to keep in mind as I take the ordination exams.

## **QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT THE EXAMS**

### **1. What is the purpose of the senior ordination examinations?**

The ordination exams provide information that helps presbyteries to determine a candidate's fitness for ministry. The exams probe the candidate's knowledge of the Reformed tradition and Presbyterian practices, and focus especially on the ability to apply this knowledge in pastoral situations.

### **2. When is one eligible to take the ordination exams?**

Ordination exams are usually taken the first time they are administered in the candidate's final year of seminary. A candidate may make another arrangement with his or her committee of care when both agree that it is in the best interests of the candidate and the church.

### **3. When are the ordination exams given?**

Exams are given the Friday and Saturday of the weekend prior to Labor Day weekend, and the fourth Friday and Saturday of January. The exegesis is due by 9:00 a.m. the following Thursday.

### **4. How does one apply for the exams?**

Registration for the Senior Ordination Examinations requires the approval of the candidate's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Once you have completed the registration forms on line, (<https://exams.pcusa.org>) your request to take the exams will be automatically communicated to your CPM moderator by email. Your registration is not complete until the CPM moderator responds to that email by providing the necessary authorizations. You will receive an email confirmation when your registration has been finalized.

### **5. Why are the exams given when they are?**

The exams are scheduled to meet the needs of the largest number of candidates. The schedule makes it possible for many students to complete their exams (including one retake, if necessary) before being examined by a presbytery of call. The present schedule has evolved in response to the needs of the largest number of candidates. No schedule can, of course, meet all needs. It is not financially feasible to administer the exams more frequently.

### **6. Where are the exams given?**

Ordination exams are regularly administered at most seminaries. With the written concurrence of the presbytery of care, a special proctor may be arranged for students with special needs.

### **7. Do the exams duplicate the examinations given by seminaries?**

Not to any great extent. The ordination exams, with their emphasis on the Reformed tradition, Presbyterian practice and the application of knowledge in pastoral situations compliment seminaries' exams, which assess academic knowledge, field and internship experience, and ministerial skills.

### **8. Do the ordination exams duplicate presbytery examinations?**

No. The written ordination exams cover material that, before this program came into existence, was the focus of presbytery examinations. Presbyteries use the exams and reader comments as additional information about the candidate that they are considering for ordination. Presbyteries

continue to explore issues such as the content of a candidate's theological perspective, which are not judged by readers on the written exams.

**9. How long has the church been examining candidates this way?**

Ordination examinations resulted from an overture to the 1963 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church from San Francisco Presbytery. The first set of exams was given on February 9-11, 1967. The General Assembly elected the first Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates in 1967. It continues to supervise the program and write the examinations. Ten years later, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.) began its examination for ordination.

**10. From where do the questions come?**

Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee develops questions from actual pastoral situations. The committee has pastors, elders, seminary professors, and educational consultants in its 24-person membership. Task forces for each examination develop questions as well as guidelines for evaluating the responses. It takes between 18 months and 3 years for a question to emerge on an examination.

**11. What about candidates who have disabilities?**

In consultation with the presbytery of care, the executive secretary of Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee can arrange for alternative settings appropriate to the situation of the candidate.

**12. Who grades the exams?**

Presbyteries elect graders who grade the examinations. Readers are ministers and laypersons whom their presbyteries deem competent judges of readiness for ministry. Readers gather in Reading Groups for grading exams. At least two persons grade each examination. If these two disagree about the satisfactory nature of the paper, a third reader is assigned, who is not aware of the previous readings.

**13. Who are the papers graders?**

The papers are graded anonymously. Readers do not know the name, gender, or seminary of the candidates whose exam papers they read. The papers are scored either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

**14. How do candidates arrange to retake an exam?**

When a candidate fails the first time, registration is not automatic for the next administration of the exam. Candidates must re-register and receive Presbytery authorization, each time they plan to take an exam. Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee places no restriction on the number of times an examination may be taken. The presbytery of care may, however, impose a limitation.

**15. Is there a way that an examination may be regraded?**

No.

**16. How does a candidate appeal a grade?**

An appeal should be directed to the presbytery of care. Exams normally must be taken three times before a request for exception is appropriate.

**17. How, other than taking exams, do students participate in the process?**

Students participate in two chief ways. One, all candidates are invited to complete evaluation sheets assessing the quality and fairness of the exam. These comments are given to the chairpersons of the groups that write the exams. Several students are also invited to attend meetings of Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee and thus participate in decisions about forthcoming exams.

**18. How should a candidate prepare?-**

Understand the instruction sheets that are available by request from the Office of Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Room M046, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202. These sheets include the Old Testament book and the New Testament book from which the passage will be selected for the Exegesis exam.

Work with colleagues on questions from old exams to get the sense of what to expect. Intensive study is useful, but cramming may produce fatigue and confusion.

Develop a strategy, including a timed schedule for the Open Book Biblical Exegesis examination.

**19. What should a candidate bring to the examination?**

A laptop computer; examination booklets are provided. The Theological Competence and Worship and Sacraments exams have an open book section when you may use a clean copy of the Book of Confessions. At Princeton Seminary these will be provided to you by the proctor.

**The Book of Order is used while writing the examination in Church Polity. You need to bring a clean copy of the Book of Order with you.** You may also access a downloaded copy of *The Book of Confessions* and *The Book of Order* on your laptop.

**20. What are some frequent deficiencies, errors, and mistakes that result in unsatisfactory grades?**

Readers report that failure to follow the instructions is the most frequent cause of unsatisfactory grades. The other major reason is a lack of balance between knowledge of the field and pastoral sensitivity.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING ESSAYS FOR ORDINATION EXAMS**

1. The questions are divided into two parts: (A) Situation and (B) Responses Required in Your Essay. Consider reading the Responses section before you read the Situation.
2. The essays generally permit some choices. Skim all the questions to see which ones you will be writing on before you answer any in depth. This helps you allocate your time and writing.
3. Read the question twice before you begin to write. Carelessness can really cost you. You have plenty of time; a shorter, well-organized essay is better than a shotgun approach. Make sure you answer the question.
4. Use outlines extensively and show these in your answer. Outlines force you to see the whole essay before you start chasing rabbits and can help minimize the whirling dervish syndrome. Outlines also show the graders you have the situation under control, suggesting an orderly mind at work and allowing them to enjoy what you have to say.
5. Role play is very helpful. Boldly assume the role that the question assigns to you as though you were in your 10<sup>th</sup> year of ministry! The graders are trying to judge you as a future pastor and need your help. Avoid a lot of qualifications and just go with the flow of the question. Be sure to think through the role of all persons involved in the Situation (not just the minister) so you can experience their feelings and needs. If there are multiple ministers in the picture, be sure to work sensitively with them and don't try to be a lone ranger.
6. When you talk to the session or to an individual, use direct address (indicate with quotation marks, if you like). This streamlines your answer and gives it a reality that third-person reporting lacks. It also helps you "get into" the pastor's mind and role. Obviously dialogue rests on some assumptions, but you can handle these with questions (e.g. "How do you feel about this suggestion?" [Discuss] "Well if you are comfortable with this, I will call Ms. X and set up a meeting," etc.) The graders are able to listen in on your meeting and see you in action. This also allows you to draw the graders in by leaving the dialogue (parenthetically) and sharing a concern or point directly with the grader.
7. Bottom line: graders seem to be looking for four things: 1) a thoughtful response that a real life pastor might make if this issue arose in his or her church; 2) do you understand the big [polity/worship/theology] issues at stake here? 3) do you view the [Reformed Tradition/Book of Confessions/Book of Order] as the pastor's friend and use it to frame an appropriate response (or are you just throwing citations around or ignoring valuable guidance by omission)? 4) can you as a leader of the church use your knowledge of the Bible, the tradition, the Constitution, the church, the personal issues operative in this situation, to give support and guidance toward a redemptive response to the problem?

## **HELPFUL HINTS FOR ORDINATION EXAM READERS**

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**RESOURCE PAPERS ARE PREPARED BY MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERIES' COOPERATIVE COMMITTEE (PCC) AS AN AID TO READER PREPARATION. RESOURCE PAPERS ARE SUGGESTIVE, NOT EXHAUSTIVE, AND ARE NOT TO BE CONSIDERED SAMPLES OF MODEL EXAMINATIONS. (THEY ARE PRINTED AS RECEIVED FROM PCC TASK GROUP MEMBERS.) WHEN COMBINED WITH READERS' PERSONAL PREPARATION, RESOURCE PAPERS ARE MEANT TO SERVE AS AN AID TO THE TOTAL READING GROUP PROCESS.**

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Members of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee continue to be impressed with the high dedication to task and love for the church exhibited by readers selected by presbyteries to assist in the process of assessing candidates' readiness for the ministry. It is hoped that this paper will serve as an introduction for new readers, as a review for the more experienced.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

1. Readers. Readers of the examinations, along with alternates, are elected by their presbyteries, utilizing the process most appropriate for each presbytery. A list of alternates is kept by the Association for Examination Services to assure that each reading group has the number of readers sufficient to the task.
2. Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee. These clergy or elders have been elected to four-year terms either by their reading group or by General Assembly. The group as a whole is responsible for writing and administering the grading of the Standard Ordination Examinations.
3. Conveners. These PCC members convene and serve as the primary leadership for the reading groups.
4. Co-conveners. These PCC members lead plenary sessions, assign exams to readers, record grades, review readers' comment sheets, collate completed exams, and generally try to make readers' work more manageable and enjoyable. Other experienced persons may be invited to assist with logistical matters.

## **READER PREPARATION**

- 1.) Resource papers, written by PCC members, are for readers' edification and are not meant to be a substitute for individual reader preparation. Authors of the resource papers try to give a sense of what was intended by the question; their observations are by no means exhaustive.
- 2.) Resource papers are prepared for readers only and are not meant for duplication or wider distribution. PCC requests that readers turn in resource papers following the grading process, or destroy them on their own.

## **OPERATING PROCEDURES**

- 1.) Reading groups always read Theology and Biblical Exegesis exams. Worship/Sacraments and Polity are read on alternate years (which means they will be read in greater numbers). So, a given reading group will grade three different exams. This is considered a more efficient use of time, since only three plenary sessions are required.
- 2.) At each reading location there is both a readers' room and a conveners' room. Conveners' work, because it involves concentrated review and record-keeping, requires intense concentration. Readers are asked to refrain from conversation in the conveners' room. It is particularly important that specific exams not be discussed as this might prejudice the decision of the next reader. Remember, each exam is read at least twice.
- 3.) Tracking the location of exams is the responsibility of the PCC conveners. An exam should be in the conveners' room or in the possession of the reader at all times. If the policy of a particular reading group permits grading of exams in other locations, a reader is expected to keep conveners notified of his or her location.
- 4.) PCC policy requires that illegible exams be returned to the candidate ungraded. Out of fairness to the candidate, an exam judged to be illegible by one reader will be assigned to at least two other readers before it is returned ungraded.
- 5.) Each exam is numbered. Readers are asked to keep a number record of each exam read in each category. This serves as a double check (conveners also check) that not more than one exam written by a candidate in any category is read by the same reader.
- 6.) It is encouraged that children not accompany readers or co-conveners. If it is not possible for the caregiver to provide child care at home, the caregiver is to contact the reading group convener prior to making travel arrangements in order to discuss options.
- 7.) Readers' special dietary or room requirements should be made known to the convener in advance of attendance.
- 8.) Readers can expect a welcoming letter from the convener, giving pertinent information.
- 9.) Readers will be given voucher forms for recording all expenses.

10.) When reading groups meet at hotels and some conference centers, double occupancy is the norm. Those who choose single occupancy instead of a double room are asked to pay the difference. This fee may be deducted from expenses listed on voucher; or a check for the difference may be attached to the voucher. **DO NOT PAY THE HOTEL/CENTER.**

11.) When reading groups have completed their work, they are asked to evaluate the overall process. Readers' comments are invaluable to the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee as it strives to improve the examination/reading group process.

### **PLENARY SESSIONS**

1.) Before an exam in a given category is read, a plenary session is held. The session is ordinarily led by a member of the task force that wrote the questions for that particular exam. The plenary leader briefly addresses the Resource Paper. Then the readers, after reviewing at least one sample exam, give a "practice grade." There follows valuable discussion ranging from "who gave that grade and why?" to some consistency of thought as to the elements of an acceptable answer.

2.) During the plenary process, new readers are paired with experienced readers. This pairing is particularly helpful when the grading of sample exams is discussed in small groups. Readers who initially feel unequal to the task find this "mentor" process to be both enlightening and affirming.

### **GRADE SHEETS AND READER COMMENTS**

1.) Readers are expected to write comments on the back of the grade sheet; **DO NOT WRITE** in the exam booklet.

2.) Comments must be consistent with the grade given. For example, a reader in order to be supportive of the candidate may focus comments on positive aspects of a failing exam. This is confusing to the candidate. Fair criticism is important, particularly when an exam fails. Likewise, comments on a passing exam should reflect positive aspects.

3.) It is important for the reader to remember that it is the exam that is being evaluated, not the candidate. Comments germane to the exam are more appropriate when referring to the third person (e.g., "This exam would have been stronger had it addressed . . .") There are exceptions of course, such as a personal note to the candidate who has an exceptional exam: "Bravo! I wish I had the wisdom to do what you suggested when I was new to the pastorate! Well done."

4.) Comments should also be of sufficient length to help the candidate understand the grade. An excellent exam (5) may have fewer comments; but it is still important to articulate what was excellent! As scores diminish, it becomes more important for the candidate to understand what made the paper weak, and what could have made it stronger. This demands more of the reader.

5.) Consistency between readers' comments and readers' own performance is also important. It is imprudent to complain about an illegible exam if the reader's own handwriting cannot be read.



Similarly, complaints about a candidate's spelling, grammar, or syntax have little impact if the reader exhibits the same weaknesses. In such cases, the reader may be asked to rewrite his or her comments.

6.) The "box" which may be checked to alert the Committee on Preparation for Ministry allows the reader to refer an exam to the candidate's CPM if there is concern that – while it may not be a factor in the final grade – requires (in the opinion of the reader) further discussion between the CPM and the candidate.

7.) When might this box be checked?

a.) A theology exam may have a well-sustained argument: but the candidate's view may not be in keeping with the Reformed tradition. Since presbyteries – not the Standard Ordination Examinations – evaluate a candidate's orthodoxy, it is appropriate for concerns about theological orthodoxy to be referred to the candidate's presbytery. Readers' comments to presbytery often triggers conversations between the CPM and the candidate that are beneficial to both.

b.) An exam may be excellent, but the language used may be sexist in character. The reader's comments to presbytery encourage the CPM to discuss with the candidate the importance of inclusive language.

8.) Snide or sarcastic reader comments are never appropriate! Reader comments should always be courteous.

9.) Each reader's grade sheet comments are read at least twice by conveners in order to prevent inappropriate or inconsistent comments from being returned to candidates. The "math" of the grade is checked, as well as the consistency between the grade and the comments. Did the reader sign the comment sheet and fill in all the blanks?

10.) Sometimes a reader, even the most experienced, is asked to rewrite comments. Such a request should not embarrass or discourage a reader; it is intended to be helpful to all concerned.

Readers, thank you for participating in our denomination's examination process. We look forward to seeing you at the reading group!

Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee  
September

1997

# **THEOLOGY**

## **GOLDEN RULES FOR THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

We understand readiness for ministry in the area of theology as the ability to give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in all its power and fullness, in the setting of the contemporary world.

We understand essential components of this readiness to be:

- (1) the ability to carry on the church's work in creative and responsible dialogue with the great tradition of Christian theological reflection down through the ages. As Presbyterians, we place special emphasis on the historical documents of the Book of Confessions, which have played a formative role in shaping the Christian identity of the Reformed churches.
- (2) the ability to discern, articulate and interpret the theological dimensions of the life of the church and of individuals in contemporary society.
- (3) FOCUS ON THE RUBRICS. Each question had a specific intent. The more specific the reference given by the candidate, the better. In the Confessional Heritage question, specific citations from the Book of Confessions (e.g. X-0.00) are essential, especially because this is an open book exam.
  - In all questions, when the rubrics say, "Guided by biblical perspectives and the resources of classical and contemporary theology," the expectation of the task force is that the candidate's response is clearly drawn from the resources of the Bible, from significant theologians, and from the historical theological tradition.
  - What does that mean? Is there a check list of all three areas? Not necessarily, a sufficient answer is clearly drawn from Scripture, from theologians, or from the great traditions of the church.
  - When the rubric says, "Give specific examples," it is expected that the candidate will give more than one example. Two examples would therefore be minimally sufficient.
  - If more than two examples are required, the rubrics will state the specific requirement. An example: "Give four (4) examples . . ."
- (4) Make the connections. In most questions, you are asked to use the materials developed in Part A of the question in responding to Part B of the question. Be sure when you are asked to respond in Part B, "on the basis of your answer in Part A," you do make that connection.
- (5) Keep the Balance. This exam seeks to relate theological insight to practical situations. In most questions, theological data is to be applied to a situation and, conversely, the situation presented impacts what theological data and insight is appropriate. Do not frame your answers in a way that is theologically remote from the situation; do not think that dealing exclusively with the presented "pastoral" situation is a substitute for theological insight. Both dimensions are necessary.
- (6) Utilize the resources. Be sure you are well acquainted with the Reformed theological tradition, since this tradition plays a major role in the exam. More generally, the history of Christian doctrine, the confessions of the Presbyterian (and Reformed) churches and a knowledge of a spectrum of contemporary theologies are important.

Theology Task Group, Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee  
April 1994 (Revised)

**EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a great study aid to help you in understanding Reformed Theology.**

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**DR. EDWARD DOWEY'S AWESOME OUTLINE: BOOK OF CONFESSIONS**

**Introduction**

The following pages are for your benefit in studying for both the Theology Ordination Exam and the Worship and Sacraments Exam. These pages are only a simple guide that is not intended to be exhaustive. I recommend first reading the *Book of Confessions*, then using this guide. The structure of this guide is taken from Dowe's topical chart, which appears at the end of his book *A Commentary on the Confession of 1967*. Each topic had been explored in outline form based on *The Book of Confessions*. I suggest you form a study group and talk through the topics, ask each other sample questions from old exams, and learn the topics in piecemeal fashion so you can have a peg to hang your hat on in the exam.

In each outline, there are selected pages from other readings that will help further explain the topic. There are also quotes from various theologians (by no means exhaustive but firmly in the Reformed tradition), Scripture quotes, and occasionally quotes and outlines from the *Book of Order*.

Finally, it has been my hope that this work be inclusive. Most quotes have been changed deliberately to reflect this. I hope this inclusiveness allows the study to be read easily by all. However none of the Scripture that is taken from the NRSV has been changed.

God bless your study and your ministry.

Sincerely,  
David Forney

**Required Reading**

*The Book of Confessions*. Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly.

*The Book of Order*. Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly.

Metzger, Bruce M., and Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

**Recommended Reading**

Dowe, Edward A. *A Commentary on the Confession of 1967 and an Introduction to "The Book of Confessions"*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968.

Leith, John H. *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.

Migliore, Daniel. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.

Neisel, Wilhelm. *The Gospel and the Churches A Comparison of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962.

Placher, William C. and David Willis-Watkins. *Belonging to God: A Commentary on A Brief Statement of Faith*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

Willimon, William H. *Worship as Pastoral Care*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.

Winn, Albert Curry. *A Christian Primer: The Prayer, The Creed, The Commandments*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.

**Historical Reading on the Confessions**

Rogers, Jack. *Presbyterian Creeds: A Guide to the Book of Confessions*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Second Helvetic Confession Chapter</b>	<b>Scots Confession Chapter</b>	<b>Heidelberg Catechism Question</b>	<b>Westminster Confession Chapter</b>	<b>Shorter Catechism Question</b>	<b>Barmen Declaration Thesis</b>	<b>Confession of 1967</b>
Scripture	I-II	XVIII-XX	21	I	2-3, 88-90	1	3, 27-30,49
Trinity	III	I	25	II	6		5,7
Creation	VII	II	26	IV	(1), 9-10		16-17
Providence	VI	I	1, 27-28	V	11-12		16-17
Covenant	XX	IV-V	19, 74	VII, XIX	20		18-19
Sin	VIII-IX	III	3-11	VI, IX	12-20, 82-85		12-14
Election	X	VII-VIII	26, 31, 52, 54	III, X	7-8, 20		(18-20)
Jesus Christ	XI	V-XI	29-52	VIII	21-28	1-2	3, 8-11, 15, 24, 32
Holy Spirit	III, etc.	XII	53-64	XXXIV			Part I, Section C
Law	XII	XIV-XV	3-4, 92-115	XIX, (VII, XIII)	39-81		
Gospel	XIII	IV-V	19, etc.	VII, XXXV			6, 7, 18, etc.
Repentance	XIV	(XII)		XV	87		21
Justification	XV	(XV)	31-34, 60-64	XI	32-33		22
Faith	XVI	XII	1-2, 21, 32, 53, 60-61,74	XIV	86, (30-38)	2	10, 21
Christian Life	XVI	XII-XIV	Part III	XIII, XVI, XIX-XX	35, 39-82	2-3	21-26, 41-47
Church	XVII-XXVIII	V, XVI, XVIII, XX to XXII	54-85	XXV- XXVI, XXX- XXXI		3-4	20, 22, 25, etc
Mission				XXXV		6	31-33, 41-47
Sacraments	XIX	XXI-XXIII	65-68	XXVII	88, 91-93		
Baptism	XX	XXI-XXIII	69-74	XXVIII	94- 95		51
Lord's Supper	XXI	XXI-XXIII	75-85	XXIX	96- 97		52
Worship	IV-V, XX-XXVII			XXI-XX	45-62		36, 49- 52
Marriage	XXIX			XXIV			17, 47
State	XXX	XXIV		XXIII		5	17, 25, 45
Consummation	(XI)	XVII, XXV	57-58	XXXII	37-38		11,26, and Part III

## Scripture

“The only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God” (7.002).

- I. Canonical (3.18)
  - 1. No addition to the canon (5.002)
- II. Authority from God Only (3.19)
- III. Used for preaching and teaching (9.49)
- IV. Inspiration of God (6.002)
- V. Interpretation
  - 1. Scripture interprets Scripture (6.009)
  - 2. Interpreted in the light of its witness to Jesus Christ (9.29)
  - 3. Illumination by the Holy Spirit (9.30)
- VI. Revelation/Word of God (see Leith, 225)

“The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures which are received and obeyed as the Word of God written” (9.27).

Book of Order ~ “Christ gives to his church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its officers and ordinances. Insofar as Christ’s will for the church is set forth in Scripture, it is to be obeyed” (G-1.0100).

Book of Order ~ “The church confesses the Scripture to be the Word of God written, witnessing to God’s self-revelation. Where that Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the Living Word is present by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the reading, hearing, preaching, and confessing of the Word are central to Christian Worship” (W-2.2001).

Calvin ~ “But I reply: the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of [Godself] in [God’s] Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in [people’s] hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit” (*Institutes*, 79).

Barth ~ “The presupposition which makes proclamation to be proclamation and therewith the Church to be the Church, is the Word of God. It attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles, to whom it was originally and once for all uttered through God’s revelation” (*CD*, Vol. 1/2, pgs. 540).

II Timothy 3:16 ~ “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

## Trinity

(See Migliore, 60-62; Leith, 98-99)

One God in three persons; “and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory” (7.006).

### I. God is One (5.015)

“We believe and teach that God is one in essence or nature, subsisting in [Godself], all sufficient in [Godself] . . .”

### II. God is Three (5.016)

“Notwithstanding we believe and teach that the same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion . . .”

### III. Not three gods (5.017)

“Thus there are not three gods, but three persons, consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal; distinct with respect to hypostases, and with respect to order, the one preceding the other yet without any inequality.”

### IV. Immanent Trinity & Economic Trinity

Immanent (heaven) ~ “The eternal distinctions of persons within the being of God” (Migliore, 61).

Economic (earth) ~ “The differentiated agency of Father, Son, and Spirit in the ‘economy’ of salvation” (Migliore, 61).

Calvin ~ “They cannot shake our conviction that three [persons] are spoken of, each of which is entirely God, yet that there is not more than one God” (*Institutes*, 123).

Barth speaks of the Trinity as “three modes of being” in God of “three distinct ways of subsisting” (*CD*, I/1, pp. 103-115).

Barth ~ “Who God is and what it is to be divine is something we have to learn where God has revealed [God]self . . . We may believe that God can and must only be absolute in contrast to all that is relative, exalted in contrast to all that is lowly, active in contrast to all suffering, inviolable in contrast to all temptation, transcendent in contrast to all immanence, and therefore divine in contrast to everything human, in short that [God] can and must be only the ‘Wholly Other.’ But such beliefs are shown to be quite untenable, and corrupt and pagan, by the fact that God does in fact be and do this in Jesus Christ” (*CD*, IV/1. P.186).

Isaiah 45:5 ~ “I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no god.”

Matthew 28:19 ~ “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

John 15:26 ~ “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf.”

## Creation

### I. God Created All Things, both visible and invisible (5.032)

“This good and almighty God created all things, both visible and invisible, by [God’s] co-eternal Word, and preserves them by [God’s] co-eternal Spirit.

### II. All Things God Created are Good (5.032)

### III. Image of God (7.010)

“God created male and female, after [God’s] own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.”

### IV. Redemption of Creation (10.3)

“In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God’s image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God: we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God’s commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God’s condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.”

### V. Creatio ex nihilo and Creatio Continua

Creatio ex nihilo is that God created everything out of nothing.

Creatio Continua is that God continues to create everything and is active in creation.

Calvin ~ “From the beginning nothing at all has existed in which God has not put forth an example both of [God’s] wisdom and of [God’s] righteousness.” (*Institutes*, 163).

Barth ~ “Creation means the irruption and revelation of the divine compassion. Once and for all the Word of God went out against the rejected and vanished reality of an alien and hostile creature. Creation, the appearance of heaven and earth, the content of commencing time, was that God spoke and spoke again that [God] thus did what was later to constitute in ever new faithfulness the covenant between [Godself] and [humanity].” (*CD*, III/1, p. 110).

Genesis 1:1-4 ~ “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light: and there was light.’ And God saw that the light was good: and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

John 1:3-5 ~ “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.



## Providence

(See Migliore 104-111, 114-119; Leith 103-109)

The reformed principle to keep in mind is Sovereignty of God over all.

*Providence does not mean that every event is arranged but that every contingency is provided for.*

- Divine preservation by which God sustains all creatures.
- Divine cooperation by which God is present in every human action.
- Divine government by which God fulfills God's purpose in all creatures through guidance (7.011 or 7.0128)

I. God as first cause (foreknowledge and decree): upholds, directs, disposes and governs all creatures, actions and things (6.024).

II. God orders through second causes (created agents) (6.024).

God is free to work without, above, and against all means (6.026).

III. God is neither the author nor approver of sin but God orders the sins of all creation for good (6.027).

God allows temptation and corruption (sin) in order that people might “discover the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon” God (6.028).

God uses these same means (temptation, corruption, sin) which softened the hearts of the elect to harden the hearts of the wicked and ungodly (6.029).

“What are God's works of providence? God's work of providence are [God's] most holy, wise, and powerful preserving, and governing all [God's] creatures; ordering them and all their actions, to [God's] own glory” (7.128).

Calvin ~ “Three things are to be noted. First, God's providence must be considered with regard to the future as well as the past. Secondly, it is the determinative principle of all things in such a way that sometimes it works through an intermediary, sometimes without an intermediary, sometimes contrary to every intermediary. Finally, it strives to the end that God may reveal [God's] concern for the whole human race, but especially [God's] vigilance in ruling the church, which [God] deigns to watch more closely” (*Institutes*, 210).

Psalm 135:6 ~ “Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

Romans 9:28 ~ “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

Romans 9:16-18 ~ “So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.’ So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.”

## Covenant

(See 6.037 – 6.042)

### I. God's Covenant with Israel for all (9.18)

“God expressed [God's] love for all [humankind] through Israel, whom [God] chose to be [God's] covenant people to serve [God] in love and faithfulness.”

### II. Covenant of Grace, New Testament

“This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in the Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ, the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.”

### III. Covenant and Infant Baptism

“Since both redemption from sin through the blood of Christ and the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit are promised to these children no less than to their parents, infants are also by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be incorporated into the Christian church . . . This was done in the Old Covenant by circumcision. In the New Covenant baptism has been instituted to take its place.” (4.074)

Calvin ~ “All [people] adopted God into the company of [God's] people since the beginning of the world were covenanted to [God] by the same law and by the bond of the same doctrine as obtains among us [Christians]” (*Institutes*, 428).

Genesis 17:7 ~ “I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

Hebrews 8:6-7 ~ “But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.”

Note that a “covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the Church according to the Word of God” is one of the four “other great themes of the Reformed tradition” (Book of Order, G-2.0500a).

## Sin

### I. Definitions

1. “By sin we understand that innate corruption of [humans] which has been derived or propagated in us all from our first parents, by which we, immersed in perverse desires and averse to all good, are inclined to all evil” (5.037).

2. “Sin is any want of conformity, unto, or transgression of, the law of God” (7.014).

### II. God is not the author of sin ~ (see Providence)

By eating the fruit “the image of God was utterly defaced in [humans], and [humans] and [their] children became by nature hostile to God, slaves to Satan, and servants to sin” (3.03).

Augustine ~ “Sin is any word or deed or thought against the eternal law.”

Calvin ~ “[Our} ruin is to be ascribed to [us] alone; for [we], having acquired righteousness by God’s kindness, have by [our] own folly sunk into vanity” (*Institutes*, 254).

Barth ~ “In all [sin’s] reality and horror it can never be a first word, nor can it ever be a final word. The atonement made in Jesus Christ teaches us (as nothing else can) to know it and to take it seriously, but we also have to perceive and state that the gracious will and act of God in Jesus Christ are superior to it and overcome it. We ourselves do not look down on it or master it or conquer it or set it aside. We ourselves are not superior to it. But Jesus Christ, against whom sin properly and finally rears itself, is superior to it” (*CD*, IV/1, p. 144).

Romans 5:12 ~ “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and do death spread to all because all have sinned --.”

Romans 6:23 ~ “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I John 3:4 ~ “Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”

### **Election**

(Migliore 76-78, 183-84; Leith 103-106)

God is the Lord, the all-governing Creator. The origin of the faith of the believer and of the church must be found first in the action of God, not in any human effort-Election. Predestination means that human life is rooted in the will and the intention of God. Behind everything that exists is the will and purpose of God.

I. God has Elected us out of grace (5.052).

II. We are Elected or Predestined in Christ (5.053; 5.059; 5.060)

III. Elected for a definite purpose (5.054)

1. To be holy
2. To be blameless
3. To be children of God
4. To be the praise of the glory of God’s grace.

IV. We cannot know or are to judge who is elect (5.055)

V. We are elect if we believe and are in Christ (5.059)

Calvin ~ “As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by [God’s] eternal and unchangeable plan those whom [God] long before determined once and for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, [God] would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon [God’s] freely given mercy, without regard to human worth . . .” (*Institutes*, 931).

Calvin ~ “The universality of God’s invitation and the particularity of election . . . The voice of the gospel addresses all in general, yet the gift of faith is rare” (*Institutes*, 943).

Old Testament: The Election of Israel through covenants – all descendants of the patriarchs and all foreigners whom God elected, see Romans 9:11.

Ephesians 1:4 ~ “. . . just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before [God] in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ . . .”

II Timothy 1:9 ~ “. . . God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”

### Excursus

The two confessions that focus heavily upon election are *The Westminster Confession* and the *Second Helvetic Confession*. Since this time Karl Barth has radically changed the Reformed view of election, predestination and double predestination. Double predestination traditionally taught that “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of [God’s] glory, some [people] and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death” (6.016).

A summary of Barth’s position is as follows. The eternal will of God is the giving of Godself in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. “The eternal will of God in the election of Jesus Christ is [God’s] will to give [Godself] for the sake of [humanity] as created by [God] and fallen from [God]” (*CD*, II/2,161). This self-giving for Barth is a “radical understanding” of double predestination; it has a negative and a positive side; it is “both a Yes and a No” (*CD*, II/2, 161). The negative side is “reprobation, perdition and death,” and the positive side is “election, salvation and life” (*CD*, II/2, 163). The radicalness is found in who the negative and positive sides are ascribed to – to human the positive and to God [Herself] the negative. “God has ascribed to [humans] the former, election, salvation and life; and to Himself he has ascribed the latter, reprobation, perdition and death” (*CD*, II/2, 163). By God electing Godself to be human’s “Friend and Partner,” God exchanged, or substituted, Godself for the guilt of humans. “He made Himself the object of the wrath and judgment to which [humanity] had brought [its]self; that He took upon Himself the rejection which [humanity] had deserved: that He tasted Himself the damnation, death and hell which ought to have been the portion of fallen [humanity]” (*CD*, II/2, 164). Graciously, this radical reversal of conditions, this exchange, “can never be reversed” (*CD*, II/2, 167). Barth concisely states, “Predestination is the non-rejection of [humanity] (*CD*, II/2, 167). Thus double predestination can be radically affirmed when the revelation of Jesus Christ is viewed as the elected one, the elected object and subject. The rejection is assumed by Jesus Christ, not humans, therefore God’s will is affirmation, not reprobation. “At the end of this way God’s glory is revealed in the fact that He Himself removed the threat and became our salvation. . . In obedience and thankfulness we can only rejoice at the double predestination of God.” (*CD*, II/2, 174).

## Jesus Christ

Read the Nicene Creed. 1.2

### I. Fully Human (see Migliore, 145-148)

- A. “The Son of God descend unto us and take himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, and so become the Mediator between God and [humans], giving power to as many as believe in him to be the [children] of God . . . further, it behooved the Messiah and Redeemer to be true God and true man” (3.08).
- B. Jesus Christ is God with [humankind]. He is the eternal Son of the Father, who became [human] and lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation” (9.07).

### II Fully God ~ (see Migliore, 148-149)

“In Jesus Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. Jesus Christ is God with [humankind]” (9.07, see also 6.045)

### III. Unity of human and divine (see Migliore, 149-151)

- A. “We therefore acknowledge two natures or substances, the divine and the human, in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord. And we say that these are bound and united with one another in such a way that they are not absorbed, or confused, or mixed, but are united or joined together in one person – the properties of the natures being unimpaired and permanent.  
Thus we worship not two but one Christ the Lord. We repeat; one true God and man. With respect to his divine nature he is consubstantial (same essence) with the Father, and with respect to the human nature he is consubstantial with us [humans] and like us in all things, sin excepted” (5.066-5.067).
- B. “We acknowledge and confess that this wonderful union between the Godhead and the humanity in Christ Jesus did arise from the eternal and immutable decree of God from which all our salvation springs and depends” (3.07).

### IV Three Offices of Christ as our Redeemer (7.023)

- A. Prophet (7.024)  
“Revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation”
- B. Priest (7.025)  
“[Christ’s] once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice”
- C. King (7.026)  
“In subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.”

Aquinas ~ “Wherefore, as to others, one is a lawgiver, another is priest, another a king; but all these concur in Christ as the fount of all grace” (*Summa Theologia III. xxii.2*).

Calvin ~ “Apart from God’s good pleasure Christ could not merit anything; but did so because he had been appointed to appease God’s wrath with his sacrifice, and to blot out our transgressions with his obedience.” (*Institutes*, 529).

Barth ~ “For Jesus Christ – not an empty *Logos*, but Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, the baby born in Bethlehem, the man put to death at Golgotha and raised again in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, the man whose history this is – is the unity of the two [Gospel and Law]. He is both at one and the same time. He is the promise and the command, the Gospel and the Law, the address of God to [humanity] and the claim of God upon [humanity]. That He is both as the

Word of God spoken in His work, as the Word of God which has become work, is something which belongs to Himself as the eternal Son of God for Himself and prior to us.”  
(*CD*, IV/1, pg. 53).

Matthew 20:26-28 ~ “It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Romans 4:24-25 ~ “It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.”

John 1:1-5 ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.”

John 1:29 ~ “The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”

### **Gospel**

“The Good News”

“The Gospel is properly called glad and joyous news, in which, first by John the Baptist, then by Christ the Lord himself, and afterwards by the apostles and their successors, is preached to us in the world that God has now performed what [God] promised from the beginning of the world, and has sent, nay more, has given us [God’s] only son” (5.089).

“God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called [God’s] church are the heart of the gospel in any age” (9.06).

Calvin ~ “Now I take the gospel to be the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ.”  
(*Institutes*, 424).

I Timothy 4:6 ~ “If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith (the Gospel) and of the sound teaching that you have followed.”

### **Holy Spirit**

“We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the Church. The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us

through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church. In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in church and culture, to hear the

voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, 'Come, Lord Jesus!'" (10.4)

I. Third Person of the Trinity (6.013; 7.006; 7.119)

II. Work of the Holy Spirit

A. Effectively calls and binds us to Christ (6.064 & 7.031, 6.071)

B. Witnesses that we are children of God (6.098)

C. Gives us faith and assurance (3.12)

"Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers within us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost."

D. Convicts us of our sins (7.031)

E. Enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ (7.031)

F. Renews our wills (7.031)

III. Definition

"What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit?"

"First, that, with the Father and the Son, (the Holy Spirit) is equally eternal God; second, that God's Spirit is also given to me, preparing me through a true faith to share in Christ and all his benefits, that [the Spirit] comforts me and will abide with me forever" (4.053).

Calvin ~ "Therefore, in order to minister to this weakness [in prayer], God gives us the Spirit as our teacher in prayer, to tell us what is right and temper our emotions. For, 'because we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit comes to our help,' and 'intercedes for us with unspeakable groans' [Romans 8:26]; not that [the Spirit] actually prays or groans but arouses in us assurance, desires, and sighs, to conceive which our natural powers would scarcely suffice" (*Institutes*, 855).

John 14:15-17, 25-26 ~ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you . . . the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."

## Law

I. We cannot Fulfill nor Follow It

"Our nature is so corrupt, weak, and imperfect that we are never able perfectly to fulfill the works of the law. Whoever boasts of the merits of [their] own works puts [their] trust in damnable idolatry. It is essential for us to lay hold on Christ Jesus, in his righteousness and his atonement" (3.15).

II. Three Uses of the Law (The Ten Commandments):

A. Constrain us (Luther)

B. Convince us of our sin (Luther)

C. To educate us about the will of God, for believers (Calvin adds)

“Why does God have the ten commandments preached so strictly since no one can keep them in this life? First, that all our life long we may become increasingly aware of our sinfulness, and therefore more eagerly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ. Second, that we may constantly and diligently pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that more and more we may be renewed in the image of God, until we attain the goal of full perfection after this life” (4.115). [Note: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> use of the law].

Calvin ~ “The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns” (*Institutes*, 360).

Calvin ~ “The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work” (*Institutes*, 361).

Deuteronomy 4:40 ~ “Keep God’s statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

John 1:17 ~ “The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:20 ~ “Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by the deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.”

Galatians 3:10 ~ “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.’”

## **Repentance**

### I. Definition

“By repentance we understand (1) the recovery of a right mind in sinful [human] awakened by the Word of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit, and received by true faith, by which the sinner immediately acknowledges [his/her] innate corruption and all [his/her] sins accused by the Word of God; and (2) grieves for them from [her/his] heart, and not only bewails and frankly confesses them before God with a feeling of shame, but also (3) with indignation abominates them; and (4) now zealously considers the amendment of [her/his] ways and constantly strives for innocence and virtue in which conscientiously to exercise [herself] all the rest of [his] life” (5.093).

### II. Two parts of repentance (4.088)

A. The dying of the old self (4.089)

B. The birth of the new self (4.090)

### III. Private and Public Confession (6.086)



#### IV. Repentance does not save a person, God does (6.083)

“Although repentance be not to be rested in as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God’s free grace in Christ; yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.”

Calvin ~ “The Hebrew word for ‘repentance’ is derived from conversion or return; the Greek word, from change of mind or of intention . . . The meaning is that, departing from ourselves we turn to God, and having taken off our former mind, we put on a new . . . [Repentance] is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of [God]; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old [person], and the vivification of the Spirit.” (*Institutes*, 597).

Barth ~ “It is the goodness of God which leads us to repentance, i.e., when repentance means more than remorse, self-accusation, despair and the life, when it means that [a person] has really come to an end of [him/herself], when it has to be undertaken as the corresponding knowledge of this fact, and the attitude corresponding to this knowledge. That I do not love my neighbor; that I thus bring mortal guilt on myself; that I put myself in mortal need; and more than that, that I am a [person] who of [myself] will always be this way, even in [my] best efforts; that, although there is nothing to force me, I can never be anything different; that, however heavily they oppress me, I can never be anything different; that, however heavily they oppress me, I can never free myself from my guilt and need, because of myself I do not seriously want things changed; that there is in me no archimedian point from which I can reverse my transgression; that I do not control any resources by which to escape disquiet in my own strength – these are all things that I learn only when and as I learn the grace of God” (*CD*, IV/1, 768-769).

Jeremiah 18:8 ~ “If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.”

Matthew 3:2 ~ “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Acts 17:30 ~ “While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

### **Justification**

(See Migliore 175-77; Leith 79-80)

#### I. Justification by grace through faith (5.109)

#### II. Definitions

“To justify means to remit sins, to absolve from guilt and punishment, to receive into favor, and to pronounce a [person] just.” (5.106)

“Those whom God effectually calleth, [God] also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and sanctification of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God” (6.068).

“Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which [God] pardoneth all their sin, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in [God’s] sight; not for anything wrought in

them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them and received by faith alone” (7.180).

### III. And Sanctification (6.075)

First justified (once and for all) and then sanctification begins

Calvin ~ He argues for justification not by works (even of the regenerate) but by the grace of God freely given (no law righteousness) through faith alone. He goes on to establish “the close relationship between justification and forgiveness of sins” (*Institutes*, 743).

Genesis 15:5-6 ~ “The Lord brought Abram outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Romans 3:21-25a ~ “But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by [God’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”

## **Faith**

(See 5.112-5.123)

### I. What is true faith?

“It is not only a certain knowledge by which I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in [God’s] Word, but also a wholehearted trust which the Holy Spirit creates in me through the gospel, that, not only to others, but to me also God has given the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ’s saving work” (4.021).

### II. As a Gift of God

“Faith is a pure gift of God which God alone of [God’s] grace gives to [God’s] elect according to [God’s] measure when, to whom, and to the degree [God] wills. And [God] does this by the Holy Spirit by means of the preaching of the Gospel and steadfast prayer” (5.113).

### III. Origin of faith

“Since, then, faith alone makes us share in Christ and all his benefits, where does such faith originate?

The Holy Spirit creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy Sacraments” (4.065).

Calvin ~ Faith is “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (*Institutes*, 551).

Barth ~ “The knowledge of God is the knowledge of faith. In the first instance, it is simply a confirmation of the fact that the knowledge of God is bound to the object set before it by God’s Word – and to this object in its irrevocable objectivity. Faith is the total positive relationship of [humans] to God who gives [her/himself] to be known in [God’s] Word. It is [the persons] act of turning to God, of opening up [his/her] life to [God] and of surrendering to [God]. It is the Yes which [the person] pronounces in [his/her] heart when confronted by this God, because [he/she] knows [herself/himself] to be bound and fully bound” (CD, II/1, 12).

Genesis 15:1,6 ~ “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great’ . . . And Abram believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Hebrews 11:1-3 ~ “Now faith is the assurance [foundation, reality] of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.”

### **The Christian Life**

“The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death. The teaching of apostles and prophets guides [us] in living this life, and the Christian community nurtures and equips [us] for [our] ministries” (9.24).

I. Thankfulness (4.086)

II. Obedience

The Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:6-21)

III. Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer (4.11 – 4.129)

IV Sanctification

“Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers within us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; whom we confess to be God, equal with the Father and with [God’s] Son, who sanctifies us, and brings us into all truth by [God’s] own working, without whom we should remain forever enemies to God and ignorant of [God’s] Son, Christ Jesus” (3.12).

A. Regeneration (6.075)

B. Corruption Still Exists (6.077)

C. Yet Still Grow in Grace (6.077)

V. Good Works which are from God Alone (3.13-3.14)

Calvin ~ “The sum of the Christian life: The denial of ourselves” (*Institutes*. chp. VII).

Calvin ~ “It is, therefore, by the benefit of prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us with the Heavenly Father. For there is a communion of [people] with God by which, having entered the heavenly sanctuary, they appeal to [God] in person concerning [God’s] promises in order to experience, where necessity so demands, that what they believed was not in vain, although [God] had promised it in word alone. Therefore we see that to us nothing is promised to be expected from the Lord, which we are not also bidden to ask of [God] in prayers. So true is

it that we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord's gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon" (*Institutes*, 851).

Bonhoeffer ~ "Once we are sure of this point, we must add at once that this step is, and can never be more than, a purely external act and a dead work of the law, which can never of itself bring a person to Christ. As an external act of the new existence is not better than the old. Even at the highest estimate it can only achieve a new law of life, a new way of living which is poles apart from the new life with Christ. If a drunkard signs the pledge, or a rich person gives all their money away, they are both of them freeing themselves from their slavery to alcohol or riches, but not from their bondage to themselves. They are still moving in their own little orbit, perhaps even more than they were before. They are still subject to the commandment of works, still as submerged in the death of the old life as they were before" (*Cost of Discipleship*, 71).

Read Matthew 5-7 – The Beatitudes

### **The Church**

#### The Book of Confessions

##### I. Christ as Head of the Body

"Because the faithful are living members of Christ under Christ the head" (5.130).

"By Christ the Church will be preserved, increased, purified, and at last made perfectly holy in the presence of God" (6.054).

##### II. Marks of the Church

###### A. True Kirk (3.18)

Word Rightly Preached – "The true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed [Godself] to us"

B. Sacraments Rightly Administered – "The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus"

C. Discipline – "Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered as God's Word prescribes"

D. One, Holy, Apostolic Church (1.3, see also Leith 148ff)

##### III. Visible/Invisible Church

A. Invisible (see 3.16) – "The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect . . ." (6.140).

B. Visible – "The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion . . . through which [people] are ordinarily saved and union with which is essential to their best growth and service" (6.141).

##### IV. There is Always a Church (5.138, 6.144)

#### The Book of Order

##### I. God's Activity

"The mission of the church is given form by God's activity in the world as told in the Bible and understood by faith" (G-3.0100).

##### II. The Body of Christ

"The church as Jesus Christ is the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity. As such, the church is called to be a sign in and for the world of the new reality which God has made available to people in Jesus Christ" (G-3.0200).

### III. The Church's Calling

“The church is called to tell the good news of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord, proclaiming in Word and Sacrament” (G-3.0300).

### IV. Called to Risk and Trust

“The church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves to the new reality in Christ” (G-3.0400).

Calvin ~ “Although the melancholy desolation which confronts us on every side may cry that no remnant of the church is left, let us know that Christ's death is fruitful, that God miraculously keeps [God's] church as in hiding places. So it was said to Elijah, ‘Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him’ (1 Kings 19:18).”

Calvin ~ “The church was created out of Scripture, not Scripture out of the Church. Such wranglers are neatly refuted by just one word of the apostle. [God] testifies that the Church is ‘built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles’ (Ephesians 2:20). If the teaching of the prophets and apostles is the foundation, this must have authority before the Church began to exist” (*Institutes*, 75).

Barth ~ The church is “the earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ.”

1 Timothy 3:15 ~ “You may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.”

Ephesians 1:22-23 ~ “And [God] has put all things under [Jesus Christ's] feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

## **Mission**

(Read 9.31 – 9.46)

### I. Church Called to Mission of Reconciliation (9.31)

#### II. Mission of the church

“The mission of the Church is given form by God's activity in the world as told in the Bible and understood by faith . . . The Church is called to be a sign in and for the world of the new reality which God has made available to people in Jesus Christ. The new reality revealed in Jesus Christ is the new humanity, a new creation, a new beginning for human life in the world: (1) Sin is forgiven. (2) Reconciliation is accomplished. (3) The dividing walls of hostility are torn down” (Book of Order, G-3.0100, 3.0200 a,b).

Calvin ~ “To impart to us this benefit, the keys of the church have been given. When Christ gave the command to the apostles and conferred upon them the power to forgive sins, he did not

so much desire that the apostles absolve from sins those who might be converted for ungodliness to the faith of Christ, as that they should perpetually discharge this office among believers” (*Institutes*, 1035).

Matthew 28:19-20 ~ “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

## Marriage

### I. Definition

“For marriage (which is the medicine of incontinency, and contingency itself) was instituted by the Lord God, who blessed it most bountifully, and willed man and woman to cleave one to the other inseparably, and to live together in complete love and concord (Matthew 19:4ff.). Whereupon we know that the apostle said: ‘Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled’ (Heb. 13:4)” (5.246).

### II. Ordinance (5.171)

### III. Modern Day Struggle and Fidelity (9.47)

“The relationship between man and woman exemplified in a basic way God’s ordering of the interpersonal life for which [God] created [humankind]. Anarchy in sexual relationship is a symptom of [human’s] alienation from God, [his/her] neighbor, and [him/herself] (9.47).

Calvin ~ “The Lord sufficiently provided for us in this matter when [God] established marriage, the fellowship of which, begun on [God’s] authority, [God] also sanctified by [God’s] blessing. From this it is clear that any other union apart from marriage is accursed in [God’s] sight; and that the companionship of marriage has been ordained as a necessary remedy to keep us from plunging into unbridled lust” (*Institutes*, 405).

Read I Corinthians 7 ~ “Because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband” (v. 2).

## Sacraments

(See 5.169-5.184; Migliore, 211-212)

“A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his Church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another, and to distinguish them from those that are without” (7.272).

### I. There are only two (3.21) – Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

### II. There are three components of a Sacrament (5.169) see also (5.178)

A. Word: Instituted and commanded by Christ for all members of the body

B. Sign and sacred action: water, bread, wine

C. Thing signified: Promise sealed by these actions. “I will be with you.”

### III. Must be administered by an ordained minister, or a commissioned lay person with approval of the Presbytery (G-14.0516)

- IV. Through the Sacraments: God: (Book of Order W-1.3033)
  - A. Seals believers in Redemption
  - B. Renews their identity as the people of God
  - C. Marks them for service: “The reformed tradition understands Baptism and The Lord’s Supper to be Sacraments, instituted by God and commanded by Christ. Sacraments are signs of the real presence and power of Christ in the church, symbols God’s actions. Through Sacraments, God seals believers in redemption, renews their identity as people of God, and marks them for service” (W-1.3033).
- V. Effectual Means of Salvation: “The Sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves or any virtue derived from the piety or intention of [the Pastor] by whom they are administered: but only by the working of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing by Christ whom they are instituted” (7.271).

Augustine ~ “The sacraments are visible signs of an invisible grace.”

Calvin ~ “The sacraments profit not a wit without the power of the Holy Spirit . . . The sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone parts are penetrated and affects moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in. If the Spirit be lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more in our minds than the splendor of the Sun shining upon blind eyes or a voice sounding in deaf ears (*Institutes*, 1284).

### Baptism

(see Migliore, 214; 6.139; 5.185ff)

- I. Sacrament in three parts:
  - A. The Word comes from Jesus’ own baptism and the command to baptize.
  - B. The sign is the pouring of water and Trinitarian formula.
  - C. The promise is the forgiveness of sins.
- II. Meanings of Baptism: “By humble submission to John’s baptism Christ joined himself to humans in their need and entered upon his ministry of reconciliation in the power of the spirit. Christian baptism marks the receiving of the same spirit by all God’s people” (9.51).
  - A. initiation, becoming a child of God
  - B. washing, cleansing of the spirit
  - C. dying and rising with Christ
  - D. rebirth by the Holy Spirit
  - E. engrafting into the body of Christ. (I Corinthians 12:13) “For with one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”
- III. Only one baptism
  - A. “For baptism once received continues for all life, and is a perpetual sealing of our adoption” (5.196).
  - B. Ephesians 4:4-6 “There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”
- IV. Yes Infants!!
  - A. (3.23) part of the community of believers.

- B. (4.074) distinguished from children of non believers, and same as Old Testament sign of circumcision
  - C. (9.51) community has a covenantal responsibility to support children in their Christian growth
  - D. The Baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God’s love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. W-2.3008
- V. What is accomplished by Baptism?
- A. Forgiveness of sins
  - B. Bestowing of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-7)
  - C. Calling forth of the church (Acts 2:37-38)

Rules for Baptism (Long)

- I. One kind of Baptism (for both adults and children)
- II. Only administered once
- III. Must be administered by Ordained Minister (promises to do it “rightly”)
- IV. Must be corporate

Book of Order (see W-2.3000)

W-2.3012 Session Responsibility:

- a. Encouraging Parents to present children
- b. Admitting to baptism adults who make profession of faith
- c. Placing baptized persons on the rolls of membership
- d. Making certain that those who are baptized are nurtured in the understanding of the meaning of baptism, and that they are surrounded by Christian encouragement.

W-2.3013 Church Responsibilities –  
Nurturing the baptized

W-2.3014 Parental Responsibility –  
Promise to provide nurture and guidance

Calvin ~ “Baptism is the sign of the institution by which we are received into the society of the church, in order that, engrafted in Christ, we may be reckoned among God’s children. Now baptism was given to us by God for these ends; first, to serve our faith before [God]; secondly, to serve our confession before [God] . . . Baptism brings three things to our faith” (*Institutes*, 1304).

Calvin ~ “Infants are baptized into future repentance and faith, even though these have not been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit” (*Institutes*, 1343).

Matthew 28:18-20 ~ “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 2:37-38 ~ “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the



other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

### The Lord’s Table

“The Lord’s Supper is a celebration of the reconciliation of [people] with God and with one another, in which they joyfully eat and drink together at the table of their Savior. Jesus Christ gave his church this remembrance of his dying for sinful [people] so that by participation in it they have communion with him and with all who shall be gathered to him. Partaking in him as they eat the bread and drink the wine in accordance with Christ’s appointment, they receive from the risen and living Lord the benefits of his death and resurrection. They rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will bring to consummation at his promised coming, and go out from the Lord’s Table with courage and hope for the service to which he had called them” (9.52).

#### I. Christ’s Presence (5.205)

##### A. Christ is in Heaven

“We do not, therefore, so join the body of the Lord and his blood with bread and wine as to say that the bread itself is the body of Christ except in a sacramental way.”

##### B. Christ is in the Celebration

“Yet the Lord is not absent from his Church when she celebrates the Supper.”

##### C. Both / And

“Christ, although in his body he is absent from us in heaven, present with us, not corporeally, but spiritually.

#### II. Outward Sign of Promise

“And this is visibly represented by this sacrament outwardly through the ministers, and, as it were, presented to our eyes to be seen, which is invisibly wrought by the Holy Spirit inwardly in the soul” (5.196).

“[Christ] has promised that he himself as certainly feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life with his crucified body and shed blood as I receive from the hand of the minister and actually taste the bread and the cup of the Lord which are given to me as sure signs of the body and blood of Christ” (4.075).

#### III. Christ’s Death Shown Forth

“By giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ’s appointment, his death is showed forth . . . [and the receivers] by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace” (7.096).

#### IV. Admission to the Feast of Thanksgiving (Eucharist)

“We hold that the Supper of the Lord is only for those who are of the household of faith and can try and examine themselves both in their faith and their duty to their neighbors” (3.22).

#### V. Past, Present, & Future (9.52)

Past - “Jesus Christ gave his church this remembrance of his dying for sinful [people] so that by participation in it they have communion with him and with all who shall be gathered to him.”

Present - [They] go out from the Lord’s Table with courage and hope for the service to which he has called them.”

Future – “They rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will bring to consummation at his promised coming.”

### Rules for Lord’s Supper (Long)

- I. Visible Word attached to Spoken Word
- II. Served Quarterly
- III. Open to every Baptized person
- IV. Children – Curiosity of child, but any baptized person
- V. Minister of Word and Sacrament only can administer
- VI. Corporate

Calvin ~ “The signs are bread and wine, which represent for us the invisible food that we receive from the flesh and blood of Christ. For as in baptism, God, regenerates us, engrafts us into the society of [God’s] church and makes us [God’s] own by adoption, so we have said, that [God] discharges the function of a provident householder in continually supplying to us the food to sustain and preserve us in that life into which [God] has begotten us by [God’s] Word. Now Christ is the only food of our soul . . . that, refreshed by partaking of him, we may repeatedly gather strength until we shall have reached heavenly immortality” (*Institutes*, 1360).

Calvin ~ “Now, if anyone should ask me how this takes place, I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare. And, to speak more plainly, I rather experience than understand it” (*Institutes*, 1403).

John 6:51 ~ “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

I Corinthians 11:23-26 ~ “The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

### Worship

#### I. God alone is Worshiped

“We teach that the true God alone is to be adored and worshiped. This honor we impart to none other, according to the commandment of the Lord, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’ (Matthew 4:10)” (5.023).

#### II. The Gathered Church (9.36)

“The church gathers to praise God, to hear [God’s] word for [human]kind, to baptize and to join in the Lord’s Supper, to pray for and present the world to [God] in worship, to enjoy fellowship, to receive instruction, strengthen, and comfort, to order and organize its own corporate life, to be tested, renewed, and reformed, and to speak and act in the world’s affairs as may be appropriate to the needs of the time.”

### III. Worship as Praise and Empowerment

- A. As Praise: “Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise and honor, glory and power to the triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God present in the world and in their life” (W-1.001)
- B. As Empowerment: “The Spirit of God quickens people to an awareness of God’s grace and claim upon their lives. The Spirit moves them to respond by naming and calling upon God, by remembering and proclaiming God’s acts of self-revelation in word and deed, and by committing their lives to God’s reign in the world” (W-1.1002a).

### IV. Order of worship

- A. Gathering Around the Word -RECOGNITION
- B. Proclaiming the Word -PROCLAMATION
- C. Responding to the Word -OBLATION
- D. Sealing the Word -CELEBRATION
- E. Bearing & Following the Word into the World -BENEDICTION

Psalm 117 ~ “Praise the LORD, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!”

Calvin ~ “What is required for the true knowledge of God, we have taught that we cannot conceive of [God] in [God’s] greatness without being immediately confronted by [God’s] majesty, and so compelled to worship [God]” (*Institutes*, 367).

Barth ~ “No praise can be too high for the mighty and triumphant grace of God in the atonement as the fulfillment of the covenant. But this praise must not be spoiled by any undertones which directly or indirectly minimizes or even approves the incident in virtue of which the fulfillment of the covenant necessarily has the character of an atonement. It must not be made misleading or harmful to those who hear it, or unacceptable to God” (*CD*, IV/I, 69).

### State

“Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (I Peter 2:17).

- I. God ordains the civil state over people for the defense and punishment of evildoers (6.127).
- II. Christians can be civil authorities and “wage war upon just and necessary occasions” (6.128).
- III. Civil government cannot administer the Word and Sacrament but protects the church to do this (6.128). “The state has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace” (8.22)
- IV. Duty of church to pray for the civil government (6.130)
- V. Subject to their authority and to obey their lawful commands (6.130)

Calvin ~ “It is no slight importance to us to know how lovingly God had provided in [civil government] for [human]kind, that greater zeal for piety may flourish in us to attest our gratefulness” (*Institutes*, 1486).

Barth ~ The church “reminds the world of God’s Kingdom. God’s commandment and righteousness and thereby of the responsibility of governments and governed (*Barmen Thesis* No. 5)” (*Public Theology*, 275).

Barth ~ “The state is not a product of sin but one of constants of the divine Providence . . . it is therefore an instrument of divine grace” (*Public Theology*, 275).

Romans 13:1-7 ~ “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.

Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them – taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

### Consummation

(to bring to completion)

#### I. Eschatology

“The resurrection of Jesus is God’s sign that [God] will consummate [God’s] work of creation and reconciliation beyond death and bring to fulfillment the new life begun in Christ” (9.26).

#### II. Resurrection of the Body (4.057, 2.3)

“The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection” (7.037).

#### III. Everyone shall be resurrected in body; some to glory, some to punishment (3.25).

#### IV. Believers will be “acknowledged and acquitted in the Day of the Judgement” to enjoy God to all eternity (7.038).

Calvin ~ “Though the Scripture teaches that the kingdom of God is full of light, joy, felicity, and glory, nevertheless all that is said about it is far above our intelligence, and as though wrapped in imagery until the day shall come when the Savior will explain [Godself] to us face to face” (*Institutes*, 1004).

I Corinthians 15:50-58 ~ This I say, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither does perishable inherit imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not fall asleep, but we all shall be changed, in a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet. For a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on imperishability, and this mortal must put on immortal. And when this perishable shall put on imperishable, and this mortal shall put on immortal, then the word having been written will be [fulfilled]: ‘Death was swallowed up in victory. Where, O

death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! The one giving to us the victory through the Lord of us Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord always, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Luke 12:37-40 ~ Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If

he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

## **CONDENSED OUTLINES BY THEOLOGICAL TOPIC**

### **Gospel**

#### **I. Helvetic (Chapter 18)**

A. Opposed to law

B. Def. = glad and joyous news. First by John the B., then Christ, then apostles and successors. God has now performed what God promised from the beginning of the world – given us God's only son.

C. Teaching of gospel is not new, but ancient doctrine

#### **II. 1967 (9.06)**

Heart of the gospel in any age = God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and mission of the reconciliation God has called church to

#### **III. Westminster (6.190)**

No other way to salvation than that revealed in gospel

### **Quotes and Scriptures**

- Now I take the gospel to be a clear manifestation of mystery of Christ

- I Timothy 4:6

### **Creation**

#### **I. God created all things, both visible and invisible (Helv. 5.032) by God's co-eternal word and preserves them with co-eternal spirit**

John 1:3 – All things came into being through him and w/out him not one thing came into being

#### **II. All things God created are Good (Helv. 5.032)**

Gen 1:31 – God saw everything that He had made and it was very good

#### **III. Image of God (SC 7.010)**

Gen 1.26 – God said let's make human kind in our image.

How did God create man? God created male and female after God's own image in knowledge, righteousness and holiness . . .

#### **IV.Redemption of Creation (Brief 10.3)**

Creatio ex nihilo – God created everything out of nothing

Creatio Continua – God continues to create everything and is active in creation

#### **Quotes**

1. Calvin
  - From the beginning nothing at all existed in which God has not put forth an example of His own wisdom and righteousness.
2. Barth
  - Creation means the irruption and revelation of divine compassion

### **Sin**

#### **I. Definitions**

- A. (Helv. 5.037) innate corruption of humans which has been derived in us all from our first parents. Now we are averse to good and inclined to evil.
- B. (SC 14) Sin is any want of conformity, or transgression of law of God.

#### **II. God is not the author of Sin**

- A. (Scots 3.03) by not eating the fruit the image of God was utterly defaced in humans and their own children b/c by nature hostile to God, slaves to Satan, servants to sin.
- B. Romans 5.12 – sin came into the world through one man

#### **III.Threefold condition of humans (Helv. Ch. 4)**

- A. What man was before fall – upright and free to do good or evil
- B. What man was after fall – free will now enslaved to sin
- C. Man does evil by own free will

#### **Quotes and Scriptures**

Romans 6.23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus

1. Calvin – our ruin is ascribed to us alone, for we acquired righteousness by God's kindness and by our own folly sunk into vanity.
2. Barth – Sin can never be first or final word. We must take it seriously but God in Jesus Christ is superior to it and overcome it. We are not superior to it, JC is.

### **Holy Spirit**

#### **I. Definition**

- A. 3<sup>rd</sup> person of Trinity (SC 7.006)
- B. What do you believe is re: HS 1) That w/F and S, HS is equally eternally God. 2) HS is given to me to have a true faith and share in JC and benefits 3) HS comforts and will abide w/me forever

#### **II. Work of HS**

- A. Calls and binds us to JC (West 6.064)
- B. Witnesses that we are children of God (West. 6.098)
- C. Give us faith and assurance (Scots 3.12): Do not proceed from flesh and blood, but are inspiration of HS
- D. Sanctifies and regenerates us (Scots. 3.12)
- E. Convicts us of our sins (SC 7.03)

- F. Enlightens our minds in knowledge of JC (SC 7.03)
- G. Renews our wills (SC 7.03)
- H. See Brief 10.4 for comprehensive list.

## **Quotes and Scriptures**

Calvin

God gives us the HS as teacher in prayer

Because we do not know how to pray as we ought the HS comes to our help and intercedes for us w/ unspeakable groans

John 15:26

I will send to you the spirit of truth from the Father who will bear witness to me.

John 14

- I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever
- The world can't receive b/c it neither sees him or knows him
- The HS will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.

## **Marriage**

### **I. Definition**

Helv. 5.246 – Marriage was instituted by God, who blessed it most bountifully and willed man and woman to cleave to the other inseparably, and to live together in complete love and concord. We know the apostle said, “Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled.” (Heb 13:4)

### **II. Purpose**

- A. West 6.131 – happiness and welfare of mankind.
  - Spiritual and physical union of 1 man and 1 woman
  - Mutual esteem and love, comforting each other, praying
  - Living together as heirs of grace
- B. Calvin – necessary to keep us from plunging into unbridled lust
- C. 1 Cor 7 – b/c of sexual immorality

### **IV. Modern day struggle and fidelity**

- A. 1967 9.47 – relationship between a man and a woman exemplified God's ordering of the interpersonal life for which God created humans. Anarchy in sexual relationship is a symptom of human's alienation from God.

### **Miscellaneous**

Helvetic 5.246

- To be lawfully contracted
- Consent of parents
- Guard against quarrels, lust and adultery

West Ch. 26

- Designed for mutual help of husband and wife
- Religious as well as civil significance
- Marriage=covenant
- Divorce allowable in extreme cases

1 Cor 7

Eph 5 – parable of Christ’s love for church

### Lord’s Supper

#### **I. Celebration of reconciliation**

Px of God w/ one another and w/ God partaking in him as they eat and drink, they receive benefits of death and resurrection (67 9.52)

#### **II. Christ’s presence**

A. Christ is in heaven

- We do not join the body of the Lord and his blood w/ bread and wine as to say the bread is the body except in a sac. way (Helv. 5.205)

B. Christ in celebration

- Lord not absent from church when she celebs. supper (5.205)

C. Both / and

- Christ absent in body is present w/ us – not corporeally, but spiritually. (5.205)

- Calvin – if anyone should ask how this takes place I shall not be ashamed to confess that it’s a secret too lofty for my mind to apprehend or words to declare

#### **III. Outward sign of promise**

A. sign outwardly done by minister, inwardly wrought by HS on soul (Helv.)

B. JC promised he nourishes my soul to ever lasting life (Heid 4.075)

C. Augustine – visible sign of invisible grace

#### **IV. Past, Present and Future (1967)**

A. past – JC gave this remem. of his dying for sinful px so that they have communion with him.

B. present – go out from him LS w/ courage and hope for service to which we are called (67)

C. future – rejoice in foretaste of kingdom

#### **Quotes and Scriptures**

I Cor 11:23-26 words of institution on the night.

Calvin – Christ is the only food of our soul . . . refreshed by partaking we repeatedly gather strength until we reach heavenly immortality.

### Mission of the Church

#### **I. Reconciliation – based on Christ’s example**

A. Church universal trusted with God’s message of reconciliation and shares his labor of healing enmities which separate men from God and each other (67 931)

B. Matt 28:18-20

#### **II. To be a sign of new reality revealed in JC**

A. New reality = new humanity, new creation, new beginning of life

1. Sin forgiven

2. Reconciliation

3. Hostilities torn down (BO 0100)

B. Church’s commission is to deliver message of free grace of God (Bar. 6)

C. Calvin – the keys of the church have been given to impart to us reconciliation



## Miscellaneous

1967 – life, death, resurrection and promised coming of JC has set pattern for church's mission

### Covenant

#### I. God's Covenant with Israel for all (1967 9.18)

God expressed God's love for all humankind through Israel whom God chose to be God's covenant people to serve in love and faithfulness

#### II. Covenant of Grace – New Testament (West 6.040)

A. 1<sup>st</sup> cov. Cov of Works

B. 2<sup>nd</sup> cov = cov. of grace called a testament in scripture refers to death and resurrection of JC, the testator and free offering of salvation to sinners (only I Cov. under dif dispensations)

C. Hebrews 8:6-7 JC is mediator of a better cov. enacted thru better promises. If 1<sup>st</sup> covenant faultless, no need for second one.

#### III. Covenant and infant baptism (Heid 74)

Both redemption and faith are promised to children so they are to be incorporated into church through baptism as a sign of the covenant.

## Quotes and Scriptures

### 1. Book of Order

other great themes of Ref. Tradition = covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for other (G2.0500a)

### 2. Genesis 17:7

I will establish my cov. between me and you and your offspring after you – for an everlasting cov.

### Sacraments

#### I. Defined

Holy Ordinance instituted by JC to signify, seal and exhibit the benefits of his mediation . . . (LC 7.262)

#### II. 2 Sacraments

Baptism & Lord's Supper (Scots 3.21)

#### III.3 Components

A. WORD – instituted and commanded by JC for all body

B. SIGN – water, bread, wine

C. Thing SIGNIFIED – promise sealed by actions "I will be with you"

#### IV. Accomplishments (by God through sacs)

A. SEALS believers in redemption

B. RENEWS their identity as px of God

C. MARKS them for service (BO W 1.3033)

#### V. Effectual means of salvation

A. Grace conferred in/by sacs, not having any power in them but by the work of the HS and WORDS of institution

## Quotes

Augustine

sacs are visible signs of an invisible grace

Calvin

sacs profit not w/out power of HS

## Scripture

### **I. Canonical (Scot 3.18) – NT and OT originally reckoned canonical**

No additional to canon commanded by God (Helv. 5.002)

### **II. Authority from God only not men, angels, or church (Scots 3.19)**

### **III. Used for preaching and teaching**

A. To equip for mission and bring px to JC (1967 9.49)

B. Useful for teaching, reproof, correction, right training (2 Tim 3:16)

C. The only role to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God (SC 7.002)

### **IV. Inspiration of God (West. 6.002) (2 Tim 3:16)**

### **V. Interpretation**

A. Scripture interprets scripture (West. 6.009)

B. Interpreted in light of its witness to JC

C. Illumination of HS (1967 9.30)

### **VI. Revelation/Word of God (1967 9.27)**

the one sufficient revelation of God is JC, the word of God incarnate to whom the HS bears unique and authoritative witness through Holy Scripture.

## Quotes

### 1. Book of Order

where word is read and proclaimed = JC is present by HS

### 2. Calvin

Testimony of the spirit is more excellent than all reason word won't find acceptance w/out inward testimony of HS

### 3. Barth

The word of God makes the church the church

## State

### **I. State is from God instituted for peace and public tranquility (Helv. 5.252)**

A. God ORDAINS state for defense of good and punishment of evildoers (W.3127)

B. God's **reconciliation** in JC is **grounded for all peace** and justice among nations which all gov. are called to serve and defend. (1967 9.45)

### **II. Xians can be civil authorities and wage war in just/necessary occasions (West. 6.128)**

War ok if first sought peace by all possible means (Helv. 5.256)

### **III. State can't administer W & S but protects church to do it (West. 6.128)**

### **IV. Church subject to their authority and to obey lawful commands (W.6.128)**

A. Any rebels against state are rebels against God's will (Scots 3.24)

B. Members of Church seek good of man in cooperation w/ authorities, but must fight against injustice when powers endanger human welfare.

### **V. Duty of church to pray for civil gov. (West. 6.130)**

## Quotes and Scriptures

Barmen I Peter 2:17: Fear God, Honor the Emperor

Calvin –

God lovingly provided in civil gov. for humankind, that greater zeal for **piety may flourish** to show our thankfulness.

Barth –

state is not a product of sin, but a constant of **state is instrument of divine grace**

Romans 3:1

Let every px be subject to governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God.

## Church

### I. Body of Christ

A. Christ as head (Eph. 1:22)

B. The church as JC is the **provisional demo of what God intends for all humanity.**

Church called to be a sign of new reality in/for world.

C. Barth – Church is earthly – historical form of existence of JC.

### II. Mission

A. Given form by God's activity in world as told by scripture (BO 3.0100)

B. Called to tell good news of salvation by grace through faith (BO 3.0300)

### III. Marks (Scot. 3.18)

A. True preaching of WORD

B. Right admin of sacs

C. Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly admin.

### IV. Visible/invisible

A. All throughout world who profess true religion (West 6.141) a.k.a Catholic Universal

B. Chosen of all ages, all realms, nations and tongues (Scots 3.16)

- whole # of elect past, present and future (West 6.140)

- at times church appears extinct but God has in darkness true worshipers (Helv. 5.138)

## Quotes

One holy, catholic apostolic church – Nicene Creed

## Jesus Christ

### I. Fully human

A. (Scots 3.08) Son of God descend unto us and take himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone and become mediator between God and humans

B. (1967 9.07) JC is God with man. He is the eternal son of the Father who b/c human and lived among us to fulfill work of reconciliation

C. He is new humanity in relation to God and others

### II. Fully God

A. 2 Cor 5:19 God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself

B. JC is God with man

C. New understanding of Divine – a humble servant w/ unconditional love

### III. Unity of human and divine

A. (Helv. 5.066) 2 natures, h and d, in one and the same JC our Lord – not absorbed, confused or mixed but joined together in 1 px – unimpaired.

B. We worship not 2 but one Lord. Same essence with father and humans.

- C. (Scots 3.07) Why Mediator had to be true man and true God – it is an eternal decree of God on which our salvation springs and depends.
  - Augustine – that which he has not assumed, he has not healed (Heid Q 14-15)

#### **IV.3 offices of Christ as our redeemer**

- A. Prophet (SC 7.024): Revealing to us by his word and spirit the will of God for our salvation
- B. Priest: Christ's once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice
- C. King: In subduing us to himself, ruling and defending us and conquering enemies
  - Aquinas – wherefore as to others one is lawgiver, another priest, another king, but all these concur in JC as fount in all grace.

### **Christian Life**

#### **I. Defined**

- A. “**New life**” in JC brought about by reconciling work, it brings forgiveness, moves px to respond, repent., and initiates new life in JC (67 9.21)
- B. **Calvin** – denial of ourselves is sum

#### **II. Reasons for living Xian life**

- A. **Thankfulness** – grateful to God for redemption (JC) and renewal (HS)
  - Prayer** is chief part of gratitude. God requires it of us (Heid 9.116)
- B. **Obedience** – God requires obedience to His revealed will (SC39)
  1. Matt 5-7 Beatitudes – whoever breaks one of these will be called least in the kingdom of heaven
  2. 10 commandments Ex 20
- C. Works as direct result of true faith

#### **III. Sanctification**

- A. Sanct. Is throughout the whole px, but **imperfect in this life** – corruption still exists, but the regenerate part does overcome and we grow in grace.
- B. Our faith proceeds from HS who sanctifies us and brings us into truth by God's working (Scots 3.12)

#### **IV. Good works from God alone**

- A. Truly good works grow out of a living faith by the **HS** and are done by the faithful (Helv 5.115)
- B. **HS** brings forth good works (Scots 3.13)
- C. Eph. 2:10 **For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

### **Faith**

#### **I. What is true faith?**

- A. Calvin – a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us founded upon the freely given promise in JC – revealed to our minds and sealed to our hearts through the HS.
- B. Heid 4.021 – not only a certain knowledge, but a wholehearted trust from HS that God has forgiven my sins out of sheer knowledge of faith.

#### **II. As a gift of God**

- Helv. 5.113 – faith is a pure gift of God which God gives to the elect when, to whom and to what degree God wills.

### **III. Origin of faith**

- Heid 65 – since faith alone makes us share in JC and all his benefits where does such faith originate? HS creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and confirms it with sacraments.

### **IV. Faith and good works**

- Helv. 5.119 We are not saved by good works, but by grace, through faith, works necessarily proceed from faith and please God

### **Quotes and Scripture**

- Faith is not a work that saves us but acknowledgment that we are saved.

Hebrew 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen.

## **Law**

### **I. We cannot fulfill or follow it**

A. Scots 3.15 – our nature is so corrupt, weak and imperfect . . . whoever boasts of their own works puts their trust in damnable idolatry.

B. We must lay hold on JC right and atonement

### **II. 3 uses of the law (10 commandments)**

A. Constrain us (Luther)

- Calvin – The law is to the flesh like a whip to an ass – arouse it to work.

B. Convict us of our sin (Luther)

1. Heid. #3 where do you learn of your sin and its wretched consequences?

From the law of God

2. Rom 3:20 – Through the law comes knowledge of sin

C. Educate us about will of God, for believers (Calvin adds)

1. Heid 4.115

a. b/c aware of sinfulness to seek forgiveness and right in JC.

b. To pray for grace so we are renewed in image of God

2. Helv. 5.080 – will of God is explained to us in God's law

3. Helv. 5.085 Law no longer condemns but guides

### **Quotes and Scripture**

3 types: moral – only lasting one

Ceremonial

Judicial

John 1:17 law given through Moses

Grace and truth through Jesus

## **Repentance**

### **I. Defined**

A. Conversation to God – sincere turning to God and good and earnest turning from devil and evil (Helv. 5.094)

- B. Process:
1. Recovery of right mind by gospel and HS
  2. Grieves from sin and confess
  3. Stop sin
  4. Strive for virtue

## **II. 2 parts**

- A. Dying of old self – sorrow over hate and free from sins (Heid 89)
- B. Birth of new self – joy in Christ and desire to do God’s will (Heid 90)

## **III. Church allows for private and public confession**

- A. Sinner ought to declare his repentance to those that are offended (W6.086)
- B. Pastoral care includes: receiving confession, declaring God’s forgiveness and calling for repentance, helping in struggle . . . (BO W-6.3009)

## **IV. Repentance doesn’t save God does**

- A. Barth – goodness of God leads us to repent
- B. Matt 3:2 – Repent for Kingdom of heaven has come near
- C. R = act of God’s free grace in JC (West. 6.083)

## **Worship**

### **I. God alone is worshiped**

-This honor we give to none other as commanded “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (Matt 4:10) Helv. 5.023

### **II. Gathered church**

- Church gathers to praise, baptize, Lord’s supper, enjoy fellowship, get instruction, comfort, be renewed and tested, pray for world.

### **III. Praise and empowerment**

- A. Worship as praise – Xian worship joyfully ascribes all praise, honor, glory and power to triune God. Px of God acknowledge God present in worlds and their life (W1.001)
- B. Worship as Empowerment – HS moves px to respond to God’s grace by calling on, remembering and proclaiming, committing their lives to God.

### **IV. Order of Worship**

- A. Gathering around WORD
- B. Proclaiming the WORD
- C. Responding the WORD
- D. Sealing the WORD
- E. Bearing and following WORD into world

## **Quotes and Scripture**

Calvin

- We can’t conceive of God’s greatness w/out being confronted w/ God’s majesty and so compelled to worship God

Barth

- No praise can be too high for the mighty grace of God in the atonement. It must be misleading or harmful to those who hear it or unacceptable to God

Psalm 117

- Praise the Lord. All you nations! For great is His love toward us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

## Justification

### **I. Defined**

- A. Being made right w/ God by an act or gift of God (Rom 3:24)
- B. For as God, the Father beholds us in body of JC, he accepts our imperfect obedience as if it were perfect. Covers our works which are defiled, with the right. of his son (Scots Ch 15)

### **II. By grace thru faith (Luther)**

- A. Just. by faith alone in the mercy of God and not by law or works (Helv. 5.109)
- B. Eph 2:8-9 For by grace

### **III. Linked with Renunciation of sins and forgiveness**

- A. God justifies by pardoning sins/, by accepting px as right. and by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of JC unto them (West. 6.068)
- B. Calvin – close to relat. Between just. And forgiveness of sins

### **IV. Sanctification**

- A. Once called and regenerated (just.), having a new heart and spirit created in them are further sanctified (West 6.075)
- B. Just. tells us God is for us sanct. tells us that by HS God works in us

## Trinity

Definition: one God in three person – F,S,HS – and these 3 are 1 God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory

### **I. God is one (Helv. 5.015)** – “God is one in essence and nature, subsisting and sufficient in Godself”

- A. Deut 6:4 The Lord your God is one Lord
- B. God who redeems is also the God who creates, gives life and speaks by prophets

### **II. God is three** – “the same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion distinguished as F, S, HS”

- Matthew 28:19 – “In the name of the F, S, HS”

### **III. Not three gods (Helv 5.017)** – Not 3 gods, but 3 persons/consubstantial, coeternal and coequal; distinct with respect to *hypostases* (persons) (Calvin)

### **IV. Immanent and economic**

- A. Economic – differentiated agency of F, S, HS in economy of salvation (earth)
- B. Immanent – eternal distinction of persons within being of God. (heaven) – based on #1

### **Miscellaneous**

1. Biblical basis of Trinity not found in a few proof texts, but in pervasive Trinitarian pattern of NT
2. Calvin –  
They cannot shake our conviction that 3 persons are spoken of, each is entirely God, yet there is not more than 1 God.
3. Barth  
- Trinity as “3 modes of being” or “3 distinct ways of subsisting”

4. SX of Nicene and Apostles Creed
  - F our creation
  - S our redemption
  - HS our sanctification (Heid 24)
- Works are indivisible
- Perichoresis – way Trinity relates to each other.

## **SOME TIPS FROM THE WASHINGTON READING GROUP**

### **THEOLOGY EXAM**

1. Use the Book of Confessions thoroughly.
2. Cite specific passages in the various confessions (“Open Book” part).
3. Concentrate not just on one confession but the same theme in a number of confessions.
4. Answer the question:
  - (A) Do not be pastoral if it is not asked for.
  - (B) Cite means give numerical location.
  - (C) Citations means cite several confessions for each section (if there is more than one section).
  - (D) If the question asks for Reformed Theology, show your knowledge of Reformed Theology even if you don’t agree with it. The purpose of this test is not to evaluate your theology (that is left up to your CPM) but rather to make sure you know Reformed Theology.
5. Use details. Be specific. Don’t be too general.
6. Know how to relate doctrine to modern experience.
7. Be able to identify theological issues from a given life situation. In your answer, discuss the major issues not the side issues.
8. Write clearly!



## **THEOLOGY: STUDENT ADVICE**

### A. General: This exam covers three things:

- 1) knowledge of Book of Confessions and Reformed Theology, including classical and contemporary Reformed theologians (you may use the Book of Confessions for this part only);
- 2) ability to interpret and explain doctrine constructively to contemporary people (e. g. why do we need a doctrine of the trinity? what difference does Jesus' divinity make?);
- 3) ability to use theological categories to diagnose and analyze and respond pastorally to some contemporary issue (AIDS, sexuality, fetal research, church conflict, etc.). Making the doctrines intelligible to lay persons in a loving way is your task.

### B. Reading Five books in descending value for Ords:

- 1) Edward Dowey, *A COMMENTARY ON THE CONFESSION OF 1967 AND INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*. This is a classic.
- 2) J. Leith, *INTRODUCTION TO THE REFORMED TRADITION* (Knox 1981), tells you everything you wanted to know about Calvin's influence on the Tradition. Very readable; gives helpful lists (e.g., 9 motifs that shape Reformed Christianity p 70f; 7 characteristics of Reformed Theology pp 96-112; 4 basic principles of Presbyterianism p 155f). Has useful materials on polity, liturgy, and how Reformed Tradition interacts with culture.
- 3) S. Guthrie, *CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE* (Covenant Life Curriculum 1968). This is slightly dated but was the standard work in the P.C.U.S. It lays out the doctrines of Reformed Faith in terms accessible to the laity. Guthrie is professor of Systematic Theology at Columbia Seminary and a Barth scholar.
- 4) J. Rogers, *PRESBYTERIAN CREEDS: A GUIDEBOOK TO THE CONFESSIONS* (Westminster 19--). This is general background with some preaching thrown in. Easy reading; not as foundational as 1-3.
- 5) F. Gear, *OUR PRESBYTERIAN BELIEF* (Knox 1980) [Fairly basic.]

### C. Strategy

- 1) Read the *Book of Confessions* carefully (skip the Larger West Catechism), particularly the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, Shorter Catechism, Barmen, C '67 and A Brief Statement of Faith.
- 2) Use Dr. Dowey's 24 categories (based on 2<sup>nd</sup> Helvetic) and supplement it with Leith's categories and references from the Book of Confessions.
- 3) Know what at least one classical and one contemporary Reformed theologian has to say about each category.
- 4) Use biblical passages to support your theology.
- 5) List past considerations. See Worship Advice in other section.
- 6) In explaining Christian doctrine, spend a paragraph showing the original problem addressed by the doctrine. If done pastorally, graders appreciate it.
- 7) Look at old exams unless that makes you anxious.

**THE COPY OF THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS USED DURING PART I OF THE EXAM MUST BE A CLEAN, UNMARKED COPY WITH NO ADDITIONS IN ANY FORM. AT PRINCETON SEMINARY THE OFFICE OF STUDENT RELATIONS & SENIOR PLACEMENT WILL PROVIDE THIS.**

**SEPTEMBER 1999**

**EXAMINATION IN THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

This examination shall assess the candidate's capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the Gospel to the faith and life of the church in the contemporary world. [G-14.031d. (3)]

This examination seeks to test your capacity to use biblical, classical and/or contemporary theological insights in doing constructive theology in the practice of ministry. The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, and/or ethical significance.

The examination questions intend to test competence in:

1. Interpreting a confessional stance faithfully in context. An open book question utilizing *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be included on this examination. The purpose of this question is to explore the candidate's capacity to articulate the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the whole confessional literature of the Reformed churches and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

This examination does **not** seek to determine the acceptability of the candidate's view within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the ordaining presbytery. You will **not** be judged on your orthodoxy or lack thereof. Your particular Reformed theological point of view is **not** under scrutiny, nor need you be inhibited in giving full expression to your convictions.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS** (continued)

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [G-6.0108b]

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked copy of *The Book of Confessions* (Copyright 1996 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

Section II and III of the examination are **CLOSED BOOK**.

Submit all answers in ink, in your own handwriting; or type the answers if you prefer. You may **not** use memory typewriters, word processors, or pencils for your answers. Any such answers shall be returned ungraded. Please write on every line in the examination book supplied for the examination. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III.B). Illegible papers shall be returned ungraded. If you type your answers, staple your work to the first few pages of the examination book, **not to the front cover**.

Papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar shall be graded accordingly.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three sections. Rounding up or down shall be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections to be considered Satisfactory.

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**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE  
ONE HOUR            OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED  
(BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

At a meeting of the Personnel Committee of the congregation you serve as pastor, concern arises about the long hours you spend at church. The following discussion takes Place:

Jennifer:            Pastor, you work too hard! I suggest that we omit the sermon from the worship service the third Sunday of each month. We know you spend a lot of time on sermon preparation. This would give you more time.

Sam:                Yes! A lot of our people read their Bibles at home. I don't think we ever need to hear a sermon. That way we would have time for a potluck meal on Sundays.

Robert:            Instead of preaching, Pastor, what if during worship on the third Sunday, people can recite their favorite scripture passages and then you would comment on each one?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1.                    Citing from at least three (3) different documents in the Book of Confessions (e.g. 0.000), articulate a Reformed understanding of the proclamation of the Word.
2.                    Drawing on your answer to 1, comment on at least one (1) issue raised by each committee member.

**NOTE: Section I must be completed in one hour. A clean, unmarked copy of The Book of Confessions must be used. When you complete Section I, give your copy of The Book of Confessions to the proctor, who will then give you Sections II and III of the examination (pp. 5-7).**

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**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK  
UPON COMPLETING SECTION I  
TURN IN YOUR BOOK OF CONFESSIONS.  
THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III**

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**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR      CLOSED BOOK      REQUIRED**

Mark, a member of the congregation you serve as pastor, comes to your office. He says:

My friend says her church teaches that believers are made holy immediately when they become believers. They believe that real Christians receive complete sanctification and are free from sinning. In most Presbyterian churches we still confess our sins every Sunday morning. Are we less holy than members of my friend's church?

I know that when I place my faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, I am justified in God's eyes. But how does this relate to being holy? How can I be holy if I still sin?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Drawing on scripture, classical and/or contemporary theologians, articulate a Reformed understanding of sanctification and its relationship to justification.
2. Based on your answer in 1, respond to at least two (2) of Mark's concerns.

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**A.**

Jack, Ruth, and Ian are faithful session members of the congregation you serve as pastor. They discuss with you the lack of volunteers and make the following comments:

Jack: I am convinced the session must consider and adopt a rigorous list of requirements for church membership. I think that this is the way to counteract having people join and then not do anything.

Ruth: I'm not sure. How do you expect people to volunteer if we don't first meet their needs?

Ian: I thought people had only to confess faith in Jesus to be members here.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Drawing on the resources of scripture, classical and/or contemporary theology, articulate a Reformed understanding of covenant community with reference to church membership.
2. Using your answer in 1, respond pastorally to Jack, Ruth, and Ian by commenting on at least one (1) issue raised by each.

**- OR -**

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9:00 A.M.**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**B.**

George is a faithful session member in the congregation which you serve as pastor. He works in the management of a large corporation. George comes to your office and explains:

There's something that has been going on at my company for some time that bothers me. For several years the amount of toxic by-products from our factories has been steadily increasing.

Recently I went with the Youth Group to a nearby lake. I remember when the lake was clear blue. Now it's murky and stinks. I wonder how much my company has contributed to this.

I struggle because I realize that it is wrong not to control toxic by-products. Yet, my company has benefited our community by building several parks around town. How much responsibility before God does the company have for the environment? Surely God doesn't hold me personally responsible for this. I don't make the decisions about the disposal of the toxic by-products.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Drawing on the resources of scripture, classical and/or contemporary theology, articulate a theological understanding of sin and its social dimensions that is compatible with the Reformed tradition.
2. Based on your answer in 1, respond pastorally to George about his ethical struggle.



SEPTEMBER 1999  
STUDENT ANSWERS WITH GRADER'S COMMENTS  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAM

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Section I.

Part 1

The Reformed understanding of the Word of God places the Word central to ministry in the church. There is a threefold understanding of the Word of God. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate and is the one Word which we have to hear and obey. (8.11) The Word of God is attested in Scripture and this written Word of God is the true Word of God. (5.001) Third, the Word of God is spoken today where Scriptures are faithfully preached and attentively read in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit. (9.30)

Based upon this understanding of the Word of God, the proclamation of the Word is indeed a central tenet of the church. The Scots Confession declares that the first of the true marks of the church is the true preaching of the Word of God as God has been revealed in Scripture. (3.18) The effectiveness of preaching does not depend on our human work, but it depends on the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is not only preaching but it is hearing and receiving the Word by the Holy Spirit. (9.30 and 7.090)

Ministers are called to specific duties in the church with respect to proclamation of the Word. Their two main responsibilities include the teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Christ and the administration of sacraments. This means that ministers are to expound God's Word and apply the whole doctrine to the call of the church. (5.163) In order to ensure this, the hearing and receiving of the Word must be attended with diligence in preparation and prayer, and should be received with love (7.090) and practicing it with our lives.

It should be noted that the inward illumination by the Holy Spirit does not eliminate the usual way of external preaching in which God instructs human lives. (5.006) As the apostle Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God by the preaching of Christ."

Part 2

The comments by each committee member raise at least one issue. Since the requirements do not ask me to respond directly to each person, I will comment as follows. Jennifer: Although Jennifer appears to believe this approach of omitting the sermon will be beneficial because it is caring for the pastor, this neglects the centrality of the Word which we hold in the Reformed understanding. A sermon is necessary for the proclamation of the Word. As identified by God's Word spoken, today Scriptures are

faithfully preached and attentively read. I would respond appreciatively toward Jennifer for her concern for me as pastor, but I would explain that the sermon is an area that I should be spending time in diligent preparation as well as prayer.

Sam's concern relates to never hearing a sermon because a lot of people read their Bibles at home. Part of practicing the Word with our lives which comes from hearing and receiving the Word is indeed to read Scripture apart from worship. Reading the Bible is a practice of Christian discipline; however, this does not eliminate the need for external preaching. I would affirm Sam's comment directed toward the desire for more fellowship time which is indeed important in the life of a community, but I would help Sam discern that such time should not be gained at the expense of the hearing and receiving of the Word which is central to our worship.

Robert: This alternative suggests replacing a sermon with the pastor's immediate interpretation of people's selected scripture passages. In one sense this may be seen as the reading and interpreting of the Word; however, our confessional heritage demonstrates that the proclamation of the Word should be attended to with diligence in preparation and prayer. The pastor should spend time in disciplined study and prayer to receive the inward illumination of the Holy spirit in order to proclaim God's Word to the congregation. While not appropriate in my understanding of the Reformed tradition for the proclamation of the Word in worship, I would suggest to Robert that there may be a way to do this as an exercise in a Christian education setting.

## Section I

GRADER'S COMMENTS: [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 5 by Grader (2)]

(1) This paper presents a clear, articulate discussion of a Reformed understanding of the Proclamation of the Word. Four documents are included in citations relevant to preaching along with citations relating to scripture as God's Word and the hearing and receiving of the Word.

The paper responds adequately to an issue posed by each of the members and gives evidence of pastoral concern in the response to each of them.

(2) This is an excellent account of the Word of God in Reformed theology. There are also excellent responses to the three questioners.

## Section II

### Part 1

A reformed understanding of sanctification is that it is a process of coming to full maturity in Christ. The apostle Paul speaks of members of the church receiving different gifts in order to build up the body of the church looking for the day when there will be one unity and all will know the Son of God. They will come to maturity. This is true for

the community and it is our hope. For individuals, this coming to maturity is sanctification. To sanctify is to make holy or to set apart.

Sanctification is deeply related to justification. To justify is to set right or make right. In a Christian understanding it is to be made right before God. The apostle Paul says that it is God who justifies therefore we cannot be condemned by human things. In God's justification of us, nothing can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ. We have been freed from the consequences of our sin because Jesus Christ lived, died, and was raised to new life on account of our Sins. God didn't have to do this. God made us right because God loved us, because God so loved the World. Because of God's grace we are justified.

So justified we have been free from the consequences of sin to which we are slaves, and we are free in our conscience to obey the Holy Spirit, and we are free from the worry about the future. In justification God has freed us, but to what purpose has God freed us? In the Old Testament God set apart the Israelites to be a holy nation, a priestly nation. Again in the New Testament God is declared to have set aside or set apart believers to be a royal priesthood. God sanctifies or sets apart the community to serve God. In this sense sanctification is not merely a state of being but a call to grow in faith in Christ and to serve God in love.

In the doctrines of justification and sanctification, sin is not obliterated. There are both original sin and particular sin. Calvin writes that all of creation fell from the goodness to which God created and intended for it. We are willing slaves to sin and deeply entangled in a web of sin. By the grace of God and the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit we are freed from the consequences of sin – we are freed from the judgment we deserve – and our willingness to serve sin is greatly weakened. Sin, however, is not obliterated. Therefore grace is not a one time event. Even having been justified, God is sovereign. Although God sets us (the believers, the faithful) apart to serve Him, we remain humble creatures in need of God's grace. God alone is holy, set apart in God's being, wholly other. Any holiness in humankind is dependent on God.

## Part 2

Mark, I am so glad that you have come to me with these questions. You mentioned that when you place your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, you are justified in God's eyes. In a sense, that is right. We are justified before God, but the dependence is not on our placing faith in Jesus. The dependence is on God. God alone justifies. We have been set right or freed from the consequences of our sin because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, if we have been justified and freed from our sin, what, if anything, is next? For what purpose have we been justified? We have been justified to serve God. To be sanctified, to be holy in other words, is to be set apart to serve God and to grow in faith. In this sense sanctification is not something that we have in and of itself. Sanctification is a process – it is a state of being which is dependent on God. Mark, I want to assure you that holiness cannot be quantified. It's not something we can objectively compare

between people of God. Holiness instead, is this sense of being set apart by God, for God.

As human beings, justified and sanctified by God, we are not completely separated from sin. I encourage you to think of sin as all the ways we are separated from God and each other. Recognizing that we have been set apart by God, for God our willingness to sustain broken relationships is deeply weakened. Yet we are caught in a web of brokenness on earth. The understanding that we have that God makes us right freeing us for the service of God helps us to see our complete dependence on God.

The questions that you have raised are all dependent on each other. As we seek to understand these questions, hopefully we will better understand who God is and what God is calling us to do. Please know that I am available to talk about this more and I look forward to hearing more of your understanding as you work through these questions.

## Section II

GRADER'S COMMENTS: [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 5 by Grader (2)]

(1) This is an excellent discussion on justification and sanctification drawing on Scripture and Calvin. The paper deals with the relationship between them, and with three discussions of sanctification in issues raised by Mark (God's work, maturing and growth in faith and discipleship, not perfection).

The response to Mark explores these issues and rightly focuses on God's grace. The response could be strengthened with fuller discussion of the place of forgiveness in both justification and sanctification.

(2) This is another excellent essay. The questions of Mark are dealt with tact and skill. Well done.

## Section III Question B

### Part 1

A reformed understanding of sin must begin with an understanding of God as creator. The Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed begin with a confession of God as creator or maker of heaven and earth. In Genesis we understand that God created the heaven, the earth, and all that is in them and that God declared this creation to be good.

Sin was the unfaithfulness of human kind in particular in Adam and Eve. Sin is a distortion of God's good creation. This distortion in general is considered original sin.

As Calvin declares we are affected by and entangled in this web of sin. Calvin cautions us however that we are not sinners only if we imitate Adam. We are truly sinners because we are willing slaves to sin.

The 1967 Confession recognized an entire world in need of reconciliation. The primary act of Jesus Christ was the reconciling of the world to God. This confession

recognized not only distortion and brokenness in humankind, and in the relationships between peoples, but it expressly identified the exploitation of nature by humankind.

In creation God called humans to a special purpose to have dominion over all the earth. We were called to have dominion over the created world, just as the creator has dominion over us. This is not a power of domination but a power of stewardship. In the Genesis account of the Fall, the brokenness between humanity and nature is first recorded. This brokenness remains today.

Because sin is pervasive in individuals, in relationships between creatures, throughout the created world – the reconciling act of Jesus Christ is seen to relate to all these aspects. “For God so loved the world . . .” (John 3:16) Jesus’ act of freeing us from sin cannot be limited to the acts of sin simply between human beings but must encompass a broad understanding of the brokenness of the entire created order. Likewise, as Calvin suggests, we must see ourselves as entangled in this brokenness. However, God’s saving work in Jesus Christ has freed us from the condemnation we deserve and restored us to new life in Christ. Freed from the condemnation of our sins we have been freed for obedience in the Holy Spirit to serve God.

## Part 2

George it sounds like you’ve been having quite a struggle with this. I appreciate your willingness to talk about it.

As we grow in faith, we sometimes become more aware of the pervasiveness of sin. It affects everything. As you’ve identified it affects the earth, its land and its waters. God set humankind apart to be stewards of the earth and everything in it. I believe we have a responsibility therefore for caring for the environment. You asked how much responsibility does the company have, but I’m not sure that can be quantified. The company exists as a human creation, and humans have a responsibility to the creation of God. In this manner, the company, as a community of humans, bears responsibility.

All of us must recognize that we play a part in the destruction of our environment. As a member of a community which allows for the destruction of God’s good creation – we must all recognize our part. We take part and become entangled in sin when we sustain broken relationships. In this case we are sustaining the brokenness of the environment. I’m saying “we” because I’m included too. I live in this community but have failed to urge legislation which would prohibit such contamination. Yet even as we recognize our roles in this tragedy, George, we can trust in God’s promise of freeing us from sin.

The question becomes: for what are we freed? As you continue to think about this, George, I encourage you to consider how it is that you can serve God in this situation. We are freed from the guilt and worry caused by our sin, but we remain called to serve the Lord in all that we do. George, what actions can you now take which you believe would serve the Lord in this situation? It’s not a question you have to answer immediately, but I invite you to think about this and pray over it. As you continue to work through this, I would be privileged to talk with you more.

### Section III B

GRADER'S COMMENTS: [Scored 3 by Grader (1) and 4 by Grader (2)]

(1) The paper describes sin as “distortion of God’s good creation” which is pervasive in “relationships between creatures” and in the “whole world.” The response would be strengthened by a fuller discussion of sin, particularly its social dimensions – e.g. corporate responsibility. The paper does discuss creation as God’s and “good” and our responsibility for stewardship of the earth (with reference to C-67).

The response to George builds on these concepts of the pervasiveness of sin and need to be stewards of the environment. There is reference to the corporation as a human institution bearing responsibility as humans. Response includes remark that “we are freed from guilt and worry caused by our sin” and thus free to act. What is the role/place of repentance and forgiveness?

(2) Again, this is a fine essay. However, it could focus more on the nature of corporate sin. The many different words Paul uses for sin: hamarita, adikia, asebeia, anomia, parakoe, parabasis, partoma, etc. are all individual, not corporate sins. Consider Moral Man in an Immoral Society, etc. The nature of corporate sin needs some deep thinking as the Third Millennium dawns. Overall – fine essays.

**SEPTEMBER 2004**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

This examination shall assess the candidate's capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the Gospel to the faith and life of the church in the contemporary world. [*Book of Order* G-14.0310d(3)]

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and/or contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, and/or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Interpreting a confessional stance faithfully in context. An open book question utilizing *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be included on this examination. The purpose of this question is to explore the candidate's capacity to articulate the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate's views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate's competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be graded down for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (Continued)**

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions* (published in 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

Sections II and III of the examination are **Closed Book**.

You may write your answers in ink, in your own handwriting, type them or use a computer. Do not use pencils for your answers. Any such answers shall be returned ungraded. Please write on every line in the examination book supplied for the examination. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (*e.g.*, III. B). Illegible papers shall be returned ungraded.

If you prefer you may use a typewriter or word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12-point font size. Please number the pages, type your candidate number on the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.

Papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar shall be graded accordingly.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three sections. Rounding up or down shall be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections to be considered Satisfactory.



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**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR          OPEN BOOK          REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

You are asked to lead an adult retreat about the topic of covenant, focusing on the following passage:

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
and has remembered his holy covenant,  
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,  
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness  
before him all our days.

(Luke 1:72-75) [NRSV]

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

As part of your personal preparation for leading the retreat, write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of *covenant* and its contemporary significance. Use at least one (1) citation from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions* (e.g., 0.000).

**Note: Section I must be completed in one hour. A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions*, 2002 or later, must be used. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor, who will then give you Section II and III of the examination (pp. 5-7).**

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**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

Consider the following quotation from the Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter XVIII, “Of the Ministers of the Church, Their Institution and Duties:”

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS. To be sure, Christ’s apostles call all who believe in Christ “priests,” but not on account of an office, but because, all the faithful having been made kings and priests, we are able to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ (Ex. 19:6; I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6). *Therefore, the priesthood and the ministry are very different from one another.* For the priesthood, as we have just said, is common to all Christians; not so is the ministry.

The Second Helvetic Confession, 5.153 (emphasis added)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay about the *differences between the priesthood of all believers and the office of minister of Word and Sacrament*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of the Reformed tradition, using at least one (1) of these resources – the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in required response 1, identify and discuss one (1) or more problems that might be created if this distinction were ignored in a congregation.

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

John and Diane have three children who are active in a local soccer program, which interferes with Sunday worship and other church activities. The couple has asked to see you, their pastor.

John:            It was bad enough that soccer basically eliminated our family meal times for half the year. Now we're supposed to give up going to church for soccer.

Diane:            God wants our children to have healthy bodies as well as healthy souls. And besides—God must feel pleasure in watching them run since God made them so fast and quick.

John:            At their baptism, we promised to provide for the Christian nurture of our children.

Diane:            I don't want our children to lose this athletic opportunity, and we can provide for spiritual growth of our children in our home.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write a theological essay on the *responsibility of the family for promoting Christian formation*. Base your answer on your knowledge of the Reformed tradition, using in your answer at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in required response 1, advise John and Diane about living out the vows they made at the baptism of their children.

**- OR -**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

There is an incident of racial discrimination in the local school. Many youth from your church attend that school. The session has asked you what the church should do about it. In preparation for the session meeting, you find the following quote:

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In God's reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. *Therefore the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it.*

Confession of 1967, 9.44 (inclusive language text, emphasis added)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write a theological rationale for the session, describing *why* local churches should labor for the abolition of all racial discrimination and minister to those injured by it. Base your answer on your knowledge of the Reformed tradition, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, write an action plan for the session that includes at least two (2) suggestions of *ways* the session could labor for the abolition of all racial discrimination and minister to those injured by it.

**FEBRUARY 2005**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

This examination shall assess the candidate's capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the Gospel to the faith and life of the church in the contemporary world. [*Book of Order* G-14.0310d(3)]

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and/or contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, and/or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Interpreting a confessional stance faithfully in context. An open book question utilizing *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be included on this examination. The purpose of this question is to explore the candidate's capacity to articulate the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate's views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate's competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be graded down for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

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**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (Continued)**

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions* (published in 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE  
ONE HOUR            OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED**

**(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

You have stopped by a coffee shop in the community you serve as pastor. A number of patrons talk with you, making these comments:

Fred:        Weak people need religion. The church is a good thing for them, that is, if you can call enabling weakness “good.”

Georgia:    As long as the church is willing to admit that it is historically conditioned, I can live with it. But it has no right to claim absolute truth.

Peter:        God has established the church, and I believe it is eternal.

Joanna:     When church leaders act immorally or teach a bunch of lies, then what they call “the church” is just a sham.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1.        Write an essay, articulating a Reformed understand of the *nature and purpose of the Church*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions* (e.g., 0.000).
2.        Building on your answer in required response 1, respond to the points of view of two (2) of the persons above.

**NOTE: Section I must be completed in one hour. A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions*, 2002 or later, must be used. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor, who will then give you Sections II and III of the examination (pp. 5-7).**



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**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

Consider the following two quotations:

Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.2.7

[This kind of knowledge] is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart. . . . We have given the first place to the doctrine in which our religion is contained, since our salvation begins with it. But it must enter our heart and pass into our daily living, and so transform us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us.

Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.6.4

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

In response to the quotations above, discuss a Reformed understanding of *faith*. Base your discussion on at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**FEBRUARY 2005  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

You are attending a meeting of the Church Growth Task Force of the church you serve as pastor. The following conversation takes place:

Richard:          I read a wonderful book about church growth. It guarantees that if we build a bigger parking lot, have a clean nursery, and stop passing offering plates, then our church will definitely grow by 20% next year. Let's do it!

Alice:             I thought that people can plant and water, but that God provides the growth. We should spend our meetings praying that we get more members.

Johann:          Should we be concerned about numbers? I think we need to form Bible study groups and prayer groups so that the members we have can grow deeper in their spirituality.

Zelda:            We need to teach members about witnessing to their neighbors and co-workers, so that they will make decisions for Christ. It doesn't matter if they join our church or any church.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay, articulating a theological understanding of *church growth and evangelism*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of the Reformed tradition, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the people above.

**- OR -**

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

You are the pastor leading adults in a discussion of God alone being Lord of the conscience. At one point, the following remarks are made:

Lou:                    Personal freedom is important to me, and I like how people in our church have so many different points of view about everything.

Martha:              Christians should be more in agreement with one another, and I like that Presbyterians have such a strong form of government.

Toby:                   Well, we should be subject to church authorities and not resist them. I say we look to our leaders for direction and trust their judgment.

Rhonda:              I wonder how much freedom of thought I should have. When in humility should I put my own point of view aside for the sake of others?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss a Reformed understanding of *God alone being Lord of the conscience*. Use in your answer at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the people above.

# **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

## **GOLDEN RULES FOR WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

The Worship and Sacraments exam provides an opportunity for the candidate to show how the Directory for Worship provides direction as he or she seeks to lead God's people in worship, faithful to the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS testifies to the core of life in the community of faith and our Presbyterian sense that there are standards for our celebrations which represent the wisdom of our heritage of working out the implication of Scripture in the practicalities of celebrating God's presence.

In preparation for taking the Standardized examination in Worship and Sacraments, it would be helpful to know and on occasion to review what the examination is testing. The Book of Order states:

“Worship and Sacraments. This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the sacraments, familiarity with the Directory of Worship and the Book of Confessions, and their application in the life of worshipping communities.”

It is our judgement that each examination should be crafted in such a way that candidates are required to demonstrate the following:

1. An ability to articulate specific provisions of the Directory of Worship and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry.
2. An ability to illustrate the connection between the contemporary understandings and practices of worship set forth in the Directory for Worship and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as it is expressed in the Book of Confessions.
3. An ability to construe or articulate a theological framework for addressing issues and practices related to worship and sacraments that arise from contemporary contexts for ministry.
4. An ability to reflect theologically on the many different relationships between the church's worship and celebration of sacraments and how it carries out its ministry and mission in the world.
5. An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

The best resources for study of a particular subject are the original documents. That holds true for the Worship and Sacraments Examination. In preparation for taking the exam, there is no

substitute for a thorough knowledge of the Directory of Worship. This is the constitutional document that forms the basis for this examination. At this time, the examination is closed book and with the increase of material contained in the new Directory, it is imperative that the candidate have as thorough a knowledge of it as possible.

The worship life of our denomination reflects conviction that the church's worship, witness and service are inseparable, and that the worship of our churches is informed by Reformed theology. It is important for the candidate to have a knowledge of the theological basis for our worship, therefore, a knowledge of the Book of Confessions helps us to answer some of those "Why?" questions that not only appear in the examination, but also confront the pastor in the parish setting. The candidate will find helpful that the Directory of Worship has been "created in harmony with Scripture and the Book of Confessions," and that when possible the biblical texts of the confessional material that gave rise to a section in the Directory of Worship is noted in the text.

The candidate will be expected to demonstrate "pastoral sensitivity" to those persons involved in the situation. The readers will be looking for sincere and concrete expressions of the care and understanding that our people deserve. There is no real way to prepare to be examined in this, simply to be aware of what people in a given situation are feeling. At times, it might be necessary to "read between the lines" of the situation to get at what is really going on. Many students have said that the best way to prepare for the Worship and Sacrament Examination in general, and this component of the exam, is to practice using old examinations. Actually "taking" the exam, writing out the answers and having those answers graded has been found to be a good way to mentally prepare. Talking through questions and situations is another good way to prepare. This also helps to sharpen one's focus on different pastoral issues in given situations.

It is expected that the candidate in taking the exams will be able to apply their understanding of Reformed worship to situations involving other liturgical traditions. As stated in the instructions, a knowledge of these other traditions is not required. The candidate will not be asked to compare and contrast the Presbyterian understanding of sacramental theology with that of the Pentecostal or Roman Catholic traditions. What is expected is that the candidate will have an informed knowledge of what we as Presbyterians hold to be the "meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments."

Worship and Sacraments Task Group  
Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee  
Jerry W. Houchens, Executive Secretary  
April 1994 (Revised)

EDITOR' S NOTE: The following is a good study aid to help you in understanding some key concepts in  
Worship and Sacraments.

\*\*\*\*\*

**KEY CONCEPTS FROM DR. JAMES KAY**

CM320 CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

A . . . all things should be done decently and in order.”

The following are common questions regarding the general oversight of worship and the Service of the Lord' s Day, including the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Lord' s Supper. The answers are taken from the Form of Government [G] and the Directory for Worship [W] of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

**I. OVERSIGHT**

**Q. Who has the responsibility for the worship of the congregation?**

A. (1) The session has primary responsibility, but (2) “the minister as pastor has certain responsibilities which are not subject to the authority of the session.” (W-1.4005) (See also G-10.0102).

**Q. What provisions of worship are the responsibility of session?**

A. The session shall make provision for the regular (1) preaching of the Word, (2) celebration of the Sacraments, (3) corporate prayer, and (4) offering of praise to God in song. Moreover, the session has authority “to oversee and approve all public worship in the life of the particular church with the exception of those responsibilities delegated to the pastor alone, (and) to determine occasions, days, times, and places for worship.” The session is responsible (1) for the space where worship is conducted, including its arrangement and furnishings, (2) for the use of special appointments such as flowers, candles, banners, paraments, and other objects of art, (3) for the overall program of music and other arts in the church, and (4) for those who lead worship through music, drama, dance, and other arts (W-1.4004).

**Q. What responsibilities pertaining to worship are reserved to the minister as pastor?**

A. (1) The selection of Scripture lessons to be read (W-1.4005, W-2.2001); (2) the preparation and preaching of the sermon or exposition of the Word (W-1.4005, W-2.2007, W-2.2008, G-6.0202; but see, W-3.3401); (3) the prayers offered on behalf of the people and those prepared for the use of the people in worship (W-2.2001); (4) the music to be sung (W-1.4005); and, (5) the use of drama, dance, and other art forms (W-1.4005).

**Q. Must the pastor “confer with a worship committee in planning services of worship?”**

A. No, but he or she may do so. (W-1.4005)

**Q. Who determines “the sequence and proportion of the elements of worship?”**

A. The pastor “with the concurrence of session.” (W-1.4006)

**Q. Who selects “hymnals, song books, service books, Bibles, and other materials for use of the congregation in public worship?”**

A. “The session with the concurrence of the pastor in consultation with musicians and educators available to session.” (W.1.4006)

**Q. Are there other joint responsibilities shared by the pastor and session?**

A. Yes. “In setting an order for worship on the Lord' s Day, the pastor with the concurrence of the session shall provide opportunity for the people from youngest to oldest to participate in a worthy offering of praise to God and for them to hear and to respond to God' s Word ...” (W-3.3200)

**II. THE SERVICE OF THE LORD' S DAY**

**A. The Liturgy of the Word**

**Q. Must the Scriptures be read and proclaimed in the Lord' s Day Service?**

A. Yes. (3.3101)



**Q. Should the Scriptures read be taken from both the Old and New Testaments?**

A. Yes, and “it is appropriate...there be readings from the Old Testament and the Epistles and Gospels of the New Testament. The full range of the psalms should also be used in worship.” (W-2.2002; W-2.002)

**Q. Must the pastor use a lectionary “offered by the church?”**

A. No, but “Selections for reading in public worship should be guided by the seasons of the church year, pastoral concerns for a local congregation, events and conditions in the world, and specific program emphases in the church. Lectionaries offered by the church insure a broad range of readings as well as consistency and connection with the universal church.” (W-2.2003)

**Q. Who selects “the version of text from which Scripture lessons are read in public worship?”**

A. The minister. (W-2.2005)

**Q. May paraphrases of the Scriptures be used?**

A. Yes. (W-2.2005)

**Q. May “adaptations” of the Scriptures be used?**

A. Yes. (W-2.2005)

**Q. May “new translations” of the Scriptures be used?**

A. Yes. (W-2.2005)

**Q. Does the minister need any authorization for the use of paraphrases, adaptations, or new translations?**

A. No, but “the congregation should be informed.” (W-2.2005)

**Q. Who reads the Scriptures lessons?**

A. (1) A minister or (2) a member of the congregation or (3) the people responsively, antiphonally, or in unison. (W-3.3401)

**Q. What is a sermon?**

A. “It is a proclamation of Scripture in the conviction that through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ is present to the gathered people, offering grace and calling for obedience.” (W-2.2007)

**Q. Who is to preach the sermon?**

A. (1) Ordinarily a minister (G-6.0202, W-2.2007); but, under specific circumstances, (2) an elder authorized by the presbytery (G-6.0304), or (3) a lay preacher commissioned by the presbyter (G-11.0103, G-14.0516).

**Q. Is proclamation limited to preaching the sermon?**

A. No. Song, “drama, dance, poetry and pageant, indeed, most other human art forms are also expressions through which the people of God have proclaimed and responded to the Word.” (W-2.2008)

**Q. Must the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed be used in the Lord’s Day Service?**

A. Whenever a baptism is administered, the Apostles’ Creed “shall” be used (W-3.3603, of. W-2.2009), and in celebrating the Lord’s Supper “the creeds of the universal church should be used.” (W-2.2009).

**Q. Must a sermon always be preached in the Lord’s Day Service?**

A. No. Nevertheless, Scripture must always be “interpreted,” and, if not in a sermon, then in “other form of exposition,” such as music (W-3.3101), “or in other forms authorized by the session and by the pastor.” (W-3.3401)

**Q. Must prayer be offered in the Lord’s Day Service?**

A. Yes. (W-3.3101)

**Q. Must tithes and offerings “be gathered and received” in the Lord’s Day Service?**

A. Yes. (W-3.3101)

**Q. Should there be a calling to worship, times for greeting, times for sharing common concerns, and times for blessing in the Lord's Day Service?**

A. Yes. (W-3.3101)

**Q. May persons be baptized, received into membership, married, ordained, commissioned, and/or installed in the Lord's Day Service?**

A. Yes. (W-3.1001, W-3.3502, W-3503, and W-3.3504)

## **II. THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY**

### **B. The Liturgy of the Lord's Supper**

**Q. Who is to administer (i.e. preside at) the Lord's Supper?**

A. (1) Ordinarily a minister (G-6.0202, W-2.4012); but, under specific circumstances, (2) an elder authorized by the presbytery (G-6.0304, G-10.0102, G-11.0103), or (3) a commissioned lay pastor commissioned by the presbytery (G-11.0103, G-14.0516).

**Q. May an inquirer or candidate for ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament administer the Sacraments?**

A. "Under no circumstances." (G-14.0307)- Unless in capacity as previously ordained elder under provisions noted above.

**Q. How often must the Lord's Supper be celebrated in a congregation?**

A. ". . . in no case less than quarterly." (W-2.4012)

**Q. Must public notice be given before each celebration of the Lord's Supper?**

A. Yes, at least one week in advance, unless the Supper is celebrated each Lord's Day. (W-3.3609)

**Q. Must the celebration of the Lord's Supper "be preceded by the reading and the proclamation of the Word?"**

A. Yes. (W-2.4008), but not necessarily a sermon (W-2.2008, W-3.3101, W-3.3401).

**Q. Must unleavened bread be used in the Lord's Supper?**

A. No. "Bread common to the culture of the community should be provided..." (W-3.3610)

**Q. Must a common cup be used in the Lord's Supper?**

A. The Directory envisions the use of the common cup during the liturgy, but not necessarily in the distribution where a number of cups may be used (W-3.3615, W-3.3616).

**Q. What beverage is to be used in the Lord's Supper?**

A. "The session is to determine what form of the fruit of the vine is to be used . . . Whenever wine is used in the Lord's Supper, unfermented grape juice should always be clearly identified and served also as an alternative for those who prefer it." (W-3.3611)

**Q. How do the bread and the beverage get on the Table?**

A. They may either (1) be brought to the Table as part of an offertory, or (2) be "placed on the Table before worship begins." (W-3.507, W-3.3009)

**Q. Where should the Words of Institution occur in the liturgy?**

A. They are to occur in one of three possible places: (1) as part of the Invitation to the Table, (2) in the Prayer of Thanksgiving, or (3) at the Fraction and Presentation of the Cup. (W-3.3612, W-3.3614, W-3.3615)

**Q. What text of the Words of Institution is to be used?**

A. If the words are said at the Fraction (and Presentation of the Cup), then the text from I Cor. 11:23-25 "shall be used" (W-3.3614 - W-3.3615). If the Words are said as part of the Invitation or Prayer of Thanksgiving, then either I Cor. 11:23-25 "or Gospel parallels" are to be used. (W-3.3612)

**Q. What are the principal parts of the Prayer of Thanksgiving?**

A. (1) Thanksgiving to God for creation and providence, covenant history, and for seasonal blessings, with an acclamation of praise; (2) remembering God's acts of salvation in Jesus Christ: his birth, life, death, resurrection, and promise of coming, and institution of the Supper (if not otherwise spoken), together with an acclamation of faith; (3) calling upon the Holy Spirit to draw the people

into the presence of the risen Christ so that they may be fed, may be joined in the communion of saints to all God's people and to the risen Christ, and may be sent to serve as faithful disciples; (4) an ascription of praise; and (5) The Lord's Prayer. (W-3.3613)

**Q. Between the Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Distribution, what occurs?**

A. (1) The Fraction or Breaking of the Bread (W-3.3614); and (2) the Presentation of the Cup (W-3.3615)

**Q. Who is to receive communion?**

A. "All baptized persons, whether children or adults, even though they have made no profession of their faith in Christ, are entitled to participation in the Lord's Supper . . ." (G-5.0301; W- 2.4006, cf. W-2.4011).

**Q. Can non-baptized persons receive communion?**

A. No, unless the provision that, "Confessing members of other Christian churches may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" (G-5.0301) is taken to include "churches" that either do not celebrate the sacraments or require baptism for membership (e.g. the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army).

**Q. Who distributes the Supper?**

A. (1) either ordained officers (ministers, elders, or deacons), or (2) "other church members on invitation of the session or authorizing governing body." (W-3.3616)

**Q. Is intinction permissible?**

A. Yes. (W-3.3616)

**Q. Does the Directory specify Words of Administration?**

A. No.

**Q. During the Distribution, may psalms, hymns, spirituals, or other appropriate songs be sung?**

A. Yes. Other options: (1) the choir may sing anthems or other appropriate musical offerings; (2) instrumental music suitable to the occasion may be played; (3) appropriate passages of scripture may be read; or (4) people may pray in silence. (W-3.3617)

**Q. After the Supper, what happens to the unconsumed elements?**

A. They "shall be removed from the Table and used or disposed of in a manner which is approved by the session, and which is consistent with the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament and the principles of good stewardship." (W-3.3619)

**Q. Is there a post-communion prayer in the Lord's Day Service?**

A. Yes, according to the Directory. (W-3.3618)

**Q. How does the Lord's Day Service conclude?**

A. "The service concludes with a formal dismissal. This may include a charge to the people to go into the world in the name of Christ. It shall include words of blessing, using a trinitarian benediction or other words from Scripture, such as the apostolic benediction in II Cor. 13:14. Signs of reconciliation and peace may be exchanged as the people depart." (W-3.3702)

**Q. Does the Directory make any provision for sacramental reservation?**

A. No. (cf. W-2.4010)

**Q. Does the Directory specify any eucharistic vestments?**

A. No.

**Q. Must there be an act of confession of sin before one receives the Lord's Supper?**

A. The Directory envisions congregational prayer "of confession of the reality of sin in personal and common life" either before the scripture lessons (W-3.3301), or before the liturgy of the Lord's Supper as part of the prayers of the church. (W-3.3506)

**Q. When is the sign of peace exchanged?**

A. The Directory suggests three possibilities: (1) After the confession of sin, (2) After the offertory, and (3) After the concluding blessing.  
". . . all things should be done decently and in order."

The following are common questions regarding the celebration of baptism. The answers are taken from the Form of Government (G) and the Directory for Worship (W) of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

## **BAPTISM**

### **Q. Who is to administer baptism?**

A. (1) A minister (W-2.3011), ordinarily serving as pastor (G-6.0202). (2) Ministers who are serving in some capacity other than pastor (e.g., chaplains, etc.), may administer baptism if authorized by the appropriate “governing body” (W-2.3011).

### **Q. Who authorizes the service of baptism to take place?**

A. The session (G-10.0102, W-2.3011).

### **Q. Who admits persons to be baptized?**

A. The session (W-2.3011), W-2.3012, W-2.3014).

### **Q. May children be presented for baptism, apart from their own profession of faith?**

A. Yes (G-5.0301, W-2.3006, W-2.3014).

### **Q. Who may present children for baptism?**

A. “. . . ordinarily the parent(s) or one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility shall be an active member of the congregation” (W-2.3014). The session may approve requests to baptize children of “Confessing members of other Christian churches” (G-5.0301), or of “a Christian parent who is an active member of another congregation” (W-2.3014). In the latter case, approval by the session then requires that “it shall consult with the governing body of the other congregation and shall notify them when the Sacrament has been administered” (W-2.3014).

### **Q. Does the PC(USA) recognize baptisms administered by other Christian churches?**

A. Yes. “The Presbyterian Church (USA) recognizes all baptisms with water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit administered by other Christian churches” (W-2.3010).

### **Q. May baptism be received more than once?**

A. No (W-2.3007, W-2.3009).

### **Q. When and where is baptism celebrated?**

A. (1) Ordinarily “in a service of public worship.” (2) “Extraordinary circumstances may call for the administration of Baptism apart from the worship of the whole congregation. In such cases care should be taken that (1) the congregation be represented by one or more members of the session; (2) a proper understanding of the meaning of the Sacrament be offered by the minister; (3) the session be consulted when possible; and (4) the Baptism be reported by the officiating minister and recorded by the session” (W-2.301).

### **Q. Who serves as “sponsors” of the baptized?**

A. (1) The congregation as whole, (2) certain members of the congregation appointed by the session, or (3) “sponsor(s) may be appointed by the session in consultation with those desiring Baptism for themselves or for their children and given the specific role of nurturing the baptized person” (W-2.3013).

### **Q. What kind of water should be used in baptism?**

A. Water “common to the location” (W-3.3605).

### **Q. What is the mode of administering the water?**

A. “. . . pouring, sprinkling, or immersion. By whatever mode, the water should be applied visibly and generously” (W-3.3603).

### **Q. What is the baptismal formula?**

A. “ \_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (W-3.3606, W-2.3010).

### **Q. In addition to the use of water and the Trinitarian formula, what other liturgical actions are mandated?**

A. (1) The rite “shall include statements concerning the biblical meaning of Baptism, the responsibility assumed by those desiring Baptism for themselves or their children, and the nurture to be undertaken by the church;” (2) “Those desiring the Sacrament of Baptism for their

children or for themselves shall make vows that (a) profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, (b) renounce evil and affirm their reliance on God's grace, and (c) declare their intention to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of the church;" (3) "The congregation shall (a) profess its faith using the Apostles' Creed, (b) voice its support of those baptized, and (c) express its willingness to take responsibility for the nurture of those baptized;" (4) "Declaration shall be made of the newly baptized person's membership in the church of Jesus Christ" (W-3.3603, W-3.3608).

**Q. May any other actions be included in the rite of baptism?**

A. Yes. "Other actions that are rooted deeply in the history of Baptism such as laying on of hands in blessing, the praying for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, anointing with oil, and the presentation of the newly baptized may also be included. When such actions are introduced, they should be explained carefully in order to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding" (W-3.3607).

**Q. Does the Directory provide for "conditional" baptism?**

A. No.

**Q. Does the Directory provide for "emergency" baptism?**

A. Only in the sense of "extraordinary circumstances" noted above (W-2.3011), and in those circumstances, only a minister is to baptize.

**Q. Does the Directory envision an Easter Vigil?**

A. No.

**Q. Does baptism grant admission to the Lord's Supper?**

A. Yes (G-5.0301, W-2.4006, Cf. W-2.4011).

**Q. Does baptism grant admission to "active membership?"**

A. Not as such. Active membership is contingent, not only upon baptism, but upon profession of faith in Christ and voluntary submission to PC(USA) discipline (G-5.0202).

**Q. What other responsibilities regarding baptism revolve upon the session?**

A. (1) ". . . encouraging parents to present their children for baptism, reminding them that children of believers are to be baptized without undue haste, but without undue delay" (W-2.3012); (2) instructing and examining non-baptized persons who seek baptism on confession of faith (W-2.3012); (3) instructing all baptized in "the meaning of Baptism, of the Lord's Supper, and of their interrelation" (W-2.3012); (4) surrounding the baptized with "Christian encouragement and support" (W-2.3012), enrolling the baptized as baptized members (W-2.3012, G-5.0201), maintaining a registry of Infant and Adult Baptisms (G-10.0302), and providing for the "development and supervision of the educational program of the church" (W-6.2004).

**Q. Whose names appear on the Baptized Members Roll?**

A. ". . . the names of those persons baptized in the particular church who have not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and children of active members or of ministers of the Word and Sacrament related to the particular church, when such children have been baptized elsewhere" (G-10.0301).

**Q. What data is to be included in the Register of Infant Baptisms?**

A. ". . . name, parents' names, and date of birth of those being baptized and the names of persons presenting the children for baptism" (G-10.0302).

**Q. What data is to be included in the Register of Adult Baptisms?**

A. ". . . name, parents' names, and date of birth of those being baptized" (G-10.0302).

Prepared by James F. Kay

Princeton Theological Seminary - 2-90

## **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS: STUDENT ADVICE**

- A. **General** – Although the exam says it’s “closed book” you are permitted to use a clean, unmarked copy of the Book of Confessions for Section I only. This is a 3 hour exam requiring three 60 minute essays. Here pastoral sensitivity is at a premium. You will be asked to counsel, answer questions, identify Worship/Sacrament issues raised by individuals and respond to them. The questions encourage direct address to the people.
- B. **Reading**
1. Class notes and graded exams from Dr. Kay’s Reformed Worship class are very useful.
  2. The Supplemental Liturgical Resources #1 (Services for the Lord’s Day), #2 (Baptism) and Renewal of Baptism), #3 (Christian Marriage) and #4 (Funeral) have helpful theological discussions on what each service is attempting to highlight. These provide good forms for your use in the parish and are not too expensive.
  3. Worship Section of the Book of Order is crucial. Outline the whole section as a way to learn its contents. This will take a long time, but is worth it. Start early and spend an hour a day doing it.
  4. Book of Confessions on Sacraments. See references below.
  5. Old exams
  6. J. Leith’s Introduction To Reformed Tradition on liturgy.
- C. **Strategy**
1. All 3 questions call for you to be guided by the Book of Order. Let the graders know you generally appreciate its help.
  2. Usually one question calls for specific citations from the Book of Confessions. Given the nature of the Confession, this will probably involve the Reformed understanding of Sacrament generally, and Baptism or Lord’s Supper in particular. See below.
  3. Be sure you touch the pain, need, anxiety, question of each person or group in the situation. Graders seem to be asking: Did he/she understand the theological point at stake and the personal issues involved in the questions? Did he/she use the tradition and the Book of Order as guidance to bring light, order, love and reconciliation into this messy situation?
- D. **A Few References from Book of Confessions**
1. A Sacrament is 1) a sign-Act instituted by Christ which 2) seals a promise in our hearts and 3) strengthens our sense of assurance, gratitude, faith and commitment and 4) is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. See Scots 3.21; Heidelberg 4.065 (confirms our faith), 2d Helvetic 5.169 (amazing 10 point definition), 5.172 (like seals appended to letters), 5.180 (sign and thing signified are united mystically), West. Conf. at 6.149 (signs and seals to represent Christ and his benefits), 6.151 (work of the Spirit), 7.092 (Q. 92 of Shorter Catechism is a great quote).
  2. Baptism: (The first reference is biblical, second Book of Confession section. Participation in Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 5.185); Washed by pure water of baptism (Heb. 10:22, 4.069), Gift of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:4-11 5.187, 9.51) Incorporated into the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:4-6, 9.51), Sign of the kingdom (royal priesthood, 1 Peter 2:9, 5.169 Mnemonic: Polly Was Going in Style
  3. Lord’s Supper: Notice the names we give this sacrament. Eucharist, Lord’s Supper, Communion, Breaking Bread, suggest various ways of understanding its significance. Mnemonic: Tom Is a Changed Man
- Thanksgiving (Eucharist is supreme expression of Christian thanksgiving, Book of Confession 4.080 Book of Order W-5.0200);
- Memory of Christ (Lord’s Supper reminds us of Christ’s love even unto death, 4.078, 4.029, 5.195, 6.162)
- Invocation if the H.S. (H.S. joins us to Christ, 4.076)
- Communion of the Faithful (binds us together, 6.161, 9.52)
- Meal in the Kingdom (Breaking bread feeds us, 5.202, 9.52)

SEPTEMBER 1999

EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Book of Order states:

“Worship and Sacraments. This examination shall assess the candidate’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and the Book of Confessions, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.” G-14.0310d(4)

\*\*\*\*\*

Questions on this examination will deal with both **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**. You will be expected to:

1. Demonstrate your knowledge of the Directory for Worship and how to apply this knowledge in specific contexts for ministry.
2. Demonstrate your ability to illustrate the connection between particular worship practices and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as expressed in the Book of Confessions.
3. Demonstrate a clear theological understanding of the relationship between the Church’s worship and its ministry and mission in the world.
4. Demonstrate your ability to work with individuals or groups involved in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

In writing your answers, bear in mind that presbyteries elect elders as well as ministers of Word and Sacrament to serve as graders. Examinations should be written in jargon-free language. Technical language shall be used only where the task requires it or where it is appropriate.

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

The examination is divided into three sections:

Section I is a required one-hour question about Reformed Liturgical Heritage. When you complete Section I, give your copy of the Book of Confessions to the proctor who will then give you Section II and III of the examination.

Section II is a required one-hour question calling for a Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship. No books or resources shall be used.

Section III deals with Application to Ministry. There are two options. Select one option. It is scheduled to be written in one hour. No books or resources shall be used.

Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., I.1 or III.A.1).

**USE THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP AS FOUND IN THE 1999-2000 BOOK OF ORDER IN YOUR PREPARATION. IT MAY NOT BE USED DURING THE EXAMINATION.**

A CLEAN, UNMARKED COPY OF THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS MAY BE USED AS A RESOURCE **ONLY** DURING SECTION I OF THE EXAMINATION. NO OTHER BOOKS ARE ALLOWED.

Submit all answers in your own handwriting, or type the answers if you prefer. Memory typewriters, word processors, or computers shall **NOT** be used. You may make corrections, deletions or additions without rewriting or erasing.

If you type the examination, staple it to the first few pages of the examination booklet, not to the front cover.

Be advised that illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar will be graded accordingly. Papers written in pencil will not be graded.

The final grade for this examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions, with rounding up or down to be determined by the readers on the basis of the examination's overall merit. You must complete all three sections of the examination in order to receive a passing mark. If you complete only two sections of the examination – even if those two sections merit a superior score – the examination will fail. The examination must receive a grade of three or higher on at least **TWO** of the three questions to be considered satisfactory.



**SEPTEMBER 1999  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 of 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK  
(BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

**REQUIRED**

The session of the church you serve as pastor has gathered for a long-range planning retreat. In a discussion concerning ministry priorities for the future, the elders make the following remarks:

- Irving: The church is an organization of people who are called to come together to worship and serve God.
- Maria: No, the church is God's creation, a place where the Word is rightly preached, the sacraments are rightly administered and discipline is uprightly ministered.
- Kim: Isn't the church a community called to build God's Kingdom on earth through its social action?
- Justinian: The church is sent to preach the good news and to tell the world about God's love.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least four (4) different documents of the Book of Confessions, and being guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of the church and its mission.
2. Informed by your response in 1, briefly describe at least one (1) way each of the descriptions of the church proposed by Irving, Maria, Kim and Justinian could be emphasized within the church's worship practices.

**NOTE: Section I must be completed in one hour. When you complete Section I, give your copy of the Book of Confessions to the proctor, who will give you Sections II and III of the examination.**

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK  
UPON COMPLETING SECTION I  
TURN IN YOUR BOOK OF CONFESSIONS.  
THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III**

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON REFORMED  
WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

You are the pastor of a congregation located in a diverse metropolitan neighborhood. Mike, a member of the congregation, has died of AIDS following many months of congregational care. The grief is strong, as Mike was well-liked by his many friends in the church and neighborhood. A group of them have come to you to ask if they might help plan the funeral service. Their concern is to make sure that the service will speak to the pain and grief they are feeling.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed theological understanding of the church's services on the occasion of death and how such services demonstrate the church's ministry of pastoral care.
2. Informed by your answer in 1, identify and briefly discuss how at least three (3) elements of such a service manifest the church's ministry of pastoral care.

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE: A or B**

**A.**

Ryan and Amanda regularly attend the church you serve as pastor, but are not members. Their three-year-old son, Jason, has been diagnosed with autism. This condition renders the child unable to respond to outside stimuli in predictable ways. The parents express their desire to have Jason baptized, but are concerned that the large crowd usually present at the Sunday worship service might be too stressful to him. They ask whether a special baptismal service could be held at a time other than Sunday morning with attendance limited to family and close friends.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the Directory for Worship, identify and briefly discuss at least three (3) issues concerning the Sacrament of Baptism raised by the situation.
2. Informed by your answer in 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity:
  - a. state the recommendation you will make to the session regarding their request and the basis for that recommendation; and
  - b. explain that recommendation to Ryan and Amanda.

**- OR -**

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE: A or B**

**B.**

You are pastor of First Presbyterian Church. During Sunday church school one morning, you visit the Adult Education Class which is studying the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. During the class discussion the following remarks are made.

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Betty:  | The Lord's Supper is to be received only by those who believe themselves worthy.  |
| Carlos: | The Lord's Supper is to be observed only on Sundays. The minister has the sole authority for deciding on which Sundays we do it.        |
| Donna:  | The session has the right to serve Communion whenever the minister is away. On such occasions one of the elders can conduct the supper. |
| Steve:  | The only reason we even celebrate Communion is because the Apostle Paul said it was important.  |

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the Directory for Worship, identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) issue concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper raised by each person.
2. Informed by your response in 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Betty, Carlos, Donna, and Steve making certain that you address the issues you have identified from their comments.

SEPTEMBER 1999  
STUDENT ANSWERS WITH GRADER'S COMMENTS  
WORSHIP & SACRAMENTS

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Section I

Part 1

The Apostles Creed declares that we believe in the holy catholic church (2.3). This is to say that we believe in the church universal elected by God. Every Christian who believes and worships God is a member of this community. (5.125). There is also the visible church which professes true faith in the gospel and saving work of Jesus Christ. This visible church is declared to be the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house's family of God. (6.141)

The Scots Confession identifies the marks of the true church as; the true preaching of the Word of God, the right administration of the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline rightly observed. (3.18) It is hoped that in these three acts people will receive Jesus Christ, receive the grace of Jesus Christ and will respond to the Holy Spirit in obedience. In a very real sense, worship is the mission of the church as it is the mark of the church.

To hear the Word of God and to have the Word illuminated by the Holy Spirit is to be reconciled to God. The Word preached is that God was in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to God. As the church receives this grace and responds in obedience it is sent into the world to be a reconciling community. (9.31) To be a reconciling community is to share the gospel with the world. The primary means of sharing this Word of grace is through the act and service of worship. However, each member of the body of Christ is the church in the world. (9.38)

The church is then called into being by God in Jesus Christ. It is the assembly of the faithful called out of the world to gather as a common united community to serve God. (5.124) Furthermore, it is sent back into the world from which it has been gathered to be a witness of Christ in the gospel so that each member confesses Christ as Lord by their lives and by their service. (9.31)

Part 2

Irving's suggestion could be emphasized in the beginning of the service. Gathering in the Word a call to worship could be spoken from Scriptural sentences which emphasize the purpose of God's community. Also a hymn reflecting God's gathering of the people could be sung.

Maria is correct in identifying the church as God's creation and she identifies the three marks of the true church. However, what effectively makes this the church is not merely the place but the very presence of Christ effected by these three things. One way this may be identified is the arrangement of the space of worship – noting the centrality of the Word and Sacraments. Furthermore this will be emphasized in each service's order of worship which places the Word central in the Proclamation of the Word and the Sealing of God's Word in Sacrament.

Kim's question reflects an understanding of the service of the church in the

World. This is consistent in particular with the 1967 Confession which declares that the church is sent to be a reconciling community. Each service of worship should provide people with an opportunity to respond in ways of discipleship. This commitment in response may be in offering of ourselves – in ways of time, talent and money. During this part of the service the pastor or a congregation member may remind the congregation that worship is a sign of the kingdom of God and that we offer ourselves according to the gift of the Spirit to further build God’s kingdom.

Justinian emphasizes the church’s responsibility to preach the good news of God’s love in the world. As the congregation is dismissed a charge may be given for the congregation to go forth in the World to live and serve lives which confess the gospel.

In these ways the church’s worship practices can reflect the understandings presented by the elders. In addition to the suggestions noted above, the pastor may read and interpret Scripture during the worship which reflects the Reformed understanding of the Church and its mission as attested in Scripture. Hymns and prayers may also reflect this.

## Section I

GRADER’S COMMENTS: [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 3 by Grader (2)]

(1). Selection of Confessional citations which articulate a good understanding of the church and its mission. Although the Directory of Worship is not explicitly mentioned, there is clear evidence that the candidate is informed by it, especially in expressing the gathering and being sent out quality of the church. The candidate’s response to the four elders is outstanding!

(2). Essay’s clarity could have been enhanced by naming the document and/or confession. Parenthetical references fulfilled the required responses; however, the essay’s structure was awkward. The essay’s second part (responses to Irving, Maria, Kim and Justinian) was clear and concise.

## Section II

### Part 1

The church’s services on the occasion of death have two main functions. The first is to face the reality of death in the community. No person is to bear their grief in isolation, but rather they are to be supported by the whole community of faith.

The second function is the occasion to clearly proclaim the gospel. We point to the hope of the resurrection that in the dying and raising of Christ, we too have died and been raised to new life in Christ.

The church is called to pastoral care to provide support in times of need and crisis. Together with nurture this is how the community ministers to one another. In describing the membership of the church, the body of Christ, the apostle Paul declared that when any one of the members suffers, the whole body suffers with it. By worshipping together in a service on the occasion of death, the whole community shares in the suffering particularly experienced by the person’s friends and family.

Not only does the community share in this suffering, but it demonstrates support by offering themselves in their presence and by offering their prayers of intercession on behalf of the person’s friends and family.

Finally, the community demonstrates its dependence of God as they commend the deceased to God’s everlasting care and place their trust in the promise of Christ’s

presence in both life and death. The focus of the worship service should be on God and God's presence in the time of grief.

## Part 2

The element of Scripture can point to the church's hope in the resurrection and promise of Christ's presence. Scripture shall be read. The pastor should select Scripture which attests to the saving work of Christ and the hope of everlasting life. Through the hearing of this work, the Holy Spirit may illumine its understanding to those who grieve and will give them comfort. Prayers shall be offered. Prayers should praise God for the gift of life and community as well as praise God for the gift of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection. Prayers of intercession should be made on behalf of the family and friends of the one who has died. Prayers, too, should reflect that there may be those present who are grieving losses other than this one. Prayers should also be offered for the community of those gathered to support and care for one another. In this manner of prayer, the church's ministry of pastoral care will be manifest.

If approved by the session, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper may be administered to all those who have been baptized. This Sacrament is a visible means of declaring that our communion is not only with those present but with all the saints on earth and in heaven. It also proclaims God's presence with us in Christ. In this meal we are nourished in life by the body and blood of Christ inwardly sealed by the Holy Spirit. This sacrament when proclaimed with the Word, is an act of the whole believing community and therefore demonstrates the care and support of the community in communion.

The focus of the service is to worship God. Therefore, the final act of the worship service is to commend the deceased to God's care. This attests to the reality of the person's earthly death as well as points to one's complete dependence on God for eternal life.

## Section II

GRADER'S COMMENTS [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 3 by Grader (2)]

(1.) The candidate not only fully addresses all requirements of the Section, but brings superior insights, i.e. illumination of the Holy Spirit in grieving hearts; intercessory prayers with those in mind who are grieving prior losses; communion of Saints on earth and in heaven; dependence on God in life and in death. Super!

(2.) Essay adequately discusses services for death as dictated by the Directory for Worship. The hypothetical friends of Mike are overlooked in the essay's narrative. Reader suggests that candidate reflect on this issue and incorporate this reflection in the essay's narrative.



### Section III

#### Part B

1. Betty's comment raises the question of who should receive the Lord's Supper. The Directory for Worship states that anyone who has been baptized may partake of the meal and is so invited. Our confessional heritage declares that the Lord's Supper is not a right of the worthy but a privilege of the undeserving. Furthermore, even those who doubt may come to the Table to receive the assurance of Christ's presence. It is an outward sign of an invisible grace. Christ's presence is conferred to the faithful by the Holy Spirit. Since every day is hallowed by God, Carlos is mistaken that the Lord's Supper may only be observed on Sundays. Any worship service may celebrate the Sacrament of Communion but all Sacraments of Communion are to be approved by the Session. Again, Carlos is mistaken by saying the minister has authority to decide when to offer communion as a part of public worship. According to the Directory for Worship it is the sole responsibility of the Session.

Donna is correct in reserving authority for communion to the Session. However, the Lord's Supper must be administered either by an ordained pastor or by a commissioned lay pastor invited by the Session and approved by the appropriate governing body. Certainly ordained elders and deacons may assist in the distribution of the elements in the communion service.

Steve is mistaken regarding his understanding of the reason we celebrate communion. Communion is a sacrament. It is a sign and seal of God's promise to be with us. It consists of both a Word and a sign. The Word is that of Jesus saying that every time we eat the bread and drink the cup we proclaim his death until he comes again. As Jesus ate his last meal with the disciples as attested in the gospels Jesus said, "Take, eat. This is my body broken for you." Similarly he said to drink of all of the cup of blessing and commanded those gathered with him to "Do this in remembrance of me."

Today the church celebrates the Lord's Supper because the Lord commanded this of the disciples and therefore of us. It is true that the Apostle Paul believes the Lord's Supper to be important, but the reason we do so is Christ. In so doing as Christ commanded, we have not only the sign but that which is signified. We have the very presence of Christ.

#### Part 2

Betty, I want to assure you that the Lord's Supper is not limited by our understanding of worthiness. The Table is open to all who are baptized. One way to understand this is that the Sacrament is an outward sign of an invisible grace. We don't receive Christ because we deserve Christ but because God loves us and graciously sent Christ to us. We are not invited to the Table because we deserve to be at the Table but precisely because we need Christ's presence. Christ's presence is especially there for those who are undeserving.

Carlos, when we studied about God's creation I remember you gave thanks to God for creating all of time and all the days. It is precisely in that understanding that we claim God has made holy every time and place to worship God. As such, we are certainly allowed to observe communion at worship services other than the service for the Lord's Day which we celebrate on Sundays. The requirement is that Session must approve it. I appreciate your trust in me to decide when we should celebrate communion, but we had better abide by the Presbyterian Church and support the Session in its responsibility.

Donna, you are correct in identifying that the congregation is not dependent on me personally to administer communion. Indeed the sacrament of communion is the act of

the whole believing community and it would be misleading if this was tied to a particular person. However, the church does require either an ordained pastor or a commissioned lay pastor invited by the Session and approved by Presbytery. Elders may certainly assist in the distribution of communion and I personally think this is beneficial for communicating that this is an act of the whole community.

Steve, the Apostle Paul certainly believed Communion to be important, but we can look further for the authority of this sacrament. Jesus himself shared a last meal with his disciples. He proclaimed that the bread was his body broken for them and the cup was the blood of the new covenant. Jesus then commanded the disciples to eat of this bread and drink of this cup in remembrance of him. As disciples of Christ, we believe Jesus commands us to do the same. Therefore we celebrate the Lord's Supper because of Jesus. The Apostle Paul communicates the importance of this act to us and helps us to understand it, but it is a Sacrament because Jesus instituted it.

GRADER'S COMMENTS: [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 4 by Grader (2)]

(1) Again, outstanding! The candidate exhibits the heart and mind of a pastor on this examination.

(2) The closing essay reflects the candidate's best work. The essay demonstrates pastoral knowledge and sensitivity.

SEPTEMBER 2004

EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The *Book of Order* states:

“*Worship and Sacraments*. This examination shall assess the candidate’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.”

G-14.0310d(4)

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Questions on this examination deal with both **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**. You will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to illustrate the connection between the contemporary understandings and practices of worship set forth in the Directory for Worship and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as it is expressed in *The Book of Confessions*.
- An ability to articulate a Reformed theological framework for addressing issues and practices related to worship and sacraments that arise from contemporary contexts for ministry.
- An ability to discern theological components in liturgical situations that may arise in ministry.
- An ability to discuss provisions of the Directory for Worship and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry.
- An ability to reflect theologically and pastorally on the many different relationships between the ways the church understands and carries out its ministry and mission in the world and its worship and celebration of the sacraments.
- An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

In writing your answers, bear in mind that presbyteries elect elders as well as ministers of Word and Sacraments to serve as graders. Examinations should be written in jargon-free language. Technical language should be used only where the task requires it or where it is appropriate.

The examination is divided into three sections:

Section I is a required one-hour question about Reformed Liturgical Heritage. When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor who then will give you Sections II and III of the examination.

Section II is a required one-hour question calling for a Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship. No books or resources shall be used.

Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with Application for Ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. It is scheduled to be written in one hour. No books or resources shall be used.

Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., I.1 or III.A.1).

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**USE THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP AS FOUND IN THE CURRENT BOOK OF ORDER IN YOUR PREPARATION. IT MAY NOT BE USED DURING THE EXAMINATION.**

A CLEAN, UNMARKED PRINTED COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSION* MAY BE USED AS A RESOURCE **ONLY** DURING SECTION I OF THE EXAMINATION. NO OTHER BOOKS ARE ALLOWED.

Submit all answers in your own handwriting in ink; or type the answers if you prefer. You may make corrections, deletions or additions without rewriting or erasing.

If you prefer, you may use a word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12 point font size. Please number the pages, include your candidate number on each page of the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages on the exam booklet.

Be advised that illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Papers that cannot be understood by readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar will be graded accordingly. Papers written in pencil will be returned ungraded.

The final grade for this examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions with rounding up or down determined by the readers on the basis of the examination's overall merit. You must complete all three sections of the examination. Even if two sections merit a superior score and one section is omitted, the examination will be considered unsatisfactory. The examination must receive a grade of three or higher on at least TWO questions to be considered satisfactory.

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

In an adult Sunday school class, one person refers to a recent worship service when the pastor called on the congregation to “Remember your baptism.” The following comments are made during the discussion:

- Alice: I think that only adults who make a public profession of faith should be baptized. Then the choice would be theirs and they would always remember what it means.
- Jim: If people were dedicated as children, there is no reason why they can’t be baptized when they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- Dana: Well, we sometimes have the renewal or reaffirmation of baptism in worship. That ought to make people feel that they didn’t miss anything if they were baptized as babies.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss a Reformed understanding of Baptism, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents from the *Book of Confessions*. The answer should be based on your knowledge of the Directory for Worship as well as the *Book of Confessions*.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the comments of the class.

**NOTE: Section I must be completed in one hour. A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions, 2002* must be used. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor, who will give you Sections II and III of the examination (pp. 5-7).**

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

**THIS PAGE HAS BEEN INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.  
UPON COMPLETING SECTION I,  
TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.  
THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**SEPTMEBER 2004  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON  
REFORMED WORSHIP.**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

At a new member training event, you explain the sacraments as practiced in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The following questions are asked:

Jan: Why don't we have more sacraments?

Dave: Isn't foot washing mentioned in the Bible?

Stan: Isn't marriage a sacrament?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the sacraments based on your knowledge of Scripture, the Directory for Worship, and *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the questions of the new members.

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**A.**

In a conversation with a friend, you explain that you have been to an Ash Wednesday service to mark the beginning of Lent. She comments that she does not understand what you are talking about and asks, "What is Lent, anyway? My church preaches the Bible all year long."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, write a newsletter article on the observance of the seasons of the church year.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the friend with particular emphasis on Lent.

**-OR-**



**SEPTEMBER 2004  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**B.**

At a meeting of the worship committee, you suggest that the congregation you serve as pastor celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on special days. You explain that you believe this would be more appropriate than their custom of celebrating it only the first Sunday of every month. The following comments are made:

Amy: What days are you talking about?

Allen: Why don't we have the Lord's Supper every Sunday?

Gail: Having the Lord's Supper that often might diminish its meaning.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, discuss a theological and liturgical rationale for the frequency and occasions for celebrating the Lord's Supper.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the issues raised by the worship committee.

**FEBRUARY 2005**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The *Book of Order* states:

*“Worship and Sacraments.* This examination shall assess the candidate’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.”

G-14.0310d(4)

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- An ability to discern theological components in liturgical situations that may arise in ministry.
- An ability to discuss provisions of the Directory for Worship and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry.
- An ability to reflect theologically and pastorally on the many different relationships between the ways the church understands and carries out its ministry and mission in the world and its worship and celebration of the sacraments.
- An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

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**FEBRUARY 2005  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

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**FEBRUARY 2005  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

A member of the church you serve recently worshiped at another Presbyterian church when the Lord's Supper was being celebrated. The pastor of that congregation made the following invitation to the table:

This is not a Presbyterian table, nor does it belong to our congregation; it is the Lord's Table. Our Lord invites all those who trust in him and are baptized to come and participate in this communion. Any of you here who are not baptized but wish to participate may think of this as an agape meal.

The church member asks, "Is that what we Presbyterians mean by 'open communion'?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the relationship between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, citing by number (*e.g.*, 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents from *The Book of Confessions*. The answer should be based on your knowledge of the Directory for Worship and *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, write an article for the church newsletter on the purpose of the invitation to the Lord's Table.

**NOTE: Section I must be completed in one hour. A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions*, 2002 must be used. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor, who will give you Sections II and III of the examination (pp.5-7).**

**FEBRUARY 2005  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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**UPON COMPLETING SECTION I,**

**TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.**

**THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**FEBRUARY 2005  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON  
REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

A halfway house for recovering addicts has opened next door to the church you serve as pastor. You and some of the members have been considering inviting the residents to attend worship. At the evangelism committee, the following discussion occurs:

Herman: Our children may be negatively influenced if these people attend our church.

Freda: The Gospel teaches us to welcome everybody. How will we know what kind of influence they might have if we don't invite them?

Dana: But this is a good opportunity for us to do mission. So, why don't we hold special worship services at the halfway house?

David: If we have a fellowship meal with them first, then we can all be comfortable worshipping together.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss how the Church's worship is related to its ministry in the world, guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the specific comments made by each person.

**FEBRUARY 2005  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**A.**

You are a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Your nephew Chris calls to ask you to officiate at his marriage to Michelle, with whom he has been living for two years. He explains that Michelle's pastor didn't want to do the wedding because they want to write their own service and be married on the beach where they got engaged. He says, "This will be great! You'll get a vacation at the beach and you won't have to worry about a thing. We'll give you a copy of the service at the rehearsal."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss a Reformed liturgical understanding of marriage, guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond pastorally to Chris and Michelle, explaining why you would or would not officiate at this marriage service, citing at least three (3) specific issues involved.

**-OR-**

**FEBRUARY 2005  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**B.**

You are the pastor of a church in a small, close-knit town. During the past few months, a controversial issue about which members have very strong opinions has arisen within the community. During a session meeting, the issue comes up and the following comments are made:

Sally: I don't think I will ever be able to speak to Sam again. I can't believe what he said at the town council meeting.

Terry: My family is split right down the middle. What can we as a church do to help people learn to get along in spite of our differences?

Jesse: I think the church should stay out of politics. This mess is for the town council to resolve. We shouldn't get involved.

Wally: But we are involved. Could we have some kind of service of reconciliation?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, explain why you would or would not suggest planning a Service of Acceptance and Reconciliation in response to this situation.
2. If you would plan such a service, list and discuss the elements that you think should be included. If you would not suggest such a service, discuss how you would deal in some other manner with the concerns raised.



# POLITY

## **GOLDEN RULES FOR THE CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**CHURCH POLITY is open-book because we orderly Presbyterians go about our ministries concerned that one evidence of faithfulness to God is an ordered life together rooted in our sense of discipleship.**

**Polity is a relational expression of the Church's theological commitments (foundation). The Church Polity examination provides an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate an understanding of polity as a tool for ministry in the context of church life.**

**The examination assesses how the candidate interprets, communicates and utilizes the Book of Order in his or her practice of ministry.**

### **WHAT THE CANDIDATES OUGHT TO KNOW**

- That the purpose of the Section I question is to test the candidate's understanding of constitutional order as founded on basic theological principles that have been passed down to us over the years.
- That the purpose of the Section II and Section III questions is to test the candidate's ability to apply constitutional provisions to life in the church.
- That the Section II question addresses concerns that repeat themselves regularly in the practice of ministry.
- That many essay questions are based on actual contemporary situations in the church, and that they tend to have a preferable direction or resolution or range of responses rather than cut-and-dried correct answers: e.g., there is the general expectation that a satisfactory resolution of a situation is reconciliation rather than victory.
- That one should appreciate what "pastoral" means out in the church – not mushy or permissive, but caringly constructive.
- That one should follow directions, that "list" doesn't mean "evaluate," and that sometimes one is asked to respond to an individual and sometimes one isn't.
- That one should keep track of time.
- That at least two of the three sections must be passed.
- That at least two people will be evaluating the paper – and eventually the candidate's CPM will read it too, as well as a calling Presbytery Committee.
- That, repeatedly, new readers comment on the fairness and care of this system.

Prepared by Polity Task Group, Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee  
Jerry W. Houchens, Executive Secretary

April 1994 (Revised)

**PREPARING FOR THE POLITY ORDINATION EXAM**  
**BY DR. RICHARD ARMSTRONG**  
**PLUS STUDENT ADVICE**

A. Some Hints for Answering the Essay Questions

1. The basic approach:
  - a. Identify the constitutional issues
  - b. Identify the interpersonal issues
  - c. Describe how you would deal with the situation, showing your knowledge of the Book of Order and your pastoral sensitivity.
2. Answer the questions as indicated, i.e., using the same structure. Don't make the readers hunt for parts of your answer. Organize your answer as suggested by the question.
3. A clue to the answer is often contained in the question. Read it carefully!
4. In interpreting the question, raise the points you are not sure about and speak to them with pastoral sensitivity and sanctified common sense. For example, "My response would depend partly on how angry Elder Lee was. If she was asking merely out of curiosity, I would say . . . If she was very angry, I would . . ."
5. Think logically! When it says to list three ways or four whatever, don't try to visualize a list; there may not be one. Rather, close your eyes a moment and think logically about what is involved. Polity is usually (weasel word!) logical. The B.O. attempts to spell out in practice the constitutional principles upon which our Presbyterian polity is based, principles which underlie, undergird, inform and validate everything we do.
6. Show that you know the spirit as well as the letter of the law. You can break a rule, if you have a better reason, based on other rules, for doing so! Know when to bend the letter in favor of the spirit, but don't just say what you would do, without acknowledging what the B.O. says. The readers will not assume you know the rule, so state the rule and give reasons for what you have done.
7. Work into your answers, whenever appropriate, key phrases and statements! Examples: fair representation; mission determines structures; ministry of compassion (deacons); church power is only ministerial and declarative; ecclesiastical discipline is purely moral and spiritual in its object; inclusiveness and participation; historic principles of church order; historic principles of church government (radical principles); basic principles of Presbyterian polity; great ends of the church; reformed and always being reformed (ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda); committee vs. commission; the organization of the church rests on fellowship and is not designed to work without trust and love; etc., etc.
8. In conflict situations:
  - a. Work at the lowest level in dealing with trouble. Don't throw the B.O. at them right off the bat. Use the judicial process only as a last resort.
  - b. Always seek first to be reconciled.
  - c. It is never wrong to point out the need to instruct, inform, educate! Deal with the causes as well as the symptoms. Ignorance of the B.O. is often the cause of the trouble.
  - d. Conflict situations require a more creative use of the B.O. than questions calling merely for information, which have their built-in focus (either a particular topic, in which case the place to turn in the B.O. is clear; or a theme, in which case you turn to the index).
  - e. Relevant sections of the B.O. in conflict situations; preliminary principles of church order and church government; basic Presbyterian principles; ordination vows; duties of elders and deacons; duties of session; responsibilities of church membership; "The Church and Its Mission," especially sections 3 and 4; the work of the committee on ministry; specific passages relating to the issue; as a last resort, the Rules of Discipline, including the Preamble.

## B. Other Things to Remember

1. In questions of authority in the particular church, when in doubt say the session! But, know the exceptions. There are only a few rights and responsibilities specifically assigned to the pastor and to the congregation, but they are important (e.g., the congregation votes on the pastor's salary but not on the rest of the budget). Know the limitations of powers and where to find them in the B.O. (e.g., G-7.0304).
2. In matters relating to the calling process, always bring in the committee on ministry.
3. When routing things in matters relating to judicial process, always send them through the clerk. In matters pertaining to records, rolls, registers and routings, when in doubt say the clerk!
4. Note words like must and shall, as against words like may, should and ordinarily (weasel words).
5. Re meetings of governing bodies, don't forget that they shall be opened and closed with prayer. Minutes should show that.
6. When nominating, or when talking about the make-up of committees and/or chair positions, always mention fair representation.
7. Important sections to know:
  - a. Preliminary principles.
  - b. Ordination vows. Don't forget to mention the appropriate vows, when dealing with church officer responsibilities. Also G-6.0300 and .0302-0304.
  - c. Rules of Discipline. Know the nature and purpose of church discipline. Remember to mention paragraph 2 of the Preamble, which must be read aloud at the start of every trial!
  - d. Meetings. Know the procedures for calling special meetings (who, how, quorums, etc.).
  - e. When can the clerk of session or the stated clerk act in lieu of the moderator?
8. Favorite themes on exams:
  - a. The "connectional" church
  - b. Ecumenical commitment
  - c. "Shared" power
  - d. Reformed and always being reformed
  - e. Diversity and inclusiveness; fair representation
  - f. The nature of power
  - g. The purpose of discipline
  - h. The Great Ends of the Church

### **YOUR POLITY ORDINATION EXAM: STUDENT ADVICE**

BE PASTORAL! This exam is not just a test to see how well you know the Book of Order, but to examine if you can apply Presbyterian polity pastorally. Compose your answer out of who you really are and how you would respond to the people involved.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: This next section is an example of a Church Polity Exam including exam questions, the readers/graders guidelines, a couple candidates' answers, and grader's scores and comments.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**February 1999**

**EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the missions of the church are determined” [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the Book of Order effectively. Candidates will utilize the 1998-99 Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each section is designed to be completed in one hour.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of the grades received on all three Sections, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination’s overall merit. However, the paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections in order to be considered Satisfactory.

Submit all answers in ink, or type answers if you prefer. Memory typewriters, word processors, computers, and pencils shall not be used. You need not erase in order to make corrections, deletions, or additions.

If you type the examination, staple it to the first few pages of the examination booklet, **not** to the front cover. Make sure your identification number is on each page.

**FEBRUARY 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

Be advised that illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Also, papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax or grammar will be graded accordingly.

The readers, in grading the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the Book of Order;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the same situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT:      READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE BEGINNING TO  
WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**FEBRUARY 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

“The church in its witness to the uniqueness of the Christian faith is called to mission and must be responsive to diversity in both the church and the world. Thus the fellowship of Christians as it gathers for worship and orders its corporate life will display a rich variety of form, practice, language, program, nurture and service to suit culture and need.” (G-4.0401)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing at least two (2) additional Book of Order references (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of the following, describe how our church’s commitment to diversity and inclusiveness is practiced in relationship to:
  - a.) form
  - b) practice
  - c) language.
  
2. Drawing upon your response in 1, write an article suitable for a church newsletter which expresses how the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) strives to fulfill its commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

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CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

You as the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church are conducting a new member class. Kathy, a member of the class, is puzzled by your explanation of governing bodies and what it means to be a connectional church. Kathy says, "I do not understand what you mean by governing bodies. I thought a church took care of its own affairs without interference from the outside. In my former church, we did not have to worry about what some other group was going to say about what we were doing."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing at least (5) constitutional provisions, each from a different chapter of the Book of Order (e.g., X-.0000), describe and explain the four levels of governance in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Guided by your answer in 1, respond to Kathy and the concerns she raises. Include an explanation of what it means to be a connectional church.



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CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

CHOOSE ONE: A or B

- A. You return from vacation to find a letter signed by the pastor and clerk of session stating that in your absence, “the session has voted to terminate your contract as associate pastor.” In checking into this, you learn that a group of parents had brought a request for your termination to the personnel committee who brought it to session. The parents felt that you did not have the skills and personality to be a junior high youth advisor for their children. However, an annual performance review given one month earlier by the same indicated satisfactory performance in all aspects of your ministry. The termination comes as a complete surprise to you.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing at least three (3) appropriate Book of Order references (e.g. X-0.0000) identify and discuss the errors committed by the session.
2. Guided by your answer in 1, identify and discuss the options available to you. How will you proceed.

**FEBRUARY 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

You are pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church. You have been made aware, by a member of the congregation that one of the elders on session, who has responsibility for collecting money for the church fund raising campaign, is embezzling funds. After checking into the member's story you find that it is true.

You confront the elder about this matter and ask him to consider quietly resigning from his position of collecting funds. You try to explore with him how he might make restitution. Although admitting his offense, he refuses to resign or to repay the funds embezzled. He says to you that you have no right to make suggestions of this nature.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

1. Citing references from the Form of Government and Rules of Disciplines (e.g., X-0.0000), identify and discuss at least three (3) constitutional issues related to this situation. Cite references from both the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline, citing at least one citation for each issue.
2. Building upon your answer in 1, outline a plan for dealing pastorally and administratively with the situation.

## **STUDENT'S ANSWERS AND GRADERS' COMMENTS 2/99**

*Note: study this essay for its form more than its content: its format, organization, writing style, use of references, balance of information and opinion, leadership style, pastoral sensitivity.*

### **Section I, Question I**

The PCUSA commitment to diversity and inclusiveness is indeed manifest in the form, practice, and language, of the church and the Book of Order. When we hear the words diversity and inclusiveness, our minds may jump to the categories cited in G-4.0403. But we should also consider diversity in size of churches, and factors that call for and receive variety of form practice and language.

Perhaps one of the most striking varieties of the form of government is the different ways that a particular church session can make use of the ministry of deacons. According to G-6.0403 deacons may either be organized as a board or “they may be individually commissioned by the session,” to specific ministries or tasks that fall under the vocational responsibility of their office. G-6.0407 provides a third possibility, that the congregation may vote not to use deacons.

Although the Book of Order provides clear guidance in the form of government of the church, it does not command an absolutely rigid structure. The form of government is to be determined by the mission of the Church and the governing body, according to G-9.0402a. So there is explicit freedom, for instance, in the use of councils, commissions and agencies at every level of Government. (G-9.0901) And governing bodies are to review and maintain a functional relationship between structure and mission (ex. Synod, G-12.0102r.)

The church's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness is practiced both in its government and in its worship. In its government, G-9.0104 demands that governing bodies take responsibility for that commitment, work toward greater compliance, and enact it specifically in their hiring procedures, to which G-13.0201b is addressed. G-9.0105 directs that each governing body above the session have a committee on representation that will see to the representation of diverse peoples in church government.

The practice of worship is also a place for diversity. In recognition of difficult and/or extraordinary circumstances and callings, the PCUSA allows for some flexibility, for example not only in the form of the administration of the sacraments, but even in the minister. That is, where extraordinary circumstances demand it, the presbytery can authorize specific elders to administer the Lord's Supper. (G-6.0304, 11.0203z) Likewise, if a presbytery determines that a church's mission demands it, a commissioned lay pastor may administer both sacraments. (G-14.0801c)

In Worship, we also demonstrate the commitment to diversity and inclusiveness in language. W-1.2006 specifically mandates the use of language that is both inclusive and diverse, appropriate to the variety of peoples who compose the PCUSA family. W-1-200s states that “appropriate” language recognizes a variety of traditions.

### **Section I. Question II**

As we approach the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the millennium after the life, death and resurrection, of our Lord, one can't help but notice that something's different. “What?” you might ask, to which the reply would be, “everything.” Not that there is no connection with the past, or connection between people and things – but we live in a world in which we increasingly have, are aware of and celebrate difference and diversity. As a denomination, PCUSA is committed to recognizing and representing that diversity, and making efforts to be inclusive of peoples in all their differences: race, gender, marital status, background – and local churches as well, have different circumstances and needs which the PCUSA recognizes and supports.

You might be surprised at how much freedom churches have. Let me give you an example. Every church I've been involved with had a Board of Deacons, and a minister of the word and sacrament, a pastor, who administered baptism and the Lord's Supper. WE might assume it just has to be this way, and it is the same way everywhere. But it's not! A church's session can decide to commission individual deacons for specific tasks, instead of having a board. A congregation, if it is perhaps very small, or for other reasons can vote not to have deacons at all! (But I am very glad our church hasn't done that!) In extraordinary circumstances, when a church is without a Pastor, presbytery can authorize an elder to administer the Lord's Supper. Or, an elder with special training and call from God thru the church, called a Commissioned Lay Pastor, can administer both sacraments, upon authorization of presbytery.

Indeed, it is in worship that our diversity is perhaps most obvious. In different voices, and faces, and colors of skin, people old and young, men and women, we gather to worship, our language recognizes a diversity of cultures and traditions concerning God.

Those different skin colors and ages, and genders are not merely romanticized in Worship however. There are committees on representation to ensure that people of different backgrounds are adequately represented at every level of church government. The PCUSA also seeks to represent this diversity in its employees. We have a real commitment to embracing all kinds of people in every aspect of church life.

So, the next time someone asks you about the Presbyterian church, smile, and tell them, "It's Different!"

### Section I

#### GRADER'S COMMENTS: [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 5 by grader (2)]

- (1) #1. How refreshing to read such a clear, thoughtful reflection on our church's form, practice and language! It was easily read and understood yet showed a good knowledge of the Book of Order. The paper also reflected diversity and inclusiveness in recognizing the wide reaching ways that diversity and inclusiveness is demonstrated! This paper covered the basics and added more.
- #2. Excellent newsletter article, incorporating teaching with areas of connection and interest to the newsletter reader. The last sentence is delightful – a phrase worth keeping. Thanks.
- (2) #1. Clearly organized, logical, yet concise, this paper could well be filed for actual use in a congregation.
- #2. Conversational tone of the article in this paper does much to wipe away ecclesiastical dust and emphasize the contemporary, all with due respect. "Skin color, ages, genders not merely romanticized." Delightful.

### Section II. Response I

#### Citations:

- G-4.0302 - governing bodies, in their mutual relationships express the unity of the church.
- G-10.0102 - defines the session in its responsibility for the mission and government of a local church.
- G-11.0101 presbytery a corporate expression of the church and ministers of the Word and Sacrament

G-12.0102j,a Synod does things that are more effective from a broad base; and provides broad strategy.

G-13.0101 General Assembly representative of unity of all lower governing bodies and churches of the PCUSA.

### **Description and Explanation**

The four levels of governance in the P.C.U.S.A. are the session, the presbytery, and the General Assembly. The session has responsibility for the mission and administration thereof in a local church. It is composed of elders elected by that church and ordained by its session, and (ordinarily) the pastor, who moderates but does not vote.

The presbytery is the first level of corporate expression where many local churches affirm they are one church. Those churches are represented by elder commissioners to presbytery meetings. Presbytery is the body to which ministers of the word and sacrament belong.

The synod is representative of a group of presbyteries, and reviews and supervises their actions as well as setting broad policy for its constituent bodies, and performing actions that are appropriate to a broader base.

The General Assembly represents the unity of all the churches of the PCUSA; we are one church. It demonstrates and allows unity of practice and doctrine, not by coercion, but by agreement, as a representative body.

### **Section II. Response II**

In my brief, response (we are in class) I want to allay Kathy's fears about interference from the outside, and demonstrate the usefulness of governing bodies and their demonstration of the church's (PCUSA) unity.

"Good question, Kathy. I should have explained what I meant by governing bodies. The Presbyterian Church has four of them. The session is responsible for the mission and government of the local church – it may have been called a church board, or maybe a deaconate in your former church. The congregation elects elders who are on the session.

The next group, or governing body, kind of like a county, is a presbytery. Ministers, like me, belong to the presbytery. It takes care of us, and also supervises us. I think it's important for ministers to be accountable to a body outside the church. Now, the presbytery does also review, and supervise its local churches. But I hope you won't think of it as outside interference. For one thing, all the churches in the presbytery send an elder to meetings whose vote counts the same as anyone else's. And the presbytery is not there to boss churches around, but first of all to serve them, and to correct them only if they are really messing up.

Next, we have the Synod, which is sort of like a state in the federal government. All the presbyteries in the synod have both an elder representative and a minister representative. Now here are some things it just makes more sense to look from a broader base – like determining mission needs or providing curriculums. So the synod serves and supervises the presbyteries in this way.

The national governing body is General Assembly. Having a representative national governing body allows all the Presbyterian churches to have and show unity. We have doctrinal standards, so you can't be a Presbyterian Church and say 'Jesus was a Space Alien and had lives on Mars!' And you can't be a Presbyterian Church and mistreat people, or stop using the Bible, or something like that.

Does that help you Kathy? I'd love to talk to you more after class."

## Section II

### GRADERS' COMMENTS: [Scored 5 by grader (1) and 5 by grader (2)]

(1) #1. The clarity and conciseness of this answer demonstrates good understanding of the four levels of governance. The simplicity of expression is a true asset!

#2. Thank you for responding so pastorally to Kathy's concerns. Her fears of interference were addressed accurately and pastorally. Even the interjection of humor at the end helped encourage Kathy to see the church as a body of real people with concern for one another. Great.

(2) #1. Clarity sparkles here, in logical organization. It's a keeper.

#2. "Good question, Kathy" and the tone of the explanation in this segment of the paper could do much, creatively, in this church.

### Section III. A Response I.

Session Errors:

G-14.0601 Pastoral relationship may be dissolved only by presbytery. – The session can't simply "terminate my contract" by its own vote.

G-14.0603 Furthermore, even a recommendation to presbytery must be approved by the congregation, not by the session alone.

G-9.0505b,d The session has acted as an administrative commission here, and failed to give me fair notice of its hearing/procedures as well as a chance to be heard and to face my accusers.

The session has confused its responsibilities and powers with those of presbytery, the congregation and perhaps a special administrative commission. It has ignored my right to a fair trial. The Pastor's complicity in this is most distressing. The apparent tone of the action, with the session assuming ultimate responsibility, and authority (apparently) without the knowledge or consent of the congregation, the presbytery or myself, is very serious.

### Section III A. Response II

The most basic question, I think is whether it is best for me and the congregation if I request termination of the associate pastoral relationship, or whether I pursue some form of reconciliation and try to maintain the assoc. pastoral relationship.

I think that the most important thing for everyone concerned is for me to get in touch with the presbytery's committee on ministry. Under their guidance and with their help, I would like to pursue the following course of action.

First, I would notify both the Pastor and the clerk of session that in my opinion, their actions were out of order, and that I was in communication with the Committee on Ministry in regard to those actions. I would avoid any judgement other than "out of order here," to avoid an escalation of tension.

Following that, I have four other concerns. First, I would want to "face my accusers" (the group of parents) to see if their concerns could be met in some way other than dissolution of Pastoral Relationship, such as explanation of my actions, clarification of some past event, or

possibly the persuasion of other parents or church members. A COM mediation commission would be helpful here. I wouldn't make these arrangements on my own and the session and its personnel committee are not in position to do so, either.

Second, the actions and attitude of the session and the Pastor need to be addressed. This would be the responsibility of the COM and the presbytery. But I would not leave quietly – it is my responsibility to refer the matter to presbytery, and not allow the session to continue in error and the next associate to be subject to similar treatment.

Third, for me to continue the associate pastor relationship, there would have to be some kind of reconciliation with the session and the Pastor. There is a lack of trust and confidence on both sides at the moment. It would be very difficult to overcome. But I hope that the COM or an appropriate presbytery commission would be able to accomplish it.

Finally, I would like to address my actions (that led to parents concern) with the COM. Although the session was out of order, parental concern with my abilities is a serious issue for me vocationally. Although the matter might be cleared up quickly given the chance for me to be heard by those parents, it might not. And in any case, my actions and policies, should be reviewed to prevent reoccurrence of such problems.

### **Section III**

#### **GRADERS' COMMENTS [Scored 5 by grader (1) and 5 by grader (2)]**

(1) #1. Wow! All in one page?! This paper showed the ability to hone in on what is really important in polity.

#2. Outstanding! This reader is impressed by the thoroughness with which the writer covered this problem. Excellent responses in regard to action with the church, presbytery, congregation, and self.

This paper demonstrates maturity, integration of polity, and readiness for ordination.

(2) #1. What good organization can do toward successful communication is well demonstrated in this paper.

#2. Calm, clear, courteous does wonders in a secular courtroom, and in this paper that same tone pervades. Again, organization is paramount. Final sentence is pragmatic.

**SEPTEMBER 1999**

**EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined.” [G-14.0310d(f)]

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the Book of Order effectively. Candidates will utilize the 1999-2000 Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

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CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 of 6**

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- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT:            READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
                                 BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 of 6**

**SECTION I: CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

“The radical principles of Presbyterian church government and discipline are:

- that the several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church;
- that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller, or determine matters of controversy which arise therein;
- that, in like manner, a representation of the whole should govern and determine in regard to every part, and to all the parts united: that is, that a majority shall govern;
- and consequently that appeals may be carried from lower to higher governing bodies, till they be finally decided by the collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church.

For these principles and this procedure, the example of the apostles and the practice of the primitive Church are considered as authority.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

1. Cite and explain how each of these four (4) radical principles is demonstrated in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Provide at least two (2) citations from the Book of Order (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of the four (4) radical principles listed above. (Citations may be taken from any or all of the sections of the Book of Order: Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and Rules of Discipline.)

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 of 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

You are called as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, a growing church in a large metropolitan area. Omar was called as the organizing pastor twenty-five years ago and served the church until he retired. He is now pastor emeritus.

Soon after you begin your pastorate, Omar comes to your study. He tells you that during Sunday worship next month, he has agreed to baptize two babies whose mothers grew up in that church, and that he has agreed to perform the weddings of three members during the coming summer. He also expresses his expectation that he will conduct funerals of long-time church members who are his close friends.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss at least three (3) issues raised by this situation, citing appropriate Book of Order references (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of the issues.
2. Guided by your answer in 1, formulate a plan to deal pastorally with the situation.

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 of 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

As a member of the presbytery's committee on ministry, you receive a call from an active elder who says:

“Last Sunday in a called meeting of the session, our pastor announced that he is leaving the church to accept another call. A special meeting of the congregation has been called for three weeks from now to act upon his request to dissolve the pastoral relationship. However, he is planning to accept the call to another church at next week's stated presbytery meeting. How can he do that? Why did the committee on ministry approve this? I thought the congregation must vote to dissolve the relationship before the presbytery can act.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing appropriate Book of Order references (e.g., X-0.0000), identify and discuss at least two (2) issues involved in this situation.
2. Based upon your answer in 1, respond to the elder.

**OR**

**SEPTEMBER 1999  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 of 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**B.**

The pastor of First Presbyterian Church, a large downtown church, has become ill. You, as a minister member of the presbytery, have been asked to moderate the stated meeting of the session. At this meeting, the chairperson of the budget committee, submits the proposed budget for the following year. After looking at the proposed budget, the following conversation takes place.

Carol: I notice that all of the pastoral staff's compensation is missing. Have we not heard from the personnel committee?

Larry: Yes, we have. They recommended that due to confidentiality and personal sensitivity, none of the pastoral staff's compensation should be listed.

Carol: But that is not right. How can the congregation vote on all the pastoral staff's compensation if neither we nor the congregation know what it is?

Larry: The congregation does not vote on the budget. The session sets the budget and tells the congregation what it is. So, they really do not need to know how much the pastors are getting paid.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing specific and appropriate Book of Order references (e.g., X-0.0000), identify and discuss at least two (2) issues involved in this situation.
2. Based upon your answer in 1, respond to the comments of Carol and Larry.

SEPTEMBER 1999  
STUDENT ANSWERS WITH GRADER'S RESPONSES  
POLITY EXAM

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Section I

Part 1

The first radical principle is demonstrated throughout the Book of Order. The entire chapter of the church and its unity, Chapter 4, of the Form of Government, is expanding this principle. The church universal is defined as all those who profess their faith in Jesus (G-4.0101), while the particular church is defined as a local expression of the universal Church (G-4.0102). This recognition of membership in the Universal Church is demonstrated whereby persons who have been members of a particular church by profession of faith may be received into membership of the Presbyterian church by the action of the Session and upon receipt of a letter of transfer. (G-5.0100e). The connection of a particular church to the Church Universal is also demonstrated in its worship life. In responding to the Word in prayer the congregation offers prayers of intercession on behalf of the Church Universal (W-3.3506(a)).

As noted throughout the discussion above, the relevant citations were:

- G-4.0101 (Church Universal)
- G-4.0102 (Particular Church)
- G-5.0100e (Transfer of Church Membership)
- W-3.3506a (Prayers of Intercession-church universal)

The principle of a representational government is also stated in the Principles of Presbyterian government stating that the church shall be governed by Presbyters (G-4.0301b). This principle is demonstrated throughout the Book of Order. Particular examples include:

- G-6.0102 (Responsibility of church membership to elect officers)
- G-7.0103 (Members of particular church led by elected officers)
- W-1.4004 (Responsibility of Session to ensure worship life of congregation)
- D-3.0101 (Jurisdiction in judicial process)

A congregation enacts the principle of representational government when it elects church members to ordained office (G-6.0102) and when they put themselves under the leadership of whom they have elected (G-7.0103). This principle is demonstrated in the responsibility of Session, a collection of ordained elders, who are to ensure the worship life of the people they serve. The Session is to provide for worship and encourage people to participate (W-1.4004). In addition to this (and perhaps most distinctly with respect to matters of controversy), the concept of representational government is seen in the judicial process of church discipline which distinctly provides for jurisdiction of a higher governing body to a lower one with Sessions having jurisdiction in cases involving church members. (D-3.0101)

The third principle of governing by majority is stated clearly in G-4.0301e. It is also implicit in the instruction that in a congregational meeting a vote which results in a tie (taken two times) is considered a lost motion. (G-7.0308). It is demonstrated as well in the election of a pastor. (G-14.0503). The Book of Order states that in every election of a pastor a vote is required and a majority of those present is required in order to elect a pastor for the congregation. In these ways, as discussed above, the principle of governing by majority has been demonstrated.

Finally, the principle of appeals is demonstrated in the following:

G-4.0301f (The right of a higher governing body)

D-8.0101 and

D-13.0101 (Appeals of remedial and disciplinary cases)

The right of a higher governing body to review a lower governing body is reserved in the Principles of Presbyterian government (G-4.0301f). This is demonstrated most clearly in the appeals process described for remedial cases (D-8.0101) and for disciplinary cases (D-13.0101). In both of these chapters an appeal is defined as the transfer of a case to the next higher governing body once a decision has been made by the lower governing body. Therefore the discipline of the church provides a process whereby decisions in a lower governing body may be appealed to a higher governing body as set forth in this principle.

## Section I

GRADER'S COMMENTS [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 3 by Grader (2)]

(1) Bravo! Well done! This section was not only well cited and discussed, but also demonstrated clear organization and articulation of thought.

(2) This response adequately demonstrates the relationship between the four radical principles of Church Government and the constitution of the PCUSA. The discussion of church membership under principle one, however is not germane to the principle of the universal church as represented by several congregations. The Book of Order citations do indicate that the author does have a grasp of the principles and their relation to the PCUSA constitution.

## Section II

### Part 1

Several issues are raised by Omar's expectation of responsibilities. These include the nature of a relationship as pastor emeritus, the responsibility to authorize baptism, the authority to minister or officiate at services, and the resources available to work through conflicts or challenges between ministers.

The Book of Order declares that the election of a minister to pastor emeritus is made as an honorary relationship with respect for the pastor. However, there is no pastoral duty or authority associated with this election. (G-14.0605) Furthermore, the officiating of services for members of a church by a former pastor may only be done upon invitation from the moderator of Session. (G-14.0606) This requirement would extend to a pastor emeritus. Based on this Omar may not assume that he will administer baptism, or officiate at weddings or funerals for members of the church where he is pastor emeritus.

Regarding the baptisms, it is unclear whether or not session has authorized them in this situation. According to the Book of Order the Session is responsible to authorize Baptism. (W-2.3011) No pastor may agree to baptize without this approval. However, a pastor may indicate their willingness to the parents at the same time directing their request for Baptism to the Session.

With respect to weddings and funerals, these services shall be under the direction of the pastor (W-4.1003 and W-4.9003). In both situations a pastor may extend an invitation for others to participate in the leadership of the service. Such invitation,

however, is at the discretion of the pastor.

Finally, a pastor who perceives themselves to be in a conflict with another minister does not have to bear the challenges in isolation. The Committee on Ministry (COM) of the governing Presbytery is by definition available to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers of the Presbytery. (G-11.0501) While it's not necessary to consult with the COM in every situation, it is appropriate to keep in mind that the COM is available.

## Part 2

The situation points to a need of clarification with Omar and with the congregation regarding Omar's role in the church as pastor emeritus. My plan to deal with this includes the following:

Immediately, I would respond to Omar because he has presented this situation to me in my study. I would express the church's gratitude and my own for Omar's willing and faithful service to the church. However, I would remind Omar of the church's polity with respect to former pastors and with respect to the role of pastor emeritus. In my capacity as pastor I would indicate my expectation to officiate at services for members of the congregation. Within this I would work with families to determine whether or not they wanted Omar to be a part of the services in funerals or weddings. I would definitely consider the possibility of inviting Omar to be a part of the worship leadership where it seemed appropriate.

With respect to the congregation there also appears the need to clarify Omar's role. First I would consult the Session and with the Book of Order we would clearly define the role of pastor emeritus. This could include ways in which the Session would like to invite Omar to specifically participate in the worship life of the community other than participation as a member in worship. Perhaps the Session would like to include him specifically in ways which recognize the heritage of the church. Session's plan should, however, focus on clearly identifying that Omar, as pastor emeritus, does not have pastoral authority or duty. It should be noted that whatever can be truly said can also be fittingly said. (Augustine) The Session can formulate its expectations for the pastor emeritus in such a way that communicates its gratitude for Omar's life and service to the church.

The role of pastor emeritus should be communicated to the congregation. The Session may authorize me as pastor or an elder to write an article for the church's newsletter. The article could include a short history of Omar's service thanking him for his gifts of ministry. The article could then identify the church's expectation for the role of the current pastor indicating that the installed pastor is responsible for leading worship services including weddings and funerals. The members of the congregation should be encouraged to avoid asking Omar to officiate such services. This would avoid putting Omar in the position of having to decline.

If for some reason Omar continued to assert his expectation to officiate at services, I would seek the counsel of the Committee on Ministry to receive guidance in working through this situation.



## Section II

GRADER'S COMMENTS [Scored 5 by Grader (1) and 5 by Grader (2)]

(1) Another well written section. The issues raised demonstrates an understanding of the polity issues in relationship to the question at hand. The response is both pastorally sensitive and constructive. The education provided not only seeks to resolve the issue of Omar, but allows the pastor to be seen clearly as the new leader of the congregation. Metaphorically, it provides an opportunity for the pastor emeritus to "pass the baton" to the new pastor and helps the congregation keep in step with the changing roles.

(2) This is an exceptional response. The paper rightly identifies 3 issues raised including the role of pastor emeritus, the responsibility to authorize baptism and the authority of the installed pastor. Each issue is expertly dealt with in this paper. The pastoral response shows both sensitivity yet also leadership. The recognition of COM's vote is very insightful.

## Section III B

### Part 1

Several issues are apparent. The first is what business is to be transacted at a congregational meeting. The second is who sets or determines pastoral compensation. Finally, there is an issue related to the use of committees.

The business to be transacted at a congregational meeting is defined in Chapter 7 of the Book of Order. Five matters are stated that shall be included. (G-7.0304) Larry is correct in identifying that the matters of the budget of the church are not included. Furthermore, the Book of Order states that congregational meetings shall be limited to the five matters discussed in G-7.0304.

However, matters relating to the pastoral relationship are a matter of congregational business (G-7.0304(3)). More specifically the congregation at its annual meeting shall review the adequacy of the compensation based on Session's report and review (G-7.0302a). This action by the congregation is consistent with the responsibilities of calling a pastor. The congregation elects a pastor indicating the terms of call, including compensation. (G-14.0507e) Carol is correct in asserting both the Session's and the congregation's right to be informed of the pastor's compensation. Compensation must also be adjusted to the minimum requirements set by Presbytery (G-14.0507e).

With respect to the committee's report, they have fallen short of the need to report full information to the Session. Use of committees are certainly permitted in the administration of the Session. (G-9.0501) The fact that the personnel committee has made a recommendation to the Session is consistent with the responsibilities of a committee. However, it is also to make a full report to the Session. Eliminating the pastoral staff's compensation appears to lack the requirement of full reporting.

A tension here is the perceived need for confidentiality for staff and the right of Session to receive information. As discussed earlier, however, both the Session and the congregation have a responsibility to review the pastor's compensation annually. (G-7.0302a) Therefore, the personnel committee must provide the Session with this information. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the Session to establish the annual budget. (G-10.0102i) Committees may make recommendations to the Session, but Session is responsible. Even if this had not been a pastor, the Session should be provided with full information necessary to make an informed decision.

## Part 2

As a minister responsible for moderating the Session meeting I would respond as follows:

Carol and Larry, you have both raised some issues that I think I may be able to clarify.

Larry, it is clear that the personnel committee is trying to be sensitive to the pastoral staff. Despite the good intentions of their recommendation, the Session will still need to require this information. The Book of Order, what we have accepted as the Constitution of the Church, requires that both the Session and the congregation review pastoral compensation annually. Instead of viewing this negatively, we can frame this as a positive action because it is intended in part to ensure that pastors compensation meet the minimum requirements of Presbytery.

The committee should be free from worrying about this because the pastoral staff, as ordained members of this church are aware of the Book of Order and should understand the need for this disclosure.

Carol, thank you for bringing this to our attention, and Larry, thank you for so clearly identifying the intentions of the committee. This also brings up our church's polity with respect to committees. Committees may make recommendations to the Session as we have requested their service, but in addition to the recommendation they must also provide a full report which will inform our decision. It is, in this case, our responsibility, as the Session to enact the budget. Even without the requirement to review pastoral compensation, it would seem that more information would be necessary for the Session to appropriately enact a budget for the church.

**SEPTEMBER 2004**

**EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined” [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the *Book of Order* effectively. Candidates will utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of the 2004-2005 *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used. Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of the grades received on all three Sections, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination’s overall merit. However, the paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three Sections in order to be considered Satisfactory.

If you prefer you may use a word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12 point font size. Please number the pages, include your candidate number on each page of the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

Be advised that illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Also, papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax or grammar will be graded accordingly.

The readers, in grading the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry.

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the Book of Order;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution.
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

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**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

The Historic Principles of Church Order were drawn up by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1788. Concerning officers, G-1.0303 states:

That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only  
to preach the gospel and  
to administer the Sacraments, but also  
to exercise discipline,  
for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Citing at least three (3) references from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000), discuss how the current *Book of Order* gives authority and support to officers as they preach the gospel, administer the Sacraments, and exercise discipline.

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

As pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, you receive notification of the presbytery's annual get together for the review of session minutes and registers. Unfortunately, the long time clerk of session has become incapacitated. The newly elected clerk understands that minutes of session and congregational meetings must be kept but asks you for guidance concerning other actions that should be recorded annually to comply with the constitution.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Identify and explain at least five (5) required actions that should be taken annually by a session or congregation within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and recorded in the minutes. Cite one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) for each required action.

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**A.**

The Second Presbyterian Church was having difficulties with its pastor. Both the session and the pastor asked the committee on ministry for help. You, as a representative of the committee on ministry, agree to meet with the pastor and the session. At the first meeting, the pastor submits his resignation and storms out of the meeting. The elders are surprised and the following comments are made:

Bob: I have never seen anything like this. Can he do that? I thought the pastor had to follow certain procedures in order to resign from his position.

Jim: I suggest that we accept his resignation right now. It's better for our church. We hired him and we can accept his resignation.

Sally: I am worried about our church. Who will conduct the service on this Sunday? Who will provide the spiritual leadership?

Carol: Sally is right. I make a motion that we elect a pastor nominating committee right now and begin our search for a new pastor.

Tomas: Wait a minute. I am not sure what we are supposed to do in a situation like this.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least four (4) issues raised in this situation. Cite at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, state your response to the session.

**OR**

**SEPTEMBER 2004  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**B.**

You are the new pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church. When you arrive for your first session meeting, the clerk of session whispers, "Welcome. You're here for the annual Battle of the Budget." In the discussion of the annual budget, the following statements are made:

next see Rosita: Well, our stewardship campaign has ended and we have less money for year than we had hoped for. Giving is down. Members were waiting to who the next pastor would be before they were willing to pledge.

Jane: I think if we have any funds for mission they should be given to the local Red Cross which did so much to help folks after the tornado hit last summer.

Howard: As a representative to the board of trustees I can tell you that their first priority is maintenance of the church property. They would like to do some much needed painting and repairs this year.

Betty: The Christian Education Committee really must have more money to fund events to attract our young people.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) that would apply to a concern voiced by each of the elders.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, describe how you would use this as a "teaching moment" for the session.



**FEBRUARY 2005**

**EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined” [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the *Book of Order* effectively. Candidates will utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of the 2004-2005 *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines or other resources may be used. Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

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**If you prefer you may use a typewriter or word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12-point font size. Please number the pages, include your candidate number on each page of the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.**

**FEBRUARY 2005  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

Be advised that exams written in pencil and illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Also, papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax or grammar will be graded accordingly.

The readers, in grading the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the *Book of Order*;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT:      READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
                                 BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**FEBRUARY 2005  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

The *Book of Order* states under the section on The Unity of the Church:

Visible Oneness:

Visible oneness, by which a diversity of persons, gifts, and understandings is brought together, is an important sign of the unity of God's people. It is also a means by which that unity is achieved. Further, while divisions into different denominations do not destroy this unity, they do obscure it for both the Church and the world. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity and is willing to seek and to maintain communion and community with all other branches of the one, catholic Church. (G-4.0203)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Cite and discuss at least five (5) references from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) from five (5) different chapters which describe how this commitment to visible oneness is lived out in the ministry and mission of the church.

**FEBURARY 2005  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

Following the Annual Meeting of First Presbyterian Church, you, the pastor, are questioned by several members.

Carmen: Every year, at the Annual Meeting, we are told that the session has already approved the budget for the coming year. Why doesn't the congregation vote on it?

Roy: I get confused about that too. We are presented with the budget which contains your salary and benefits. We can't vote on the budget but we do vote on your salary. Please explain this to me.

Alma: Whenever we discuss the salary someone mentions the "minimum" salary. Who decides what the minimum is? Don't you work for us?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each person. For each issue raised, cite at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000).
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Carmen, Roy, and Alma.

**FEBRUARY 2005  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**A.**

The members of Second Presbyterian Church have recently had a crisis in the life of the church resulting in the presbytery's decision to dissolve the relationship between the pastor and the congregation. About fifty members of the church have now come to you, the parish associate, asking you to leave the Second Presbyterian Church with them to form a new congregation where you would become the pastor.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least five (5) issues raised by this situation as they relate to the members of the congregation, the parish associate and the presbytery. For each issue cite at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000).
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, write a brief and appropriate letter that you might send to the congregation in response to the group's request.

**OR**

**FEBRUARY 2005  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**B.**

You are the pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church. At the first meeting of the nominating committee, the following comments are made:

Sam: It seems to me we can make our job easier by nominating two persons for every vacancy. That way we don't have to ask for additional nominations from the floor.

Judy: How about expediting the election by listing all the qualified people suggested? When we vote, the five people receiving the most votes will be elected.

Helen: I don't know. These suggestions don't sound right to me. Pastor, what is the best way to elect officers? Can we choose our own procedure?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least three (3) issues raised by this situation. Cite at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the nominating committee.

# BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

**Pages 165-168 were prepared for the previous edition of this manual. While the form of the Bible Exegesis exam changed in 2002, many of these pointers still apply. Instructions for the current form, a recent Exegesis exam and student answers with grader's comments begin on page 169.**

## **GOLDEN RULES FOR OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS EXAMINATION**

The open book Biblical exegesis exam provides an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate how she/he utilizes the resources of Scripture and the appropriate disciplines related to it in the practice of ministry. It offers the opportunity to work from text to sermon/lesson as one engages in that regular pastoral task of helping God's people hear God's Word.

1. Read the directions carefully and follow them explicitly.
2. Read widely in your preparation for the book identified. When the book is announced, survey the literature on it. If there are various ways of approaching the book by scholars from various "schools," decide which one is most convincing to you. In your notes for the paper, present (briefly) the choices and the one to which you subscribe, telling the reader why. Mention of your sources in the paper will impress the reader, provided the whole discussion is a brief survey.
3. When discussing in the paper what you think is the most accurate translation of the passage, be sure to let the reader know its source. If it is entirely from the NRSV, NIV, or some other published version, say so. If it is your own translation, tell us that. All of these possibilities should be consistent with discussion in the paper about the key words and phrases you think are central to the passage. This is a primary way in which you will demonstrate working knowledge of the original language to the readers.

(NOTE) At no point in the paper does the reader expect the writer to know more than the experts on the issues. However, the readers do expect that you will know the issues and state why one or the other seems to make sense to you. This is what many of the readers do each week as they do their exegetical preparation.

4. Remember your dual audience.
  - (a) While sound scholarship is of prime importance in your paper, remember that you are not writing for professors, but for pastors/chaplains/educators as well as well-informed elders. They are looking for the responsible preparation made for the presentation of a sermon, lesson, etc. to be heard/read in a congregation like the one in which their life is centered. Unnecessary technical jargon or extended analysis of the obvious frustrates them.
  - (b) In addition, the application for your exegesis is important to them. They "hear" it as if you are presenting it to them in their home context. They are eager to learn from it and excited by what you will share with them. Therefore, two things are important in this part of the exam: a) applying the consequences of what you have researched in a consistent way (i.e., without setting aside a theme you previously labeled as "important" or introducing themes not considered in your exegesis), and b) presenting your application in a clear way that reflects your able exegesis and your genuine desire to convey the message gleaned from the passage to your Christian audience.
5. Most important of all, and probably most difficult to believe from where you are at this moment in your preparation for ministry: the readers see this exam as an opportunity to see how well you will do. They want to see a strong paper. In reading groups when a reader returns a freshly graded paper to the conveners and that paper has been a sound one, it is not uncommon to hear her/him declare, "Wow, that was a good paper!" Readers invest (sacrifice) valuable personal time to grade papers that seek to prove you right, not prove you wrong. These volunteers are there because they have the conviction that the Lord of the Church and the people of God you will serve deserve the best we can give!

Bible Task Group  
Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee  
Jerry W. Houchens, Executive Secretary  
April 1994



## **YOUR EXEGESIS PAPER: STUDENT ADVICE**

1. Bottom line: write a real sermon outline for real people using real exegesis.
2. Minimize your scholarly apparatus. This exam is misnamed. “Applied Exegesis” more accurately describes its dual focus on exegesis and how you use these tools to craft a relevant sermon (or other final use).
3. Make sure you pay close attention to specific instructions about number of words allowed in each answer.
4. The graders expect to see a self-conscious and rational connection between your exegetical warm ups and final performance; the end use should reflect your exegetical findings.
5. Before beginning your exegesis, picture an actual congregation which will hear your sermon. This will give your work a genuine pastoral quality which will be apparent.
6. Brainstorm before you tackle the commentaries so you won’t get seduced into one point of view prematurely. The graders know that commentators differ. They do not care whether you find Bultmann more persuasive than Childs or vice versa. They are more interested in seeing that you are open to and have wrestled with several possible interpretations and whether you are consistent in your paper if you select a particular interpretation over another. Look at Calvin, Childs (NT AS CANON), Spivey & Smith, (Anatomy of NT), and commentaries on reserve in Speer Library.
7. Read carefully the required parts for a satisfactory examination and observe all guidelines given.
8. Consider sketching your intended audience and your objectives before giving your final interpretation of the text. According to Dr. Tom Long, the culmination of exegesis is an interpretive act which says: “I hear this text saying to this congregation:\_\_\_\_\_.” The graders will appreciate getting to know the audience before hearing the punch line.
9. Do not go on at length about anything that will not be relevant to your sermon. For example, only do word studies that are important to determining the meaning of the passage.

## **TIPS FROM THE WASHINGTON READING GROUP**

### **BIBLICAL EXEGESIS EXAM**

1. Pull out only key Hebrew or Greek words that bring more insight to the text. The graders are not looking for a complete translation. If you include it, make sure they know you did it, but put it in an appendix. They are looking to see if you can use the original language well enough to discuss the relevant and significant aspects of it.
2. Identify and state the central meaning of the passage. For example: “Given the Hebrew or Greek, I find the central meaning of the passage to be: . . .” As you struggle with the text, make a decision and expound on it. Do not just sit on the fence.
3. Make sure you follow the main idea of the passage. Focus on the key issues in both exegesis and application.
4. Apply the passage by:
  - (i) stating your audience: describe it in a short paragraph.
  - (ii) explaining how the text relates to us today. Make sure you show how the congregation and sermon relate.
5. You may include a thorough sermon outline. Do not write a litany or order of worship. Sometimes an outline is better.
6. Don’t mention anything to do with your locality. However, if English is your second language, you may want to indicate that.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR READERS**

1. Read the passage in a standard version (King James, Revised Standard, American Standard)
2. Outline the passage. Look especially at paragraphs.
3. Read the context of the passage. How does the passage relate to what precedes it, and what follows it.
4. Read the passage in a modern version (e.g., Good News Bible, Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible).
5. Ask questions of the text: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?
6. Pick out important words and concepts. Explore the meaning of these in a Bible dictionary or Bible word book.
7. Read about the passage in two commentaries. Look for differences of understanding and/or interpretation.
8. Write a paragraph (5-7 sentences) in your own words stating the meaning of the passage in its Biblical context.
9. Write a paragraph stating the significance of the passage for the contemporary world.

**NOTE:** Bring your notes and the two paragraphs (items 7 & 8) with you to the Reading Group.

### **Guidelines for Non-Pastor Readers**

1. Read over the assigned passages carefully in several translations.
2. Note interesting words, phrases, or thoughts, recording these for later reference.
3. Check footnotes to the passage in a study Bible, noting issues.
4. Working within the specific books:
  - a. Read the chapters surrounding the passage. Is there a major division of the book within which the passage lies?
  - b. Note how the passage fits into the whole section.
  - c. Scan the book to identify the role played by the passage.
  - d. Ponder how the passage fits into the rest of the Bible.
5. Check any cross references noted in your Bible.
6. Use a concordance to research important words, phrases from #2.
7. Dealing with the book as a whole:
  - a. Consult an introduction to the book in a commentary, Bible dictionary, material in Jerusalem Bible, etc. (More than one preferable.)
  - b. Consult commentaries for their views on the passage.
8. Determine as best you can how the passage fits into Biblical history. Seek to determine what the "original hearers" would have understood the passage to be saying.
9. Think about what this passage would say to your church.
10. Note how you might use the passage in a sermon, teaching plan, or some other means of interpreting Scripture.
11. Bring to the Reading Group: 1) your notes from your work; 2) the study Bible you frequently use.

During the Reading Group, a plenary on the passages will be provided to:

  - give you additional ideas regarding the passages
  - guide you in dealing with issues relating to the original languages.

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description approved by 2008 General Assembly.)

- 1 TECHNOLOGY. Computers must be used to write this examination. Double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12-point font throughout. Section III may be single-spaced. When finished, staple the printed copy to the inside of the exam folder. Handwritten examinations will be returned without being evaluated.
- 2 IDENTIFICATION NUMBER Include your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
- 3 FORM Examinations that cannot be understood because of poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
- 4 HONESTY. You must do your own work, without giving aid to or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages.

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 OR 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Your examination is due to your proctor at 9:00 AM, FEBRUARY 3, 2011. The time of submission will be strictly observed

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1 Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc., and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
2. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
- 3 You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.

*Specific Instructions continued.*

5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain your anonymity and to ensure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:  
your name  
the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship  
the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography  
mention of your having taken the exam previously.

### **REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas.

1. *Language of the Text:* word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community.
2. *Historical Situation:* the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come.
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context:* the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church.

A total of four responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

#### Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

1 *Focus Statement:* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*

2 *Supporting the Interpretatio:* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

### Section III: Application

Present a sermon outline or lesson plan (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

## JANUARY 2011 OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS

### Page 3 of 6

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

OR

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

### Deuteronomy 26:1-11

#### Ministry Context:

You are working with the Worship Committee to come up with new ways to integrate stewardship emphases into worship. You are planning a retreat to work with them on this topic. During this retreat you will be presenting a Bible study on Deuteronomy 26:1-11. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your lesson plan for this Bible study.

#### Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context

After studying Deuteronomy 26:1-11, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

#### 1. *Language of the Text*

##### First Required Response

In comparing translations of Deuteronomy 26:5 you notice that the *New Revised Standard Version* and most English versions translate the word אָבַר as "wandering," but the *New King James Version* reads "perishing." In addition to "wandering" and "perishing," identify one other option for translating אָבַר in this verse. What are the implications of each of these three translations for understanding Deuteronomy 26:5? Which translation would you choose and why?

#### 2. *Historical Situation*

##### Second Required Response

Some scholars propose that the text of Deuteronomy has been strongly shaped by the experience of the exile. How would the liturgical confession in verses 5-10 be heard in the context of exile from the land?

3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

Third Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B

A. After the priest is presented with the first fruits, the worshiper, "the Levites and the aliens .. shall celebrate" (Deuteronomy 26:11) Within Deuteronomy, who are the Levites and the aliens? Why must they be included in the celebration?

OR

B. The idea of the "first fruits" is not unique to Deuteronomy 26:1-11. It occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:9-21). Discuss the significance of the Old Testament concept of first fruits as an offering to God. How might the concept of the first fruits offering enrich the Christian community today?

Fourth Required Response

In the speech quoted in verses 5-10 you notice a shift in pronouns from "he" to "we" to "I " What is the significance of this shift both for those addressed within Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and for later readers?

Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

- 1 *Focus Statement* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words*
- 2 *Supporting the Interpretation* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Section III: Application

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Ministry Context:

You are serving as pastor at a church where you and the Worship Committee have a strong commitment to using the Scripture lessons assigned in the Revised Common Lectionary. You are planning your sermons for the fall stewardship campaign. In reviewing the passages for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, you find that 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 touches on themes of work, reliance upon the community for support, and financial support for those engaged in ministry to the church. You choose to preach on that text. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your outline for this sermon.

Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context

After studying 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

1. *Language of the Text*

First Required Response

In comparing translations of the passage you notice that some translators use terms like "idleness" in verses 7 and 11 (*New Revised Standard Version*) where others use terms like "undisciplined" (*New American Standard Bible*) and "disorderly" (*New King James Version*). Discuss the related Greek words ἀτακτέω and ἀτάκτως. How were they used in ancient Greek literature? How does the specific content of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 influence the translation choice? What translation of these terms do you find most helpful in communicating your understanding of the passage, and why?

2. *Historical Situation*

Second Required Response

2 Thessalonians was written in response to abuses from a group within the church who enthusiastically promoted the imminent return of Jesus, even to the extent of believing "the day of the Lord is already here" (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Some commentators on this passage have argued that those described as having stopped working were motivated by such belief. Discuss the arguments for and against this identification of the "idle" people in this passage. Which argument do you find more convincing, and why?

3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

Third Required Response



This passage reasserts an apostolic command: "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat" (verse 10). The command is further supported by the principle that everyone is "to do their work quietly and to earn their own living" (verse 12). How do you understand the relationship between these commands and the responsibility elsewhere in Scripture to care for the poor and disadvantaged in society (e.g., James 1.27)? Support your understanding with reference to the overall context of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and/or the specific wording of the command in verse 10.

**Page 6 of 6: Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

A. In commissioning the Twelve, Jesus said both that those who have received God's blessings should "give without payment" and that those who do the work of the gospel should be supported by the community because "laborers deserve their food" (Matthew 10 8b-10). Similarly Paul both claimed the "right" to be financially supported for his ministry and yet "boasts" that he made "the gospel free of charge" (1 Corinthians 9.8-18). Compare and contrast 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 with these other statements by Jesus and Paul. What insights do you draw from this comparison regarding the model of support for Christian ministry presented here in 2 Thessalonians? How would you respond to the apostles' example as a model for the church today?

OR

B. The recipients of this letter are reminded that they "ought to imitate" (δεῖ μιμῆσθαι, 3:7; see also verse 9) the example of the apostles. This theme of "imitation" is a recurring one in the Thessalonian letters and elsewhere in the Pauline letters. Compare and contrast the use of "imitation" here in 2 Thessalonians 3:7 and 9 with its use in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 2:14. How do you understand the command here in 2 Thessalonians 3 in light of those passages and Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"?

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

Identify the parts of Section II by number

1. *Focus Statement:* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words*

2. *Supporting the Interpretation:* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages*

**JANUARY 2011**  
**STUDENT ANSWERS WITH GRADER'S RESPONSES**  
**BIBLICAL EXEGESIS EXAM**

Section I, Question 1.

The range of possible meaning for אָבַד certainly includes the common translations “wandering” [NRSV] and “perishing” [NKJV]; however, neither of these options fully captures the nuance of the verse. A potential alternative, though still imperfect, would be “lost.” The choice has precedent in NRSV translation: in Ps. 119:176, the author writes that אָבַד כְּשֶׁה תַעִיִּי; “I have gone astray like a lost sheep” (here in the same grammatical form – the qal active participle – found in Dt. 26:5). An imperfect choice, it nonetheless improves upon the existing options.

The problem of “wandering” is that it contains no value judgment. In English, or at least in contemporary parlance, one can wander intentionally and carefree. But there is no question in the Deuteronomy text that the אָבַד is not a state to be desired, that it constitutes a definite problem. It is possible, even likely, that the father is meant to evoke the “wanderings” of the nomadic Jacob in Genesis 25-33.<sup>1</sup> But it is important not to let that association prevent us from reading the full force of the verb itself (which never appears in Genesis). אָבַד is, in fact, frequently associated with *destruction*, as in Nm. 16:33, wherein the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram אָבַד into Sheol as a result of God’s judgment. Here, the Septuagint use of ἀπόλλυμι reinforces the consequence-laden aspect of the verb.

To some degree the NKJV translation “perishing” addresses this consideration. To be sure, to “perish” implies consequence and pressing concern. However, it leaves open the question of agency and causality. What has caused the father to perish? Does he perish by his own hand, for lack of food or shelter? Or is his perishing state an inherent quality of having been far from his home in the first place? The verb adequately captures the consequence of God’s judgment as in

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<sup>1</sup> W. Brueggemann, Deuteronomy, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 247.

the Nm. 16:33 reference above. But it fails to imply that it is God who has set this activity into motion. Instead, the consistent pattern throughout the scriptural use of נָחַס is that of a problematic state brought about by God's judgment upon sinful behavior.

This is particularly the pattern in Deuteronomy: the shadow of exile haunts 4:26, in which Moses invokes a doubled form of the verb to suggest that Israel will soon “be utterly destroyed” even as it inherits the land across the Jordan. In 8:19, the relationship is even starker: If Israel forgets God, they shall “surely perish” (again the doubled form). From an exilic or post-exilic point of view, it is clear that Israel is not to perish as Korah perished (into Sheol) but rather to “perish” by means of being scattered, sent unwillingly from home, judged by the one with the power of sending. The Greek translation ἀποβάλλω captures this distinction: it's not destruction unto death, but rather being “tossed-out,” forcible geographic straying as consequence for having strayed from God's commandments.

It's impossible to capture this full consideration in a single English word. Nevertheless, “lost” at least mitigates against the finality of “perishing,” undoing the implication that the father is in imminent mortal peril, while also giving appropriate danger to the otherwise risk-free “wandering.” “Lost” suggests that the father was supposed to have been elsewhere, but instead strayed from obligation – an all-too-familiar rendering of Israel's own pattern of covenantal failure and salvation. Read in light of Genesis, “lost” reminds us that God was the one who called Jacob home – as God invariably calls Israel – and thus appropriately remembers God's saving actions for both family and nation.

## Section 1, Question 2.

In Deuteronomy 28:62-63, the speaker predicts what will happen to Israel should the nation not “observe all the words of this law that are written in this book” [NRSV, v.58]. The threats are eerily predictive of the Babylonian exile to come: “... you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the Lord your God ... the Lord will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess.” This entire section strongly echoes the historical credo of 26:5-10. The credo remembers that the ancestry entered Egypt במתימעט, “few in number,” an unusual construction repeated explicitly and only in 28:62. Likewise the infamous verb 5:62 ni אבד– “wandering,” “perishing,” or “lost,” – appears here in its nominal form as “destruction,” and the “land you are entering to possess” echoes the opening of the credo in 26:1 (in its use of ירש, “to possess”).

This small example bolsters the argument that Deuteronomy was a product of exilic assembly; the Deuteronomist editor seeks to understand the plight of exile by the light of Israel’s prior covenantal history.<sup>2</sup> But regardless of the editorial relationship of 26:5-10 to the rest of the book, it is clear that the language therein weaves its way into much of Israel’s seminal exilic literature. In Isaiah 14 the prophet predicts the restoration of the nation after the “hard service” in Babylon, here repeating the language (עבודה קשה) of Dt. 26:6. The unusual cadence of “oppression,” “toil,” and “affliction” in v.7 finds parallels in Is. 19:20 and 30:20. Jeremiah invokes nearly identical language to vv. 8-9 in Jer. 32:21-22, including the Exodus-based “milk and honey” cadence. It is therefore clear that this particular text not only *could* be read in the context of exile but certainly *was* practiced throughout the exilic period, regardless of its precise date of origin.

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<sup>2</sup> An example of this general claim would be P. Miller, Deuteronomy, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox, 1990) 2-8.

The effects of liturgical use of this text during exile would likely have been threefold. The first effect is that an Israelite worshipper would feel *addressed* by the invocation of the “wandering” or “lost” ancestor. As was discussed in question 1, the semantic range of *sevig* אבד much room for the act of having been pushed far from one’s seeming home or destined place; the forced removal of the nation from its territory would have strongly echoed in the use of this single verb, and it would have created considerable space in which the practitioner could identify with the story.

The second effect is that this worshipper would be *entitled* by the historical narrative. Whereas the address would find the worshipper in his/her current situation, the entitlement (here without the negative connotation the word can generate in modern use) would have recounted the origin of Israel’s historical claim to that land. The story functions as a deed of property, inherited generation-to-generation, a reminder of the God-givenness of “home.”

The final effect is that this worshipper would feel *assured* by the remembrance of God’s deliverance. God’s prior saving history indicates the certainty of God’s future salvation for the people in exile. This is underscored by the final movement to personal offering; it reinforces the bilateral nature of the covenant. The worshipper is fulfilling his/her obligation to God; God will therefore fulfill God’s obligation to deliverance. That the language of this credo survived into the prophetic literature only reinforces that these effects are not just hypothetical but almost certain.

### Section 1, Question 3A.

Deuteronomy 10:8-9 establishes the tribe of Levi as a special class within Israelite society (echoing Joshua 21). The Lord “sets apart” the tribe “to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him” [NKJV]. For this reason the Levites are not granted property rights; they have no נחלה (NRSV: “inheritance”), because YHWH *is* their נחלה. This informs 18:1, in which the priests are explicitly encouraged to eat from the נחלה of YHWH (the specifics of which are then laid out in vv.2-3); likewise, it informs 18:6, in which the Levites are specifically referenced as גור. In this specific context NRSV translates the word as “reside,” as in those priests who are residing in small towns and settlements; but, the root is the same root Deuteronomy uses elsewhere for “sojourn”: both in 26:5 (“lived as an alien”) and in 26:11 (for those who now live as aliens amongst the Israelites). It is not simply a matter of being foreign, but rather, like Israel in Egypt, being long-term residents of a foreign land: in 23:20, “foreigners” are given an entirely different root, נכר.

This class of explicit “sojourners” joins the Levites in having no land for agriculture. In 14:28-29, Levites and aliens are lumped together (with the widows and orphans) as those who have no “allotment or inheritance.” The clear implication from the pairing of the two nouns – נחלה and חלק is that “inheritance” is not simply a matter of material wealth but a specific reference to property rights (echoed in 26:1: the land that YHWH has given as inheritance). In vv. 28-29, the other tribes are commanded every third year to make provisions for emergency food storage so that those without property rights might have means of subsistence. The clear conclusion is this: what binds the Levites and the aliens is that a lack of agricultural land has left them beholden to the crop production of the surrounding community.

Despite this similarity, there is a significant difference between the groups with regards to power within Israelite society. Levites have been vested by God with significant power for arbitration in religious affairs (cf. Dt. 17:9; 21:5). They are the inheritors of the law itself; Deuteronomy is written as a document then entrusted to Levites for safekeeping (31:9); the book itself constitutes the Levites as a powerful cultural force. By contrast, sojourners are still on the outside. Deuteronomy constitutes them as a class subject to the justice of the law (1:16; 10:18) but not always to its dietary provisions (as in 14:21, wherein they alone are allowed to eat defiled meat). They are invited to hear the law upon its entrusting to the Levites (31:12) but are not held to its behavioral prohibitions.

These differences notwithstanding, the common thread between the Levites and aliens is that both groups, for reasons not of their own design, have not been included in the allocation of land to the tribes. Because Israel's land has now been allocated by God, there is no moral fault to those who were not able to receive their landed inheritance, inclusive in many places of the widows and orphans. Because their fates are not of their own design, God will not hold them accountable for their inability to produce the crop yields from which the "first fruit" offering would be taken. They have no means to produce such offering and are thus invited to partake in the offering given by the rest of the community, and to join in the joyful celebration of that offering as commanded in 26:11.

#### Section 1, Question 4.

It is important to try and identify the referents implied by the pronominal shift between “he,” “us,” and “I,” before trying to discern the evolving relationship between them. Simply put, it is important to remember who is talking, about what, to whom.

As it is with so much of Deuteronomy, speaker in this section is Moses, addressing the entire Israelite nation. But v.5 begins with a command: “you shall make this response.” And so there is no question but that the ensuing remembrance in vv.5-10 is meant as liturgical speech: this is the story that all of Israel is to repeat for itself at the time it brings the first fruit of offering. When the history begins with the first-person plural suffix – “my father” – Israel is already being commanded to embody and re-tell its story of captivity and liberation.

It seems likely, as referenced in question 1, that the “he” in this passage is meant to invoke Jacob the “wanderer.” Possibly the reference could also be to Joseph, the descendant who famously brings the Genesis narrative so firmly into the Egyptian land. Whether or not it identifies a particular character is less important than observing that in this very phrase Deuteronomy re-enacts, in miniature, the Biblical story of the Pentateuch: a story of long-ago ancestors who emerge as the Israelite nation, a story of movement from Genesis into Exodus, from stories of other people to stories about Israel’s own national history, a story whereby the “he” becomes “us.”

The “us,” first referenced in 26:6, forces the reader to re-interpret the final clause of v.25: now, the “great nation, mighty and populous” [NRSV] is revealed to have been Israel. The story for the next few verses is the familiar Exodus narrative: we, the Israelite nation, cried out to the “God of our ancestors,” the God of that wandering “he” from v.5; then, God delivered us, and brought us into “this place.” The historical story, first begun as a story about a third-person



ancestor, has now fully informed the current situation of the nation: this is the story of how “we” got to be “here.”

The final movement is the movement from “us” to “I.” This is the movement from national history to personal action: because of what God has done for the nation as a body, the response becomes, as Von Rad notes, “quite personal.”<sup>3</sup> God has acted on behalf of the entire nation; the entire nation responds with a series of individual gestures. God’s deliverance has touched each individual, and so each individual makes thankful offering. The effect upon the historical addressee is one of invited remembrance: as liturgical speech — something akin to a confession of faith — the individual is invited to remember God’s gracious deliverance even in a moment of sacrifice and offering.

As liturgical speech, however, this “I” happens only in public worship; to perform this ritual is to engage in public confession and to participate in the confessional language that continues to connect each collective generation with the long history of God’s covenantal actions, over and over embodying this transition between the ancestral “he” and the contemporary “us.” It is designed to generate sacrificial action by performing the intersection of God’s past action and our joyful individual and corporate responses. In that spirit, it is not so different from the confessions we proclaim in worship: that God has given his only son that we might be saved, and that we therefore respond with our own tithes and offerings.

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<sup>3</sup> G. Von Rad, Deuteronomy, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1966) 159.

### Section II, Question 1: Focus Statement

The function of Deuteronomy 26:1-11 is to proscribe a liturgical celebration of the fruits of the covenant that embodies the connection between God's salvific actions and Israel's subsequent response. Israel's faithful participation in the covenant is painted as joyful remembrance of the good God has done.

### Section II, Question 2: Essay

In support of the above function statement I intent to outline the relationship of the text to three key time periods: first, its relationship to its own narrative moment, the moment in which Israel is on the cusp of entrance into the promised land; second, its relationship to the remembered history of God's deliverance as miniaturized in vv.5-10; and, third, its relationship to its own future history, that is, how it might have functioned for Israel as liturgical object and how therefore it might function for us in the same manner. Interspersed throughout this temporal organization will be an elaboration of two keywords from the above thesis: first, the word *function* (instead of "focus"), hinting at the performative nature of the text; and, second, the word *celebration*, both for the text in its original context and for us as contemporary worshippers.

As is the case with much of Deuteronomy, 26:1-11 is instructional: Moses is conveying God's instructions to the gathered Israelite nation as they prepare to enter the land that God has promised to them. Even though the text has a narrative *feel* to it, it is important that we view it in the context of the legal proscriptions and prohibitions that surround it: the liturgy that this text outlines is in and of itself a legal code, even as it contains a strongly theological aim. The opening verses provide the specific occasional context for the proscription: it is to be done at the time when the people enter into the promised land. Once they have taken possession of the land

that God has given as inheritance (v.1), they are to take the first fruits of harvest of that land as sacrificial offering to God. Richard Nelson has pointed out that this is not a tithe (which would occur at the *end* of the harvest cycle, when a fixed percentage could be calculated, as in 26:12-15) but rather an “initial, foundational requirement” of the nation.<sup>4</sup> But the language also suggests that this is not only a one-time requirement but also clearly institutes a repeated event; both the “priest who is in office at the time” language in v.3, and the echoes of the opening clause in 17:14ff, indicate that this is to be the inauguration of a regularized and repeated ceremony of offering.

The instruction shifts in v.3 (and again in v.5) from a proscription of action (the bringing of the fruits to the temple) to a proscription of speech. This is the fundamental linkage of the text: that the action of sacrificial offering should be done in consort with a particular spoken liturgy. This is the moment when the text moves out of its own narrative context and into Israel’s prior history, and what emerges is a particular retelling of the Exodus narrative with a focus on the gradual identification of the liturgical speaker with the narrative protagonist. This is the effect of the movement from the remote third-person “wandering” ancestor to the gradually inclusive “us” of the Israelite nation: the liturgical speaker is made to understand the connection between the remembered stories of the past, the remembered stories of God’s covenantal deliverance, and his/her own national and religious identity. While the spoken confession plunges quickly into the remote past, it gradually weaves its way back into the present, forcing the speaker to orally re-tell his/her connection to the ancestral stories and thereby forcing the speaker to understand his/her personal act of sacrificial offering as a logical extension of that narrative.

It is for this reason that I have chosen to ascribe to this passage a *function* instead of a “focus” (though the difference is, at least partially, semantic). The key point here is that this text

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<sup>4</sup> R. Nelson, Deuteronomy, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 307.

is not content with simply establishing a legal principle, or with remembering a piece of Israel's history, or even with imploring Israel to remember that history. Rather, the text is particularly interested in the performative understanding of the connection; the text is interested in "doing" something to its reader by establishing the occasion for embodied remembrance. When the reader abides by the legal principle here established, the act of offering will have theological consequence; it will re-create the initial conditions of the covenant in each new act of offering, continually tying each new reader to that first generation of entrance into the land.

This connection, between God's history of deliverance and each new instance of sacrificial giving, is meant to create the appropriate space for joyous *celebration*. It is, after all, with a spirit of joyfulness that the passage concludes. After the liturgical speech-act ends, the speaker is commanded to worship, to "rejoice" in "all the good" which God has given. The phrase "all the good," בכל-הטוב, echoes in form the use of "all the fruits" in v.2, such that the "good" here refers importantly both to the agricultural yields themselves but also to the history of deliverance that is the condition of possibility for the agriculture itself. The celebration is obligatory, to be sure: there is no question that the context of the entire passage is unmistakably instructional. But by inviting the speaker to enter into the good news of God's providence, the passage seeks to create space for public worship and stewardship that can be joyous and required at the same time.

With this in mind we should conclude by talking about the future history of this text. It is quite clear that the credo language in 5-10 occupies a central place in Israel's theology particularly in the context of exile, predicted by strong echoes of its language in the threats of Dt. 28:62-63 and reinforced by occurrences of its word choice in later prophetic texts like Isaiah 14 and Jeremiah 32 (treated in greater detail in question I.2 above). This is why it is so crucial to say that this text has a *function*, and that the function is in part *celebratory*: when Isaiah and Jeremiah

cite the language of this credo, they draw upon a liturgical tradition that would have its audience embody celebration even in the darkness of exile, even when covenant fidelity seems impossible or even undesirable, even when God's saving deliverance seems far-off.

While the specific language of this credo is not as familiar to us in a contemporary Christian context, the sentiment should speak volumes churches thinking about stewardship. While the model of stewardship provided here is certainly tied to obligation, it is so much more so tied to joyful celebration in response to God's providence. It is worth remembering that the celebration is not just for those who have given; it is also for the Levites and the sojourners – those with no property upon which to grow the first fruits of offering. For churches, this serves as a reminder that stewardship is finally not about giving in accordance with budgetary need but rather in accordance with the gifts each member has already been given; and, finally, that each of us, whether poor or rich, whether hungry or well-fed, are called to celebratory thanksgiving for what God has done.

### Section III: Application/Bible Study

#### I. Opening Discussion: what do you think about when you give your offering to church?

- a. How do you make your stewardship/pledge decisions? What emotions do you associate with it?
- b. Every year we have church members stand and give testimonials during our stewardship drive. What kinds of emotions do they convey? What do they say?

#### II. Deuteronomy: a general context

- a. What pre-existing associations do you have with Deuteronomy?
- b. Some expected answers: laws, legal codes.
- c. Narrative context is Moses giving laws as Israel prepares for the promised land.
- d. Historical/Authorial context: likely in exile. We should think about this context as we read the specific passage. How is the editor using one period to speak to another? Could it therefore also speak to us?

#### III. Verses 1-3: the Situation

- a. What is the importance of this particular land? Hold onto the question.
- b. But land in general is also the means of survival. It yields crops, and therefore first fruits.
  - i. First fruits: one way that the legal codes think about stewardship.
  - ii. Also “tithing.” What might the differences be? What’s the difference between giving out of the beginning of your paycheck vs. giving out of the end of it?

#### IV. Verses 4-10: the Remembrance

- a. Notice the drastic shift. Moves from instructed action to instructed speech.

- b. Does this sound familiar to our current worship? Are there words that we repeatedly say in Sunday worship (thinking Lord's Prayer, Apostle's Creed).
- c. Read this particular story. Have someone in the group read it out loud (vv.5-10).

What is the effect? What questions did you have in hearing? Likely questions:

- i. Who's the "he" – probably Jacob. Talk a bit about the different possibilities/translations of "wanderer." What's at stake?
- ii. What story is this referencing? Exodus narrative; this *particular* land.
- iii. Pronoun shift over time. Effect on liturgical speaker.

#### V. Verse 11: the Celebration

- a. How does it feel to be commanded to rejoice?
- b. Connection between this joy and the remembered story we just told.
- c. Question of sojourners & Levites: a bit of background on property rights. Israel commanded to give according to what they have been given.

#### VI. Consequences of the Text

- a. Deuteronomy 28:62-63: past actions repeated as future threats. Evidence that this was almost certainly composed/compiled/valued during exile.
- b. Jeremiah/Isaiah references: small indications that this text was a central part of Israel's worship life. Implications of joyous celebration even in exile.
- c. (probably) Nobody said "joy" during our opening conversation about the emotions of stewardship. Is this something we could do? Is this something that could be central to our worship life in the same way? Let's daydream...

## Works Consulted

- Biddle, Mark E., Deuteronomy. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2003.
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- Miller, Patrick D., Deuteronomy. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990.
- Nelson, Richard D., Deuteronomy. The Old Testament Library, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Von Rad, Gerhard, Deuteronomy. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- Von Rad, Gerhard, Old Testament Theology, Volume I. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.



## READER'S COMMENTS:

Reader 1:

### Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context [600 words/response]

#### 1. *Language of the Text* – First Required Response

Excellent analysis based on broad comparison of OT usages. Exam shows skillful attention to the nuances of the Hebrew text.

#### 2. *Historical Situation* – Second Required Response

Strong argument for the exilic locus of the final Deut. recension. But exam risks a danger by stressing entitlement in the exilic context. Deuteronomy conditions the restoration of the land on faithful observance of the law, the big if.

#### 3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

##### Third Required Response (A or B) A

Good portrayal of similarity of and difference between the status of Levites and aliens.

#### 4. Fourth Required Response

The exam offers an adequate response here but would be strengthened by noting the Deuteronomist's strong communal orientation regarding Israel. The breakdown that leads to the Exile resulted from the Israelite elite's failure to maintain the communal perspective of single-minded worship of Yahweh. The individualism attacked by the prophets (greed, injustice, idolatry) is a central target of Deut.

### Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

#### 1. *Focus Statement* [50 words]

The focus statement is adequate but clumsy. Condensing into statement of a central theme would offer a stronger launching pad for the faithful interpretation.

#### 2. *Supporting the Interpretation* [1200 words]

Intelligent interpretation. Good on difference between first fruits and tithe. Excellent on implication for worship.

### **Section III: Application [2 pages]**

Good questions. Relevant application to contemporary situation (joy, celebration). Exam moves toward a solid theology of stewardship. It could be strengthened by more attention to Deuteronomy's emphasis on the worshipping community. How might Acts 4:32-37 be an outgrowth of the Deuteronomist's perspective?

#### **Summary Statement (why exam is satisfactory or unsatisfactory)**

This is an excellent examination. It demonstrates critical attention to the Hebrew text, shown in a nuanced analysis of OT texts. Asserting the performative value of the text creates a link with contemporary worship.

#### **Reader 2:**

#### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context [600 words/response]**

##### **1. *Language of the Text* – First Required Response**

The paper presents a compelling argument for the preferred translation “lost” and the implications of that translation on the meaning of the text.

##### **2. *Historical Situation* – Second Required Response**

This section demonstrates a thorough understanding of the historical context and how these verses might have been heard in the context of exile.

##### **3. *Scriptural and Theological Context***

###### **Third Required Response (A or B) A**

The paper here provides a thorough and well supported description of Levites and aliens in the book of Deuteronomy.

##### **4 Fourth Required Response**

The response follows the progression of personal pronouns well and appropriately connects the “I” back to public worship and confession.

## **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

### **1. *Focus Statement* [50 words]**

Clear and succinct statement of the function of the passage.

### **2. *Support the Interpretation* [1200 words]**

The section presents the material very well and is supported by the previous material. Very focused and well reasoned.

## **Section III: Application [2 pages]**

The lesson plan presents a good outline for teaching the paper's previous scholarship of these verses. It fails to make a good connection to the ministry context of a church Worship Committee's consideration of stewardship practices in worship.

### **Summer Statement (why exam is satisfactory or unsatisfactory)**

The paper provides an excellent exegesis of the text. It is thorough and focused. The lesson plan could be more engaging and would have been improved had the paper more fully imagined and addressed the ministry context.

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools. Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description was approved by the 2008 General Assembly.)

- 1 **TECHNOLOGY:** Computers must be used to write this examination. Double-space your answers to Sections I and II; use a 12-point font throughout. Section III may be single-spaced. When finished, staple the printed copy to the inside of the exam folder. Handwritten examinations will not be evaluated.
- 2 **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER:** Include your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam
3. **FORM:** . Examinations that cannot be understood because of poor grammar or syntax will be returned unevaluated.
4. **HONESTY:** You must do your own work without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages.

Proverbs 3:1-8 OR John 3:16-21

Your examination is due to your proctor at 9:00 AM, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011 The time of submission will be strictly observed

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1 Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc. and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
- 2 In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
- 3 You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works

**Specific Instructions *continued***

- 5 Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will evaluate the exam as a unit and not in parts.
- 6 In order to maintain your anonymity and to ensure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned unevaluated:
  - your name
  - the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship
  - the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography
  - mention of your having taken the exam previously.

**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. If any of these sections is incomplete the entire examination will be evaluated as unsatisfactory. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas:

- 1 *Language of the Text*: word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community
- 2 *Historical Situation*: the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come
- 3 *Scriptural and Theological Context*: the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church

A total of four (4) responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement*: Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation*: Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation with a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline or lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**Proverbs 3:1-8 OR John 3:16-23**PROVERBS 3:1-8

## Ministry Context:

You are officiating at the wedding of a young couple in your congregation. They have requested that you preach on Proverbs 3:1-8. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your sermon outline.

## Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context

After studying Proverbs 3:1-8, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

1. *Language of the Text*

## First Required Response

In comparing translations of Proverbs 3:2, you notice a difference in the following four versions:

For they will bestow on you length of days, Years of life and well-being. (*Tanakh*)

... for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. (*New International Version*)

For length of days and years of life and peace will they add to thee. (*JPS Holy Scriptures, 1917*)

...for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare they will give you. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

Discuss the differences in the translation of *אֶלְוֵי*. Which translation do you find most appropriate for this passage? Why?

## Second Required Response

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Proverbs 3:3-8 among the passages suggested for use in a service of Christian marriage. The engaged couple have asked you to preach on Proverbs 3:1-8. From your study of the book of Proverbs and chapter 3 in particular, determine the proper boundaries of this passage. Support your decision on the basis of the biblical text.

2. *Historical Situation*

## Third Required Response

Proverbs 1:1 attributes what follows to "Solomon son of David, king of Israel" (*New Revised Standard Version*). Therefore, one might say that, within the Bible at least, the narratives of Solomon in 1 Kings provide a historical context for the Book of Proverbs, including Proverbs 3:1-8. In 1 Kings 3:1-14, Solomon prays to God for wisdom and receives God's answer to his prayer. How might 1 Kings 3:1-14 inform your understanding and interpretation of Proverbs 3:1-8?

### 3 Scriptural and Theological Context

#### Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B

A. As you read Proverbs 3:3, the words "bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart" (*New Revised Standard Version*) remind you of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In addition, you discover that similar language also appears in Proverbs 6:21 and 7:3. Compare Deuteronomy 6:4-9 with Proverbs 3:3, 6:20-21, and 7:1-3. How are these verses similar or different? How does this comparison inform your understanding of Proverbs 3:1-8?

OR

B. Proverbs chapters 1-9 form a large unit within the book of Proverbs, with the theme of "wisdom." You notice that the term חָכְמָה also appears often within these chapters, including Proverbs 3:5. How does this repeated use inform your understanding of the term חָכְמָה and the interpretation of this passage?

#### Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

- 1 *Focus Statement:* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
- 2 *Supporting the Interpretation:* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number

#### Section III: Application

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

JOHN 3:16-21

## Ministry Context:

You are the preacher at a youth conference and are given John 3:16-21 as the text for the closing worship service. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your sermon outline.

## Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context

After studying John 3:16-21, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words*

1. *Language of the Text*

## First Required Response

As you study John 3:16-21, you notice that forms of κρίσις or κρίνω are translated differently, such as *condemn, judgment, and verdict*. Discuss both Greek words as they appear in this passage and the nuances of meaning in the Greek that permit the different English renderings of the words.

## Second Required Response

As you read through the Gospel of John and study this passage, you notice key concepts that pervade the Gospel. One of them is the verb πιστεύω. You also realize that the noun πίστις never occurs. What are the implications of John's use of only the verb for your understanding of John 3:16-21?

2. *Historical Situation*

## Third Required Response

There have been various reconstructions posited for the Johannine community; describe one. To what experience of this community might John 3:18 be referring? How do your findings about this experience affect your interpretation of the assigned passage?

3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

## Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE:

A or B



- A. What is the relationship between John 3:1-15 and John 3:16-21? How might this larger context aid your understanding of John 3:16-21?

OR

- B. What theology of salvation do you discern in John 3:16-21? Support your answer with specific references from within the passage

### Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

- 1 *Focus Statement:* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation:* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

### Section III: Application

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages*

**AUGUST 2011  
STUDENT ANSWERS WITH GRADER'S RESPONSES  
BIBLICAL EXEGESIS EXAM**

**JOHN 3:16-21**

**SECTION I: LANGUAGE, HISTORICAL SITUATION, SCRIPTURAL AND**

**THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT**

**1. LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT**

*First Required Response*

In the Gospel of John, the words most commonly used to describe judgment are *krinō* and *krisis*. Like the notion of judgment itself, these words carry many nuances of meaning that lend different shades of meaning to their use in John 3:16-21. *Krinō* and *krisis* appear in this pericope four times, with forms of *krinō*, a verb, appearing three times (3:17-18), and *krisis*, a noun, appearing once (3:19). In each instance of *krinō*, the NRSV renders the verb as forms of ‘to condemn,’ while rendering *krisis* as ‘judgment.’ The NIV, however, while similar in its translation of *krinō*, renders *krisis* as ‘verdict.’ The ASV renders both of the words as forms of ‘to judge’ and ‘judgment.’ Such translations are understandable, but to understand fully the significance of the words, one should examine how these words are used throughout the New Testament, especially through the rest of the Gospel of John.

A common context of the words is the apocalyptic invocation of coming judgment (Mt 7:1, 19:28; Lk 6:37, 22:30; Rev 6:10, 11:18). *Krisis* is often used to describe specifically the coming “day of judgment” (Mt 5:21-22, 11:22; 2 Pe 2:4, 3:7). Another common connection is

the notion of the judgment of individual sinners (Rom 2:12; 2 Tim 4:1, Jam 2:12) with even the strong indication of condemnation (Rom 3:7; 2 Thess 2:12). These terms are also used in other settings, such as the act of deciding and discerning (Lk 7:43; Acts 20:16; 1 Cor 10:15) and even legal proceedings (Mt 5:40; Acts 15:19, 23:6; 1 Cor 6:1).

Within the Gospel of John, the use of *krinō* and *krisis* takes on yet another shade of meaning. As opposed to a coming judgment, John presents *krinō* and *krisis*, more often than not, as a present reality (Jn 3:18-19, 5:24, 5:30, 12:31, 16:11). This judgment, however, does not always necessarily imply condemnation. There are shades of both, with condemnation seeming more appropriate in some passages (5:24) while others suggest a meaning closer to an impartial evaluation (5:22, 5:27, 12:31).

The notion of impartiality marks an important aspect of judgment. Though this theme is picked up elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Pet 1:17; Rev 16:5), it is prominent in John. Judgment in the New Testament was not depicted as an emotional exercise on the part of God but rather a candid, impartial matter of necessity in response to human sin.<sup>5</sup> In John 3:16-21, this impartiality is presented with the theme of light and darkness, especially in verses 19-21.

In John 3:16-21, the translation of the forms of *krinō* to ‘condemn’ is appropriate as the condemnation is set in opposition to the world’s potential rescue, though the impartial aspect of judgment should not be lost in interpreting the action (3:17-18). The translation of *krisis* in verse 19, however, could just as easily be ‘condemnation’ as ‘judgment’ or ‘verdict,’ depending on which interpretation of the verse holds more weight for the translator. On one hand, ‘condemnation’ is consistent with the people of the world loving darkness (3:19), while

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<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Buchsel and Volkmar Hertrich, “*krin.*” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume III, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 940.

‘judgment’ or ‘verdict’ retains more effectively the impartiality implied in the nuanced meaning of *krisis*.

Within this ministry context, it would be important to note to the youth that the judgment is not the act of an angry God but rather the inevitable and unavoidable response of God to humanity’s response to Jesus. Jesus, as the light of the world, brings about a present response, here and now, from all people, and one is either in the light or in the darkness, not being condemned to darkness but rather choosing to stay there.

### *Second Required Response*

The striking absence of the use of the *pistis*, a noun usually rendered ‘faith,’ in the Gospel of John, despite its concentration on the need to believe, suggests that the exclusive use of the verb form of the noun, *pisteuō*, usually rendered ‘believe,’ carries an important distinction for Fourth Gospel. Within all of Johannine literature, *pistis* appears only once (1 Jn 5:3). On the other hand, elsewhere in the New Testament, *pistis* appears quite frequently (Mt 15:28; Rom 4:5; Heb 11:1-39; among many others). In fact, with the exception of Johannine literature, *pistis* appears in every other book in the New Testament.

This is not to say that the notion of belief is unimportant in John. Quite to the contrary, the verb *pisteuō* is used in John more frequently than in any other New Testament book and more than the other three Gospels combined. Belief, or rather believing, is of central importance to the Fourth Gospel. It appears in the Gospel’s prologue (Jn 1:7,12) and even describes the purpose of the book itself: “But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). The exclusive use of the verb *pisteuō*, rather than *pistis*, indicates that, in John, faith is not

something that a person *has* but rather something that a person *does*. Believing is not just an internal process; it is inherently connected to action.

One manner in which the connection of belief to action can be readily identified is in the mode and purpose of Jesus' ministry. John, as opposed to the other three Gospels, emphasizes that Jesus' ministry of miracles and signs was specifically for the purpose of bringing others to believing (1:50, 2:11, 2:22-23, 4:48, 10:25, 11:45, 12:37). In fact, Jesus at times exhorts his followers to "believe the works" even if they do not believe Jesus (10:25, also 14:11). Jesus' evangelism is tied not only to the words he speaks but also to his actions.

In a similar fashion, a believer's response to Jesus is connected to action throughout John. John 9:38 describes the connection of a blind man's belief to the act of worship. John 3:37 clearly connects belief to obedience. Perhaps most striking is the explicit statement of John 14:12: "The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do."

In John 3:16-21, believing is the key to having eternal life, but given the usage of *pisteuō* throughout John, that belief likely does not suggest that an internal acceptance of the Son of God is sufficient. Rather, that belief is something acted out, something that is readily evident in the believer's life. It is no coincidence that the discussion of belief leading to eternal life in verses 16-18 is followed immediately by the discussion of the people's deeds relating to either light or darkness in verses 19-21.

In the ministry context of the youth conference, it would be important to emphasize the importance of belief and the importance of the love of God (3:16). That emphasis, however, should come with the clarification that, although there is nothing one can *do*, no action one can take, to earn God's love or to earn eternal life, believing is not a process limited to a single

moment. It is tied to a life and to a lifestyle of action, doing the works of Jesus as a sign of one's belief.

## 2. HISTORICAL SITUATION

### *Third Required Response*

The Gospel of John, among other aspects, takes on the tone of a sharp discourse, much more so than the other three Gospels. The various lines of thought concerning the Johannine community to which the Gospel of John was likely written attempt to take traits and themes of the tone of the Gospel of John along with historical knowledge of religious and cultural environment current to that community in order to discern how the composition of the Gospel of John may have been affected by its context.

One such reconstruction describes the Johannine community as a group of believers separated ideologically from its Jewish heritage, perhaps more specifically from the local synagogue. Though scholars disagree concerning the most plausible location of this community, Ephesus in Asia Minor and Syria are common conclusions, likely at the end of the first century.<sup>6</sup> The community was probably at odds with other religious communities, Jewish and Christian alike, because of its high Christology, an issue prominent in the Gospel of John. The polarizing tone of truth and falsehood, light and darkness, indicates that the community was internally very loyal but often hostile to the outside world that may have disagreed with it.<sup>7</sup> The dualist tone, in

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<sup>6</sup> Barnabas Lindars, "John," in *The Johannine Literature*, ed. Barnabas Lindars, Ruth B. Edwards, & John M. Court. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 76-77.

Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, Volume 29, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983), ciii-civ.

<sup>7</sup> Lindars, "John," 73.

which one is either saved or condemned, holds some similarities with the Qumran community, as well as elements of Gnostic thought, but does not necessarily imply a direct influence of one community on the other.<sup>8</sup>

In John 3:16-21, the experience of the alienated Johannine community is perhaps most readily seen in verse 18. Verse 18 describes the status of those who believe and those who do not. The verse emphatically outlines the criterion for being saved and being condemned as believing or not believing in “the name of the only Son of God.” Such sharp terms inviting an ‘us and them’ mentality suggest that this verse addresses the sense of being ostracized and ideologically isolated felt by the Johannine community and, moreover, the community’s response to that alienation by drawing clear lines of what is true and what is false.

A passage’s historical and religious context should always inform the interpretation of that passage. Taking the passage’s bold and direct language without understanding the possible reasons for that boldness could easily bring about an interpretation that justifies needless confrontation and separation from those who do not believe. Specifically, the verb *kekritai*, though rendered in the NRSV ‘are condemned [already],’ is a perfect passive verb and could be translated ‘have been condemned [already],’ suggesting that the condemnation has already happened and is a present and unalterable reality. Accepting the present judgment against those who do not believe could easily lead to a lack of compassion for those who are not part of one’s religious community. This flies in the face of the message of inclusive and universal love also in the gospel, not to mention the call to evangelism (Mt 28:19). Knowing the conflict facing the Johannine community is useful in understanding the reason behind such direct language. It is important, therefore, to respect and learn from the boldness of the dualist tone of John 3:16-21,

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<sup>8</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 148.

especially vv. 18-21, but also to hold boldness alongside the Christian call to compassion, love, and evangelism.

In this ministry context, the isolation of the Johannine community could serve as a way to relate to youth who feel alienated from others in their lives. A helpful emphasis would be on the importance of a community sticking together and being strong in its identity while also noting the need for outreach and compassion for all people.

### 3. SCRIPTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

#### *Fourth Required Response—Question A*

The most immediate relationship between John 3:1-15 and John 3:16-21 is that they are part of the same discussion. Thematically the content in vv. 16-21 flows from what is discussed in vv. 1-15. The framing of the words of John 3:16-21 as the culminating points of a powerful discussion with Nicodemus, “a leader of the Jews” and “teacher of Israel,” inherently puts this passage in conversation with the discourse in vv. 1-15 (3:1,10). The emphasis on the “Son” in vv. 16-18 is a response correcting Nicodemus, who describes Jesus as “a teacher” (3:2). The sharp, dualist tone of vv. 18-21 matches the clear “no one” statements of vv. 3, 5, and 13, as well as the rebuke of Nicodemus’ lack of understanding (3:11-12).

One striking and unique connection between 3:1-15 and 3:16-21 is the connection between the verses 14-15 and verse 16. Verses 14 and 15 allude to a somewhat obscure account in the Old Testament regarding the making of a “fiery serpent” for the healing of Israelites bitten by poisonous snakes and compare the Son of Man to the serpent (Num 21:4-9). Believing in the Son of Man will bring eternal life (Jn 3:15). The following verse, John 3:16, builds on this notion



of belief and eternal life and its connection to the lifted serpent in Numbers 21. A common understanding of John 3:16 interprets the verb *edōken*, a form of *didōmi* rendered ‘gave,’ in the same way as *paradidōmi*, which often is rendered ‘given over’ or ‘handed over.’ Thus, when God “gave his only Son,” it is often understood to mean that God ‘gave over’ or ‘handed over’ God’s Son for the sake of sacrifice (3:16). This often-made connection is significant, as the verb *paradidōmi* is prominent in language of Jesus’ death and sacrifice on humanity’s behalf (Mt 26:2; Mk 10:33; Rom 4:25, 8:32). Such a connection, however, is not prominent in John. Instead, the giving of God’s Son, when read in the context of John 3:14-15, has more to do with the healing of those who look upon the serpent and of those who believe in the Son. This does not reject the language of atonement or sacrifice, but it does present Jesus also as a gift given *to* humanity to be enjoyed now, not just a gift given *for* humanity.

The discussion in vv. 3-8 concerning being “born from above” and “born of the Spirit” also affects the understanding of vv. 16-21. Though much could be said about these terms, one point of interest in how it relates to vv. 16-21 is the manner of the work of the Spirit, described in v. 8. Because much of the tone of vv. 16-21 emphasizes the importance of humanity’s responsibility for one’s own decisions, in belief and in action, the description of the unknowable work of the Spirit initially feels out of place. Without taking away from human responsibility, an understanding of the inscrutable work of God in v. 8 adds a dimension of God’s sovereignty to John 3:16-21, especially the final phrase, “...that their deeds have been done in God” (3:21).

In this ministry context, it would be important to note how God’s gift to the world is not just something on our behalf but also a gift to be realized now. Specifically, this would invite discussion of how Jesus is a blessing here and now in each person’s individual life. Also,

acknowledging dependence on God through the work of the Spirit in all things would be an important additional note in presenting the language of belief shown in action.

## SECTION II: PRESENTING A FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION

### 1. FOCUS STATEMENT

John 3:16-21 describes the necessity for bold belief as a response to the ever-present gift that is Jesus, the Son of God, even in the face of adversity, and that belief is shown not just in a single decision but through one's actions in life.

### 2. SUPPORTING THE INTERPRETATION

For a passage containing such a well-known verse (John 3:16), the context in which this verse appears seems surprisingly absent from any discussion of the verse. Often presented as the 'gospel in miniature,' John 3:16 truly is a stunning statement about the love of God and humanity's response to God. What is often inferred, however, when John 3:16 stands alone is that, in response to God's love, all that is required is mere belief. Such an understanding takes away the responsibility (and privilege!) of humanity to respond to, follow, and enjoy Jesus as the Son of God not only in the thoughts of one's heart and mind but also in one's life. When this

verse is understood alongside the verses following it, John 3:16-21 offers a view on both the powerful message of the love of God as well as the just-as-powerful response that is called for.

Perhaps what turns many off of reading John 3:16 in the context of the following verses is the very dualist language seen in vv. 18-21. There is a subtle development and transition from the beginning of the passage to the end, moving from an emphasis on God's love towards one on humanity's actions. By the end of the passage, the tone has turned sharply dualist, outlining those who do believe and those who do not, describing them in terms of light and dark (3:19-21). These declarative and bold statements are not just the audacious ruminations of a biblical theologian. They are indicative of the response of a community that has been alienated and whose identity has been attacked ideologically.

The Gospel of John along with 1, 2, and 3 John constitute the body of work in the New Testament known as Johannine literature. Because of the thematic consistencies between these books, it is thought that they were the product, if not of the same author, of the same community. Thus the concerns and struggles of the Johannine community are evident in the language and tone of the Gospel of John. The Johannine community was in conflict with other religious groups of its time and place, specifically the local synagogue authorities.<sup>9</sup> The sharp tone of the Gospel of John and its penchant for drawing clear lines of differentiation are largely due to the impact of the community having to forge its identity in opposition to other religious groups. Thus, when John 3:16-21 moves towards the dualist language of light and dark, the lines drawn in the sand, so to speak, are not meant to detract from the loving message of God in v. 16 but rather to frame the belief called for in v. 16 within the context of boldly claiming one's identity, even in adversity, just as the Johannine community had to do.

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<sup>9</sup> Gary R. O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume IX*, ed. Leander E. Keck. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 506.

Another common theme in the Gospel of John that enters into the discussion of the passage is the notion of realized eschatology. As opposed to other forms of eschatology which usually speak of the eschaton and final judgment as a future occurrence, realized eschatology treats such matters as a present reality. As this perspective pertains to this pericope, the judgment, as rendered from the Greek words *krinō* and *krisis* in vv. 17-19, refers to a present reality and a present response. Thus the believing that is called for in vv. 16-18 is not an action that carries only future ramifications but rather, and more importantly, summons the reader to immediate and bold response to Jesus, here and now in the present, as the judgment is not something delayed for later.<sup>10</sup> Thus, another important distinction is made about the role of Jesus within this pericope. Jesus, as the revelation of God in Jesus (14:11) confronts humanity with a choice.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Jesus, as the light of the world (1:4, 9:5), reveals the true nature of all people, as one's response to Jesus reveals his/her nature: "People loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (3:19).

The nature of the response to Jesus is also a matter of importance. A common interpretation holds that all that is necessary is faith, that is, the spiritual, emotional, or mental acknowledgment and acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God. Interestingly, John 3:16-21 says little about 'faith.' Instead, it says a great deal about 'believing.' As semantic as this point may be, it brings up an important point for clarification: that the Gospel of John does not limit belief to an internal process. It breaks out into one's actions. The Greek word most commonly translated 'faith' is *pistis*, a noun. Though very common in the New Testament, it never appears in the Gospel of John, despite John's emphasis on believing. Whenever John discusses belief, the verb form *pisteuō* is used rather than the noun (e.g. 3:16-18). The exclusive usage of the verb

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<sup>10</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, The Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 4, ed. Daniel J. Harrington. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 96.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 148-149.

form suggests that, in the Gospel of John, belief is more than a single moment of acceptance. It is a lifestyle that affects one's actions. Along these lines, the discussion of belief in vv. 16-18 transitions quickly to discussion of people's deeds in the light or in the darkness (3:19-21). A person's actions mark whether a person is in the light or the darkness, and those actions are an inherent part of the belief called for as a response to Jesus.

The importance placed on one's belief and one's actions in this pericope might paint a proper response to Jesus as being choked by expectations, each of which one must fulfill in order to receive eternal life. Under this interpretation, eternal life is something that is sought and striven for. Jumping through hoops to get to heaven, however, is not the message of John 3:16-21. The stunning beauty of John 3:16 remains stunning, as Jesus the Son of God is given to the world as an ever-present gift. The immediacy expressed in the judgment and in the revelation through John's realized eschatology extends to this point: that eternal life is not something that will begin far in the future. It begins now. Jesus sheds light on the deeds of all people, but the deeds in the light "have been done in God" and bring about the gift of eternal life. As Jesus was compared to the healing bronze serpent in Numbers 21 (Jn 3:14-15), the gift of Jesus not only brings redemption and life in eternity but also healing and fullness in the present.

The call, then, on readers of John 3:16-21 is one of boldness in belief and action. That response, however, is not beset with obligation or stoic suffering alone. Belief, or rather believing, in Jesus the Son of God brings one to fullness of life in the light of God's love.

### SECTION III: APPLICATION

- I. Show and discuss [clean] video clip from *The Matrix*.<sup>12</sup>
  - a. Clip is of Morpheus offering Neo the choice between the red pill and the blue pill.
  - b. “Remember, all I’m offering you is the truth. Nothing more.” –Morpheus
  - c. Blue pill leading back to ignorance and illusion
  - d. Red pill leading to the truth
  - e. Neo’s choice of the red pill brings revelation to what his life was really like (truth).
  - f. Neo’s choice of the red pill brings difficulties and adversity as well.
  
- II. Recap of what has been discussed during the youth conference
  - a. Talked about God’s loving creation of the world.
  - b. Talked about how humanity is trapped in a sinful state.
  - c. Talked about how Jesus redeemed us from our sin.
  - d. Tonight, talking about the role Jesus plays in our lives, today, here and now.
  
- III. Read John 3:16-21
  
- IV. Familiarity of John 3:16
  - a. Probably heard it before.
  - b. Probably seen it on signs. Probably seen other people’s names, then “3:16”, as a joke.
  - c. Often thought of as ‘the gospel in miniature.’
  - d. Stunningly beautiful, but so familiar we sometimes miss its message.
  - e. Calls us to a response of belief to Jesus.
  
- V. It’s so simple, but not quite.
  - a. Just believing sounds easy, right?
  - b. All the other stuff about judgment and condemnation and light and darkness and people’s deeds (vv. 17-21) makes it harder to understand.
  - c. How do we make sense of it?
  
- VI. Jesus reveals
  - a. Be a moth, not a cockroach.
  - b. Moth is attracted to the light.
  - c. Cockroach runs away from the light.
  - d. Jesus is the light of the world. Light just shines. That’s just what it does.
  - e. Some come to the light. Some run from the light.
  - f. All of us respond to Jesus in some way.

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<sup>12</sup> No profanity is included in this particular clip of the movie, but the presentation must be careful not to extend into parts of the movie that do have profanity or other inappropriate material.

- VII. Full-bodied faith
- a. Why should we have to *do* things if we're only supposed to *believe*?
  - b. 'Believing' vs. 'belief'
  - c. Faith, in John, always being something you do, not something you have.
  - d. "We are saved by faith alone, but if faith is alone, it is not faith."
  - e. Believing as changing our entire lives, not just how we think or feel.
- VIII. Things may get rough.
- a. In *The Matrix*, Neo's life after responding to the truth. Difficulties and hardships.
  - b. No promise of an easy road.
  - c. Description of Johannine community as one faced with adversity and opposition
  - d. Their response was to be bold in their beliefs and to cling tightly to the bond within their community.
  - e. This kind of change might be difficult for some people to accept. Strained friendships.
  - f. You don't have to go it alone. Importance of Christian community.
- IX. Jesus is a gift, here and now.
- a. Previous discussion of Jesus as a redeeming sacrifice.
  - b. Jesus not given only for that.
  - c. Jesus as a gift that can change your life right now.
- X. The Gift of Eternal Life
- a. Faith isn't 'fire insurance' (i.e. better believe so you don't go to hell).
  - b. Not thinking of eternal life as something that is way in the future.
  - c. The gift of eternal life is something that affects you here, today.
  - d. The immediacy of Jesus in John: revelation *now*, judgment *now*, response *now*
  - e. The gift of eternal life is something that begins *now*.
- XI. Not a scare tactic
- a. Not trying to frighten you or pressure you into doing something.
  - b. Not trying to make you beat yourself up.
  - c. Not trying to give you a list of things to do to prove your faith.
  - d. Trying to communicate the immeasurable gift that is offered to you.
  - e. Gift of healing. Gift of fullness of life.
- XII. Invitation to respond to Jesus
- a. This loving gift is offered to you. Jesus has revealed himself, has shined his light.
  - b. Encourage you to consider how you respond to Jesus, here and now. Do you come to the light? Or stay in the shadows?
  - c. Invitation, as one is led, to pray or to talk with a friend or to talk with a leader.
  - d. Live in the loving light of the Lord, in Jesus Christ, God's only Son.

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## READER'S COMMENTS

### Reader 1

#### Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context [600 words/response]

1. *Language of the Text* –

##### **First Required Response**

This paper shows strong understanding of text and complete fulfillment of requested information. Exploration of text opened obvious options.

##### **Second Required Response**

The understanding of text supports theories addressed. Well thought out.

2. *Historical Situation* –

##### **Third Required Response**

This response flows with grounded source and profound context of intent. Response has a fair partnership in scripture and theology.

3. *Scriptural and Theological Context* –

##### **Fourth Required Response (A or B) A**

The response encompasses both events with direction and precision.

#### Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

1. *Focus Statement* [50 words]

This statement clearly defines the focus.

2. *Supporting the Interpretation* [1200 words]

The interpretation was supported in a non-judgmental, understandable and persuasive manner.

### **Section III: Application [2 pages]**

The combination of youthful language and examples show appropriate material. Outline suggests a lengthy sermon. This may be a consideration.

### **Summary Statement (why exam is satisfactory or unsatisfactory)**

This paper is satisfactory as it contains the requested information and that information is presented in a strong and knowledgeable format.

### **Reader 2**

### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context [600 words/response]**

#### **4. *Language of the Text* –**

#### **First Required Response**

The paper explores the nuances of the Greek verb and noun and provide different translations in English. Not only are nuances of the Greek words provided for John, additional sources from Matthew, Luke and Revelation are also provided within the context of the apocalyptic invocation of coming judgment. There is a good spirit evident in the manner in which the material is presented..

#### **Second Required Response**

Good biblical scholarship is evident in the response to this question. The paper looks at the entirety of Johannine literature in regards to pistis and concludes after additional citations that believing is of central importance to the Gospel of John. That statement is rooted in scripture, i.e., John 1.7, 12 quoting the author: ‘But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah...’

#### **5. *Historical Situation* –**

#### **Third Required Response**

The context of the Johannine community is clearly presented. The paper highlights the characteristics of this community, especially holding a high Christology. John 3.18 understood in light of the status of those who believe and those who do not. While there is a brief discussion of the Johannine community in light of this verse, there remained a need to mention the tension between Jews and Jewish Christians.

6. *Scriptural and Theological Context* –

**Fourth Required Response (A or B) A**

The paper captures the relationship between John 3.1-15 and John 3.16-21. The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus informs the content of 16-21. There is a healthy discussion on the difference between being born from above versus born of the Spirit. Note that the passage ends with the phrase, “that their deeds have been done in God” (3.21).-

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

3. *Focus Statement* [50 words]

The focus statement represents the work of exegesis as evidence in the paper. The focus statement clearly states that responding to Jesus is not a single decision but through actions in life.

4. *Supporting the Interpretation* [1200 words]

The faithful essay supports the central theme of the focus statement. The understanding of scripture, the exegetical work, the connection between 3.1-15 and 16-21 as well as the background on the Johannine community support the focus statement. The paper mentions a “stunning beauty” to John 3.16 and that is Jesus the Son of God is given to the world as an ever present gift. Eternal life isn’t in the future, it is now. The words in this paper offer an attractive hope and also redemption and life in eternity but also present healing.

**Section III: Application** [2 pages]

The use of a clip from the Matrix is good. The footnote was appreciated. An overall focus statement for the sermon/application would be helpful. The outline is long and would ask how long can hold an audience at a youth conference when preaching. The sermon outline may need to be trimmed. It is important to state summary of the sermon somewhere. The introduction of choosing between pills, for either truth or ignorance is good. That needs more development. Preaching at a youth conference does bring its own set of challenges.

**Summary Statement (why exam is satisfactory or unsatisfactory)**

The exam is satisfactory for several reasons. The paper is faithful to the text as the Greek words are discussed, the focus statement made and the supporting interpretation offered. The application does contain good information and illustrations. The paper reflects good solid exegetical and academic work.