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Published by  
The Christian Education Committee  
of  
THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

January, 1993

**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**

It is with gratitude to God that we begin a second year of publication for *Ordained Servant*. As we do so we want to note several items in the paragraphs that follow.

First of all, our thanks to Dr. James Visscher of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Dr. Visscher edits a journal called DIAKONIA, now in its sixth year of publication. When we first saw this publication we recognized at once that it was the sort of thing that we needed in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Dr. Visscher offered en-

couragement right from the start, and also granted us permission to reprint material from DIAKONIA. It is our opinion that no one has surpassed our Dutch brethren in the cultivation of good elder oversight. It is therefore our intention to make good use of some of the excellent material from DIAKONIA in future issues of *Ordained Servant*.

In the second place, we want to thank all of you who have written to the editor. Some have contributed mate-

## EDITORIAL

rial that we have already used, or will use in this issue or issues to follow. In this issue we present the training course for office-bearers developed by Rev. John Hilbelink. From various quarters we have had requests for something along this line, and we are thankful that pastor Hilbelink has been willing to help us. Others have written to encourage us, to voice constructive criticism, or just to pose a worthwhile question. We are thankful for every one of them, and hope that future issues will show that we try to respond.

Finally, a word of appreciation to the members of Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Carson, North Dakota. Since Pleroma Press is a fledgling operation, and does not have a mechanical page assembler, the work has been done—*willingly*—by Bethel members. They understand how important it is to the well-being of the church to have faithful and able pastors, elders and deacons.

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At the fall meeting of the Committee on Christian Education, it was decided that the following information be included in this issue of *Ordained Servant*.

*Ordained Servant* is published according to the following mandate, adopted by the full Committee on Christian Education, September 12-13, 1991.

“That the CCE approve the publishing of a journal two to four times per year of approximately 20-24 pages (8 1/2 x 11, hole-punched) to be mailed in sufficient quantities to each session to provide copies for all elders, teaching and ruling, and deacons. Contents such as the following would be included:

- A. Editorial page introducing each issue.
- B. The work of the Elder and Deacon
  1. Theoretical
    - a. Biblical/Theological/Exegetical Studies
    - b. Studies in Church Standards (COF, Catechisms, BOCO)
    - c. Historical studies from history of Presbyterian Reformed churches
  2. Practical
    - a. The elders’ oversight of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline
    - b. The elders’ leadership in worship, evangelism, and edification
    - c. The elder’s task in wider assemblies
    - d. Discussion of practical problems for elders and deacons
    - e. The deacon’s task in the congregation
    - f. The deacon’s task in wider assemblies
  3. Suggested (session-directed or self study) courses for

- elders and deacons
  - a. Syllabus of recommended books and activities for officer training
  - b. Resources (books, reviews, etc.)”

*Ordained Servant* is under the immediate oversight of four members (two teaching and two ruling elders) of the Christian Education Committee. At the fall meeting of this sub-committee it was also decided that you should be informed as to the cost to our denomination for the publication of this periodical. The budgeted cost for 1993 is \$19,200. This means that it costs our churches about \$13 each, per year, to supply office-bearers with their own copy of *Ordained Servant*. And the inevitable question is: *is it worth what it is costing?*

To answer this we need to hear from you. It would help us to know the answers to questions such as these:

- are we dealing with the things that concern you?
- are we failing to deal with vital concerns that you can bring to our attention?
- do you have something of superior value that the rest of the church needs to have?
- is *Ordained Servant* being used by your Session members?
- if it is not, would you please let us know what we can do to make it more usable?

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One of the areas that we deal with in this issue (Dr. Leonard Coppes review article), and want to encourage in future issues of *Ordained Servant*, is a more effective use of modern technology. As the invention of the printing press was of no small importance as a means of promoting the Reformation of the 16th century, so the electronic revolution could—if God so wills—be of similar importance to the church in days to come. This publication is itself an example of what we mean. With a Macintosh IIsi computer and a small GCC personal laser printer, we have been able to produce master copy ready for the printer. We have also made use of the fax-modem method of rapid transference of written material. It is our view that just we who have been granted the privilege of knowing the truth by God, ought to be the most zealous to make good use of such means for his glory.

We therefore invite those who may be able to help us learn to exploit this God-given means for the advancement of His Kingdom to contribute to *Ordained Servant*. We cannot promise to use everything that is sent to us, but we will certainly consider it carefully.

# A TRAINING COURSE FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS

In Two Sections\*

by Rev. John R. Hilbelink

Second Parish Orthodox Presbyterian Church,  
Portland, Maine

## INTRODUCTION — A SUMMARY OF THE COURSE

1. 5 WEEKS - WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (READ THE CATECHISMS)
2. 4 WEEKS - ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORM OF GOVERNMENT (READ THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE AND DIRECTORY OF WORSHIP)
3. 4 WEEKS - THE WORK OF THE ELDER AND DEACON

### STEPS TOWARD ORDINATION

1. NOMINATION SUBMITTED TO THE SESSION
2. TRAINING
3. EXAMINATION BY THE SESSION
4. NOMINATION CERTIFIED BY THE SESSION
5. ELECTION BY THE CONGREGATION
6. ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION BY THE ELDERS

### ORDINATION VOWS

#### ASKED OF THE CANDIDATE:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
3. Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?
4. Do you promise to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?
5. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon) in this congregation and promise, in reliance on the grace of God, faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

#### ASKED OF THE CONGREGATION:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office according to the Word of God and the constitution of this church, entitles him?

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\*In this issue of *Ordained Servant* we publish the first section in its entirety.

**A TRAINING COURSE FOR ELDERs AND DEACONS**

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH - 5 WEEKS\*

WEEK	CHAPTER	TITLE	SECTIONS	PAGES
1.	I.	OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE -	10	22pp
	II.	OF GOD, AND OF THE HOLY TRINITY -	3	7pp
	III.	OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE -	8	11pp
	IV.	OF CREATION -	2	5pp
	V.	OF PROVIDENCE -	6	7pp
			29	52pp
2.	VI.	OF THE FALL OF MAN, OF SIN AND OF THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF -	6	9pp
	VII.	OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH MAN -	6	9pp
	VIII.	OF CHRIST THE MEDIATOR -	8	16pp
	IX.	OF FREE WILL -	5	3pp
	X.	OF EFFECTUAL CALLING -	4	8pp
	XIV.	OF SAVING FAITH -	3	4pp
	XV.	OF REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE -	6	3pp
			38	52pp
3.	XI.	OF JUSTIFICATION -	6	8pp
	XII.	OF ADOPTION -	1	3pp
	XIII.	OF SANCTIFICATION -	3	3pp
	XVI.	OF GOOD WORKS -	7	9pp
	XVII.	OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS -	3	5pp
	XVIII.	OF THE ASSURANCE OF GRACE AND SALVATION -	4	6pp
	XIX.	OF THE LAW OF GOD -	7	10pp
		XX.	OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE -	4
			35	55pp
4.	XXI.	OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND THE SABBATH DAY -	8	16pp
	XXII.	OF LAWFUL OATHS AND VOWS -	7	6pp
	XXIV.	OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE -	6	7pp
	XXV.	OF THE CHURCH -	6	9pp
	XXVI.	OF THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS	3	4pp
	XXVII.	OF THE SACRAMENTS -	5	7pp
			35	49pp
5.	XXVIII.	OF BAPTISM -	7	10pp
	XXIX.	OF THE LORD'S SUPPER -	8	14pp
	XXX.	OF CHURCH CENSURES -	4	9pp
	XXIII.	OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE -	4	4pp
	XXXI.	OF SYNODS AND COUNCILS -	5	8pp
	XXXII.	OF THE STATE OF MEN AFTER DEATH AND OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD -	3	7pp
	XXXIII.	OF THE LAST JUDGMENT -	3	9pp
		34	61pp	
TOTAL —			171	269pp

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READING

(Not necessarily covered in class)

1. THE WESTMINSTER LARGER CATECHISM - 196 QUESTIONS.
2. THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM - 107 QUESTIONS.

\* The textbook used for this part of the course was *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* by G. I. Williamson, Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1964.

**A TRAINING COURSE FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS**

THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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FOUR WEEKS

WEEK	CHAPTER	TITLE	SECTIONS	PAGES
1.	I.	CHRIST, THE KING & HEAD OF THE CHURCH	4	3pp
	II.	THE CHURCH	4	1p
	III.	THE NATURE & EXERCISE OF CHURCH POWER	5	2pp
	IV.	THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH	4	2pp
	V.	OFFICES IN THE CHURCH	3	2pp
	VI.	MINISTERS OR TEACHING ELDERS	4	2pp
	VII.	EVANGELISTS	2	1p
	VIII.	PASTORS	1	1p
	IX.	TEACHERS	2	1p
	X.	RULING ELDERS	3	1p
	XI.	DEACONS	7	2pp
	XII.	GOVERNING ASSEMBLIES	4	2pp
	XIII.	THE LOCAL CHURCH & ITS SESSION	10	3pp
			53	23pp
2.	XIV.	THE REGIONAL CHURCH AND ITS PRESBYTERY	9	3pp
	XV.	THE WHOLE CHURCH AND ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY	8	3pp
	XVI.	CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS	7	2pp
	XVII.	CONGREGATIONS WITHOUT PASTORS	3	1p
	XVIII.	MODERATORS	3	1p
	XIX.	CLERKS	1	1p
	XX.	ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION	8	2pp
	XXI.	LICENSING CANDIDATES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL	11	5pp
			50	18pp
	3.	XXII.	CALLING A MINISTER	16
XXIII.		ORDAINING & INSTALLING MINISTERS	20	20pp
XXIV.		DISSOLVING MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIPS	5	3pp
XXV.		ELECTING, ORDAINING, AND INSTALLING RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS	7	5pp
XXVI.		DIVESTING FROM OFFICE	7	3pp
			55	39pp
4.	XXVII.	MISSIONS	3	1p
	XXVIII.	MINISTERS LABORING OUTSIDE THE CHURCH	4	3pp
	XXIX.	ORGANIZING AND RECEIVING CONGREGATIONS	7	6pp
	XXX.	ORGANIZATIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH	3	1p
	XXXI.	INCORPORATION AND CORPORATIONS	5	2pp
	XXXII.	THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS AMENDMENT	5	2pp
			27	15pp
			185	95pp

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READING  
(Not necessarily covered in class)

1. THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BOOK OF DISCIPLINE
2. THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP

READINGS CONCERNING THE OFFICES OF ELDER AND DEACON

FOUR WEEKS

READING FOR OFFICE OF ELDER AND DEACON

1. THE GLORIOUS BODY OF CHRIST by R. B. Kuiper
2. WHO WILL LEAD US? by Leonard Coppes
3. THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH by Thomas Witherow
4. WHY THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH? by John P. Galbraith
5. UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES by G. I. Williamson
6. SHEPHERDING GOD'S FLOCK (VOL. 3) by Jay Adams
7. BY-LAWS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND
8. SAMPLE EXAMINATION FOR RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS (paper)

READING FOR THE OFFICE OF ELDER

1. THE ELDERS HANDBOOK by Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster
2. THE RULING ELDER by Lawrence R. Eyres
3. THE RULING ELDER (book or pamphlet) by Samuel Miller
4. THE RULING ELDER (pamphlet) by Leonard VanHorn
5. TAKING HEED TO THE FLOCK by Peter Y. DeJong
6. THE CHALLENGE OF ELDERSHIP by Donald J. MacNair
7. BIBLICAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT by Kenneth A. Horner, Jr.
8. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ELDER VISITATION (paper)

READING FOR THE OFFICE OF DEACON

1. LOVE EXPRESSED THROUGH MERCY MINISTRIES by Tim Keller
2. THE DEACONS HANDBOOK by Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster
3. THE MINISTRY OF MERCY FOR TODAY by Peter Y. DeJong
4. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF THE DIACONATE (paper) by George W. Knight, III
5. THE SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE DIACONATE (paper) by Theodore Hard
6. THE OFFICE OF DEACON (paper)
7. A PROPOSED JOB DESCRIPTION FOR A DEACON (paper) by A. G. Edwards
8. GUIDELINES, BOARD OF DEACONS, FRANKLIN SQUARE, NEW YORK (paper)

OFFICER TRAINING — WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

FIVE WEEKS

- A. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, and answer the questions below.
- B. Read the Larger Catechism, and write an outline no longer than one page.
- C. Read the Shorter Catechism, and write an outline no longer than one page.

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## A TRAINING COURSE FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS

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### WEEK 1 - STUDY QUESTIONS

#### CHAPTERS I - V

##### I. OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

1. In what two ways does God reveal himself, and why is only one of them sufficient for salvation? (I,1).
2. How many books are there in the Old Testament? The New Testament? (I,2).
3. Of what use are the books called the "Apocrypha"? (I,3).
4. On what does the authority of the Scripture depend, and on what does it not depend? (I,4).
5. In view of the various evidences that the Bible is God's Word, what is necessary for our full persuasion and assurance? (I,5).
6. What is meant by the phrase "good and necessary consequence"? (I,6).
7. How easy is the Scripture to understand? (I,7).
8. In what languages was the Scripture written, and why should we translate the Bible into our own language? (I,8).
9. Who is the only infallible interpreter of the Scripture? (I,9).
10. Who is "the supreme judge" for all controversies of religion? (I,10).

##### II. OF GOD AND OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

1. What are God's attributes? (II,1).
2. Describe God in relationship to his creation. (II,2).
3. What are the three persons of the Godhead, and how are they related to one another? (II,3).

##### III. OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE.

1. If God ordains whatever comes to pass, what must we believe concerning our responsibility and freedom? (III,1).
2. If God decreed to do something because he saw beforehand what would happen, what effect might this have on his sovereignty? (III,2).
3. What has God decreed for all men? (III,3).
4. How certain is God's predestination and foreordination? (III,4).
5. What is predestination unto life? (III,5).
6. What in the Christian's present life is affected by God's predestination unto life? (III,6).
7. What is the purpose of God's ordaining some to dishonor? (III,7).
8. How should we handle the doctrine of predestination, and how do we benefit from studying God's decrees? (III,8).

##### IV. OF CREATION.

1. What is God's work of creation? (IV,1).
2. What distinguishes the creation of man? (IV,2).

##### V. OF PROVIDENCE.

1. What four words describe God's works of providence? (V,1).
2. If God is "the first Cause," what is meant by the phrase "second causes"? (V,2).
3. Give an example of what is described in section 3. (V,3).
4. What is the relationship of God's providence to the fall of man and to sin? (V,4).
5. Why does God allow us to suffer the sinfulness and miseries of this life? (V,5).
6. How does God deal with "wicked and ungodly men"? (V,6).
7. Who is the greatest beneficiary of God's providence? (V,7)

### WEEK 2 - STUDY QUESTIONS

#### CHAPTERS VI - X, XIV, XV.

VI. OF THE FALL OF MAN, OF SIN AND OF THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF.

1. What was the first sin, and what was God's relationship to it? (VI,1).
2. What was the result of the first sin? (VI,2).
3. How does the Fall affect all others? (VI,3).
4. Why do we sin? (VI,4).
5. Do Christians sin? (VI,5)
6. What is meant by "original and actual" sin, and what consequences do they bring on us? (VI,6).

VII. OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH MAN.

1. Why is it necessary that God come to us to save us? (VII,1).
2. What is the "covenant of works," and with whom was it made? (VII,2).
3. What is the "covenant of grace," and with whom was it made? (VII,3).
4. How is the covenant also a "testament"? (VII,4).
5. How was the covenant of grace administered in the Old Testament? (VII,5).
6. How is the covenant of grace administered in the New Testament? (VII,6).

VIII. OF CHRIST THE MEDIATOR.

1. What did God send Jesus to be for us? (VIII,1).
2. What are the "distinct natures" of Christ, and how are they related to each other? (VIII,2).
3. How are the Father and the Holy Spirit involved in the ministry of Christ? (VIII,3).
4. Describe the humiliation of Christ. (VIII,4).
5. What was accomplished by Christ's perfect obedience and sacrifice? (VIII,5).
6. How does Christ's work relate to the believers of the Old Testament? (VIII,6).
7. Describe further how the "distinct natures" of Christ are related to each other. (VIII,7)
8. How does Christ serve as our mediator now? (VIII,8).

IX. OF FREE WILL.

1. Describe the "natural liberty" God has given to us. (IX,1).
2. What liberty did Adam and Eve enjoy in the garden? (IX,2).
3. Describe man's liberty after the Fall. (IX,3).
4. What liberty do we have as Christians? (IX,4).
5. Describe the liberty possessed by the saints in heaven. (IX,5).

X. OF EFFECTUAL CALLING.

1. Whom does God effectually call, and what changes occur in those he effectually calls? (X,1).
2. What part does man have in his effectual calling, and what part does God have? (X,2).
3. What does the Confession say about those who cannot hear the gospel, such as "elect infants, dying in infancy"? (X,3).
4. How good must "others, not elected" be to be saved? (X,4).

XIV. OF SAVING FAITH.

1. What is "the grace of faith," and how do we receive it? (XI,1)
2. What are "the principal acts of saving faith"? (XI,2).
3. How are faith and assurance related? (XI,3).

XV. OF REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.

1. What must always accompany the preaching of repentance? (XV,1)
2. Describe repentance unto life. (XV,2).
3. Why is repentance necessary? (XV,3).

4. Is there any sin too great for true repentance? (XV,4).
5. How specific should we be in repentance? (XV,5).
6. Under what circumstances should there be a private or public confession of sin? (XV,6).

WEEK 3 - STUDY QUESTIONS

CHAPTERS XI - XIII AND XVI - XX

XI. OF JUSTIFICATION.

1. Describe four false views of justification and the answer to each. (XI,1).
2. Describe the faith that justifies. (XI,2).
3. Describe the extent of Christ's payment for our justification. (XI,3).
4. When was our justification decreed, accomplished, and applied? (XI,4).
5. What must one who is justified by faith do when he sins? (XI,5).
6. How does the justification of believers under the Old Testament compare to that of believers under the New Testament? (XI,6).

XII. OF ADOPTION.

1. What privileges are enjoyed by those who are made partakers of the grace of adoption? (XII,1).

XIII. OF SANCTIFICATION.

1. What changes take place in the lives of those who are sanctified, and by what power do these changes take place? (XIII,1).
2. What is the extent of God's sanctifying work in our lives? (XIII,2).
3. Describe the "continual and irreconcilable war" in the lives of those who are sanctified? (XIII,2,3).

XVI. OF GOOD WORKS.

1. What is, and what is not, a "good work"? (XVI,1).
2. What is the purpose of good works? (XVI,2).
3. How are the grace of God and our diligence related to our doing good works? (XVI,3).
4. How close can we get to perfection in this life? (XVI,4).
5. Why can't we earn salvation by our good works? (XVI,5).
6. Why then does God look upon our works as good? (XVI,6).
7. Describe the "works done by unregenerate men". (XVI,7).

XVII. OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

1. What does God's effectual calling and sanctification accomplish in us? (XVII,1).
2. On what does our perseverance depend? (XVII,2).
3. What may happen to those who are called and sanctified? (XVII,3).

XVIII. OF THE ASSURANCE OF GRACE AND SALVATION.

1. Who may enjoy assurance of salvation? (XVIII,1).
2. On what is the certainty of our faith founded? (XVIII,2).
3. How are faith and assurance related? (XVIII,3).
4. To what extent may our assurance be shaken? (XVIII,4).

XIX. OF THE LAW OF GOD.

1. Describe the law which God gave to Adam as a covenant of works. (XIX,1,2).

2. How are the ten commandments divided? (XIX,2).
3. What is the moral law, and what are meant by the ceremonial laws? (XIX,3).
4. What other laws did God give to his people under Moses, and what do you think is meant by the phrase "further than the general equity thereof may require"? (XIX,4).
5. How binding is the moral law? (XIX,5).
6. In what way is the law of great use to believers? (XIX,6).
7. How is the law related to grace? (XIX,7).

XX. OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

1. What is meant by Christian liberty? (XX,1).
2. What do you consider to be some ramifications of the phrase "God alone is Lord of the conscience"? (XX,2).
3. What is the "end" of Christian liberty, and how might it be destroyed? (XX,3).
4. What is the relationship of Christian liberty to the civil government? (XX,4).

WEEK 4 - STUDY QUESTIONS

CHAPTERS XXI, XXII, XXIV - XXVII

XXI. OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND THE SABBATH DAY.

1. Where must we learn how to worship God? (XXI,1).
2. To whom and through whom is worship to be given? (XXI,2).
3. How are we to pray? (XXI,3).
4. For whom and what may we pray? (XXI,4).
5. What also are parts of the ordinary worship of God? (XXI,5).
6. How is the place of worship related to our worship today? (XXI,6).
7. On what day is the Christian sabbath, and why must we continue to remember it? (XXI,7).
8. How must we keep the sabbath? (XXI,8).

XXII. OF LAWFUL OATHS AND VOWS.

1. What is a lawful oath? (XXII,1).
2. How must an oath be taken? (XXII,2).
3. To what may a person bind himself by oath? (XXII,3).
4. What is forbidden in taking oaths? (XXII,4).
5. How is a vow like an oath? (XXII,5).
6. To whom is a vow made? (XXII,6).
7. Under what circumstances is a vow now to be taken? (XXII,7).

XXIV. OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

1. How many wives or husbands may one have? (XXIV,1).
2. Why was marriage ordained by God? (XXIV,2).
3. Who may marry whom? (XXIV,3).
4. Under what circumstances may people not marry? (XXIV,3,4).
5. What are the biblical grounds for divorce? (XXIV,5,6).
6. Under what circumstances may a divorced person remarry? (XXIV,5,6).

XXV. OF THE CHURCH.

1. What is the "invisible" church? (XXV,1).
2. Describe the "visible" church and her importance. (XXV,2).
3. What did Christ give to the visible church and for what purpose? (XXV,3).

4. How perfect is the catholic visible church? (XXV,4).
5. Describe the purity and permanence of the church. (XXV,5).
6. Who is the head of the church? (XXV,6).

XXVI. OF THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

1. Describe our union in Christ and our union to one another. (XXVI,1).
2. What is our duty with regard to the communion of the saints? (XXVI,2).
3. What is not meant by the communion of saints? (XXVI,3).

XXVII. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

1. What is the relationship of the sacraments to the covenant of grace? (XXVII,1).
2. How are the sign and the thing signified related? (XXVII,2).
3. Upon what does the grace in the sacrament depend, and upon what does it not depend? (XXVII,3).
4. What are the sacraments ordained by Christ? (XXVII,4).
5. How are the sacraments of the Old Testament related to the sacraments of the New Testament? (XXVII,5).

WEEK 5 - STUDY QUESTIONS

CHAPTERS XXVII - XXX, XXIII, XXXI - XXXIII

XXVIII. OF BAPTISM.

1. For what purposes did Christ ordain the sacrament of baptism, and of what is baptism a sign and seal? (XXVIII,1).
2. What is the outward element, and in whose name is the person baptized? (XXVIII,2).
3. How is baptism to be administered? (XXVIII,2,3).
4. To whom is the sacrament of baptism to be administered? (XXVIII,4).
5. How urgent is the administration of the sacrament of baptism? (XXVIII,5,6).
6. How are grace and salvation related to the sacrament of baptism? (XXVIII,5,6).
7. How often must a person be baptized? (XXVIII,7).

XXIX. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. For what purpose did Christ ordain the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (XXIX,1), and of what is it a sign and seal (I Corinthians 11:25)?
2. How is Christ's death related to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? (XXIX,2).
3. By whom, to whom, and how is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to be administered? (XXIX,3).
4. What misuse is to be avoided? (XXIX,4).
5. What are the outward elements of the Lord's Supper, and how closely related are they to what they represent? (XXIX,5).
6. What misuse is to be avoided? (XXIX,6).
7. How is Christ related to those who worthily receive the elements? (XXIX,7).
8. Who may not receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? (XXIX,8).

XXX. OF CHURCH CENSURES.

1. By whom is the government of the church established, and to whom is it entrusted? (XXX,1).
2. What is meant by "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" in relation to the government of the church? (XXX,2).
3. What are the purposes of church censures? (XXX,3).
4. How may the officers of the church attain these purposes? (XXX,4).

XXIII. OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

1. By whom were civil governments ordained, and for what purpose? (XXIII,1).
2. To what extent may a Christian be involved in the civil government? (XXIII,2).

3. How is the civil government to be related to the church? (XXIII,3).
4. What is our duty to the civil government? (XXIII,4).

XXXI. OF SYNODS AND COUNCILS.

1. By whom and for what purposes are synods and councils to be called? (XXXI,1).
2. What must the synods and councils do to attain these purposes, and how are their decisions to be received by the members of the church? (XXXI,2).
3. What is the relationship of synods and councils to our faith and practice? (XXXI,3).
4. What is the relationship of synods and councils to the civil government? (XXXI,4).

XXXII. OF THE STATE OF MEN AFTER DEATH, AND OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

1. What happens to the bodies and souls of men after death? (XXXII,1).
2. What will happen "at the last day"? (XXXII,2).
3. What happens to the bodies of the just and unjust at the resurrection? (XXXII,3).

XXXIII. OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

1. At the last judgment, who will judge, who will be judged, and what will be taken into account in the judgment? (XXXIII,1).
2. What is the purpose of the last judgment, and what will happen to the righteous and the wicked? (XXXIII,2).
3. Why is it important that we know that there is a last judgment while not knowing the time it will take place? (XXXIII,3).

+ + +

OUTLINE OF THE WESTMINSTER LARGER CATECHISM

Fill in the blanks with the Larger Catechism question numbers you think best reflect the themes in the outline below. All numbers are in sequence.

INTRODUCTION

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>____. I. Man's Chief End.</p> <p>____. II. Revelation and Scripture.</p> | <p>____. B. Union with Christ.</p> <p>____. 1. Effectual Calling.</p> <p>____. 2. Communion in Grace.</p> <p>____. 3. Communion in Glory.</p> |
|---|---|

WHAT MAN IS TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

- \_\_\_\_. I. God and the Trinity.
- \_\_\_\_. II. God's decrees.
- \_\_\_\_. A. Creation.
- \_\_\_\_. B. Providence.
- \_\_\_\_. III. The Covenant of Life.
- \_\_\_\_. A. The Fall.
- \_\_\_\_. B. Sin.
- \_\_\_\_. IV. The Covenant of Grace.
- \_\_\_\_. A. The Person of Christ.
- \_\_\_\_. B. The Work of Christ.
- \_\_\_\_. V. Redemption and the Holy Spirit.
- \_\_\_\_. A. The Church.

WHAT DUTY GOD REQUIRES OF MAN

- \_\_\_\_. I. Obedience and the Moral Law.
- \_\_\_\_. II. The Ten Commandments.
- \_\_\_\_. A. The Preface to the Ten Commandments.
- \_\_\_\_. B. The First Four Commandments.
- \_\_\_\_. C. The Last Six Commandments.
- \_\_\_\_. III. Our Sinfulness and God's Wrath.
- \_\_\_\_. IV. The Means of Grace.
- \_\_\_\_. A. The Word.
- \_\_\_\_. B. The Sacraments.
- \_\_\_\_. 1. Baptism.
- \_\_\_\_. 2. Lord's Supper.
- \_\_\_\_. 3. Relationship of the Sacraments to each other.
- \_\_\_\_. C. Prayer.

OUTLINE OF THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Next to the Shorter Catechism question numbers please write a short theme which you think best summarizes the questions using the outline form below.

INTRODUCTION

I.	-----	-	1
II.	-----	-	2
III.	-----	-	3

WHAT MAN IS TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

I.	-----	-	4
A.	-----	-	5
B.	-----	-	6
II.	-----	-	7
A.	-----	-	8
B.	-----	-	9
1.	-----	-	10
C.	-----	-	11
III.	-----	-	12
A.	-----	-	13
B.	-----	-	14
C.	-----	-	15
D.	-----	-	16
E.	-----	-	17
1.	-----	-	18
2.	-----	-	19
IV.	-----	-	20
A.	-----	-	21
1.	-----	-	22
B.	-----	-	23
1.	-----	-	24
2.	-----	-	25
3.	-----	-	26
4.	-----	-	27
5.	-----	-	28
V.	-----	-	29
A.	-----	-	30

B.		-	31
1.		-	32
a.		-	33
b.		-	34
c.		-	35
d.		-	36
e.		-	37
f.		-	38

WHAT DUTY GOD REQUIRES OF MAN

I.		-	39
II.		-	40
III.		-	41
A.		-	42
B.		-	43
1.		-	44
C.		-	45
1.		-	46
2.		-	47
3.		-	48
D.		-	49
1.		-	50
2.		-	51
3.		-	52
E.		-	53
1.		-	54
2.		-	55
3.		-	56
F.		-	57
1.		-	58
2.		-	59
3.		-	60
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5.		-	62
G.		-	63
1.		-	64
2.		-	65
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H.		-	67

**A TRAINING COURSE FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS**

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2.	-----	-	69
I.	-----	-	70
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J.	-----	-	73
1.	-----	-	74
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K.	-----	-	76
1.	-----	-	77
2.	-----	-	78
L.	-----	-	79
1.	-----	-	80
2.	-----	-	81
IV.	-----	-	82
A.	-----	-	83
B.	-----	-	84
V.	-----	-	85
A.	-----	-	86
B.	-----	-	87
VI.	-----	-	88
A.	-----	-	89
1.	-----	-	90
B.	-----	-	91
1.	-----	-	92
2.	-----	-	93
a.	-----	-	94
1)	-----	-	95
b.	-----	-	96
1)	-----	-	97
C.	-----	-	98
1.	-----	-	99
a.	-----	-	100
b.	-----	-	101
c.	-----	-	102
d.	----- - 103		
e.	-----	-	104
f.	-----	-	105
g.	-----	-	106
h.	-----	-	107

# Reforming the Diaconate

by

William Shishko

Part 3

PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

The practical bent of the Western mind makes us always ask, “But how do I actually do it?” Rather than be defensive about this concern to be “practical,” we should be thankful for it. Knowledge is always to the end of obedience (“You are my friends if you do whatever I command you,” John 15:14), and wisdom, in its very nature, means the skillfulness of knowing how to do the will of God (“And Bezaleel and Aholiab and every gifted artisan in whom the Lord has put wisdom and understanding to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary....,” see Exodus 36:1ff.).

After dealing in article one with foundational Biblical principles defining the nature and work of the diaconate, and after dealing in the previous article with a model for training prospective deacons, surely the next issue is “How do you actually put this into practice?” In this final article I will draw from the pattern we use in the OPC, Franklin Square, New York. In explaining our model I do not intend to imply that you must do as we do. Because the diaconal office is essentially the work of freeing the elders for their primary task of prayer, the ministry of the Word, and rule (see Acts 6:4), their specific responsibilities will, in some respects, be different from place to place. Nevertheless, I think you will cull enough from our model to help you in your situation. I hope that you will at least be motivated to give attention to developing your Board of Deacons, and not letting this precious resource lie fallow.

We are blessed with three mature, gifted, and well-trained deacons who manage the diaconal responsibilities of a congregation of approximately 85 families. Since we do not have a great number of widows and widowers in need of special attention, this number is sufficient for our “ministry of mercy,” but the growing spheres of church responsibility delegated to the deacons by the Session mean there is increased “holy pressure” to prepare more men for the diaconal office. That’s in our plans for next year!

Appendix A is a copy of a typical docket for one of our monthly meetings of the Board of Deacons. The deacons meet once a month for approximately four hours, and their ranks are small enough that they can caucus throughout the month to deal with the multitude of “surprise” things that come their way. Either I or another Session member appointed by the Session meets with the Board of Deacons during its regular meeting. This is most important, because the Board of Deacons operates under the authority of the Session, and it is also dependent on the Session’s guidance in any number of matters coming before it. Some churches follow the model of having the Board of Deacons meet with the Session on a monthly basis to deal with “matters of common concern.” If that is helpful in your situation, fine, but be careful not to blur the distinction between the two offices.

Three foundational principles govern the format for our meetings:

1. The Board of Deacons is a BOARD (cf. the OPC Form of Government, XI:3). It has official authority to act on behalf of the “corporation” known as the OPC, Franklin Square. Hence, we have a docket, minutes, treasurer’s reports, etc., and operate using standard parliamentary procedure. The “informality” of our meetings does not detract from the care to do things in an orderly way, I Cor. 14:40.

2. The Board of Deacons is in charge of “TEMPORALITIES” and the church’s “MINISTRY OF MERCY.” About 4/5 of our time (after minutes, treasurer’s report, and correspondence) is spent on the former. In churches with more responsibilities in “mercy ministry” that percentage would be different. Since there is a tendency to crowd out “mercy ministry” with “temporalities” (which, like the poor, are always with you!), periodically we deal with “Ministry of Mercy” matters earlier in the docket.

3. The Board of Deacons operates under the supervision and authority of the Session (cf. OPC Form of Government, XI:5). There is regular communication

## REFORMING THE DIACONATE

between the two bodies (eg. “Matters From/To Session” on the docket in Appendix A). Over the years we have developed our understanding and appreciation of the fact that both groups of officers serve, practically, as one body: The Session as a head, and the Board of Deacons as hands and feet. Their unified goal is to so function that the local church is ruled and served in such a manner that it grows more and more into a “pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 2:15). It is important that your officers become comfortable with this model, and continually work together toward this goal.

Everything the Board of Deacons deals with during its meeting(s), and everything the deacons do from day to day is, basically, to assist in seeing the church function as an efficient organism in its work of presenting the Gospel. “Subcommittees,” each with a deacon or elder representative acting as “liaison,” connect the officer with church members who manage various elements of the church ministry. Does the book table manager need more space for her growing number of volumes for sale? What can be done to improve the invoicing mechanism for the tape ministry so that this ministry is financially well-managed? Are the nursery rules being enforced? What problems is the nursery superintendent having? What recommendations are there from the various people who work with the church sound system(s)? What equipment should be ordered? How are visitors being ministered to by families handling Lord’s Day hospitality. All of these are tasks which are directly connected with the church’s Gospel ministry; all are under the oversight of the Session; but all are given to deacons to manage under a system of wise delegation. Subcommittees are created as new spheres of ministry develop. Each deacon’s ability to deal wisely with people as a manager is most important in this regard. Remember that both elders and deacons must be men who have proven abilities to manage others, see I Timothy 3:12, cf. vs. 4.

“Old and New Business” usually pertains to matters regarding the church physical plant, the church manse, or order with respect to Lord’s Day activities. It is incorrect to think that fine tuning the air conditioning or heating, preserving cleanliness in the church bathrooms, or making provision for the maintenance of a church house are less “spiritual” matters which can be given over to a “Board of Trustees.” Everything in corporate church life is connected in some way or another with the church’s calling to “make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), and deacons must operate out of that

conviction in every “physical aspect” of their work. If worshippers are too hot or too cold in the church sanctuary, if people cannot hear the minister because of poor amplification, if visitors do not know where to take a baby who cries during worship, if children are being destructive of church property due to poor supervision by parents after worship, etc. etc. etc., the church deacons have an official responsibility to deal with and correct these problems.

Some will ask, “Why don’t the elders handle these matters?” Certainly it is better that the elders deal with these things than that no one does; but it is better still that the deacons realize this is their sphere of responsibility. “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables...we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:2,4). Our Session members spend time dealing with the official public, family, and personal ministry of the word, and how to exercise our office of rule in each, and also in praying for the various matters before us as a church. This consumes our 4-5 hour-long regular monthly Session meetings, and other time during the month besides. “Temporalities” are referred to the Board of Deacons. If the deacons are “stuck,” or if they need the assistance of the Session (eg, We need another “housekeeping meeting” after worship one Sunday soon to remind families about supervising their children before and after worship), they consult with us and we respond as necessary. This is good order, and it works well.

“Ministry of Mercy” receives much attention in the customary treatments of diaconal work, so I will not delve as deeply into this facet of labors of the Board of Deacons. It is sufficient to note that widows should always be the object of special care by deacons, cf. James 1:27. This does not mean that a church Board of Deacons is responsible to replace family members in meeting needs. Well-intentioned and kind-hearted deacons must never let their human compassion override the clear pattern of I Timothy 5:3-16. In many cases deacons will carry out their work in tandem with elders, and often their role will be to facilitate the providing of assistance in working with family members (eg, “We are happy to help you work out a schedule for some of the church members to come and help you care for your aged mother during the times you need assistance.”), but widows (and, where applicable, orphans) must be seen as a special responsibility of the diaconate. This was the need which precipitated the formation of the diaconate in Acts 6!

Similarly, the aged, infirm, and shut-ins are a particular ward of the Board of Deacons. Each person in these categories needs pastoral ministry of the Word under the oversight of the Session, but each also needs the ministry of care which goes beyond what the elders bring. Is there an organized program to visit these needy saints, seeking to fulfill our Lord's words in Matthew 25:35-40? Too often a church thinks of "ministry of mercy" as a means of evangelizing the lost, forgetting that Jesus' concern in Matthew 25 was ministry to the saints (read verse 40 very carefully, cf. Gal. 6:10). At the same time, Boards of Deacons should be sensitive to the fact that both believers and unbelievers (eg, "inquirers" about the Christian faith who regularly visit the church, unbelieving spouses of church members) who are brought within the orbit of a local church's ministry must be treated as "neighbors" to whom there is a special responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

We have also found it necessary for our deacons to assist certain individuals and families in matters pertaining to budgets and financial planning. The extravagance and ill-discipline of our debt-laden generation have infected well-meaning Christians who need reform in this area of life. Boards of Deacons, due to the very nature of their work, must be models of good management in temporalities, including finances. When financial assistance must be given to "bail out" a family, this should also carry with it a willingness on the part of the beneficiary to receive counsel in bringing his or her finances in line with Biblical patterns of moderation and self-control. Deacons must, of course, show great discretion in this aspect of their work, but they must still exercise their official authority in this area if they are not to become welfare agencies akin to those managed by the State.

I trust that this will be suggestive enough for you to begin NOW on the work of practical reformation of your Board of Deacons. God has wisely given a wonderful resource in the office of official service. The Scriptures are sufficient to guide our formation, development, and functioning of the diaconate. No supplementation by creative imagination sparked by contemporary social problems is necessary. Let your deacons assist the elders by freeing them for prayer and the

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<sup>1</sup> R.B. Kuiper treats this and related matters in his chapter "The Office of the Deacon" in his superb volume THE GLORIOUS BODY OF CHRIST (reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983). I commend both this particular chapter and the entire book to you as a masterful treatment of the doctrine of the Church.

ministry of the word (both by rule and teaching), and God will magnify the extent and quality of your local church ministry in ways you would never imagine (see Acts 6:7). When the church IS what God calls it TO BE there is no doubt that His blessing will be present.

Rev. William Shishko, Pastor, OPC, Franklin Square, N.Y. 11010

**APPENDIX A**

**Sample Docket for Board of Deacon's Meeting**

Scripture:

Opening Prayer.

Minutes:

Treasurer's Report:

Matters From/To Session:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Correspondence:

Matters To/From The Covenant Christian School<sup>2</sup>

Subcommittees:

1. Housing (Gene)
2. Book Table (Gene).
3. Tape Ministry (Gene).
4. Nursery (Phil).
5. Sound system (Joe).
6. Hospitality (Phil):

Old Business:

1. Manse/Parsonage matters.
2. Church physical complex.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

New Business:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ministry of Mercy.

1. Financial Statement.
2. Specific Needs, Problems, etc.
  - a. Visiting Shut-ins.
  - b. Aged, Infirm, & Widows:
  - c. Unemployed:
  - d. Medical assistance?
3. Other?

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<sup>2</sup> A family association Christian school which uses the church facility.

# TAKING HEED TO THE FLOCK

A Study of the Principles and Practice of Family Visitation

by

Peter Y. DeJong, Ph. D.

## Chapter IV

### THE SPIRITUAL PURPOSE OF FAMILY VISITATION

*“The first foundation of discipline is to provide for private admonition—that is if any one does not do his duty spontaneously, or behaves insolently, or lives not quite honestly, or commits something worthy of blame, he must allow himself to be admonished and every one must study to admonish his brother when the case requires. Here especially is there occasion for the vigilance of pastors and presbyters, whose duty is not only to preach to the people but to exhort and admonish from house to house, whenever their hearers have not profited sufficiently by general teaching; as Paul shows, when he relates that he taught ‘publicly, and from house to house,’ and testifies that he is ‘pure from the blood of all men,’ because he had not shunned to declare ‘all the counsel of God’ (Acts xx: 20, 26, 27). Then does doctrine obtain force and authority, not only when the minister publicly expounds to all what they owe to Christ, but has the right and means of exacting this from those whom he may observe to be sluggish or disobedient to his doctrine.”*

— JOHN CALVIN: INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELI-

GION.

To consider the purpose of any activity is always a very important matter, since it is purpose which gives meaning to life. Ruskin has aptly said, “There is no action so slight, nor so mean, but it may be done to a great purpose, and ennobled therefore; nor is any purpose so great but that slight actions may help it, and may be so done as to help it much, most especially that chief of all purposes, the pleasing of God.”

Before we therefore dismiss family visitation with a wave of the hand as ineffective and wasteful of time and energy, let us pause to consider its purpose. This alone may be able to convince us of its value in the life of a Reformed church, especially when we bear in mind the development of true spirituality as a means to

glorifying our God.

It is apparent at once that our conception of this spiritual ministry of the church is largely governed by our views of the nature and growth of spiritual life. Here again the uniqueness of the Reformed position is clearly demonstrated when compared with the views held by other Christian groups.

#### *Types of Christian Piety*

The Roman Catholics who never weary of emphasizing that they alone represent the true continuation of the apostolic church, have adopted as their chief purpose in working among the members of their

communion, the welfare of the instituted church. According to them the institution is always of far greater significance than the individual. Gregory the First, one of the most influential popes ever to occupy the see of Peter, clearly presents this as his conception, when he argues that the purpose of all spiritual work among the members is that they may be able to order their lives according to the will of the church. This idea was strongly stressed during the Middle Ages, when the life of the individual was completely wrapped up in that of the church. The pope received the distinct honor of being regarded as the vicar or undershepherd of Christ, and all those who were saved owed him obedience. Any who dared to flaunt the authority of the church were severely dealt with, as many instances of ecclesiastical discipline prove.

During the modern era the Jesuits have done much to perpetuate the influence of the church by their insistence upon obedience. By making auricular confession obligatory upon all the members at least once each year and teaching that salvation can only be found within the walls of the visible church, the Roman Catholic church has firmly bound her members to the organization and to this very day exerts a tremendous influence over their lives.

In the days of the Reformation the emphasis once more was made to fall on personal faith. Luther particularly stressed justification by faith only, which was to be preached as the heart of the gospel. However, in order that the people might clearly see the necessity of a diligent use of the means of grace, he retained the confessional. By means of its regular use for a time the influence of the church in the lives of her members remained dominant. Although he paved the way for the development of pastoral work by insisting on regular visitation of the sick and the needy, he did not grasp the significance of regular spiritual work among the families. Thus the Lutheran membership, far more than the Reformed, has been inclined to satisfy itself with a rather passive faith which accepts the teaching of the church and thus has failed to see the implications of the gospel for daily Christian living.

### *The Spiritual Purpose of Family Visitation*

The present-day Fundamentalists, whose theory and practice betrays close kinship with that of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century and that of the Pietists of the eighteenth century, have emphasized the individual at the expense of the church and the family. With their "passion for souls" they have encompassed land and sea to bring others to Jesus, forgetting often that the lives of those who have been brought must also grow and develop to spiritual matu-

riety.

Because the Fundamentalists believe that all teaching must root in the heart, they have little appreciation for the official preaching of the gospel. As a result the New Testament regard for the place of officers in the congregation has not come to its own among them. Believing that the congregation is a voluntary association of experiential Christians, they insist that all are clothed with equal authority. Thus there is much room for mutual edification but none for the official visitation of the members by the authorities of the church.

Likewise, their insistence on personal piety has often been so one-sided, that the implications of the Christian message of salvation for the whole of life have altogether too easily been overlooked and ignored. (This is the main contention of a recent work by Dr. Carl F. H. Henry entitled *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, which has occasioned much debate in those circles.) The result has been very little appreciation for Christian education in the schools and for Christian action in the spheres of politics, industry and culture.

Much of this can best be explained by the fact that the Fundamentalists, quite like their forerunners some centuries ago, have little appreciation for the Biblical conception of the relation between nature and grace. In their estimation the believer is a "new creature" in Christ in the most radical sense of the term. He must necessarily live a dualistic life as long as he is in this world, accommodating himself to life as he finds it for the time being. Since it lies under the curse of God and the power of sin, nothing in it can be restored to the service of Christ and the glory of God. The sole hope of those who believe is regarded to be the imminent return of the Saviour, who at His coming will make all things new and give the believer a redeemed sphere in which his life can become completely integrated.

The Reformed churches have consciously sought to avoid the pitfalls inherent in the conceptions outlined above. As a result of their peculiar insight into the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its cosmic implications, they have tried to apply their principles to every relationship in which they were involved. To live by the rule of the gospel so completely is an arduous task. It requires not merely preaching the full counsel of God but likewise an appreciation on the part of the believers of the many-sidedness of the gospel message. Christians who were called upon to carry out the will of God at all times felt themselves particularly in need of instruction and encouragement, and to meet this need family visitation was instituted and maintained.

### *Developing Spiritual Life*

The first conscious aim of Reformed family visitation is the development of the spiritual life of the individual.

The importance of this has been seen clearly by the Rev. J. J. Knap, outstanding pastor of one of the large Reformed churches in the Netherlands, who in his little volume on *Spiritual Growth* writes, "The church is duty bound to be a blessing to the world. But how can she be, if her members have no growing, energetic spiritual life? The influence of the church in the world rises or falls with the inner power of its members. The energizing Spirit, from whom a renewing power goes out upon the world through the preaching of the Word, does not live in temples made with hands, but in living hearts which are woven together with the strands of faith and love."<sup>1</sup>

The uniqueness of the life which the Father has given us through the Son by the operation of the Holy Spirit requires much spiritual care, if it is to flourish and bear fruit. Salvation is never our work, but God's alone. Since we are by nature dead in sin, it is impossible for us to turn to God apart from the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit. His work has so beautifully and accurately been described for us in the *Canons of Dort*:

*"But when God accomplishes His good pleasures in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illumines their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient and refractory, He renders it good, obedient and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions."*<sup>2</sup>

Faith, thus, is far more than knowledge of and assent to the teachings of the church. It is rather the exercise of that personal religious fellowship which the believer has with God through Jesus Christ. The activity of faith is the result of God's renewal of the entire life of the individual. And "grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

All who live by the power of faith consecrate their lives entirely in His service. Yet since the power

of sin is never wholly removed in this life, the believer finds within himself a daily conflict. Time and again he is tempted to indulge in the lusts of the flesh, and often he stumbles and falls. Such sins, though fully pardoned by God on the grounds of the efficacy of the atoning work of Christ, nevertheless leave their scars and render the Christian's witness less effectual than it might be. Often the believers will doubt the sincerity of their faith and consequently of their saving relationship to God through Christ. Periods of spiritual darkness and barrenness may darken the light of their souls. In fact, a child of God may stray so far from the blessed communion, that for a time he seems completely callous to the demands of the divine law and the joy of salvation.

In such circumstances, which are by no means rare among God's people, the church must minister to the individual. In order that the tender plant of faith may again be revived and bring forth fruit in its season, the Word must be personally administered and applied. Though the Holy Spirit can alone render these labors effectual, we are to remember that He makes use of human agents. By wise and patient exhortation and rebuke the elders of the church help the believers to "lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees.... that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed."<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Challenging the Lives of Believers to Service***

God's people have a peculiar calling in this world. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In their every endeavor they must show forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness to His marvelous light.

However, to meet this challenge their spiritual life must be not only strong but also active. Faith demands expression; it must be translated into effective Christian service.

Contrary to the emphasis of many Christian groups, the Reformed churches have always insisted that spiritual life, as well as natural, is organic in character. By this is meant that the believer does not and cannot live in isolation. Salvation is far more than a matter of securing and enjoying personal peace with God. It indeed governs our individual relation to God, but just as surely and completely must it give direction to our relation to our fellow-men in all areas of society. The principles of the second table of the law are also regulative for the life of the New Testament believer. We must not only love God above all but also our neighbors as ourselves.

Thus Christian calling embraces all of life. No

1. Knap: *Spiritual Growth*, p. 19

2. Chapter II-IV, 11

3. 2 Peter 3:18

4. Hebrews 12:12,13

part of our daily walk lies outside the scope of our faith-relation to God. This follows from the plain Scriptural teaching that God loved “the world”, that is, the *created order*, and redeemed it to Himself through the Son of His eternal love. Never for a moment should we forget the intimate relation between nature and grace. The latter aims to restore the former, to reconcile the whole created order to the God who has fashioned it for His own glory. And, although the full realization of that divine program of cosmic salvation will not be seen and enjoyed fully until God Himself makes the new heavens and the new earth in which dwells righteousness, already in this life the first principles of it must become evident in the attitudes and actions of His people.

Such is the comprehensive calling of every believer. Of this he must be constantly reminded, and to this he must be repeatedly challenged.

And although the preaching of the gospel will provide the chief opportunity of pursuing this course, the Reformed churches have used family visitation as an additional means to challenge the lives of their members. When that challenge personally confronts the believers in their daily walk, we may confidently expect them to utter the prayer

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

*Promoting the Communion of the Saints*

Such a well-rounded Christian life needs much encouragement and help in its daily struggle. To enjoy this the believer must live in the closest possible relationship to the officers and members of the church.

God has been pleased to use means for working out His plan of redemption. Therefore He has established His church among men. In that organization there are many members, each having received unique talents and enjoying a unique position. Paul therefore likens the church to a body, a spiritual unity or organism. Each member is necessary to the well-being of all the others, and is in duty bound to employ his gifts and talents for the advantage of the whole. Knap has described this beautifully, “If we had been created as so many separate entities, without any living connection with the millions of men, we would not need each other for the development of our gifts and powers. All human beings would have many

traits of similarity. But the inner relationship would be lacking. Every one would be living as it were, on some glass non-conductor. And that would cut off the possibility of giving spiritual and moral strength to one another.”<sup>5</sup> Now, however, God has made us of one blood. In Christ the relationship which was broken by sin has been restored. And in consequence we must remember the law of spiritual growth. “Not in isolation, but in the full flowing stream of life, full-grown personalities are formed.”<sup>6</sup>

In an age in which individualism is rampant and has wreaked havoc everywhere, it is essential to stress the organic aspect of life. We cannot live without each other. Nowhere is this more valid than in the church among the communion of saints.

Where this law of life is understood, the elders do not regard themselves as policemen of the congregation. Theirs is not the duty of trying to uncover all the sins which mar the hearts of God’s people who as yet are imperfect. But, realizing the almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of a well-rounded Christian life, they visit the families for the purpose of helping all to see their duty more clearly. This makes for the closest possible fellowship between the officers and members of the church on the one hand and between the members among each other on the other. They learn to stand shoulder to shoulder in the great spiritual struggle against the common foe and learn to wage this war more successfully. It makes of the church truly a “militant” church. As each soldier has his own position and duty and obliges himself to carry it out in strict obedience to the commands of his superior, so too in the church all the members find their calling outlined by Christ in His Word. The purpose of the work of the elders is to remind the believers in the name of the Commander-in-Chief of their personal and social responsibilities. Where this is found, the words of the well-known hymn are immortalized in the life of the congregation:

“Like a mighty army  
 Moves the church of God;  
 Brothers, we are treading  
 Where the saints have trod.  
 We are not divided,  
 All one body we,  
 One in hope and doctrine,  
 One in charity.”

As this is progressively realized in the life of the church, she marches forward from victory to victory in the name of the Captain of her salvation.

5. Knap, *Spiritual Growth*, p. 115,116

6. *Ibid*, p. 117

# Discipline Is Not A Dirty Word

by  
Geoffrey Smith

Biblical church discipline has confessional status in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (cf WCF XXX, **Of Church Censures**). Yet in many American churches discipline is either suffering from neglect or, worse, actively resisted. As a result, problems are compounded and spin out of control, leaving far more damage than there otherwise might have been had discipline been implemented at the outset.

How shall we, as Presbyterians, respond to this general church scene? By answering the objections being raised against the use of discipline, and by demonstrating that it has a vital role to play in promoting life and health in the church.

Some Christians in the modern world consider the very idea of ecclesiastical discipline to be repugnant. A word like “excommunication” conjures up the image of people being cast away into hell at a papal whim. Other folk may recall Protestant bishops conspiring with the civil authorities to consign a fellow Christian to the stake over a disagreement about baptism.

However, a corruption of a doctrine does not nullify the doctrine itself. Those who are repulsed by past abuses should not turn away from discipline, they should turn to the Scriptures. The careful study of the Biblical teaching will unearth the true nature of church discipline and establish its proper use.

Other Christians may be reacting to experiences where discipline was properly understood in principle, but poorly carried out. At issue here is the character of the leaders in the church. Some may “dish out” discipline in a cold and sterile fashion, others out of a vindictive spirit, still others as a way to promote their own positions of (at times, absolute) power in the local church. These examples share one thing in common: the absence of any glimmer of Christian compassion.

To correct this, we should promote Biblical leadership in Christ’s church, which is characterized by humility and a desire to serve. When cause for discipline arises, an elder is in a place of tension. He may need to be (seemingly) harsh, yet he must also be gentle (the offender is not to be treated as an enemy, but as a brother [2 Thess. 3:15]). Like Moses, he is standing in the middle, with one hand upon the Lord, jealous for his holy name, and the other hand upon the erring member. With the latter he pleads on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

Unlike the civil courts, where jurists should be impartial and detached during legal proceedings, those who preside in the church courts must balance their objectivity with the right sort of emotional involvement. They must strive and pray for one “verdict” over another: the restoration of the offender. Correct judicial procedure stands side by side with a willingness to consider the individual and his unique situation. Elders should be prepared to invest of themselves in order to assist the offender in his recovery (Ez. 34:4).

Still, there will always be occasions when elders act irresponsibly, when the care of precious souls is just one more item of business on the docket.

This attitude serves to reinforce the most common objection against church discipline: it is unloving and inconsistent with the gracious nature of the gospel.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that the very opposite is true (Rev. 3:19)! Discipline, far from being contrary to grace, is actually a means of grace for the sanctification of the Lord’s people.

Consider the most extreme form of discipline: denying the Lord’s Supper (i.e. excommunication) to an impenitent church member. The reason most often provided is to prevent the Lord’s Supper from being profaned. However, excommunication also ensures that the sacrament is not given falsely. In other words, if an individual’s credible profession of faith is no longer so, it would be the height of cruelty to extend to him the sign and seal of the covenant. The unloving thing to do would be to pretend the benefits of Christ’s atoning work were his; he must be warned, not comforted. This is why Jonathan Edwards called excommunication “an act of benevolence.”

Here we are only saying what Scripture says: good works and heavenly affections are God’s “fingerprints” on a person, the evidence of his divine workmanship (Jer. 31:31-34; Ez. 36:25-27; I Jn. 2:3-5).

Therefore, the absence of what the Bible calls “good fruit” makes any confession of Christ’s Lordship hollow and false (Mat. 7:15-23). In such a case, the church must warn the individual that he remains in the state of spiritual peril and is liable to experience God’s wrath. To continue the charade that he is safely in God’s favor would be another perversion of the gospel ministry.

That is not to say the church is in position to pronounce God’s final verdict. As Calvin wrote,

*“It is, therefore, not our task to erase from the number of the elect those who have been expelled from the church, or to despair as if they were already lost. It is lawful to regard them as estranged from the church, and thus, from Christ—but only for such time as they remain separated. However, if they also display more stubbornness than gentleness, we should still commend them to the Lord’s judgment, hoping for better things of them in the future than we see in the present.” (Institutes IV, xii, 9)*

The above objections notwithstanding, the fundamental issue for those who neglect church discipline is unbelief. Simply put, the church which will not discipline sinning members is rejecting the word of God and thereby frustrating Christ’s rule in his church (Mat. 18:15-20; esp. vs. 19,20; 1 Cor 5; esp. v. 4). We must be firm and clear: such a church arrogantly declares that it is wiser and more loving than Christ. In reality, this same church blocks off wayward members from the gracious means Christ appointed to preserve them. As Calvin warned, “Those who trust that without this bond of discipline the church can long stand are, I say, mistaken: unless, perhaps, we can with impunity go without that aid which the Lord foresaw would be necessary for us.” (Op. cit., IV, xii, 4)

In conclusion, we must declare that discipline is not a dirty word. The right and proper use of discipline in the church is the obedient response of the Lord’s people to this rule, and will provide benefits for them both in this life and in the life to come. It is a loving and merciful means to this end: that Christian disciples may learn to obey everything Christ has commanded, and ultimately, be presented perfect in him (see Mat. 28:20 and Col. 1:28).

**LOGOS BIBLE STUDY SOFTWARE**, by Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2 West Route 70, Suite 270, Marlton, NJ, 08053, Ph. (800) 87-LOGOS. Reviewed by Dr. Leonard J. Coppes.

This is a very useful Bible study system compatible with MS Windows 3.0 and 3.1. I highly recommend it.

It is user friendly so that the average computer user can easily master its major features and almost immediately use the program. One may view several different Bible translations either simultaneously or one after another (KJV, NKJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, and ASV). Also available are four different Greek texts (in Greek letters but without accents and breathing marks) and (soon) the entire Hebrew Bible (without vowel points). This offers the serious Bible student a means of doing comparative studies quickly and easily since one may switch from one translation to another or from a translation to an original text with a glance (if one parallels the texts by using the tile feature) or with a quick press of a computer key or mouse.

I am amazed at the rapidity with which the cross-references may be looked up (more than one half million references are included). All one needs to do is to put the mouse on the desired reference (the list is displayed alongside the text one is using) and click twice. The desired reference immediately appears (in English or Greek depending on the user's desire) with its entire context (one may scroll upward or downward in the text as far as he desires). The program may be used to look up particular words (including Hebrew and Greek words), phrases, and other passages of Scripture either by using the search feature, (a search may be prosecuted by using single words, phrases [full boolean operators], proximity and wildcard searches) or searching on Strong's numbers. So one may also look up Hebrew and Greek words and study them in their contexts, either in any of several translations or in the original languages. Since more than one window may be opened at a time (using the tile feature) one may hold the original text in a window and then use another window to look up and compare the cross references. Indeed, one may open as many as 12 windows and work in all of them separately or link them all together. Another useful feature is that the program has immediate access to both Hebrew and Greek lexicology. Topical indices and the capability of making multiple note files are included. The user may make his own notes on the text or texts he is studying, he may save them, cross reference them to other passages, and print

them out. If desired, one may export text, notes, and references as well as printing any or all of these items. One can set up to ten bookmarks for easily moving from one text to another.

This is an extremely powerful and useful program. I have been using it for a few months to prepare sermons and have found my preparation easier and faster. This program offers search features that are not found elsewhere. It allows one to find a passage even if only one or two words are recalled or only the general idea is recalled. Moreover, I have found that seeing the Greek text written in Greek letters is much easier for me than seeing the text in translation.

**THE HARMONY OF THE PROTESTANT CONFESSIONS**, 640 pp., edited by Peter Hall, Still Waters Revival Books, 4710-37A Ave. Edmonton, AB Canada T6L 3T5 (available from Great Christian Books). Reviewed by the Editor.

This classic collectors edition of a book originally written in Latin is a valuable book. It contains material from a number of the early Protestant Confessions not readily available, and is organized by subjects. What impressed me particularly was (1) the rugged intensity of some of these early testimonies, and (2) the over-all unity of essentials held by the early Protestant churches in Europe. There is an extensive subject index at the back of the book that gives it additional usefulness. I found it a pleasure to read through entire sections (subjects). But it was an added benefit to find that it is easy to re-locate a point that sticks in the memory through this subject index.

In this day of fascination with what often appears to me to be mere trivia, it is refreshing to hear again the powerful testimony of the early Reformation churches. Though I cannot agree with everything these fathers in the faith had to say—and regard the Westminster Confession of Faith as, all things considered, the best of the lot—I found my own faith strengthened and refocused by this book. Let me close this brief review, then, with a quotation from *The Confession of Saxony* with respect to the worship of God. “*The works ordained and commanded by God do far differ from works not commanded or ordained by God, but only devised by man’s invention... will-worships, devised by men, neither have been, nor are, any service of God: God doth not allow this boldness of men (which, notwithstanding, hath always been usual) to devise new worship...*”