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**Ulrich Zwingli**

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## ORDAINED SERVANT

### Statement Of Purpose

Ordained Servant exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal Ordained Servant will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

### Editorial Policy

1. Ordained Servant publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of Ordained Servant or of the Church.
2. Ordained Servant occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ordained Servant does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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## EDITORIAL

In this issue we have reproduced a sermon by the eminent Reformer, John Calvin. And, for a number of reasons, we believe some editorial remarks may be in order.

The material is taken from the 1579 edition of Calvin's sermons on Timothy and Titus. Where this old translation seemed almost unintelligible I have done

my best to render it into equivalent present-day English. When I began this I did not foresee that—later in the sermon—Calvin would advocate an order of women deacons! My first impulse was therefore to scrap the idea of using this material. On second thought, however, I determined to use it even though I do not believe that women ought to be ordained to any of the

same offices that men hold in the church. I believe ordination to the office of teaching elder, ruling elder or deacon involves authority within and over the congregation of the Lord. I am also convinced that the exegetical arguments for the ordination of women as elders *or deacons* is not at all compelling.

But, as usual, Calvin is not to be easily dismissed. And much of what he says about these widows that he calls deacons (unwisely, as I see it) is quite convincing. There evidently were widows who were cared for by the ancient church. It also seems clear that a task was committed to them as a part of the church's care for the sick and needy. And it seems to me that the nature of a living congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ is such that something like this is virtually inevitable. Not a few times, in my own pastoral experience, it has been the women who have come to the rescue, as it were, in performing a much needed ministry of mercy. Yes, and I can also think of older women who are widows who have been most ready and willing to offer themselves for such service. And I will go a step further. I see no reason why a needy widow today could not be given support by the deacons of the church if she met the standards so clearly set down by Paul (and so cogently argued by Calvin), and—under the authority of the deacons—given specific tasks within the realm of the ministry of mercy. It seems clear to me that this *was* done in the Apostolic Church and, that being the case, that there is warrant for doing the same thing today when the need arises.

One of the great fallacies of the feminist movement is the 'all or nothing at all' mentality that lies behind it. If women are not given everything that men have, so the feminists argue, they are supposed to feel that they have nothing. This is all wrong. It may be that in some otherwise orthodox churches women have been deprived of legitimate opportunity to serve. In firmly closing the door to 'women in office' we must be careful that we do not go to an opposite extreme. In the Apostolic church there was a great need for the ministry of mercy. Some who needed to be cared for—a considerable body of older widows—were also quite capable of ministering to others. So the two were brought together by means of an order, or an organization, in which these widows were supported *and employed*. I see no reason why older widows of proven piety and stability could not be employed today by the church for a similar purpose.

It will be evident from the remarks above, then, that in deciding to use this material from Calvin I do *not* want to be understood to favor the ordination of women as deacons. But just as clearly I *do* want to be understood as being in favor of finding ways for women—who *meet the criteria set down by the Apostle*—to be employed in the ministry of mercy today.

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In this issue of *Ordained Servant* we come to the end of Dr. P. Y. De Jong's discussion of the work of the elders entitled *Taking Heed to the Flock*. We also begin our reprint of his equally fine study of the work of the deacons entitled *The Ministry of Mercy* and take this opportunity to again express our thanks for Dr. De Jong's gracious permission to use this material in *Ordained Servant*.

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At a recent meeting of the Christian Education Committee the decision was made to seek to assess the usefulness and effectiveness of *Ordained Servant* at the General Assembly. But since many who receive this journal will not be present at the General Assembly, we invite you to write to the editor with your criticisms and suggestions.

In future issues of this journal we plan (1) an exegetical study of the Timothy-Titus passages setting forth the requirements for the offices of elder and deacon; (2) a select list of books for study in connection with "*The Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*" approved by the Fifty-fourth General Assembly; and (3) a discussion, beginning with an historical study, of the fencing of the Lord's Table.

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We welcome the submission of material for possible publication in *Ordained Servant*. If you—or your Session—have produced material that might be of use to others in the church why not send it to us. We do not promise, in advance, that we will use material sent to us. But we do promise that we will give it careful consideration. Please send it to the editor (Pastor G. I. Williamson), 119 Normal College Ave., Sheldon, IA 51201. Thank you.

# TAKING HEED TO THE FLOCK

by

Dr. P. Y. De Jong

## THE SUPREME IDEAL OF FAMILY VISITATION

*“As the people of Israel, after being delivered from the oppression of Egypt, were in advance day by day on the way to their goal, the land of Canaan, so we also must make a steady advance on the way to perfection. The longer we are on the way of eternal life, the nearer we are to be to our ideal!*

*“Is this indeed a DEMAND?”*

*“No. Thank God! it is a PROMISE.”*

— J. J. KNAP: SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

God’s people are strangers and pilgrims in the earth. Called out of darkness to the marvelous light of the kingdom of heaven, they have the supreme obligation and privilege of showing forth the excellencies of their heavenly Father. In thought, word and deed their lives are to be transformed after the pattern and image of the Lord Jesus, through whose precious blood they have their redemption from sin and through the power of whose Holy Spirit they are kept for the salvation ready to be revealed in the last times.

All of their life must therefore come under the sweet and pervasive influence of His Word, which is the rule for their faith and practice. How earnestly they learn to pray,

Fill Thou my life, O Lord, my God,  
In every part with praise;  
That my whole being may proclaim  
Thy being and Thy ways.  
Not for the lip of praise alone,  
Nor e’en the praising heart,  
I ask, but for a life made up  
Of praise in every part.

Praise in the common words I speak,  
Life’s common looks and tones,  
In intercourse at hearth and board  
With my beloved ones,

Enduring wrong, reproach or loss,  
With sweet and steadfast will,  
Loving and blessing those who hate,  
Returning good for ill.

So shall each fear, each fret, each care,  
Be turned into a song,  
And every winding of the way  
The echo shall prolong;  
So shall no part of day or night  
From sacredness be free,  
But all my life in every step,  
Be fellowship with Thee.

This is not only a most complete ideal but also a most difficult program to be realized. For within us we still find in this life the power of sin. Daily is necessity laid upon us to mortify the flesh and walk in newness of life. From without continual temptations force themselves upon us, against which we, except for the grace of God, are absolutely powerless. This constant struggle must teach us each day anew our own unworthiness and helplessness. Faced with such undeniable spiritual realities, we are to seek refuge always in our blessed Savior through Whom we have the power to a new life.

This sanctification continues as long as we are in this life. Indeed, the way is not one of unbroken progress. Often and even bitterly the children of God complain that the good that they would, they do not,

## Taking Heed to the Flock

and the evil that they would not, they do. There are seasons of spiritual barrenness, lean years in our lives, when we see so little of the power of sovereign grace and taste so seldom the preciousness of the divine presence. There are days of murmuring and rebellion against the mysterious ways of the overruling providence. There are moments of despair, when we feel ourselves dreadfully lost in the mazes of sin. And yet in and through all this our faithful Covenant God continues to work out the salvation of His own. Never does He forsake the works of His own hands. Step by step He leads us along the way with all its trials and temptations, until after life's little day is past we are meet for full fellowship with Him in glory.

Thus the Christian life below is a preparation for eternity. God has been pleased to work the first principles of grace in His own at the time of their regeneration. And as this life which He begets begins to unfold itself and becomes conscious of these tremendous spiritual realities, it needs direction and encouragement. Such is the pastoral duty of the overseers of the flock of Christ. Being themselves rooted and grounded in His Word and enjoying the assurance that they belong to the Savior, they are used to build up the church on earth.

They must instruct the congregation. In season and out of season their calling requires them to hold before every member the word of life which alone can make sinners wise unto salvation.

They must rebuke those who err. Young and old alike stray from the paths of righteousness and seek their fulfillment at times in the fields of sin. Lovingly, but firmly, the undershepherds seek such erring sheep and lead them back to the shelter of the fold, where alone there is safety and security.

They must comfort. Life may seem to deal bitterly with God's children for a season. The chastisements which come to each in His own time are grievous to be borne. Yet God wills that none shall be tempted above that which can be endured and therefore He commis-

sions His servants to speak words of consolation and cheer. Being so strengthened and encouraged His people are able to continue their journey joyfully.

Does such spiritual work bear fruit? Indeed, it must. This cannot be otherwise, since God's Word never returns to Him void but accomplishes that whereunto it was sent. The saints are built up in faith and are drawn into ever closer communion with Him who is the fountain-head and final goal of their lives. Sinners who harden themselves against godly counsel and reproof are exposed and, unless they return to the Lord, must be excommunicated from the church, so that the body of Christ may be kept pure. Going from strength to strength in loving and obedient service to God through Christ, the congregation already here receives a foretaste of heaven.

And when eternity breaks, the results of this spiritual work of the officers of the church will be made manifest in the redeemed multitude which praises its God and Savior in perfection.

The word of God by the mouth of His servant Daniel must be fulfilled: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they

**And when eternity breaks, the results of this spiritual work of the officers of the church will be made manifest in the redeemed multitude which praises its God and Savior in perfection.**

**Dr. P. Y. De Jong served several congregations in the Christian Reformed Church, and for a time taught at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids. In recent years he helped to organize the Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Orange City, Iowa, where he taught in its early years. Because of his conviction that the Christian Reformed Church has forsaken its heritage he and Mrs. De Jong recently separated from the denomination to become members of the Independent Christian Reformed Church of Lynwood, Illinois. Dr. and Mrs. De Jong live in Northwest Iowa during the summer where they sometimes attend services at the Hull Orthodox Presbyterian Church.**

~~that are wise shall shine~~ as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."<sup>1</sup>

# THE MINISTRY OF MERCY FOR TODAY

by

Dr. P. Y. De Jong

## CHAPTER ONE

### DO WE NEED THE MINISTRY OF MERCY TODAY?

*All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.*

*Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.*

— THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

As it nears the end of the 20th century the modern world finds itself facing stupendous problems which baffle the minds and hearts of men. Life has become so complex and closely interrelated that no question can be faced in isolation. Rather, because of the organic character of human existence and history, each new problem must be viewed in the light of its fellows, sometimes strikingly similar but more often on the surface at least widely different.

The most immediately pressing concerns of mankind seem to be the political issues involved in the titanic struggle between the Western democracies and Russian totalitarianism under a pseudo-communistic regime. However, as must be apparent to all who have seriously considered the issues, the political difficulties are intertwined with a welter of other questions and problems which must be faced before they can be satisfactorily resolved.

In discussing the particular issues which face the leaders who seek a way out of the present impasse, Toynbee in his *Civilization on Trial* demonstrates the interrelation of the several problems admirably in his brief summary. "What shall we do to be saved? In politics, establish a constitutional cooperative system of world government. In economics, find a working compromise (varying according to the practical requirements of different places and times) between free enterprise and socialism. In the life of the spirit, put the secular superstructure back onto religious foundations. Efforts are being made in our Western world today to find our way towards each of these goals...Of the three tasks, the religious one is, of course, in the long run by far the most important..."<sup>1</sup>

In the present world the church of the Lord Jesus

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1. Arnold Toynbee: *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 39, 40.

## The Ministry of Mercy for Today

is still an influential and powerful organization. No other organization has such a long, continuous and honorable history. Thus Toynbee, though holding that the economic and political issues are the most pressing, readily admits that the religious problem is the most basic.

The true church has within herself the gift of divine grace which alone is able to lead men out of the morass into which they have wandered because of their sins, and to lift both individuals and nations by the Holy Spirit which she has received to that conscious spiritual communion with the God of the Scriptures which gives hope and happiness. The true solution to the ills of mankind is found in God's grace revealed in the Bible. Although the Scriptures offer no detailed blue-print of the effective program which alone can answer the problems of men, they do announce in no uncertain voice the principles which must control our thoughts and lives.

The calling of the church, therefore, is first of all to confront individuals with the gospel of God's grace in Christ. In their deliverance from the power of sin lies the sole hope for the amelioration of the social, cultural and political conditions of the present age. These redeemed individuals, embraced in the fellowship of the church by baptism and profession, constitute the new humanity. And that new humanity is the proving-ground for the effectiveness of the social program of the gospel. To them the church gives leadership for all of life.

The church therefore has much to say also on economic issues. Because she firmly believes the basic principles of Scripture, she affirms that no adequate answer to the economic ills of society can be given without a humble recognition of the sovereign Lordship of Christ and the need of His redeeming grace. Thus her members interest themselves both in developing a more realistic, effective and spiritual approach to basic economic problems, and in ameliorating the conditions of those who suffer because of the inequalities and injustices of life. Contrary to the criticism of many of her opponents, she is very much concerned with the physical life of man. Believing that God in Christ has redeemed the bodies as well as the souls of men, she stresses the need of working toward the improvement of those distressful conditions which make men suffer.

In the church which strives to do her work faithfully

and obediently, no new organization is necessary to witness to the redeeming power of the gospel for the whole life of man.

(1) The church is commissioned first of all to proclaim the glad tidings that in Christ is a full salvation for body and soul, for time and eternity. For this work she has received from her Glorified Head the apostles and *preachers to whom has been committed the ministry of reconciliation*.

(2) Furthermore, her life must be regulated in all its details according to the teachings of His Word. To assist her in this there has been instituted *the ministry of government represented by the elders* who are to be appointed in every congregation.

(3) And finally, to make more effective already in this life the law of perfect love in word and deed by ameliorating such rampant results of sin as poverty, sickness and distress, she has received *the ministry of mercy which comes to expression in the loving service of the deacons* without whose presence no congregation is completely organized according to the Scriptural pattern.

With the nature, task and effective execution of that ministry of mercy in the churches we are now to concern ourselves.

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The actuality of the subject of diaconal service in the churches in these mid-century years cannot be easily overestimated by those who are intimately acquainted with the life of Christ's church today.

Four trends which impinge on the life of the church ought to be reviewed briefly. In them the diaconates should recognize a rising challenge to their place and effectiveness in the life of the churches as "the salt of the earth and the light of the world."

(1) *One of the undeniable characteristics of the church today is her growing concern with herself.* Since the leaders of men have placed her largely on the defensive in our modern culture, she has learned the art of introspection by which she has somewhat better been able to evaluate her worth and work.

Someone has aptly remarked that "the great unsolved problem of Protestant theology is the problem of the Church."<sup>2</sup> In so far as this is true, the church can only blame herself. Too long has she either wandered

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2. Mackay: *A Preface to Christian Theology*, p. 170.

around in a confused welter of conflicting theories or else withdrawn with the weary dignity of an enfeebled grandam to the sidelines of the conflict which is raging today. We ought to be deeply grateful that out of the Oxford conference of 1937 there has come for many a new evaluation of her place and duty summed up in the statement, "Let the Church be the Church." Since that day no end of writers have tuned their instruments to this pitch. On the Continent, in Great Britain and even on this side of the sea leading theologians have tried to implement this position with a clear-cut presentation of what the church may and may not do. Quite generally they have agreed that the church has failed in her calling because she brought the word of man instead of the Word of God. By allowing herself to become the sounding-board of the latest man-made theories she has stifled the gospel of sovereign grace. Her only hope together with the last best hope of the world, so many of the outstanding leaders claim, lies in a renewed consciousness of her prophetic calling. If the church is to be truly the church, she must return to her job of preaching.

Although this emphasis on her "prophetic role" was a good corrective for the vague "social gospel" which has been in vogue for some decades, the new position on the church's calling is too limited in its scope. It is true that the church is called upon to give "birth to an adequate theology as the fruit of her insistence on a complete reorientation of the mind and will towards God." However, too great a restriction is placed on the calling of the church when it is affirmed, "But the chief concern of the Church now as ever is not to transform the conditions in which men live, for that must largely be done by secular organizations inspired by the Christian spirit, but the regeneration of men themselves."<sup>3</sup>

Much as we appreciate this return to a more clear-cut appreciation of the uniqueness of the church's contribution in our present-day cultural crisis, we maintain that much more ought to be expected of the church than preaching—foundational and fundamental as this truly is. The Holy Spirit does not "create the creators of a new civilization" in a vacuum. They are born into the family of God, the redeemed humanity that knows and loves and seeks to do the will of the Father in all things. This new humanity, which is the spiritual body of which Jesus

3. Mackay: op. cit., p. 178

Christ is Head, must be disciplined by the Word, so that not only the Christian individual but also the collective life of the Christian community reflects the will of God. And to give expression to that life of God-centered and God-glorifying service she is to be guided by the ministers of mercy, the deacons, who according to the Scripture are among her permanent officers.

Of great significance to a proper understanding of the nature and importance of the diaconates has been the study of this phase of the church's early life undertaken by many scholars during the past seventy or eighty years. The first contribution of note was Dr. Lightfoot's *Essay on the Christian Ministry*, written in 1868, which appeared in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*. His estimate of the offices in the early churches was widely accepted by competent scholars in England and Germany, until Dr. Hatch published his celebrated Bampton Lectures in 1881.<sup>4</sup> His opposition to the theories of Lightfoot and others gave rise to a very fruitful series of discussions. In England Sir. William Ramsay furnished new insights based on his archaeological discoveries in several erudite works.<sup>5</sup> Thomas M. Lindsay presented his conclusions in *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, in which the controversy about office-bearers in the primitive churches was carefully sketched and evaluated.<sup>6</sup> Since then the discussions have been carried forward with but few intermissions.

This material is particularly useful for our investigation. For surely if the diaconate is to receive a worthy place in the life of the church today, it ought to be demonstrated that this ministry is properly part of the well-organized congregation. Only when thoroughly convinced that the "priestly" function is as much a part of the church's divine calling today as the "prophetic" will we be able both to defend the legitimacy of the diaconate and to outline in a measure the spiritual contribution which it should make.

(2) *Particularly necessary does a careful study of the ministry of mercy in the churches appear, when we*

4. Edwin Hatch: *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, third edition, London 1888.

5. William Ramsay: *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170; Letters to the Seven Churches; The Cities of St. Paul; Pauline and Other Studies*; etc.

6. Thomas M. Lindsay: *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, pp. 365-377.

7. E. R. Hopper: *The Crisis of Faith*, p. 28f. For a survey of secularization in politics cf. A. Hyma: *Christianity and Politics*, p. 263f.



*take note of the appalling secularization of the present world-order.*<sup>7</sup>

For many centuries the church was the dominant institution in the Western world. During the Middle Ages this was effected largely through the closely-knit organization of the Roman Catholic Church. With the Protestant Reformation this external unity was shattered. However, the spiritual power of the gospel became markedly manifest in the lives of hundreds of thousands who because of their allegiance to the supreme Head of the church refused allegiance to the pope. Protestants of various types were more thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a God-centered and Biblically-grounded philosophy and practice of life than the Roman Catholics of the medieval period ever were. Especially was this strong in the lives of those who followed the Calvinistic pattern. The story of the Reformed people in France, the Netherlands, Hungary, Great Britain and not the least of the Puritans in America reflects a way of life which is diametrically opposed to the materialistic and earth-bound secularism which sways the world today. Therefore, those who defend the thesis that secularism is the legitimate offspring of Protestantism betray the grossest ignorance of the spiritual dynamic which inspired her people as well as her leaders.

The tap roots of this spiritually devastating movement must be sought in other soil than that in which Protestantism flourished. Already before the Reformation in those nations which were at least outwardly to remain loyal to the Roman Catholic Church the influence of the Renaissance with its glorification of classical Greek and Roman culture blinded the eyes of many to the things of the Spirit of God. As this new ferment gradually spread from one country to another, the lives of multitudes were divorced from the gospel of Christ. It both produced and was kept alive by a revolutionary spirit which completely transformed the life of Europe. It has now appeared in all lands as a “new gospel,” competently aided and abetted by such movements as the industrial revolution, “neutral” public education, and power politics on the national and international levels.

Today there is no greater foe of the Christian gospel than this materialistic secularism. It has registered its most signal triumphs in the Russian communistic order which has openly attacked the church, ridiculed the gospel of Christ and set in

opposition to it the “gospel” according to Karl Marx.

The secularization of a world largely committed in the past to the Christian pattern of thought and action required centuries to achieve its present position of prominence. But now that its gains have been consolidated, the battle-lines are being sharply drawn. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants ceaselessly warn against its all-pervading influence. Even the leaders of the non-Christian religions are aware of its threat to their positions. The life of the race today manifests a disintegrating quality which bodes ill for the future, since it cannot satisfy the heart and mind of man. “For years secular thinking around the world has not been governed by any single, luminous idea that gives meaning and purpose to life...Even before the last world war, Albert Schweitzer had become aware of the lack of an integrating conception in our culture . . . What is at stake is a clear, coherent conception of life.”<sup>8</sup> In summarizing this situation with its crucial effects for our nation the same author affirms, “I pause at this point to say that the effect of all this upon the United States and upon the American public opinion generally is devastating. This is particularly so in the world of youth. We live like people in a strange world . . . We are conscious of no all-embracing purpose. Broken-mindedness benumbs the heart; it dries the fountains of philanthropy; it makes heroic action impossible; it creates cynicism and distrust. It is a condition much harder to cure than that of the broken heart.”<sup>9</sup>

By now this secularization has fully saturated our culture. Everything is separated from God and His Word. Government, education, economics, recreation and culture have come to be regarded as ends in themselves. Such a way of life can rise no higher than its source. Thus all of its products are as earth-bound as its theories.

That this secularization has sapped the strength of philanthropy is evident on every hand. That grace had for centuries been the hall-mark of the church and believers. In distinction from those who sought only themselves, the people of God were deeply convinced of their obligation to help all who were in need. At first this was done in and through the church. Later private charities imbued with the Christian spirit developed next to the instituted church. Finally this work was

8. Mackay: *op. cit.*, p. 6.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

removed from the inspiration and leadership of the church and handed over to the state in many countries. But by making charity a function of the government we have robbed it of its spiritual rootage and character, of its intimate relation to the will of the God of the Scriptures, and of its original consideration for the dignity and welfare of man. No purely humanitarian philanthropy can ever answer to the demands of the law of love. This can be done only where that law is understood, appreciated and applied in obedience to the divine mandate. And since it is the God-given function of the ministry of mercy to demonstrate the power of this law concretely and to furnish definite guidance to all who recognize its authority, no time is more favorable for the restoration of the diaconate than this secular age which, though it knows so little of the things of the spirit, still complains of the vacuum in the lives of men which must be filled.

*(3) A third argument for considering the ministry of mercy today may be gleaned from the growing complexity of the problems which have arisen in our modern culture.*

This exceedingly complex phenomenon is quite in contrast with the simplicity of life as it was originally lived in various parts of the world. With the new means of communication and transportation our world has been shrinking. The problems of Brazil and China and Hungary, for example, are today in a very real sense the problems of the average American. Economic upheavals and wars and droughts in one part of the world directly affect the lives of people everywhere. In politics we are no longer largely limited to the local magistrates; we think in terms of world government. In industry are we no longer controlled by the employer who hired us; a thousand complications ranging all the way from United States government regulations to the price of tin in Indonesia determine how long we shall work and how much we shall be paid. When anything goes wrong, it seems to go wrong on a world-wide scale. Both the economic recession of the thirties and the international conflict of the forties have demonstrated this conclusively.

Today we find evidences of poverty on every hand caused by the rising living standards which prevail throughout the world. Whereas in times past the actual income of most people was far smaller than it is today, the hardships encountered today were largely unknown or at least unrecognized. Much difficulty is encountered

because of the complexity of world economy. Thus today there is a crying need for security, not only political but especially economic, throughout the world. We are beginning to understand the ties which bind us indissolubly to the whole race better than before. The cataclysmic wars of this century have forced on our attention the basic unity of the race also in its suffering. New fields are opened for the ministry of mercy, and in this the members of Christ's church must somehow be made to share. Also in the fulfillment of the law of love it is our duty to outgrow the former limited and provincial outlook which sees need only at the back-door and closes its eyes to the sorrows of the world community.

*(4) And finally there is no escaping the question of the place of the ministry of mercy in the churches today because of the growing preoccupation of man with his physical needs.<sup>10</sup>*

Much of this has been fostered by the spread of socialistic and communistic theories which are grounded in historical materialism and hold forth the hope of heaven on earth to the downtrodden masses. Quite naturally when such glittering promises of decent dwellings and full dinner-pails are sketched to the poverty-stricken peoples of earth, especially to those who have felt the blighting breath of secularism, it need not surprise us that multitudes eagerly swear allegiance to a new way of life. Little do they realize and less do they care that they are bartering freedom for security. In so many instances they have never known liberty. These same economic philosophies have also forced the democracies to pay more attention to cleaning up their own houses. Many types of social legislation have been passed and enforced because of the growing clamor for economic security. Man is much more conscious of his body than of his soul.

This concern has been further fostered by the tremendous advances of medical science. No longer is sickness regarded with fear as in times past. So many ailments once considered incurable can now be conquered. But here too the care of the body has been too much divorced from the care of the soul. The constitutional unity of man is attacked by a practical

10. Cf. Pitirim A. Sorokin: *The Crisis of Our Age* for an analysis of our present -day sensate culture with its degradation of values. Pp. 311-315.

11. Much has been written in recent years about the church's ministry to the sick. This, however, is customarily limited

## The Ministry of Mercy for Today

denial of the needs of the spirit.

In this field the church in times past has made tremendous contributions. And because the ministers of mercy were charged with the problems of poverty and sickness in those days it is well to ask whether also today they may have something to offer which has been too long obscured or denied.<sup>11</sup>

In consideration of the above we should gratefully take note of the plain teaching of Scripture that Christ has provided His church on earth with the necessary auxiliaries to meet the challenge of every age. As He Himself came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many, so He lays the law of sacrificial love upon the hearts of His people. They must follow in His footsteps. To make their loving service effective He has instituted the ministry of mercy.

It is one of the outstanding tragedies that the church has too long minimized and misunderstood this office. Its true significance is in almost total eclipse. And until the church in all seriousness returns to the Word, there is little hope that this eclipse will pass.

It is true that the churches still recognize deacons. There are even arch-deacons and sub-deacons. But little do these offices reflect the original institution of the Savior through His apostles. As a result the church has lamentably neglected the duties of Christian charity.

Though in many places philanthropies are flourishing, they owe much of their inspiration to the tender mercies of a few individuals and are usually regulated by some secular committee. In some places small groups of believers have constituted themselves as relief organizations. In others believers either directly or indirectly seek to influence the passing of social legislation in the hope that poverty will be curbed and large benefits extended to needy individuals and families. But all these attempts fail to show the power of the church as the great spiritual agency for mercy in a world shot through with distress and despair. The healing touch of the sympathetic Savior is seldom felt through the loving service of His disciples. We, too, are in a measure to blame for the secularization of the works of charity. In our superficial concern with

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to the spiritual comfort given by the pastor. Cf. Cabot and Dicks: *The Art of Ministering to the Sick*; also John S. Bonnell: *Pastoral Psychiatry*, esp. p. 75f.

the body we failed to realize that many who are suffering physically faint for lack of the refreshing waters of Christian love and fellowship.

In our modern world it is essential that we realize that the church of Christ has a well-defined priestly as well as prophetic function.

We may not leave it to a few individuals to discharge this function in the name of Christ. The calling comes to all who are members of His spiritual body. And to make it effective, we must use the agency which He Himself has provided in the office of the deacons.

In this way of faith and obedience the well-being of the whole church will be promoted. Only by personally participating in the works of mercy through the legitimate representatives of the Savior with unbroken regularity will we be led to a deeper appreciation of the love of God in Christ towards us. We need a renewed conviction that the gospel of grace has a message for the body as well as for the soul, for this life as well as for the life to come. The eloquent message of the hymn of a previous century demands our attention.

“Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old,  
Was strong to heal and save;  
It triumphed o’er disease and death,  
O’er darkness and the grave.  
To Thee they went the blind, the dumb,  
The palsied and the lame,  
The leper with his tainted life,  
The sick with fevered frame.

“And lo, Thy touch brought life and health,  
Gave speech and strength and sight;  
Lo, youth renewed and frenzy calmed  
Owned Thee, the Lord of Light.”

Until the church recognizes anew her calling of preaching that full, rich Savior of mankind, she is tragically remiss in her duty toward a world fallen upon evil times. In the name of that ever-living and ever-loving Redeemer she must pray and practice,

“And now, O Lord, be near to bless,  
Almighty as of yore,  
In crowded streets, by restless couch,  
As by Gennesareth’s shore.

“Be Thou our great Deliverer still  
Thou Lord of life and death;  
Restore and quicken, soothe and bless  
With Thine almighty breath.  
To hands that work and eyes that see  
Give wisdom’s heavenly lore  
That whole and sick, and weak and strong  
May praise Thee evermore.”

The church has this blessed work to do in Christ’s name until He comes. Such a deepened understanding of the priestly work of the church will be a challenging

# FAMILY MATTERS

by

Rev. Peter Stazen II

We recently received new members into our congregation. As a couple was presenting themselves before the congregation to make their public profession of faith the man remarked audibly, “It feels like we are getting married again!” I responded to them and to the congregation, “Well, you know, in many ways you are. You are taking vows. It is public: it is before God and this congregation. You are vowing or promising commitment to Jesus Christ and His church. Indeed *it is* much like a marriage.”

And yet, by and large, the church and its members do not view church membership in these terms of commitment. The question this article seeks to address is whether a church member has any obligation to keep his/her vows upon relocating their residence to another city or state due to a new job (or whatever the case may involve). With the citation of the above Scripture and the preponderance of Confessional support it would be rather audacious for one to say that they are relieved of the vows made unto Jehovah and his church. One may argue, “But, how do you expect me to keep these vows since I now live hundreds of miles from the church of which I am a member?” That is why Presbyterian polity makes provision for the transfer of church membership. We should take it seriously because our very integrity to these vows and our commitment to Christ may well be called into question if we fail to act. Once again it is a very serious matter to neglect the vows we make unto the Lord.

As a matter of fact, God has much to say on the subject of vows. “There will be silence before Thee, and praise in Zion, O God; And to Thee the

vow will be performed” (Psalm 65:1). “Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them” (Psalm 76:11). “When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow that you should vow and not pay” (Ecclesiastes 5:4,5). “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord...But let your statement be, Yes, yes’ or No, no’; and anything beyond these is of evil.” (Matthew 5:33,37).

The Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Book of Church order) directs its ordinands, parents having their children baptized, and those making a public profession of faith to give assent to vows. Again, much is said in God’s Word and our subordinate standards concerning vows.

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* devotes a whole chapter to “Lawful Oaths and Vows.” Chapter XXII, Section V states, “A vow is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness.” Section VI says, “It is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone; and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or, to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce thereunto.” Vows also involve the third and ninth commandments (cf. *The Larger Catechism* questions 111, 112, 113, 143, 144, and 145). Vows made in public worship which are subsequently broken are deemed along with some other sins as more heinous in

nature (cf. The Larger Catechism questions 150 and 151).

Presbyterian books of church order often have several chapters devoted to church members and their spiritual oversight. Though an entire chapter is often given to “jurisdiction” this notion is likely spread throughout the entire form of government and book of discipline.

Jurisdiction (jur, juris - right, law; dictio - to pronounce) is the power or authority of pronouncing the law or governing. Jurisdiction is secular or ecclesiastical.<sup>1</sup> While most people are likely to think jurisdiction concerns government within geographical boundaries it may also include government upon those outside of a geographical area. Ecclesiastically, the first three vows of communicant membership in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are personal commitments to the Lord Jesus Christ affirmed publicly before God and a congregation of His people.<sup>2</sup> The fourth vow, also a personal vow taken publicly, concerns commitment to Christ’s visible body, namely, a particular body of church government.

4. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline?

It is an assent or an agreement (covenant) to be governed by a particular church. (Note, it is not any church, but “....this church”).

Jurisdiction is interwoven throughout our *Book of Church Order*. Note the following relevant portions of our OPC Standards. First, in the Form of Government, Chapter III - The Nature and Extent of Church Power. (Emphasis mine)

1. “. . . The regular exercise of oversight in a particular congregation is discharged by

those who have been called to such work by vote of the people.”

2. “Those who join in exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction are the ministers of the Word or teaching elders, and other church governors, commonly called ruling elders. They alone must exercise this authority by delegation from Christ, since according to the New Testament these are the only permanent officers of the church with gifts for such rule.”

“Government by presbyters or elders is a New Testament ordinance; their joint exercise of jurisdiction in presbyterial assemblies is set forth in the New Testament; and the organization of subordinate and superior courts is founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, expressing the unity of the church and the derivation of ministerial authority from Christ the Head of the church..”

3. “All church power is only ministerial and declarative, for the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”
4. “All church power is wholly moral or spiritual. No church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction;”
5. “Nevertheless, church government is a valid and authentic jurisdiction to which Christians are commanded to submit themselves. Therefore the decisions of church officers when properly rendered and if in accord with the Word of God “are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his Word” (*Confession of*

*Faith, XXXI, 2).*”

Secondly, in the OPC Book of Discipline, Chapter II, Jurisdiction. B. The Session’s Jurisdiction, we read:

1. “The session of a particular church shall have jurisdiction over all those whose names are on the roll of the church.”
2. “Members shall be received . . . and removed . . . to and from the roll of the church *only* by order of the session . . .”

The chapter continues to elaborate on the various circumstances under which a person may be placed or removed from the rolls.

The point is, when one becomes a communicant member he voluntarily submits to a particular church’s government. One voluntarily places oneself under the elders of a particular church for their spiritual oversight and rule. Again, this not “just any church.” Nor is it the church “down the road.” It is certainly not the invisible church government to which one is to submit. And contrary to popular opinion it is not submission to the universal visible church.

True it is a geographical jurisdiction. But it is also a jurisdiction over a person. That is why moving one’s residence does not automatically remove ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Relocation does not automatically remove one from the roll of the church.

While most, if not all, Presbyterian and Reformed book of church orders have chapters on jurisdiction there seems to be a weakness or a laxity on the part of members to keep their “home” churches informed on their search for a new local church home. Likewise, many sessions assume that the relocated member will conscientiously pursue membership locally and keep his “home” church eldership posted on any progress. Regrettably, in a majority of instances, neither case materializes.

There is a wide range of latitude in the books of church order on this topic. The transfer of membership is implied in most of the forms of government. No doubt the authors presuppose that relocated members will

diligently pursue a new local church home and seek to transfer their membership as soon as possible. Maybe in a day and age when ecclesiology was better understood by the laity and elders there was reason for this assumption, but certainly it is not the case today especially when many feel that church membership is optional.<sup>3</sup>

One book of church order is very explicit on this matter and following are sections along with commentary.<sup>4</sup> From its Rules of Discipline, Chapter 46. Jurisdiction. (Emphasis mine).

46-1. When a church member shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the congregation of which he is a member, so that he can no longer regularly attend its services, it shall be *his duty to transfer* his membership

**“...it is the primary obligation of the members of our churches to see to it that, upon a distant relocation of residence, they actively seek out the local Orthodox Presbyterian Church or another branch of the true church. It is the secondary obligation for the elders of the ‘home’ church to encourage the relocated members to do so.”**

by presenting a certificate of dismissal from the Session of the church of which he is a member to the church with which he wishes to unite.

Commentator, Dr. Morton Smith says, “This paragraph provides for the orderly transfer of members from the jurisdiction of one congregation to another. *The responsibility rests upon the member himself.*”

46-2. When a church member shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the congregation of which he is a member into the bounds of another, it shall be the duty of the Teaching and Ruling Elders of the church of which he is a member, as far as possible, to continue pastoral oversight of him and to inform him that according to the teaching of our Book of Church Order it is his duty to transfer his membership as soon as practicable to the church in whose bounds he is living.

Dr. Smith states, “In addition to the responsibility of the individual member to move his membership, the Session is also to continue its pastoral care over him, and to inform him of his responsibility.”

It shall also be the duty of the church from whose bounds the member moved to notify the Teaching and Ruling Elders of a church into whose bounds he has moved and request them to take pastoral oversight of the member, with a view of having him transfer his membership,...

Again, Dr. Smith notes, “A further duty of the Session is to inform the Session of the Church into whose bounds their member has moved, so that they too will seek to have the member transfer.”

46-3. Members of one church dismissed to join another shall be held to be under the jurisdiction of the Session dismissing them until they form a regular connection with that to which they have been dismissed.

46-7. No certificate of dismissal from either a Session or a Presbytery shall be valid testimony of good standing for a period longer than one year, unless its earlier presentation be hindered by some providential cause; and such certificates given to persons who have left the bounds of the Session or Presbytery granting them shall certify the standing of such persons only to the time of their leaving those bounds.

On the above two sections Smith cites Ramsey<sup>5</sup> who says,

“The point is, that a person cannot be presumed to be in good standing if he has let a whole year pass since leaving the bounds of a court, or obtaining a letter of dismissal from it without presenting his certificate of dismissal to the court to which he comes.

“The principle underlying these provisions may be stated thus:

1. One is a member of or officer of the Church which exercises its jurisdiction over him through the appropriate court; and while the Church does not fix his residence, the Church does, with only limited choice over the individual, fix the court through which it exercises the court to whose jurisdiction they will be subject.

2. Being subject to the jurisdiction of the Church, they cannot cast off that jurisdiction at will without sinning against the Church. And she may surrender her jurisdiction only in the way of censure by excommunication or deposition, or in the way of correcting a mistake made by both her and the person, as in demission, or in the way of fraternal recognition of some other Church by dismissal thereto. But no one may quit this Church without thereby violating his covenant with it, except with her consent; nor is she permitted to give her consent, except when transferring to some other Church of Christ that can, all things considered, do as well for the member.’’

Thus, it is the primary obligation of the members of our churches to see to it that, upon a distant relocation of residence, they actively seek out the local Orthodox Presbyterian Church or another branch of the true church. It is the secondary obligation for the elders of the “home” church to encourage the relocated members to do so. Regrettably, it often comes to the exercising of some sort of discipline of relocated members to get them to fulfill their vows. One of the problems is that the sessions of our churches are lax in their approach to membership in Christ’s church. The church at large suffers from a weakness in ecclesiology. The church has failed to exhort its members of the seriousness of vowing unto the Lord.

Putting this into practice the elders at our church strive to effect a transfer of membership as soon as it can after the session learns of a member’s plans to relocate his residence. The session makes a visit in order to share with our members the addresses of local reformed churches in their new area of residence, an exhortation to find a new church home as soon as possible, and alert them

that shepherding letters will soon be following them to encourage them in their search. Sent on a quarterly basis to our relocated members, our “Shepherding Letter” is a survey inquiring into the spiritual and church activities of the members. Along with the survey is a cover letter explaining the importance of church membership and our endeavor as a session to prompt the member to find that local church and transfer their membership. We also include various tracts which touch on the subject matter at hand.

As we look ahead to improving this among our own congregation our elders plan to emphasize it in membership classes, include it in our annual reports and an occasional statement in our bulletin and/or monthly newsletter, preach it from our pulpit, and even develop a leaflet that would assist our members in their search for a new church home.

Certainly in a day and age when promises are made with “fingers crossed” and so readily broken, we, the body of Christ must pay our vows unto Jehovah because the family does matter.

<sup>1</sup> Noah Webster’s First American Dictionary of the English Language 1828, Foundation for American Christian Education, San Francisco, CA, copyright 1967.

<sup>2</sup> The Directory of Worship, The Standards of Government Discipline and Worship of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Norcross, GA, Great Commission Publications, 1990, p. 237.

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
2. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
3. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?



# THE PASTORAL WISDOM OF JOHN CALVIN

**“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honor widows who are really widows.”**

**1 Timothy 5:1-3**

We know there are very few that can abide to be rebuked, though they have done amiss, and feel themselves faulty. For first of all we are proud, and that hinders the most part of us from submitting ourselves to correction: and then, we have a foolish kind of shamefacedness, so that we had rather abide still in our sins than to be told of them, to the end we might beware of them.

For this cause it is requisite, for him that must reprove sinners, to have some moderation and modesty in him, that he may somewhat sweeten his reproving and rebuking of them, which otherwise might seem sharp and bitter. As we see Physicians used to do, when they will give a sick man some drink, they will sweeten it, because the medicine of itself is unpleasant, and therefore they mix some sugar or syrup with it. So is it profitable, by reason of that resistance which I spoke of—if we will do good in warning them that have done amiss—to use some gentle and meek kind of dealing. And this is especially requisite toward old men who are more forward and hard to rule. For they think they have lived long enough in the world to know what is good, and would exempt themselves from all rebuke, under a pretense or color of their age, although they have more need than others, inasmuch as when an old man gives himself to do evil, it is less to be suffered a good deal, then in a young man. But yet old folks are not very patient to be corrected. And therefore we must go wisely to work with them, to the end that they may take our correction well in worth, and we must

sweeten it, so that they may abide it, and profit by it. And therefore Saint Paul says to Timothy in this place, that he must not deal roughly with old folks, but exhort them as fathers and mothers. For we have seen indeed that Timothy was a young man, therefore they that should be rebuked of him might perhaps reply and say, that he was yet too uppish to handle them so rudely.

Therefore Saint Paul uses such means as he knows to be fitting. And so we see by this, that he that has the charge to preach the Word of God, must not only expound the holy Scripture generally, and reprove vices, and rebuke those who have done amiss, but also deal wisely and discretely with every one: yea, so wisely that the doctrine which he preaches may be well received of them, or if not that at the least, it would not be not through his fault. For it may fall out very well, that when a man has done what he can, he shall find notwithstanding that some will be strong and stubborn against such warnings as he gives them, though they are sweet and gracious. But this is not of his fault. Yet notwithstanding (as I said before), we that have charge to teach the people must not only see what is profitable for all in general, but we must also have this regard, to deal with every one according to his age.

But we must emphasize here with the rest, that it is not enough for a man who is a shepherd in the Church of God to preach, and cast abroad the word into the air. We must have private admonitions also. This is a point wherein many deceive themselves. For they think that the

order of the Church was made for no other end and purpose but that they should come to Church one hour in the week, or certain days, and there hear a man speak, and that when he is come out of the pulpit, he should hold his peace. They that think in this way clearly show that they never knew either what Christianity is, or what God's order meant.

For as we see in this place, and it has been shown to us already before, when he that preached the word has taught the people, he must have an eye to them that have need to be warned of their faults 'a parte': as we see also, that in Ezekiel it is not only said that God has set the Shepherd to lead his flock out to feeding, but his office is to help the weak, and to heal the sick, and to remedy all infirmities that are among them. And therefore if we will do our duty toward God, and to them that are committed to our charge, it is not enough for us to offer the doctrine generally, but when we see any of them go astray, we must labor to bring him to the right way, when we see another in grief and sorrow, we must go about to comfort him, [and] when we see any that is dull of the spur, we must prick him and spur him, as his nature will bear. This is what we have to note in this place.

But yet we must consider also, that St. Paul will not have us bear with old folks so far as to nourish them in their sins: for if they have need to be told of their faults we must do it. True it is, that they would gladly be spared, and be touched in no way. But we see what order God takes by St. Paul's mouth, namely, that we must always reprove faults both in young and old, and not foster them by flattery, that men may not be privileged [or held to be immune] from correction, and discipline. Whatsoever they can say for themselves, we must beware of this only, that they become not too fat. And especially when we see an old man, we must yet honor age, and use as much sweetness and gentleness as we can. Of course this truth is to be understood of them that are not utterly past correction. For if an old man is hardened in evil, and will play the rebel too bad against God, then must we deal vehemently and sharply with him: but yet before we have tried him, we must use this modesty that St. Paul sets down here, that is, we must exhort them as fathers, although they have done amiss. And it is certain that when he that must tell an old man of

his fault, which he has committed, if he [will] set the person of a father before his eyes, he will use reverence and modesty in reprovng him. And therefore St. Paul says in express terms that God presented the Elders to us, as our Fathers, and will have us to have that regard to them. And this is the first point we have to note.

As for them that are equal in years to us, St. Paul will have us take them as Brothers and Sisters. And this all serves to cause us to use gentleness, that we be not too rigorous against them: as also brothers and sisters must be gracious one towards the other, for so nature itself has appointed. For this cause therefore, when the age is equal St. Paul will have—as it were—a brotherliness used, and therefore that we use gentle admonitions that none may be offended, unless he will be stubbornly obstinate and fall into rage, as we showed already before, that there are a number that do so, however we conduct ourselves in reprovng them so that we can never win them. For they harden themselves against God, and will not abide to be found fault with. Such men, therefore, will never profit, though we are ever so gentle and loving in dealing [with them]. And why so? The Devil possesses them. They become fat in all bitterness. They have the sharpness of spirit that the scripture speaks of, to poison themselves against God, and to refute all good warnings. We see a number whom the Devil has so marred that there is no means nor way to bring them to good. But if a man be not yet wholly hardened in his sins, and someone bring him a well seasoned medicine, it is certain it will make him bow and soften his courage.

And thus we see in few words what St. Paul's meaning is in this place. For though we speak to them who have the charge of teaching, showing them what their office is toward their people, yet notwithstanding, this admonition belongs to all. For if we are gently dealt with when we have done amiss—and feel that we are brotherly handled, and that they seek our salvation—if we should play the rebels we would not show that unkindness to a mortal man, but to God who we despise, and grieve his Holy Spirit as much as lies in us. And why so? Because we see that God has appointed this means, to the end that we should profit in his doctrine and not be hardened in our sins. He will not have our sins covered, and lie hidden so

that they may not be known, nor found fault with. Therefore God will not have men use such flattering—for that engenders rottenness that can never be healed—but will have sins reprov'd. He will have us beat down: yea, though sins be lovingly, and leniently reprov'd, yet if we cannot abide such loving admonitions when they are made us, this is not to despise men, but to make war against God. It is this that we must bear away. And if this were well marked we should see another obedience than we do. For no man can now abide to have his fault told him, but as soon as a man opens his mouth to reprove some one, then begins an open war! Then shall we have deadly hatred! And why is it so? Because we consider not, that to refuse the admonitions that are given us in God's name, and by his commandment, is to refuse God. And therefore we must mark this place so much the more, where we are told, that God will not have sins nourished by dissembling as though we see them not, but that we must be corrected gently and modestly.

And we have yet another point to gather out of this place, namely, that as we are all commanded to reprove and rebuke our neighbors, so we follow the rule which is contained here, that because all correction is sharp and loathsome, we moderate it and sweeten it the best we can, that it may be the better received, and profit more. When St. Paul willed Timothy to do this, with all pureness as touching the young women, he does not mean that Timothy should abstain from all dissolute manners (for he was a man of great holiness). Instead, his meaning was to prevent such suspicions as might arise because the world is wicked. As soon as one sees a man speak with a young woman—although it be for her salvation—right away men talk of it, and murmur. And therefore St. Paul seeing that Timothy might be subject to false reports, warns him to be wise and circumspect in this matter, and if he must needs have conference with young women to warn them of their duty, that he do it with such fear and reverence that the mouths of the wicked may be stopped, that the weak be not offended, and that they may conceive no evil opinion to trouble them. And this is a place well worth noticing. For we know that the Devil seeks nothing, but to bring the word of God into hatred, and uses such craft especially to hinder us, that we may not do our

duties which God has committed to us. If it lay in him, we should never have sermon nor doctrine: and seeing he cannot bring that to pass, he would gladly [have it] that when we go up into the Pulpit our sermons should be as the playing upon organs, that we should preach such doctrine that no man might be touched, but go home as he came. As we see these scoffers and profane vagabonds they would that all were brought to confusion. What preaching is it, I beseech you, that they would have? That the doctrine might hang in suspense, and be like a flint, as Ezekiel makes the comparison, that we might hear no others words but these, 'Oh, he preached very well, Oh, that was a good sermon.' And how? Without any profit, or edifying the hearers. And yet this is it that a great number seek nowadays. And this proverb, 'To preach according to the text,' imports nothing else but this, that the word of God must have no use nor virtue among us, but as it were in closets, and not be enlightened of God. But it is said, on the contrary side, that the word of God must be a two-edged sword, [and that] there be neither marrow nor bone, nor thoughts, nor affections, but all must be sought and fetched to the bottom. God must make a trial, and as it were a cutting up of all the parts of our souls: and moreover, as it is said in another text, that the office of the word of God is to search us even to the bottom, and to bring to light the things that we would have hid: as also it is said, that as it is God that sounds out the heart, and that the matter belongs to him, so will he also that the virtue be in his word. So then seeing it is the craft of Satan to prevent and hinder us from preaching the word of God freely, when he can do no worse he finds out these false reports. Yes, and how so? Under color of admonishing and reprov'ing a preacher has liberty to say this and that: moreover a preacher has liberty to go into houses. And so other things which a man might allege. Therefore St. Paul wants us to be wise and to prevent these murmurings, and all other things that might bring the doctrine into hatred which we preach. And therefore, let them that would profit the Church, take good heed to give no occasion either to the weak or to the malicious to be offended, or to speak evil and blame them when they do their duty.

And therefore St. Paul gives order to Timo-

thy when he speaks to young women. He uses such gravity with himself, that no man may conceive any evil suspicion, but be bridled, and that the word of God be not subject to mockery by that means. Now if Timothy had need of such an admonition, what shall we say of ourselves who have come to nothing near to being such good scholars as he was, especially in such an exercise? And therefore, let us learn to take heed ourselves, and to abstain from all talk, and all countenances: and whatever things might engender any murmuring so that they that who would speak evil of us might be ashamed, and when the matter and truth shall be examined, it may be found that they are impudent and past shame in inventing and forging such slanderous reports.

This is what we have to mark. But still every one of us must apply this admonition to himself: for St. Paul shows us how we must behave ourselves among men, that is to say, in such a way that neither our words, nor our countenances, may breed any evil suspicion. If this were well marked we should not see such liberty as there is, and so consequently, there would not be so many stumbling blocks among us as there are. But there are very few that think upon this that is said in this text. That every one must edify his neighbor in that which is good. For St. Paul shows us there, that we must not be given to ourselves, none of us ought to please himself in contenting his own person, but seeing God has made us bound one to another that we see that we do our duty to our neighbors. In what manner? To edify them in that which is good, says St. Paul. But there are very few that practice this lesson, nay rather every man gives himself the bridle. If we see a man offended by us, we shall hear right away. 'Well, it is all one to me, I did it not for any evil, let them be offended if they will.' Yes, but we should abstain from all appearance of evil. For it is not enough for us that our conscience be pure before God, unless we take away all evil occasion before men, as we are debtors to them. So then let us walk in such an honest way that no man may suspect any evil of us. And though St. Paul direct his talk to Timothy, we know that it belongs to all the faithful, and that every one of us ought to make his profit of it, according to the place and charge wherein God has set him.

Moreover, after St. Paul has shown how Timothy ought to govern himself, warning them that have done amiss, he adds another lesson touching widows, saying: *Honor those that are widows indeed*. Now this word 'Honor,' has a significant import, namely, that he should have care to take them into his charge and—as it were—his protection. And this is said expressly, because the widows which were now old (as we shall see presently) were received—as it were—into a hospital, and found there. Truth it is that they worked notwithstanding, but if they wanted anything, they had it supplied by alms, and they also served to see to the sick; to be brief, they that were widows gave themselves wholly to serve the Church, and were as public persons, and had also a name that they were called deacons. For as men served to distribute the alms, and to gather them, the widows were to help the sick and to play the housewives amongst the poor, which were also kept up by alms. And because the widows that were thus received were in some honor (for they were consecrated to God), St. Paul says precisely to Timothy that he should honor them that are widows indeed! By this word 'indeed' he means that he must not receive all widows, as it shall be shown hereafter, as the text indicates. If a widow, says he, has children, let her keep her house, and let the children learn with the widows to do their duty, and to do the like for them that have begotten them: for this is good and acceptable before God. And after St. Paul shows more clearly, what widows must be received to this place, to wit, they that are comfortless, and have no help on their side, they must be received and nourished. But yet they also must employ themselves to serve the poor: and yet beside all this, though there be a widow that is comfortless, St. Paul will have her to wait upon God and trust in him: for this is to keep the widows under, when they are received into the church, that if they put their trust in God in this way, they shall not be carried away with the world. And, again, he will have them continue in prayer both day and night. This is, in few words, St. Paul's meaning in this place. For—though we must speak more at large of these things hereafter (I mean, of the order of widows and of the policy that was in the old church)—yet, notwithstanding we have to note presently that there was in those days what we

do not now have. Truth it is that there are some hospitals among the Christians, but it is so slender a thing, that it is pitiful to behold. And yet, if we should compare our time with that which St. Paul speaks of, have we not better occasion, I ask you, to maintain this order which he appoints and sets down here than they had in those days? For the poor Christians were persecuted—they had the knife always upon their throat—they were always set out to the spoil—they were poor vagabonds, as it were, having nothing certain. Therefore if we compare the charity that was then, with the charity of these days, we may be greatly ashamed. And yet there are a number that would have the hospitals to be made poorer. They are at not a penny of cost: yet, notwithstanding, they would that it were clean down, it troubles them so much that they think men pluck out their guts out of their bellies when anything is given to nourish the poor! Alas, this is far from offering every day some thing to the poor, as they did in those days. They had neither rents nor possessions—there were no foundations—but they were gladly willing to gather day by day alms to nourish their sick, and poor and widows. Yet God wrought among them and the faithful had such compassion in them that there was sufficient to help the necessity of them that wanted sustenance. But now, when there are revenues from ancient times, and foundations erected (as they term them), we see nothing but to cut them off, and to take away all from the poor, and snatch the bread as it were out of their mouths, and profane that which was dedicated to God, and which should be held as a holy thing. And they turn it to a use—I will not say other than God had appointed, but—completely contrary to such things. Therefore, as often as we hear speaking of the old order (as St. Paul touches here) they are so many condemnations and processes against us, to make us inexcusable. For when the word of God had its strength, what was the result? There was sufficient to nourish men that were in necessity. There was some policy. There were men that would employ themselves to serve the poor. Others spared not their own property and yet they had not one penny rent. There was not a house to be had upon hire. Thus does God set a looking glass before us, where by we ought to confirm and frame ourselves. But if we look upon ourselves,

we shall find the exact opposite: for it seems that we have conspired to do quite otherwise than was then observed in the ancient church.

Is it not as much then, as if God made our process to shame and confound us? There are very few that are touched with it, yet we shall pay well for it, seeing this order is showed to us and we make no account of it; and seeing we are so blockish nowadays, God will awaken us. Yes and we see (and that not far off) that the poor blind wretches, and the enemies of the truth, condemn us, and God does us this shame, to make *them* our judges. When the papists have no fault to find with us for our doctrine, what will they say, but that we have taken the gospel to devour the goods of the Church withal, and to spend all, and to bring all to naught? Why so? Because we are not worthy to be reprov'd by God's mouth, for we will not hear that which is contained in holy writ. Where we are shown our office that we should fulfill we stop our ears, and play deaf men. And therefore God sends us to the unbelievers, to the end that we should be condemned to our greater shame. It is this in few words that we have to mark in this text: and not only to tarry as we are, but to sigh and lament, that these faults may be remedied, that are not to be borne with. But we must mark, touching these widows that they were partly taken to be nourished—if they had nothing—and partly to employ themselves to the service of the poor. And because in applying themselves to this, they were common servants of the Church, this state was holy and honorable. And therefore we must mark this first of all, that we may understand what St. Paul says, and also that we may make our profit of it. And surely it is very requisite that we should be put in mind of these things, because Satan (as he is an ape that always counterfeits God's works) has made a new fashion, and this by disguising that which God appointed. But he took his cloak from this that St. Paul says in this place, although there be as great difference between them as is between the day and the night. For the Nuns of hospitals came from this that is said here. But St. Paul takes order in plain terms that no widows be received before the age of three score years, and has been once married, as we shall see. And seeing it is so, that St. Paul had this regard, it is clearly against what the ignorant and unskillful appointed, and is at

this day observed among the Papists. And therefore I said that it was requisite for us to be armed, seeing that we know St. Paul's meaning, to apply this which is here spoken of to our instruction and learning.

Now let us come to that lesson which he gives Timothy. "*Honor*" he says, "*the widows that are widows indeed.*" We see what his meaning is here: that we examine and try a man well when we mind and purpose to put him in an office; and it is a point well worth the marking for states and offices all be it that they conceive the policy of men, yet ought they be dedicated to God. Why? Because he is the chief master and therefore ought all to be referred to him. When a prince will set his house in order he has a master to appoint the officers. But God, because he will hearten us the better to serve him, does not only appoint a great master here beneath, but has a care himself of all the offices that are in his Church. And therefore let us mark that when we have to employ any man in any office, and choose him to it, we must examine him, else we profane the place we set him in. And this injury is not done to creatures, it is done to God himself. And what does St. Paul speak of here? Even of the provision of widows, which (as we said before) must serve to see to the sick and therefore were supported by alms. Now if Timothy was warned that he should not take all widows that might be presented—yea and such as were not worthy to be received to this office—if we look upon this calling according to the outward appearance the matter is not great: what shall we think then of offices that are far more excellent? When the case stands so that there is a minister to be chosen to preach the word of God what care and what wisdom I pray you is to be used, that the place of truth be not profaned? For (as we saw before) the rule and government of God's house is committed to us, and therein we bear the message of salvation to men, the treasure of this great mystery is given us to keep, namely, that God is manifested among men. Therefore when the question is one of choosing pastors, must we not, I pray you, use far greater wisdom than is here required touching widows? And therefore let us take good heed in this case. For if any of us would have a servant, he will seek a fit one as near as he can, and such a one as is meet for him, and if there be any great evil fault in him,

all the world shall not persuade him to take him. Is he a drunkard? I will never trouble myself with him! Is he thought to be a thief? Is he a loiterer? Is he a telltale? We are wise enough to beware of those faults which may hurt or damage us by any means! We are discerning enough to our own profit and therefore we would never take a worthless servant into our house. In like sort, if a man would have a herd of beasts he would gladly have a diligent fellow, and honest too. But if a man should choose a schoolmaster for his children, it fares so oftentimes that he would be less careful in that case, than in choosing a herder to see to his beasts! And what is the cause of it? A beastly blindness that men are possessed with.

But let us go further yet. If there be any question of choosing men that must rule in the execution of justice, and govern in God's name, not only little children, but the elder and greater sort, what order is taken therein? We think not much upon it, as we daily see before our eyes, and the case is to be lamented. It is evident that God is dishonored by profaning that which he had sanctified for our salvation. For now-a-days it is made a jest and matter of sport, to put men in an office. There is nothing regarded but the ceremony only and the outward show, as though they should play a play. And not this only, but it seems that men seek occasion to provoke God's anger and vengeance by putting men in place that are chosen for the veriest villains and scoundrels they are. And thus the matter goes in our elections! To be short, there is no question now-a-days to have offices honored and revered, there is nothing but heaving and shoving for them. And what manner of men? Such as are utterly worthless, and have not so much as a show of honesty. For the best and readiest way to promotion and to be preferred, is to be an open enemy and at defiance with God, to be given to all kind of wickedness, to show themselves bolsterers and maintainers of all perverse quarrels, to seek nothing but to bring all to naught. These are the men that shall—and do—come to credit and authority. And therefore it behooves us to note this place so much the more: yea, and we have need of this admonition this day, for the election of them draws nigh, that must be established in the government of this commonwealth!

But, I pray you, how do you proceed in this election (for I must not wait till next Sunday to

tell you a thing that is very well known)? When there is question of electing the magistrates you should be here to call upon God, that he would be president in your counsel, and give you the spirit of wisdom and uprightness. But for all that where are you? You are either at the tavern, or at play, and they that have voices to choose come less to sermons than all others. True it is that you shall see them come more upon other days than upon this, and yet they will be first at the general council, and their voices shall be loudest of all, although they never showed any token of Christianity in all their lives. And yet will they then show the greatest disorder, and behave themselves worst. For upon such a day a man shall see them come with most bold and impudent faces, and will flock together in companies, as if they would make their masters! Instead of being there to call upon God's name, and to look into themselves, they come from a tippling house. They should think thus with themselves: 'We have this day to choose men to govern us in God's name, and we may not choose them after our own fantasy, because they must sit as rulers here in the authority of God. Let us take heed that we set none to govern in such sort, that God may be served and have always his sovereign honor and empire, and that both small and great may do him homage.' Again, every man for his part ought to think thus: 'Well, I must choose a man that shall have power over my life, he must execute justice and if all things be well ordered, every man shall have his own—especially if it please God to keep us under his protection and shadow of justice—and suffer us not to be as wild and savage beasts.' Thus, I say, men ought to think. But do they? No, No! And therefore they shall be recompensed accordingly.

To be short, although the matter deserves to be handled more at large, let us remember this, and bear it away, that when there are any to be placed in office that God has appointed in the Church for the profit of the whole, we must exam-

ine them: and if we do not do so, but profane the things that are holy, and despise God, we know that this confusion shall come upon the heads of those that have by favor and bribery, or any other regard, put up such as they thought good and as their fantasy led them. And therefore, when there is any question of setting order in God's house, let us learn to behave ourselves in such sort that no office be dishonored by base and wicked men, or such as are unworthy of the honor that is sought by them. For if this is to be observed in the least offices (as St. Paul shows us in this text) we must have greater care and wariness when we come to the greater. And if we do so it is certain that God will bless us, and show that he rules among us and gives his Holy Spirit to them that are put in office, to lead them to do their duty. And so we shall feel his virtue to be such in us that every one of us shall have occasion to rejoice on his own behalf, and all in general to give thanks to this good God for providing so well for us. But if we will go on to do as we have begun, namely, to strive to set confusion in the church of God, he will show us that he can easily depart from us, as it pleased him for a season to sit and rule among us. For if his glory departed from the temple of Jerusalem—as the prophet Ezekiel shows us—and the temple which he called his house and his everlasting rest became void of his grace and so was made profane place, let us mark that if in this day we cannot abide to have God rule among us, and give us men to rule in his fear, but will have disordered persons that care not much either for God or our salvation, he can give us our desires. But it shall be to show us that we are not worthy to be governed by him. And when he has so forsaken us what shall become of us?

Therefore let us take good heed to ourselves, and pray to God, that it would please him to raise us up men that have his Holy Spirit given them, and with wisdom have love and affection to govern us in such a manner that all be referred to him, and cause especially that he may be served and honored among us.

**Prayer:** Now let us fall down before the face of our God, confessing our faults and beseeching him that it would please him to forgive us these faults, and to put out the remembrance of them, and henceforth reform us in such sort that we desire nothing but to frame ourselves wholly to his holy commandments. And thus let us say: "Our Father...etc."

## A COMPARISON OF SOME HISTORIC REFORMED LITURGIES

Martin Bucer, Strassburg, German, 1537	John Calvin, Strassburg, French, 1540	John Knox, Scotland, 1564	Westminster Directory 1644
Confession of sins	Scripture sentence: Ps. 124:8	Confession of sins	Call to Worship
Scriptural words of pardon; Absolution	Confession of Sins	Prayer for pardon	Prayer of Approach: adoration; requests for God's holy presence, acceptance of the worshippers, and blessing on the readings of the Word
Singing of a psalm, hymn, or Kyrie eleison (Greek for Lord, have mercy) and Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Latin for Glory to God in the highest)	Scriptural words of pardon; Absolution	Singing of a metrical psalm	Singing of a metrical psalm or psalms (before, between, and/or after Scripture readings)
Prayer for Illumination	Singing of metrical Ten Commandments with Kyrie eleison (Greek for Lord, have mercy) after each law	Prayer for Illumination	Old Testament reading
Singing of a metrical psalm	Prayer for Illumination	Scripture reading	New Testament reading
Scripture reading	Scripture reading	Sermon	Prayer: confession of sins, intercession, and for illumination
Sermon	Sermon	Collection of alms	Sermon
Collection of alms	Collection of alms	Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession, the Lord's Prayer	General Prayer: thanksgiving & intercessions; the Lord's Prayer
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Singing of the Apostles' Creed	Prayer of Intercession, concluded by a long paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer	The Apostles' Creed	Exhortation and invitation; fencing of the Table
Prayer of intercession, consecration; the Lord's Prayer	Singing of the Apostles' Creed	Words of Institution	Consecration of the elements (by the Word and prayer): Words of Institution Prayer of consecration
Exhortation	Prayer of consecration; the Lord's Prayer	Exhortation	Fraction (breaking the bread)
Words of Institution	Words of Institution	Prayer of consecration	Distribution
Fraction (breaking the bread)	Exhortation	Fraction (breaking the bread)	Communion
Distribution	Fraction (breaking the bread)	Ministers' communion	Exhortation to live worthy lives
Communion (during which psalms or hymns were sung)	Distribution	Distribution Peoples' communion (during which "the whole historie of the Passion" was read)	Prayer of thanksgiving; and for a worthy life
Prayer of thanksgiving	Communion (during which psalms were sung)	Prayer of thanksgiving	* * * *
* * * *	Prayer of thanksgiving	Singing of Psalm 103	Collection of alms‡ Singing of a metrical psalm Benediction
Benediction	* * * *	* * * *	
Dismissal	Singing of metrical Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-32) Benediction	Benediction	

+ Elements between the asterisks were included when the Lord's supper was celebrated.

‡ The Westminster Directory states: "The collection for the poor is so to be ordered, that no part of the publick worship be thereby hindered." Although it is found in the section on the celebration of the Lord's Supper, this statement seems to imply that the Divines saw the collection as a regular part of public worship.

Sources: James A. De Jong, *Into His Presence* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church, 1985)  
 William D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936)  
 Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Cleveland/New York: World Publishing Company, 1962)  
 The Westminster Assembly, *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*.



## BOOK REVIEW

AN EARNEST MINISTRY, THE WANT OF THE TIMES. John Angell James (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993). Reviewed by the Rev. William Shishko, pastor of the Franklin Square, N.Y. Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Church officers especially should remind themselves regularly that there may be an orthodoxy of doctrine but a heterodoxy of emotion. Jesus was Himself the embodiment of Truth (Jn. 14:6), but it is no less true that Jesus was consumed with a zeal for that Truth as God's means of building His Church (Jn. 2:17).

The Christian Church has been blessed with many volumes which have sought to impress Christians in general and church officers in particular with the need of earnestness in the service of Christ. Within the Reformed tradition, Richard Baxter's *THE REFORMED PASTOR* (currently reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust) and Horatius Bonar's *WORDS TO WINNERS OF SOULS* (currently reprinted by the American Tract Society) stand out as model appeals. They should be staples in the literary diet of those who are set apart for Christian ministry.

Also in this category is the volume by John Angell James entitled *AN EARNEST MINISTRY, THE WANT OF THE TIMES*. The Banner of Truth Trust, a special friend for all lovers of the Reformed faith, has again done the Church a great service by reprinting this classic title. The fact that four editions of this work were published within a year of its publication in 1847 indicates both its demand and worth as a wake-up call in a day of ministerial lethargy. Its reprint and renewed availability in our day is most timely.

James, born in 1785, served as pastor of a Congregational Church in England for fifty-five years. He lived to witness the decline in effectiveness of pulpit ministry during the first half of England's 18th century. Preaching had become powerless; ministers commanded little respect because of their mediocre and not infrequently dissolute lives. Cold rationalism was replacing fervent religion, beginning with Ministers themselves. In short, James lived in a day just like our own. *AN EARNEST MINISTRY* was James' seasoned call for Ministers to be revived in their lives and service for the glory of Christ and the good of souls.

The reader of this volume will be challenged afresh with the very nature of Christian ministry, and the tried and proven means by which that ministry is to be carried out. Were such earnestness about even the component elements of ministry, i.e. prayer, preaching, and pastoral work, present among us, what revival it would bring in the impact of our ministries. "If the honour of an ambassador be in proportion to the power and glory of the sovereign who employs him, what is the dignity of him who is the ambassador of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and at the same time, what ought

to be the sanctity of his conduct, and the elevation of his character?" (p. 24).

James rightly exalts the place of preaching, filling the first half of his book with biblical and historical insights into the nature of earnestness in preaching. Ministers need to take particular stock of James' material on "Earnestness of Manner in Delivery of Sermons" (Chapter VI). Without canonizing a particular (and sometimes artificial) "style" of earnestness, the author gives a wealth of thoughtful observations and sage advice that will help all Ministers speak with "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

The last half of the book, like Baxter's *THE REFORMED PASTOR*, treats the matter of earnestness in pastoral work. Like Baxter, James lacks an appreciation for the fact that all elders (not just "The Minister") are to be involved in pastoral shepherding of the flock, cf. Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:2. Nevertheless, James' exhortations are applicable to all elders who labor in their local congregations with a biblically formed sense of their duties. Though their secular callings will not allow them the time for devotion to ministerial work which is developed in these pages (sometimes with crushing effect), the motives and means to such earnestness, especially the necessity of divine influence, will stir all church officers to seek to attain the maximum earnestness in their individual service, and in their corporate testimony as a church.

This book is not a manual of church government, and should not be read as such. It is important to remember that zeal and earnestness always should run in the channels of good church order and submission to one's brethren. Likewise, the modern Minister (who apparently is possessed of a lesser reserve of strength and time than Ministers of James' day!) must assess realistically how he can be involved earnestly in all of the spheres of labor to which James calls him. I, for one, would wonder how I could do all of these things and still be one who 'manages his own household well' [cf. I Tim. 3:5]. Nevertheless, his appeal to s-t-r-e-t-c-h oneself in the service of the One Who gave Himself even unto death for the salvation of His elect was a challenge I very much needed. I suspect that I am not alone.

I have never been able to understand why those who possess the truth (and the Reformed faith is the finest expression of the system of truth known as Christianity) could be so nonchalant about it. Our manner of treating issues of life and death will inevitably communicate more than the matter of our sermons. Is it any wonder that people will flock to hear the Arminian and the Charismatic who, at least, is earnest about what he (or she!) is saying? May God use John Angell James' wake-up call to arouse us from our ministerial slumber, and make us arise to more earnest, hearty, and energetic service of the Lord of sovereign grace.