

ORDAINED SERVANT



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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 NOTES

There are some things that we can only learn—as the saying goes—“in the school of experience.” I found this to be true in my own ministry when it came to pastoring the dying and the mourning. Yet it does seem to me that more could—and should—be done to help men prepare for this awesome pastoral responsibility. It is for this reason that I am most grateful to Pastor Joel Beeke for what he has written on this subject, and for his permission to publish it for the first time in *Ordained Servant*. As I’ve read through this fine essay I’ve found many echoes of lessons that I had to learn the hard way, in his wise counsel. We have previously cut material like this into short sections in *Ordained Servant*, but as I read through this material I became convinced that it would be most valuable if it is kept in one article for convenient reference. It is my hope that many pastors—especially those who are just beginning their ministerial labors—will read, and reread, this fine essay, and that it will prove a helpful resource when they are called on to minister to the dying and mourning. (Readers will also note that I have reviewed a new book by Dr. Beeke in the Book Review section).

It is my hope that the article by Stewart E. Lauer will generate discussion and further input. Another article on the subject taking a somewhat different view, has already been submitted and I hope to put it in a forthcoming issue.

When I was a young pastor I first discovered the work of W.G.T. Shedd in a secondhand book store, and in doing so became firmly convinced that his view of the nature and propagation of the human species was far more convincing than that of Charles Hodge. It is therefore a pleasure to see his work republished by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, and in an edition that provides far more information than anything previously available. My thanks to Pastor Mark Herzer for his review of this important new edition.

I again remind readers of *Ordained Servant* that a CD containing the entire archive of the first 12 years of this publication has been made available for \$5 (postage paid). If you want one of these, you need to send \$5 to the editor to cover the cost of the CD, the label, the sturdy mailer and the postage. Be sure to include your full return address.

Finally please consider the following quote from the *Church Order Commentary*, by Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, published by Zondervan Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1941 (which is now out of print).

“What should be our attitude toward cremation? The Bible does not forbid the burning of dead bodies, but honorable burial was the rule in both Old Testament and New Testament times. The patriarchs were buried. God himself buried Moses. Lazarus rested in a grave. Our Lord himself underwent burial, not burning. In the ancient apostolic Church burial was the common custom. On the other hand many pagan peoples burned the bodies of their dead. And the only instances in which burning was prescribed by God for Israel is in the case of great sinners, as a special condemnation of such sinners on God’s part (Cf. Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15). Many people today favor cremation from materialistic unbelieving considerations. Death to these ends all. Christian burial, on the other hand, is expressive of the hope and expectation of the resurrection. The body is sown in corruption, as a seed is sown, but it will be raised incorruptible (1 Cor. 15).”



PASTORING THE DYING AND THE MOURNING

by

Joel R. Beeke

Every morning, in recent weeks, my wife and I walked past an injured Canada goose, whose feathers stuck out in several directions. Several geese stayed with the injured bird in dutiful care for their wounded friend.

Likewise, caring for the dying and the mourning is the pastor's loving duty. Paul teaches us that when one member of Christ's body suffers, "all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). Caring for those who suffer promotes the unity of the body of Christ and fosters the communion of saints. Furthermore, dying and mourning saints have a claim on our compassion for Christ's sake (Matthew 25:40; see also John 11:33-36).

Death is so final, so irreversible, that the dying and the mourning need pastoral care perhaps more at this time than at any other in life. The initial shock of a terminal illness or death cries out for pastoral help in working through grief biblically, making difficult decisions, planning funeral services, repairing brokenness, and addressing guilt. People need hope, support, and love to get through these crises.

Pastoring the dying and the mourning is challenging, sobering, and rewarding. It is challenging because we need great wisdom to know how to respond to people's needs scripturally, truthfully, and compassionately. It is sobering because we stand by our parishioners as they cross the threshold of time into eternity. And it is rewarding because the dying and the mourning are open at this time about their deepest feelings and hungry to receive guidance from Scripture.¹

Visiting the Dying

Here are some suggestions for visiting the dying:

Make frequent, short visits. People who are dying cannot be visited too often. Their need for scriptural guidance and earnest prayer is great. When you can't be present for a day, call by phone

¹ Much has been written about pastoring the mourning, most of which is neither biblical or Reformed, nor grapples seriously with spiritual casuistry (i.e., cases of conscience), which can be so intense on deathbeds. The footnotes below represent some of the soundest sources, but a solid Reformed book has yet to be written on pastoring the dying and mourning.

and talk with them for a few minutes.

A twenty-minute visit in person is usually sufficient. Sometimes five minutes is all that sick people can handle. In extreme cases, their pain may be so intense that all you should do is read a few verses and pray. At other times, these folks may be more comfortable and indicate they'd like you to stay longer. Honor that request, but don't stay longer than thirty minutes. It's better to have a short, meaningful visit than a lengthy visit that loses focus.

If family members are present, you may want to visit separately with some of them after you've visited the patient. The length of such a visit depends on what they want as well as upon your own time constraints. If family members are very distraught, you may want to stay with them longer, even if it means postponing or canceling your next visit.

Two general guidelines: First, seize the opportunity to reach the mourning when their consciences are tender. Second, when conversation begins to drift away from

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matters of real importance, bring the visit to a close. Read another Scripture passage, pray, and move on.

Begin by listening. As you enter the home or hospital room, shake hands with relatives, addressing them by name. Be warm and calm. Move as soon as possible to the bedside of the patient. Sit as close as possible, reaching for his or her hand, if the person is comfortable with that. Look the patient in the face, and ask, "Do you have much pain?" If pain is intense and death is imminent, ask, "Are you having a difficult time?" Allow the person enough time to talk about physical pain, emotional stress, fears, and spiritual concerns. Welcome expressions of the person's hopes for eternity with a question such as: "Dear friend, as you face the prospect of death, is your hope for eternity grounded only in Jesus Christ?" In more serious cases, you might ask more directly, "Dear friend, is it well with your soul—are you ready to meet the Lord if He were to take you from this world now?"

Listen carefully so that the patient may speak from the heart and that you may, as a spiritual physician, correctly diagnose his or her spiritual condition. If you fail to make a correct diagnosis, you may give the wrong medication from Holy Scripture. It is possible that one Scripture passage may be spiritually therapeutic for one dying person but poison for another. If the dying friend

fails to respond despite all your loving efforts, you, like a good physician, should apply pressure to various places. Discreetly probe for tender spots through persistent but loving questions.

Despite your best efforts, the patient may not respond at this time. Take heart; he or she might feel freer to open up another day. Remember that people move through various phases of coping with their illness—from tense uncertainty and a sense of powerlessness, to denial, hopelessness, and, finally, acceptance.² In addition, in the face of death a person's personality can change so much that even close family members find it difficult to relate to him or her.

Don't take such alterations personally, but recognize that the interactions between a person's emotions and physical disease can generate rapid shifts in moods.

² D. Los, *Thou Holdest My Right Hand* (Neerlandia, Alberta: Inheritance Publications, 1993), 65-71. The mourner can also go through various stages. Jay Adams speaks of three stages: shock, disorganization, and reorganization (*Shepherding God's Flock*, Volume 1: The Pastoral Life [Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974], 143-56); James Christensen writes, "The grief syndrome inevitably takes people emotionally through the journey of disbelief, rebellion, numbness, anger, loneliness, hostility, and guilt, finally moving to acceptance and assimilation. For some, the healing is more rapid than for others. Not always are the feelings in the same sequence" (Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology, Volume One: *Word & Worship*, ed. James D. Berkley [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 1,464).

Look for the right balance between loving concern and respect for another person's space. Patiently attend to the person, offering hands of mercy and prayer.³

Read and apply Scripture. Select an appropriate passage, based on your diagnosis of the patient's spiritual condition. Let it be short and relevant. Then offer one or two thoughts from the text that you believe address the greatest spiritual needs of the patient. Keep your words brief and scriptural. People who talk too much are often more of a burden than a help to the dying. And guidance without Scripture is actually misguidance.

If the patient has doubts about his or her salvation, direct attention to the living God to whom "belong the issues of death" (Ps. 68:20), and who is able and willing to save even the greatest of sinners who take refuge in Him. Present the basics of the gospel, then talk about the need for faith and repentance. Gently but lovingly question the person about whether he or she has come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

At this point, don't allow relatives who may think well of the eternal state of the patient to deter you from examining the person to find out whether he or she has truly experienced repentance, faith in Christ, and holiness. If those marks of grace do not appear to

³ Cf. J.J. Arnold, "Visiting the Sick," *Diakonia* 7,3 (1994):83-86.

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be present, do not tell the patient that he or she is unsaved, for we may not act as judge at another's deathbed. Yet we may, and I believe must, earnestly direct such a person to examine himself or herself for those marks of grace.

For that we must use Scripture. Over several visits, speak to the patient about the Beatitudes and the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). All the while, stress Christ's blood, merits, and person. Show how Jesus saves sinners through his life, sufferings, death, and resurrection. Most useful for this are Psalm 51, Isaiah 53, John 3, Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 1:9, and Revelation 22:17. Talk about God's willingness in Christ to save the greatest of sinners. Cite biblical examples, such as Adam, Manasseh, and Paul.

Describe Christ's loveliness and kindness. Declare His compassion for the dying, even for the greatest of sinners, such as the thief on the cross. Then invite the patient to repentance and faith in Christ. Good chapters to use include Psalm 130, John 3, Hebrews 4 and 12, and James 2.

A word of caution: There is a world of difference between evangelizing and deceiving. We must not give false hope to a person who has not truly come to repentance, or who does not truly believe. The Lord condemns those who comfort the unbelieving and unrepentant people of this world with "peace, peace, when there is

no peace" (Jer. 8:11). God will require their blood at our hands. Rather, we must lovingly tell a dying, unbelieving patient that God is ready to pardon and forgive, but persistent unbelief will keep a person even someone who is dying—from Christ and salvation. Happily, we may add that even this sin will be washed away through Jesus' blood if it is brought to Him in confession and repentance.

While you are evangelizing, keep praying for the patient, but leave the outcome in God's hands. Do not fall into the trap of telling the person whether or not you think he or she is saved. Even if the person directly asks you that question, suggest that it be taken up directly with the Lord, and say that this is a question that everyone must answer himself. Also, after the person has died, be cautious about mentioning a deathbed conversion in a funeral message, especially if the person's life was not a testimony of saving grace. It is far wiser, in such cases, to silently entrust the matter to God.

If the patient is a believer, comfort him or her with Christ-centered themes, for Christ is the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25). Remind the person who Christ is, what He has done on Calvary, and what He is doing now at the right hand of the Father. Use Philipians 2:5-11 to show the riches of his states and natures. Speak of Christ's strength to comfort the dying as prophet, priest, and king.

Show how precious and faithful he is. Tell how much pain He suffered for us and how death delivers us from earthly agony so we can be with Christ (John 14:3). Remind them of the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism that for the believer, death is "only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life" (Q. 42).

Then focus on the joy of heaven—the blessedness of being with the Triune God, the holy angels, and the redeemed. Describe the joy of knowing that even though the standing of believers is perfect with God now, their condition will finally match that standing in glory. They will live then the way they have wanted to live since they were regenerated—worshiping and glorifying God without sin.

Comfort the dying believer with familiar words from the Psalter, too, that stress comforting truths such as God's covenant faithfulness or his gracious, caring hand of mercy such as "Jehovah's truth will stand forever; His covenant-bonds He will not sever" (425:5), or "In doubt and temptation I rest, Lord, in Thee/ My hand is in Thy hand, Thou carest for me! My soul with Thy counsel through life Thou wilt guide/ And afterward make me in glory abide" (202:1). Such words from songs well known from childhood, often do more for the dying believer than all our other talking, reading, and praying.

For further advice on dealing

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with dying people, consult “The Consolation of the Sick,” in the liturgy of the Psalter, for a rich display of appropriate texts and themes for ministry to the sick.⁴ That, as well as Andrew Bonar’s *The Visitor’s Book of Texts* offer passages of Scripture to help you counsel and comfort the dying.⁵

Do not be surprised if those passages fail to ease a person’s depression, discouragement, or fear of dying, however. Don’t forget that Paul calls death the last enemy and the king of terrors. Moreover, physical deterioration and spiritual darkness usually walk hand-in-hand. It is a supernatural event of divine grace to meet a believer on the mountaintop of faith as he or she walks through the valley of the shadow of death. Though it is true that the best way to die well is to have lived well, many saints still struggle greatly with death.

Pray for wisdom to discern between spiritual fatigue due to physical pain and spiritual backsliding due to forsaking God. We must show compassion to one and confront the other. We must also take care not to make seniors feel guilty about the normal pattern of aging and dying, which may negatively impact their spiritual zeal. You have not come to add to suffering but to relieve that of a dying believer who is struggling to

see “no man, save Jesus only” (Matt. 17:8).⁶ Sometimes a dying believer needs to be directed more to Scripture’s promises than to personal experiences, and to passages from the Psalter such as “He hears the needy when they cry! He saves their souls when death draws nigh! This God is our salvation” (420:5).

Pray. If a patient has significant pain or is in danger of drifting off to sleep, pray at the beginning of a visit. Prayer is the most important part of the visit. If the pain continues, or if other relatives join you, pray again. It’s not uncommon for me to pray two or three times in one visit at the bedside of a dying person. After you leave the patient, you may want to pray with the relatives in another room.

If the patient is a believer, should a church leader pray for deliverance from death? I believe that early in the illness that request is appropriate in prayer, but the focus should be on the grace of divine healing, if it be God’s will. When the person is very near death, all quality of life is gone, and he or she is longing for death, however, prayer for deliverance through death may be uttered without reservation.

Be loving and compassionate. Don’t be afraid to take the dying patient’s hand, unless the patient

feels uncomfortable with that. I sometimes hold the hand of a dying senior for the duration of the visit. Don’t resist if a mourning relative wants to hug you, either. And don’t be afraid to allow short spaces of silence as you grieve together. Stay calm, but don’t be afraid to shed tears with the loved ones, particularly if you are deeply moved by the suffering and death of the patient. Be warm and sincere in your words, your eyes, your hands, and your entire demeanor.

Avoid bad etiquette. Don’t speak about the patient’s physical condition to others in his or her presence, even if the person appears to be sleeping or unconscious. One never knows what the dying can hear. If someone initiates such conversation, guide them to a different topic, or indicate that you would like to move to another room.

Never sit on the patient’s bed, or stand above them when you could be sitting alongside in a chair. Sitting on the bed is a kind of trespassing, and may cause the patient added physical pain and suffering; standing implies dominance or haste. Be as close to the patient as possible. Be tactful, respectful, sober, yet natural. Don’t try to be humorous. And put away all self-centered comments. The patient—not you—is the most important person in the room.

Don’t inspire false hope of life, blunt the edge of providen-

⁴ The Psalter (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995), 159-68.

⁵ London: James Nisbet, 1864.

⁶ Arie Elshout, *A Helping Hand* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1997), 78-80.

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tial warnings, or provide medical advice for which you are not trained. On the other hand, don't express your every fear. Neither promise life nor predict death. There is one who is Lord both of death and life, who often removes when removal is least expected and restores when restoration is despaired of. We must not infringe upon his prerogative.

Don't delay or avoid visiting. If you delay, you may be too late. If you avoid visiting, you come across as uncaring. A word is in order here to ruling elders: Some of you avoid visiting the dying on the fallacious grounds that you're not a teaching elder, that you're not qualified for the task, or because some may not value your visit as much as a minister's visit. But James 5:14^a says, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him." Your minister needs your assistance, your back-up support, in visiting the dying. How can church members sympathize with you in the challenges of the eldership if you do not sympathize with them in their times of crisis? If you are not gifted to converse with the dying, you can at least read applicable words from Scripture, pray, and point them, simply and humbly, to the heavenly physician who can meet their every need. Deny yourself, and feed the afflicted church of God.

Ask others privately about the condition of the dying. If no family members are present, leave a card behind with your phone

number and perhaps a little note to the relatives with a text or two from Scripture, then speak with a nurse or doctor. Explain that you are the patient's pastor or elder and would like to know, if possible, the patient's condition. Some medical people will tell you a lot, while others may not say much at all. Be grateful for what they tell you, and thank them for the information. As a spiritual counselor, your work complements that of medical people who minister to the body. At times, you may be asked for input on whether or not to tell a patient about the gravity of his condition,⁷ or how to sort through the difficult issues of when to do everything possible to keep a person alive and when to let go. When you return home, call the closest relative for a more thorough update, and pray together.

Receiving the Phone Call

Ask the closest relative to call you immediately if the patient suddenly "takes a turn for the worse." When that call comes, day or night, get to the bedside as soon as possible. Tell the caller when you'll be there. After you arrive, follow the guidelines given above. If death appears imminent, stay longer, perhaps an hour or more. Pray frequently—every 15 to 30 minutes—with all who are present.

If the patient does not pass away in your presence, let the rela-

⁷ Adams, 130-34.

tives know you'd like to be called if matters get worse or the patient dies. Assure them that you will call in a few hours to see how things are going. Shake hands with each relative and friend prior to leaving, wishing them God's strength and blessing.

If the loved one dies in your presence, give the mourners time to weep together. Never gloss over grief. Don't give easy answers and pious clichés ("No need to weep because he is with Jesus now") that can be abused to suppress important feelings. Let death be death. Express your sympathy, then call them to the Word of God as the greatest source of strength in need. Offer a few thoughts from the passage, stressing the comfort and joy of God's sanctifying grace. Pray with compassion.

Before you leave, ask about funeral preparations. Would the family like your help? In most cases, that will prompt them to call the funeral home. You should leave shortly after that so the immediate family can have time alone together around the body of the loved one before the funeral director arrives.

When you leave, ask the closest relative to call you after funeral arrangements are made. I usually tell them I'd like to meet with the entire family about forty minutes before the first visiting hours so we can read Scripture and pray together. That helps set the tone for the visiting hours and funeral.

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Often the funeral director, rather than the family, will call you about the hours of visitation and the funeral. Write down this information so you can accurately pass it on to your consistory and congregation. Tell the funeral director you'd like to meet with the family prior to visiting hours. That way he'll have chairs set up for that purpose.

Typically, you will not be present when a patient dies, and the family will not call you until after the body has been taken to the funeral home. In that case, pray with the person who calls, and ask him or her to contact the relatives to arrange for a pastoral visit in the funeral home immediately prior to visiting hours. If the caller is not the husband or wife of the deceased, call and pray with him or her as soon as possible. In some cases you may need to make an immediate visit. Most often, however, the widow or widower has so much to do that he or she prefers to meet you the following day prior to visiting hours.

Visiting With the Family. Before visiting with the family at the funeral home, get a copy of the obituary from the newspaper or the funeral director. Familiarize yourself with the names of the relatives. Then come to the funeral home early, bringing your wife if possible. This visit is important, not only for expressing sympathy and for clarifying funeral arrangements, but also for establishing rapport with the mourning family. The contact will enable you to

sense more fully the grief of the family and to have a better understanding of their needs. Such a visit may often prompt a pastor to choose a different text to preach on at the funeral.

Move toward the casket, shaking hands with family members on the way and expressing sympathy to each one. Pause as you view the body. Absorb the reality of death; its heaviness, finality, and curse. Then shake hands with the remaining relatives, expressing your sympathy.

As soon as possible, form a circle with chairs so you can visit with the family. Say a few words about their deceased loved one before turning to Scripture. Read a short passage and share several thoughts on it. Do not use notes. Aim more for comfort than examination during this visit. Pray for the family, for strength during the visitation, and for God's blessing upon the funeral message. Pray that God will fill the empty place of their loss with His presence and sustain the family with His amazing grace.

If some of the relatives are not familiar with your way of conducting a funeral, briefly indicate that your emphasis, according to Reformed tradition, will be to speak to the living rather than about the dead. Ask if they'd like to sing a Psalm or two. Invite questions about the funeral. You may receive unusual questions, such as whether you are going to put their relative "in heaven," but it's better to an-

swer such questions at this time rather than the day of the funeral.

Use the remaining time to allow the family to reminisce about their loved one. These memories can be touching and edifying, particularly if they recall some of the spiritual experiences of the deceased person; how his or her life exhibited godliness or God's special grace, or what Scripture passages were most meaningful. Other comments made during this time can be disconcerting, such as "I have no idea how I can face the future; I don't know what to do." Or "What's the use for me to go on living? I have nothing to live for." Receive such comments with respectful silence, or with a simple acknowledgement that facing death is difficult. Unrealistic statements such as "He was an absolutely perfect husband" are hard to take, of course. So are negative pronouncements, such as "You know, Pastor, John left the truth so he is lost forever, and I sure hope you tell the people that!" Some people use grief to say ugly things like, "Jane, you sure were a lousy sister to my husband; you never treated him right—I hope you feel guilty now that he's gone!" They can even direct it at you by saying, "So I suppose since John left your church, you are going to put him in hell?" Don't overreact to such comments, nor feel that you have to respond to all of them. Look to God for wisdom. Remember Psalm 37:5-6.

In rare occasions there may be strong disagreement about funer-

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al arrangements. Follow these guidelines:

1. Try to get family members to work toward a compromise that violates no one's conscience.

2. If they can't, follow the wishes of the deceased as expressed in his or her will.

3. In the case of a minor, the parents' wishes should prevail.

4. If the deceased was married, the spouse's opinion takes precedence over that of surviving parents.

5. Be true to the Word of God and your own conscience. If you don't feel right about participating in a funeral that violates your convictions, respectfully suggest that someone else conduct the service.

If you can't get these matters resolved in one meeting, set up another—either a special one to discuss weighty matters, or a few extra minutes prior to the funeral to take care of less important issues. Do not intrude even one minute into the visiting hours. If you do, the family will become restless and people will be waiting outside the closed doors.

Leading the Funeral Service

Properly conducted, funeral services offer loving support to the mourning, provide a means of healing, reaffirm faith in the Triune God, strengthen believers and warn unbelievers, and honorably dispose of the body. So spend much time in prayer prior to a funeral, asking God for the right words to say.

Arrive at the funeral home at least twenty minutes early. Ask the funeral director for a quiet room where you can pray with the family. Sometimes the family needs this time to ask a few final questions about the funeral or to share a few more memories of the deceased one's spiritual life. Respond to special requests graciously. Be short, warm, and compassionate in your prayer with the family. Focus on asking the Lord to strengthen everyone in the coming hour.

The entire service should be approximately 40-45 minutes and consist of the following:

Opening: 6 minutes. You might begin by saying, "We wish to commence this memorial service for [the name of the deceased] with the reading of Holy Scripture, from [book, chapter, and verses]." Use one to three readings. Read with expression, remembering the Bible is a living book. Keep the readings short, but select each with great care because each has the power to communicate hope, comfort, and warning specific to the audience's needs. They can reveal how true believers confront the reality of death; its mystery and finality. They can offer understanding and recognition of a mourner's feelings as well as what to do with those feelings. And they can relate to special circumstances, such as the loss of a child or of a young mother.

Here or at other points in the service, you may also wish to read

well known or relevant passages from the Reformed Confessions, such as the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism or Article 37 of the Belgic Confession. You may also include the Apostles' Creed, which is often read at the graveside of believers.

In the opening prayer, acknowledge the sovereign Lord as the One who gives and takes away life. Include petitions of confession and thanksgiving, but focus especially on intercession and submission. Mention the deceased by name. You may also refer to the deceased near the beginning of your prayer as "a dear husband, son, mother, grandfather, daughter," or whatever primary relationships apply. Pray warmly and personally for the surviving widow or widower. Recognize the painfulness of death; do not disguise its bitterness. Confess its connection with our fall in Adam. Use prayer as God's resource for working through grief rather than avoiding it. Pray for strength for the entire family, that they may mourn with true, godly sorrow, for such "shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

Pray that all distractions may be set aside and that the solemn message of death may be applied by the Holy Spirit to the living. Stress human frailty, weakness, and sinfulness. Pray that each person present may see the need to be born again, to be convicted that life is empty apart from Jesus Christ, and that we must fly to Him in faith and repentance.

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Avoid these faults that often mar prayers at a funeral: excessive length, lack of preparation, undue loudness, excessive speed, and embarrassing impropriety.⁸

Personal introductory remarks: 3 minutes. Admit the difficulty of facing the death of a loved one. Address the widow or widower by name, and express a wish for Jehovah's abiding strength for him or her. If the deceased person's life did not clearly show the fruits of grace, do not address the question of his or her eternal destiny. If the person did show the fruits of grace, encourage the family by saying they do not need to sorrow as those that have no hope. Briefly mention some of the fruits, if you'd like, to glorify God's grace, but do not eulogize the deceased. Salvation is only of grace; human honor has no place. Moreover, your message should focus on the spiritual condition of the mourners rather than on that of the deceased.

Speak to the children and grandchildren as well. Encourage them to seek the God of the Scriptures. Call them to repentance and faith if they do not know Christ. If they do know Him, challenge them to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Savior.

Text-based message: 30 minutes. An old German Reformed ordinance states that the funeral ad-

dress should have three goals: to be "a public confession of the Christian hope of the resurrection, a lasting testimony of love, and an earnest reminder of the approaching hour of death."⁹ To that we add that the message must proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ acts through events such as funerals. Ultimately, he holds the service, not we. He is the divine Host, and we are the guests. Like all worship, the funeral message must be centered in Christ. The Christian funeral is a witness to our faith in the living Christ, and not merely a memorial service for the person who died.

Therefore, select a short, striking text that covers the gospel basics and deals with life and death, resurrection, judgment, or heaven and hell from a Christ-centered perspective. Whether a believer or unbeliever is being buried, Christ must be proclaimed as victor over death and the guilt and power of sin. Many people at the funeral will have little understanding of what the gospel is. Some may never have heard it clearly preached. So preach a total Christ for a total sinner—the living Christ who reversed the effects of death by his resurrection. For believers who die in Christ, death is a passageway to victory, freedom, healing, and eternal life. Speak from the Word and from the heart. Maintain good eye contact with the bereaved; use few or no notes.

Speak slowly, especially if you have many seniors in your audience. Preach simply, warmly, earnestly, and experientially. Stress that saving faith and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are essential.

Separate the precious from the vile. Balance warning and comfort. Do not assume that people you don't know are saved or unsaved. Remember that nearly every funeral audience includes both believers and unbelievers. Offer warnings and comforts in a spirit of love.

Press the consciences of visitors with words like those of Isaiah 1:18: "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" Like Paul, talk about righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come (Acts 24:24-25). Make sure that no one in your audience can walk away saying, "I didn't hear what I need to know to live in comfort and die in peace."

As you close, address the family again. Wish them divine strength as they go to the cemetery and face the future. Assure them that with God, they can face the future with confidence, knowing that come what may, the Lord will never forsake them (Psalm 27:10; Psalm 138:7,8).

Closing prayer: 4 minutes. Apply the message by praying for vari-

⁸ Andrew Blackwood, *The Funeral: A Source Book for Ministers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1942), 112.

⁹ J. J. Van Oosterzee, *Practical Theology*, trans. Maurice J. Evans (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878), 275.

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ous groups of hearers. Pray for the family, that they will have the strength to witness the burial of their loved one. Contrast the bliss of eternal glory with the sorrow of eternal condemnation.

Singing (if desired): 5 minutes. If the family wants to sing a psalm, sing it at the end of the service. It will be a fitting finish. If the committal service is held at the funeral home, sing the psalm between your funeral message and the committal message. Cut back on the funeral message a bit to make time for the committal message, which should be 5-10 minutes. If the family wants to sing two songs, sing one at the beginning of the service and one at the end. If the family has selected music you don't consider appropriate, tactfully encourage them to choose something else. Sometimes it helps to suggest that the music might offend visitors from their loved one's church or from other churches. If the family has strong feelings about keeping the music, short of its being utterly heretical, allow it, remembering that a funeral is also a family service.

Discourage soloists and eulogies, if possible. Again, if the family insists, try to limit these and move them to the end of the service so they don't detract from the funeral message. Suggest that persons who wish to offer a tribute to the deceased may be invited to speak at the fellowship hour, and arrange to have a microphone provided for this purpose.

Remember that a certain tension exists at funerals that you cannot erase. On the one hand, a funeral, like every other act of Christian worship, is for the church—it is not a private matter but a covenantal event in which the church is to focus upon the never-ending grace of her Triune God. The entire church is invited to attend. On the other hand, there is a sense in which the funeral is a family service, and therefore the family should have a say in the liturgy.

After the service, sit near the lectern while the funeral director dismisses the people. Do not stare at the people as they file out. When everyone but the family is gone, stand as they approach the casket. Do not intrude on this time of weeping and mourning. Let the director decide when to lead out the family. Usually people will not speak to you at this time; they are too immersed in their grief. Sometimes, though, a few will shake your hand, speak a few words of appreciation (or, on rare occasions, confrontation), or weep as they hug you. Be available at this point to do what's needed. Let your emotions be natural and your words be few.

After the family leaves, view the body a final time. Follow the instructions of the morticians who will ask you to walk in front of the casket as it is carried to the hearse. Stand quietly to one side as the body is placed in the hearse. Then go to your car.

Conducting the Committal Service

Encourage the family to have the committal service at the graveside. Those services are more real and personal. The cemetery is a visual sermon to the mourners. Besides, as J. J. Van Oosterzee said, "It is appropriate and good that the church should speak the last word even at the grave of the departed."¹⁰ Don't resist, however, if they decide to have the committal service at the funeral home or in church.

On the way to the cemetery, ask your wife if you have forgotten anything important at the funeral that might be mentioned at the grave site. You can use that opportunity to mention people or points you might have inadvertently omitted.

At the cemetery, lead the casket from the hearse to the burying place. Stand on one side of the casket, several feet from the mourning family, near the head of the deceased. Keep your message short. If the weather is good, ten minutes of speaking and prayer is sufficient. Remember, the cemetery itself is already a "silent sermon." If the weather is poor, make the talk shorter. Begin and end with the Word, but keep the readings brief and to the point.

Remember to project your voice more than ordinary, so that

¹⁰ Ibid., 274

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everyone can hear. Don't use notes. Focus on a text that speaks of the resurrection, judgment, or eternity. Let the victory of Christianity sound clearly. Set forth Christ as the resurrection and the life. Close with a prayer that resonates with assurance of the resurrection and the necessity to be prepared for it. As mentioned above, you may also include the reading of the Apostles' Creed.

If the deceased was a veteran, an American flag is often draped over the casket. At the close of the service, the director will fold the flag and hand it to a family member. More complex military rites can follow the pastor's closing prayer.

If the family wants to see the casket lowered into the ground, wait with them. Your presence will support them.

If there is no fellowship time afterward, shake hands with the family when the committal service is finished. Some mourners will follow your example. If there is a gathering, inform one of the children that you hope to be there. Don't rush away from the graveside. Follow the lead of the family. Tell the surviving spouse that you'll visit him or her the following week.

If the committal service is at the funeral home or church, and no music is selected, make the transition from the funeral message to the committal message by simply telling the people that you

will now conduct the committal service. Read a few verses of Scripture, speak for a few minutes on a different text than that of your funeral message, and close the service with prayer. At the funeral of a believer, you may wish to use the classic formula for the Committal from the Book of Common Prayer (1662) of the Church of England:

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother (or sister) here departed: we therefore commit his (or her) body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

Attending the Fellowship Hour

If possible, sit with close relatives of the deceased during the fellowship hour after the funeral. Center upon the needs and memories of the mourners; listen and empathize. Avoid a light-hearted spirit even if it prevails around you. You may be susceptible to that temptation, especially in the relief of having finished your message. Resist it. Strive, instead, to engage in meaningful conversation. A friend has just died; a serious message has been delivered. People tend to be vulnerable at this time.

Sometimes the family will ask you to close the gathering with prayer. Use that opportunity to commend your hearers to the grace of God. Don't stay too long; 30-45 minutes is sufficient. When you leave, shake hands with the surviving spouse and children and wish them God's comfort and peace.

Don't schedule pastoral work immediately after leading a funeral. Funerals are emotionally draining. When you return home, update your pastoral record.

Keeping careful records of funerals will help your consistory clerk and prepare you for the congregational overview on New Year's Eve. After the funeral, ask yourself questions like these:

1. *Did I affirm death's power and deal with it realistically*, both as the wages of sin for all men and as the passage to eternal life for believers?

2. *Did I proclaim Jesus Christ to every hearer* and present the hope to be found in his death and resurrection?

3. *Did I present God's character in a way that was helpful* and comforting to believers who were mourning?

4. *Did I warn the unbeliever* to repent and take refuge in Jesus Christ?

5. *Did I preach the way of salvation*—how the Holy Spirit works in sinners' lives—as well as the Christ of salvation?

6. *Did I show how the Christian*

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faith can help a person mourn, yet not as those who have no hope?

7. *Did I present death in a way that fosters deep feelings about its finality? A due sense of how swiftly life passes, and how soon we all must die?*

8. *Did I reach out with compassion to the needs of the bereaved?*

9. *Did I proclaim blessing to the righteous and woe to the wicked?*

10. *Did I tailor the service to the needs of the family?*

11. *Did I glorify God by being faithful to his Word?*

Following-up with Pastoral Visitation

Visit the the mourning widow or widower one week after the funeral. You will often find them most needy at this time, when the reality of death is beginning to register. Let the mourning spouse reminisce. Don't rush the visit. Persons experiencing grief need time to express their hurt as Job did. Acknowledge the sense of loss and the burden of loneliness. Then offer the balm of Gilead through the Word of God.

Stress how only God can fill the empty place in their lives. Lead the mourner to a deeper understanding of the biblical view of death and resurrection. Encourage the person to build on what you said at the funeral.

You might offer the person a book. I like to give widows John A. James's *The Widow Directed to the Widow's God*; to widowers, James Buchanan's *Comfort for the Afflicted*, or James W. Alexander's *Consola-*

tion for the Suffering People of God.

Continue to visit the mourners regularly, depending on their need, then follow visits up with periodic phone calls and prayer support. Build upon the foundation laid during the prefuneral calls and the funeral itself. As much as possible, let your ministry or eldership reflect James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Salting All With Prayer

Ministry to the dying and mourning can be a valuable experience. Our calling allows us to offer comfort in Christ Jesus to the brokenhearted. Be much in prayer throughout the entire process. Pray for the dying, the mourning, and yourself. Pray for a warm, caring heart that reflects the ministry of our High Priest (Heb. 4:15), remembering that when we show mercy to sick, dying, or mourning believers, we are showing mercy to Christ himself (Matt. 25:31-46).

Remember too, that God often uses death to lead relatives closer to himself. This touching story often encourages me to be faithful in pastoral ministry, even under trying circumstances:

A godly seven-year-old girl was on her deathbed. Her Dad, an unbeliever with whom the Spirit was striving, stroked her hair, and said, "Honey, wouldn't you rather stay here on earth for awhile so that

you can spend more time with Daddy and Mommy?"

"No, Daddy," she said.

"But why not?" he asked.

"Do you want to know the truth, Daddy?" she asked.

"Yes, of course," he replied.

"Well, Daddy," the girl said, fighting back tears, "I've noticed that ever since I've been sick, you've been praying more and reading the Bible more. And you see, Daddy, not only do I want to be with Jesus, but even if there were no heaven and no hell, and I could believe that my death would only bring you closer to Jesus, then I would want to die. You see, Daddy, anything that brings you closer to Jesus—even my death—is worth it to me."

Finally, remember that we too will need to be pastored by Christ and church leaders as we approach the Jordan. By God's grace, may the day of our death be better than the day of our birth. May we experience the dying grace spoken of in Psalm 73, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (vv. 23-25). So we shall live and die happily, enjoying the comfort to be found only in our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

Appendix: Possible Texts for Funeral Messages

If you are asked to preach a funeral message on a particular text, re-

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spond either that you will try to do so with God's help or that you will write it down and lay it before the Lord. If a relative gives you a favorite text of a child of God whom you must bury, preach the message on that text only if you feel it is appropriate. If not, at least find a way to quote the text—and perhaps say a few words on it during the introduction or conclusion, or at graveside.

"It is well." (2 Kings 4:26b)

"So the poor hath hope." (Job 5:16a)

"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (Job 14:1-4)

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." (Ps. 8:2)

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." (Ps. 27:14)

"And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee." (Ps. 39:7)

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Ps. 46:1)

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Ps. 50:15)

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Ps. 84:10)

"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah." (Ps. 89:48)

Almost all of Psalm 90—esp. vv. 9,12

"A time to be born, and a time to die." (Eccles. 3:2a)

"It is better to go to the house of mourning,

than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." (Eccles. 7:2)

"Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." (Eccles. 12:5b)

"Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me." (Isa. 38:14)

"Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isa. 40:2)

"But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." (Isa. 43:1-3)

"For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed." (Isa. 61:8-9)

"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." (Jer. 49:11)

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37)

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom. 5:20b)

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:26)

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is

gain." (Phil. 1:21)

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thess. 4:13-14)

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2:19)

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." (Heb. 4:9)

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:27-28)

Most of Revelation 7.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13)

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

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THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE STRUCTURE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17ff

by

Stewart E. Lauer

This article seeks to shed light on a key passage for the church's understanding of the New Testament teaching on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:20-34, by reevaluating the structure of vv. 17-34. As a first reaction, this topic might seem esoteric, only distantly related to worship and communion in the pew. That is not the case. How one views the structure from v. 17 through the end of the chapter has a profound effect upon what one reckons to be Paul's central concern in the Corinthian's defiling of the Lord's body and blood (v. 27). That, in turn, impacts one's understanding of the self-examination Paul demands in v. 28 and what constitutes the goal of that examination, "judging the body rightly," in v. 29. Those verses are the primary (if not only) biblical basis for key historic elements of Reformed eucharistic liturgy, as evidenced both in the Westminster Standards and the OPC *Directory for Public Worship*.

Analysis of the Structure of 1 Corinthians 11:17ff.: Today's Consensus vs. Godet

English translations suggest, and commentators of the last century seem to agree with, F.F.

Bruce's division heading, "The Lord's Supper 11:17-34."¹ A search of numerous commentaries published over the past 150 years suggests that one must go back to 1889 to find an exception. The well-respected Swiss Reformed commentator, Frederic L. Godet, despite similarly entitling vv. 17-34, "Disorders in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper," insisted "vers. 18, 19, are not put by the apostle in any connection with the disorders in the Holy Supper."² In other words, Godet argues that vv. 18-19 deal with a different problem than that addressed in vv. 20-34. The lat-

¹ F. F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, edited by Matthew Black, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 108. Similarly, a commonly used edition of *The Greek New Testament*, (United Bible Societies, 4th rev. ed.), puts this heading above v. 17: "Abuses at the Lord's Supper." The NIV and ESV have, "The Lord's Supper"; the NKJV, "Conduct at the Lord's Supper." The NASB original edition has no precise section headings, though it implicitly agrees, making vv. 17-34 one paragraph. Its "Updated Edition" begins a section called "The Lord's Supper" at v. 24, but still makes vv. 17-23 one paragraph.

² Frédéric L. Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, translated by Rev. A. Cusin, 1889 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 561, 565.

ter section does indeed rebuke them for abuse of the holy table, but vv. 18-19 rebuke them for "divisions" within their worship services. This article supports and develops Godet's view of the independence of vv. 18-19 from the Lord's Supper problems.

Identifying the "Divisions (schismata)" of vv. 18-19

If Godet is correct, the unusual term, "divisions (schismata)" (v. 18), is not defined or explicated by vv. 20-34 (the Lord's Supper problem), but either by vv. 18-19 itself or perhaps by 1:10ff., where the striking term also appears.³ Similarly, Godet's analysis would preclude reading the problem of divisions into their guilt with respect to the holy supper. In other words, by recognizing a clear break between v. 19 and v. 20, one segregates the problem of divisions from that of the abuse of the Lord's Table.

In 1 Corinthians 11:18, Paul explicitly affirms the existence of factions "in the assembled church (ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ)" in Corinth. He

³ In Paul's letters, the only three appearances of this word, from which the English term, schism, is derived, are 1 Cor. 1:10; 11:18; 12:25.

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cites the existence of factions when they “come together” (v. 18a) as his first ground (πρώτον μὲν γὰρ) for denouncing their gatherings; they assemble (συνέρχασθε), he chides, “unto the worse.”⁴ Yet, aside from asserting their existence as ruining their worship, Paul does nothing in vv. 18-19 to characterize the divisions or to provide evidence for his accusation. If one assumes 11:18 refers to the same factionalism described in 1:10-12—an assumption that has not gone unchallenged—the severe denunciation there shows that Paul judges the divisions to be both real and grave.⁵ In his final use of the term, 12:25, Paul declares the existence of division in the body of Christ to be contrary to the way that the Spirit has ordered the body. While these two uses of this (for Paul) rare term do not (contra Margaret M. Mitchell) prove the topic of the whole letter to be division,⁶ both do presuppose the reader will recall Paul’s

earlier case against the rivalries (1:10ff.), and that even in the midst of dealing with other matters, Paul is sufficiently concerned with that problem to take these further opportunities to turn aside and touch on it again.

In 11:18-19, Paul recounts that (a) he hears (ἀκούω) that in their assemblies schismata “exist” (ASV). Then, (b) he expresses his qualified (μέρος τι) credence toward that report, “to some extent I believe it” (NRSV). The common analysis of the discourse flow of 11:18ff. assumes that Paul has forgotten a “second ground.”⁷ However, for four reasons, 11:18 should be read (a) separate from v. 20ff. and (b) as expressly alluding back to the divisive “rivalries” already de-

the term schisma “again in 11:18 and 12:25 (and nowhere else in the Pauline corpus) gives a further indication that factionalism is indeed the topic of this entire letter” (p. 74), seems to go beyond the evidence. Even in chs. 1-4, the threat of schism is not Paul’s deepest fear (but rather the threat to the gospel foundation). In chs. 5-16, even occasional use of terminology, concepts and style which also appears in ancient writings against division cannot alter the fact that those chapters make cases for and against things besides unity and disunity. Factionalism is simply not the topic of those chapters. 11:18 and 12:25 do prove, however, that that topic continues to vex Paul even after he has moved onto other concerns (Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* [Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992].).

⁷ “The best explanation is the simplest one: the πρώτον μὲν is simply not picked up.” According to most, point one ends without a two in 11:34b; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 536, n. 26, 569.

scribed in 1:10-12, with (c) v. 20ff. being Paul’s “next” ground. (1) The word (schismata) is the same and is distinctive; in Paul it appears only in 1 Corinthians (these three verses). Having warned against schismata and pursued the issue for almost four chapters (1:10-4:21), the appearance again of this distinctive term in chapter 11 would readily remind readers (who were themselves experiencing the “existing schismata” weekly) of 1:10ff. (2) By “I hear” in v. 18, Paul again alludes to oral information, that is, to the report from the people of Chloe, the previously expressed source. It was the very report which had provoked the exhortation, “that there may be no schismata among you” (1:10). (3) Verses 18-19 are the first of two reasons for his denunciation of their assembly (“unto the worse”).

“The divisions, σχισματα [schismata], mentioned in vers. 18, 19, are not put by the apostle in any connection with the disorders in the Holy Supper [vv. 20ff.], which are explained by a whole different cause. . . . the two subjects cannot have been combined in one by Paul, and both embraced in the πρώτον μὲν [first of all] of ver. 18.”⁸

(4) 1 Corinthians 11:18 and 11:20 begin with virtually identical participial phrase constructions that accordingly read naturally as parallel, successive

⁸ Godet, *1 Corinthians*, 565, underlining added. Fee dismisses Godet’s argument that πρώτον μὲν expects a “next of all” which role “therefore” can serve: “all of that assumes the letter to be more literary than it in fact is.” Fee points further to

⁴ Their meetings have become “positively harmful occasions instead of the blessing they ought to be”; Bruce, *1&2 Corinthians*, 108-09.

⁵ My dissertation under Drs. Dyer and Knight at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary—from which this article was adapted—includes a section of Ch. 5 which seeks to prove the reality and seriousness of those rivalries; that ch. has already received preliminary approval. The argument is too long to repeat in *Ordained Servant*.

⁶ Mitchell’s thesis that the presence of terminology also found in ancient literature urging unity among divided groups (111, 180-81) demonstrates that “the issue of factionalism runs throughout all sixteen chapters” (p. 182) and that occurrence of

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points. This becomes obvious once the interstitial particles (e.g., “for” and “then”) and similar discourse structuring words are struck:

11:18a Proton men gar sunerchomenon umon ... “For first, indeed, ye coming together ...”

11:20a Sunerchomenon oun umon ... “ye, then, coming together ...”⁹

As a blemish on their assembly entirely distinct from the Lord’s Supper (vv. 20ff.) and (hypothetically) distinct from the schismata of 1:10, Paul’s claim to have “heard there are divisions” would sound like little more than giving heed to gossip. It is the earlier probative case—naming witnesses (1:11) and recounting

the discussion in “Hurd, 79-80”; Fee, *I Corinthians*, 536-37, n. 26. Hurd’s explanation is even less substantial, referencing a host of 19-20th century commentators who reject the older view (defended by Godet), Hurd merely says, “The opinion of some older scholars (cited by Meyer) that the second member of the series begins in v. 20 is now no longer current. It is firmly rejected by more recent commentators”; John C. Hurd, *The Origin of I Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1983), 79. Fee seems to have missed the heart of Godet’s argument (Hurd does not mention Godet who directly refutes Meyer). The point is not that Paul’s style would not permit anacoluthon (i.e., forgetting no. 2) and that therefore a “next” is absolutely demanded. Godet’s argument is that the contents of 18-19 (divisions as blemish on worship) are distinct from 20ff. (defilement of the Lord’s Supper). As such, they do not fit into one point. Since οὖν can function to signal the next stage in discourse (see below), the passage would naturally so read.

⁹ The English Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible 1862/1887/1898 (YLT) by J. N. Young,

testimony (1:12)—that allows Paul to insert a severe criticism of their worship which, otherwise, would likely appear to be coming out of thin air.¹⁰ Thus, 11:18 should (with Mitchell) be understood as referring back to 1:10. Like vv. 20-34, it explains v. 17b,

¹⁰ Fee’s attempt to deny that 11:18 refers to the same divisions (σχίσματα) as 1:10ff., based upon four reasons, is strained. Given the prominence of the theme in chs. 1-4, especially his use of the identical term in its theme-signaling 1:10, the burden here falls heavily on his shoulders to prove that 11:18’s σχίσματα is different than that of 1:10ff. He argues: (1) only 1:10ff. defines the σχίσματα as rivalries and jealousies. (2) 1:10ff. suggests 4 parties (slogans) and “there is a decidedly anti-Paul sentiment”; in 11:18, there are “only two groups, the ‘have-nots’ and the ‘haves,’ with no hint of a quarrel with Paul on the matter.” (3) Only the later σχίσματα is associated with the assembly (“when you come together as a church”); the earlier seems related only to “false allegiances to their leaders or to ‘wisdom.’” (4) 11:18’s “I partly believe it,” Fee claims, “hardly fits ... 1:10-4:21,” but Fee believes it explicable here as a tactful way to accredit the report from Chloe’s people, “especially if they were trusted Christian slaves,” while “bridging the sociological gap ... [to] the wealthy who are guilty of the misdeeds”; Fee, *I Corinthians*, 537 & n. 31.

As to (1), if the σχίσματα of 11:18 refer back to those of 1:10, then the absence of a repetition of its definition in ch. 11 is to be expected. Verses 18-19 in no way contradict the definition in 1:10-12.

Regarding (2), Fee again reads his assumption of an underlying Pauline self-defense into a passage lacking any such positive evidence on its own (1:10ff.—in fact, v. 13 seems self-effacing). The difference between the several name-boasting rival groups of 1:11-12 and the poor/rich in 11:21 arises because Fee has read 11:21 back into v. 18. He assumes without explanation that v. 19 was a “brief digression” (p 539), with v. 20 re-

yet it is distinct from the Lord’s Supper issue. They are two separate but serious blemishes on their worship services. Thus, Godet’s case for a divide between 11:19 and 20 is established. For once the factional issue in 11:18-19 is clearly identified as the same as

suming the concern about divisions. While, lexically, the latter is a possible sense for v. 20’s οὖν (Friberg, #2.a), it can also, says Friberg (#2.b), “make a transition to a new thought or new phase of a narrative or discourse now, then.” Given v. 18’s γὰρ [For in the first place], οὖν is better taken as carrying the sense of signaling the “next ... phase” (expected after πρώτον, especially with μὲν) and so denoting the second reason why they “assemble for the worse”: “You assemble not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear divisions exist ... Then, in the second place (οὖν), when you assemble, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.” Thus rendered, v. 18 is an express reminder of 1:10ff.’s treatment of the name-touting divisions. This time it is qualified by an acknowledgment of a providential purpose—“by the sure providence of God”; Calvin, 1 Cor. 367—to the divisions. Paul quickly moves on to a second major blemish on their worship services: profanation of the holy supper. Regarding (3), Fee claims only 11:18’s σχίσματα are “especially related to their gatherings,” yet Thiselton argues for different σχίσματα claiming that in 1:10-12 the “splits ... reflect tensions between ... different house [church] groups” (hence, different assemblies); Thiselton, *I Corinthians*, 857. The fact is that 1:10ff. mentions nothing about the assemblies, Thiselton has read separate house churches into the rivalries, and both Fee and Thiselton have read 11:21’s rich/poor division back into the σχίσματα of 11:18, a strained reading (given v. 20’s οὖν as the next of all). Why does Paul imply that there are not fully formed divisions in 1:10 but say that he thinks there are in 11:18? Perhaps it is as simple as this: well formed divisions existed within one assem

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that of 1:10-12, it cannot fit the Lord's Supper problem of vv. 20ff. (this was Godet's point).

Implications for Understanding Paul's Lord's Supper Teaching (11:20ff.)

Since plural of schisma in v. 18 is a reference back to the multiple factions of 1:10-12, it cannot be a description of the single division (rich/poor) that many today (such as Fee) believe to be at the heart of the Lord's Supper-related excoriation (e.g., v. 22b, "Or do you despise the church of God?", NASB). The recent trend to see Paul as primarily concerned with mistreatment of the poor is misguided. Calvin's view is closer to the mark, "the abuse that had crept in among the Corinthians as to the Lord's Supper, ... their mixing up profane banquets with the sacred and spiritual feast, and that too with contempt for the poor." With vv. 18-19 rightly segregated from vv. 20-34, the latter section opens and closes

with the apostle proscribing what Calvin calls their "profane banquets" (Paul: "each one takes his own supper," 11:21; "if ... hungry ... eat at home," 11:34) from the time and place of the sacred assembly.

The central meaning of the sacred rite proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes again had been obscured to the point that many no longer discerned the Lord in the elements (v. 20b).¹¹ It is "for this cause many are weak ..." Verses 18-19 are thus "first of all," with v. 20 beginning the "next" of the discourse; each (first and next) explains independently why Paul believed they were "coming together for worse." The problem at the Lord's Table at Corinth was not "divisions"—that criticism was a part of point #1, not #2—but a failure to remain cognizant of the Lord's body and blood in the bread and wine, with the result that Paul judged that when they meet, "it is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (NASB; NKJV). With awareness of the

Lord's death gone from the sanctified elements, they turned the sacred meal into an ordinary dinner party, and one at which some were largely left out. The offense to the Lord's body and blood was primary; the offense to the poor among his church caused what might be termed secondary damage.

Conclusion

The crucial point that is clarified is this: in 1 Corinthians 11 the essence of what distinguishes eating profane bread and wine over against the Lord's body and blood is not the time or the place. It is not the presence or officiation of elders or minister—an issue not addressed. It was not even their coldness toward their hungry brethren—a concern mentioned in passing. In 1 Corinthians 11 that which (alone) distinguishes the sacred meal from the profane, that which makes the meal truly "the Lord's Supper" (or not), is the self-conscious partaking of the Lord on the part of those eating and drinking. Precisely by eating without that discernment of the Lord's body in the meal, they profaned the Lord's Supper, and ate and drank judgment to themselves. Surely if we agree that the apostle's teaching on the essence of the supper is to govern our church's practice, we, too, must instruct all whom we welcome to the Lord's Supper that they can, and indeed they must, self-consciously partake not merely of bread and wine, but of the crucified Savior and if they lack such faith and

assembly, but the churches' assemblies had not actually fractured along the party lines. The result was an obvious blemish when they assembled (establishing 11:17b); but, full schisms had not occurred.

Finally, regarding (4), as to the "puzzling addition, 'I partly believe it'" (Fee), once the above discourse analysis seeing v. 20ff. as 'next of all' is accepted, and vv. 18-19 is taken as an explicit reference back to 1:10ff., "I partly believe it" could be explained as an expression of the same cautious treatment of the oral reports seen in Paul's use of the word *σχίσματα* in 1:10 but avoidance of explicitly declaring the existence of such in 1:11. If Paul believed the probative testimony (v. 12) proved rivalries and jealousies, but did not quite

prove *σχίσματα*, then in 11:18 where he makes a summarizing reference citing the direct testimony to the existence of *σχίσματα* it is only logical that the careful pastor should so qualify his judgment as to leave open the possibility that the people of Chloe may have overstated the problem. On the other hand, one might render it, "I believe it in part" since there was a sense in which factions existed, but a sense in which the church was still unified. Either way, Mitchell is basically right that "Paul has already demonstrated that factions exist within the church—certainly he believes (knows!)" (Mitchell, *Paul & Rhetoric*, 152).

¹¹ Hence, οὐκ...κυριακὸν δεῖπνον.

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discernment they approach the table at their own peril.

Worthy receivers ... inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood

of Christ being then ... spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses. (WCF 29:7)

Paul's remedy for their having turned the Lord's Supper into their own meal (vv. 20-21) is to

order that the ordinary meal be completely separated from the Lord's Supper (vv. 22, 34). Accordingly, that continues to be the practice of churches in our day. What of our church-wide luncheons following our services? Perhaps that is a topic best left for another article.

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EIGHTEEN REASONS FOR ELDERS TO DO HOME VISITATION

The command to shepherd the flock (1 Peter 5) assumes a shepherdly care. How is an elder like a shepherd? He must know the sheep, initiate care, and have oversight of the flock and of the individual members. Therefore, elder visits are among the most important tasks an elder undertakes.

9 Positive Reasons for, and the Fruit that Comes from, Consistent Elder Visits:

1. Elder visits manifest personal care in a way that binds people to the church.
2. Elder visits inform the elders of the spiritual state of the congregation and are a way of checking the spiritual pulse of the congregation.
3. They build capital in people's lives so that if elders need to confront problems there is a relational context.
4. Visits afford the opportunity to remove misconceptions and misunderstandings otherwise unknown to the elders.
5. It displays to the membership that elders are taking their spiritual responsibilities seriously, and it therefore serves as an exhortation by example that each part of the body of Christ is expected to be faithful.
6. It demonstrates the parity between ruling and teaching elders and shows people that the pastors are not the only ones they should seek out for counsel.
7. It allows members to directly express concerns directly to the leadership. Included in this is the ability to receive feedback on the pastor's ministry from people who would be uncomfortable in talking directly to him.
8. Families see pastoral care modeled in their own home.

9. Elders can preempt members who are tempted to make a bad decision or to complicate a difficult situation in some way.

9 Negative Reasons for Not Neglecting Elder Visits:

1. Lack of elder visits depersonalizes the leadership of the church, and it becomes easier to criticize the leadership and even fall into disaffection.
2. Lack of elder visits mean that leadership makes decisions with the congregation as an abstract concept.
3. When elders only become involved in crises the members may assume that elders have no right to confront sin or administer discipline. Then, when elders do have to initiate correction, they will not have enough capital built up to gain a hearing. Members will dismiss admonitions from the elders and justify their dismissal echoing the sentiment, "I don't care what you know, until I know that you care."
4. Misconceptions members have will remain underground, unknown to the elders.
5. Members may conclude that leadership is not working hard to fulfill their vows and neither should they.
6. Members will go to the pastors for all of their needs since they are the most visible. The office of elder will be seen as having a minimal significance.
7. Members will feel cut off from leadership.
8. Members will struggle alone, and make decisions that complicate their lives before the elder can possibly know it and become involved.
9. By the time the elders know about it, it may be too late.

BOOK REVIEWS

Dogmatic Theology, by W.G.T. Shedd, edited by Alan Gomes, 3d edition. Published by P&R Publishing, 2003. Hardback, 992 pages. List price \$59.99 (\$38.99 at Westminster Seminary Bookstore). Reviewed by Pastor Mark Herzer.

There have been about a dozen systematic theologies written by American presbyterians to date. Most presbyterian pastors and laymen possess Charles Hodge or Robert Dabney and perhaps a few others. But of W.G.T. Shedd, little is commonly known. While most have heard of him, the only things that are usually recognized are his realistic theory and his traducianism. Apart from that, he is set aside as being just another reformed theologian with nothing unique to offer. I think that is incorrect.

He was not viewed that way by his contemporaries. Two men have listed Shedd as one of America's greatest theologians. Thorton Whaling lists Shedd as being one of the three best theologians in America (Jonathan Edwards and R. L. Dabney are the other two), and Thomas C. Johnson lists Shedd along with Thornwell and Dabney. Many may agree with some of these names but few in our generation would have listed Shedd. Shedd was highly prized and eagerly read by nineteenth-century Christians, but he has been greatly neglected in the twenty-first century. Most today think of Charles Hodge as the great nineteenth-century giant while that appears not to have been the case for many in that century.

P&R has remedied this neglect and has done a wonderful service

to the Christian community in reprinting Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*. Before presenting my review of this new volume, a few words of an introductory nature are in order. Almost all of his works have been reprinted in the twentieth century, with the exception of his *Literary Essays* and yet even this volume has been recently reprinted (by Wipf and Stock Publishers). Most of his works have been before the public through The Banner of Truth Trust and Klock and Klock, and his *Dogmatic Theology* has been reprinted by Zondervan and Thomas Nelson. These reprints have been predominantly facsimiles but the book before us has been completely redone, and therefore deserves to be considered a new edition. I believe this edition is a tremendous improvement over the original three editions.

Alan Gomes, the editor of this volume, states, "Careful study of Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology* is, I dare say, much more than an intellectual exercise: it is an aesthetic experience for those who appreciate the comeliness of truth. If truth is beautiful in itself, then Shedd's vigorous and stately prose sets before us incomparable beauty beautifully expressed" (p. 12). One of the first things the reader will notice from Shedd's writings is his absolute clarity and beauty of expression. Since he was a professor of English studies for seven years before taking on his theological professorships, this is to be expected. However, his theology is not mere beautiful prose, but also lucidly logical and densely penetrating. Gomes says "I believe that W.G.T. Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology* can serve as a powerful

floodlight to lay bare some of the theological blind spots plaguing today's evangelical church" (p. 11). He is absolutely correct.

Let me first list many of the strengths of this edition. This is a very usable volume. I was always forced to lug my three volume set with me on my vacation and found them cumbersome to study, but Gomes has combined the entire three volumes into one. This is not an abridgement of the three volume work. Though it may be difficult to believe, this single volume includes the entire three volumes. Unlike the abridged one volume edition of C. Hodge, Gomes has compressed the entire three volumes into one without leaving out anything. The fonts are easy to read and the format is attractive. The most helpful change is the translation of all the foreign language quotes. The original is placed in the footnote while the editor's translation is incorporated into the body of the text. This alone makes the new edition superior to the previous editions because it possesses both the original and the translation.

Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology* was originally published in two volumes (in 1888) and the third volume was subsequently added in the year of his death (1894). The third volume is supplemental and adds various selections from other writings which support or elucidate his argumentation. There are several places in the third volume which truly shed further light on particular theological topics. However, it is utterly cumbersome to use because there are no clues in the two vol-

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umes which would direct you to the third—you always had to have the third volume handy and were forced to read two volumes at a time. This great problem has thoroughly disappeared in this new edition. The editor placed the respective contents of the third volume after their appropriate chapters; now, you can easily access the supplemental contents because Gomes refers you to the supplement in the body of the main text.

In addition, Gomes has set off in block quotes large extractions from other works (which Shedd did not do) and has given helpful titles and subtitles. Shedd did not use subdivisions, and this made it difficult to locate a particular aspect of a topic. Gomes' titles for these sections are very user-friendly. He has also added several helpful appendices. He gives a bibliography of all the works Shedd cited and also includes a very helpful glossary of technical terms with a separate glossary entitled "Biographical Entries" (a handy list and explanation of various authorities Shedd cited).

As if that was not enough, he has written an able and accurate introductory essay introducing the author and the general contours of the masterpiece. Gomes has encapsulated all the salient facets of Shedd's thought in a superbly succinct manner. This essay was a delight to read and he seems to have mastered most of the secondary literature related to Shedd.

What then are the weaknesses? There is not much to mention, but I will suggest a few (though they are so minor). Since Gomes has taken the liberty of adding titles to

various subsections in Shedd's theology, they can be misleading. Though the subtitles are helpful, they are at times quite arbitrary and misleading. Shedd's excellent chapter entitled "Theanthropic Person" has many numbered points to it. Rather than numbering each of them, Gomes has placed titles for some of the numbered points. The other numbered points are subsumed under Gomes' subtitles. The practical effect of this method is to give the editor the undue license in making one point more prominent than another (e.g., points 6 & 9 are under previous points, pp. 623, 631). This is a very minor point. There are, however, many times where the subsections are very helpful and they give the reader some breathing space. Shedd's chapter on "Christ's Mediatorial Offices" addresses the distinction between the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace. After resolving the issue, he immediately develops the three offices of Christ. At this point (p. 681), Gomes inserts a most appropriate title because Shedd had changed his topic.

Shedd occasionally referred to other parts of his *Dogmatic Theology*, and various page numbers were cited by him. Gomes usually catches these references and repaginates to fit the new edition, although he missed a few. For example, Shedd refers to "p. 91 sq." in his section on Christology (2:301-302 n.2). Rather than converting the page numbers to correspond to the new edition, Gomes has merely reproduced the same page references. If the reader does not have the original three volume edition, he will not be able to refer to the specific page.

There are also issues of accuracy. This is not truly a third edition; it is in fact a fourth edition. I have in my possession the three previous editions and found to my surprise that P&R has listed this as the third edition. This is a very minor issue. Finally, the editor states that Shedd published Cole-ridge's works in 1852 when in fact they were published in 1853 (a minor error no doubt taken from Grecu's essay). As you can tell, the weaknesses are technical in nature and they do not in any way take away from the value of this new edition. It is relatively cheap since a three volume set usually goes for around \$100 in the used market. It is worth getting this new edition.

In conclusion, let me add a few words regarding the value of reading Shedd. *Dogmatic theology* includes a fine defense of the doctrine of hell, the atonement, and a lucid display of the doctrine of Christology (e.g., the unipersonality of Christ). In addition, this volume will make you think. Shedd has been deemed by some to be the most speculative theologian of the orthodox wing, and many have noted his rigorous logical abilities. His cogent and clear arguments demand your fullest attention. Though you may breeze through Hodge and Berk-hof many times, you cannot get away with that when reading Shedd. I have found myself pausing and pondering quite deeply when reading Shedd and have been forced to take a deep breath. His mastery of church history and relevant secondary literature is breathtaking. His *Dogmatic Theology* is uneven (e.g., he does not address all the usual topics in

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great depth), but on the points in which he gives his energy, you will find him to be full of insight. Reading deep theology is not fashionable these days but I can think of very few things that would be of equal value in our generation. When was the last time you read through a systematic theology? This one is worth your effort. I end by quoting one of my favorite statements from Shedd (taken from his Preface, p. 38 in the new edition):

If an author in any department gets into the eddies of his age and whirls round and round in them, he knows little of the sweep of the vast stream of the ages which holds on its way forever and forevermore. If this treatise has any merits, they are due very much to daily and nightly communion with that noble army of theologians which is composed of the elite of the fathers, of the Schoolmen, of the reformers, and of the seventeenth-century divines of England and the Continent.

The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented, by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas (with new additions by S. Lance Quinn), 2d edition. Published by P&R Publishing, 2004. Paperback, 272 pages, retail price \$12.99. Reviewed by Jacques Roets.

The “Doctrines of Grace” are some of the most precious truths of God’s word. They provide believers with an unshakable confidence. Their salvation is secure because it is all of God! From its inception in God’s eternal pur-

poses, to its accomplishment on the cross by Christ, through its application by the Holy Spirit to the heart and until the final glorification of believers, it is all of God. God the Father purposed it, the Son accomplished it and the Holy Spirit applies it and assures its perfection! Nothing is left to chance. God does it all! This working of the Triune God to save sinners is the most comforting truth to doubting and struggling believers on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem.

But the sad reality is that many Christians today are denied—or deny themselves—the joy of this comfort! They believe that God merely purposed to save those whom he “foreknew” would believe, that Christ died merely to make salvation possible for all; that the Holy Spirit is waiting for us to open the door of our hearts before he comes in; and therefore, they also hold that it is possible for Christians to lose their salvation! These thoughts have robbed many of God’s children of their true inheritance.

The Five Points of Calvinism is a book that addresses this situation. It is designed to be, as it is stated in the Preface to the first edition, “an introductory survey of that system of theology known as ‘the five points of Calvinism’” (xxi). Part One of the book introduces the history behind the points and briefly defines each of them in comparison to their Arminian counterpart (pp. 1-15). Part Two is devoted to listing the Biblical support in defense of each of the five doctrines. This section is the most valuable section of the book

since it marshals passage after passage in support of each point to show how the Scriptures affirm it. This will be a powerful source of comfort and instruction for all the saints who struggle with these doctrines, and an invaluable resource for ministers and elders who preach and teach these doctrines to God’s children, giving the saints their inheritance. All the biblical quotations of this second edition are from the English Standard Version (pp.17-71). Part Three provides a long list of bibliographic material, first on Calvinism in general, and then on each of the five points in particular. This list is considerably expanded and updated from the first edition adding many valuable sources to those which appeared in the edition of forty years ago. All in all 328 sources are listed, some with an explanatory note to highlight their relevance. For anybody who is interested in finding out more about Calvinism this will be of inestimable help. Another improvement on the first edition is the addition of seven new appendices to the one in the first edition. These appendices contribute to a fuller understanding of preciousness and continual relevance of the “Doctrines of Grace.”

Since this book is such a great resource to show forth the biblical witness to the saving work of our Triune God, I can highly recommend this updated and expanded fortieth-anniversary edition to all. In fact I deem it so valuable that I recommended it to our elders who, in turn, determined that it will henceforth be a standard gift to all men newly elected to this office.

BOOK REVIEWS

Puritan Reformed Spirituality, by Joel R. Beeke. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004. Hardback, 475 pages, retail price \$35. Reviewed by the Editor.

This book—which is being given away in connection with donations to the proposed new Puritan and Reformed Theological Seminary—is a winsome introduction to the great puritans of the past. It is also a strong refutation of those who like to make too great a distinction between John Calvin and these, his worthy successors. Let me mention just a few of the things that I found most interesting.

One is the importance of the “lost art” of meditation. Living as we do today, with a constant stream of information (and misinformation) via the internet, there is much to learn from the Puritan emphasis on *medita-*

tion—that is, on taking the time to *think* about what we have seen and heard (especially from the preaching).

As one who has roots in the past in the Scottish secession led by the Erskine brothers, I am grateful for the fine summary of the life and work of these men in two of the chapters of this book.

The Westminster Assembly was a culmination point in the history of the Puritans. And the men and events brought into focus here increase both my understanding of, and appreciation for, the great doctrinal standards they produced. I hope many of you will get this book. I’m sure you will not be disappointed.

I first saw it on the web site mentioned below. In it is to be found the following announcement: “*This book is being published as a fund-raiser for the*

new \$3.1 million building project of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, which will also house RHB. As of this writing, \$2.4 million has been given or pledged; an additional \$700,000 needs to be collected to complete the project. We would like to make one copy of Puritan Reformed Spirituality available to everyone free of charge, whether or not you can give a donation. All donations will be matched by a donor. A tax deductible receipt will be forwarded to you. Donations may be made by Visa, MasterCard, or check. Please make check payable to Reformation Heritage Books, earmarked "Building Fund", and send to Reformation Heritage Books, 2919 Leonard St. NE., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525. To order more than one copy, please remit \$20.00 per copy, plus postage. For further information, email us at orders@heritagebooks.org, or call us at 616-977-0599.”

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