

Professing Your Faith

A Study Course for Communicant Church Membership Based on the Four Membership Vows of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

By G. I. Williamson

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Chapter 1

Why Do I Need Jesus as My Savior?

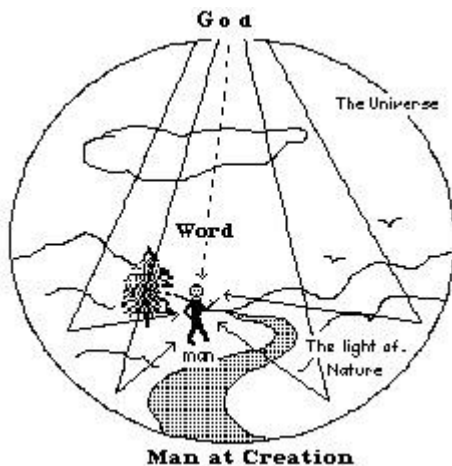
Do you understand yourself? Is there a purpose in your existence? Do you understand the universe? What does it all mean? Such questions as these are a pressing problem today. We live in a time when—as someone has well said—experts know more and more about less and less. We have eye specialists. They know a lot about this one small part of the body. We have atomic scientists. They know a lot about the tiny building blocks of the universe. But what does it all add up to? Does anyone have—not just fragments of truth—but truth as a whole?

The answer given by many today is, quite simply, "No!" They say that we are too small—and the universe is too big—for us to ever arrive at any final and absolute truth about the whole of reality. The reason for this will be explained presently. But the important thing to mention here is this: the Bible-believing Christian gives an opposite answer. He says, "Yes, it is possible to know the truth." It is possible because the Christian receives the truth from almighty God. God exists. He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable, and He knows all there is to know. There is no possibility that He will ever need to revise His interpretation of reality because of some new discovery. No, God already has all the data there is in his possession, and a correct interpretation of it. This presents no difficulty for Him, inasmuch as He created it all in the first place. But for us, the most important thing is the fact that he has revealed His truth to us so that we can know it too. This does not mean that we can ever know everything there is to know about the universe—or even everything there is to know about any particular part of the universe. Only God has exhaustive knowledge of anything, and of everything. But when we submit to God's revelation to us we can know something about everything—and we can know what is really true.

THE CONCEPT STATED

To illustrate this, consider the diagram below (diagram 1). Here we represent—in a very simple way—God, man and the universe. God created the universe. He also created man. In fact, God created man in his own image, so that man could think his thoughts after him. God revealed his glory to man through everything that he created as an environment for man. And then, in addition

to this revelation through nature, He also spoke to man verbally (that is, by means of words). By this two-fold revelation—by creation and by speaking words to man—God gave man what he needed in order to know the truth about God, about the universe, and about himself. Psalm 19 speaks of these two ways in which God revealed (and still reveals) his truth to man. He reveals himself by the works of art that he produces. He also reveals Himself through His words. This is possible for man alone among the creatures on earth because man was created in God's image."

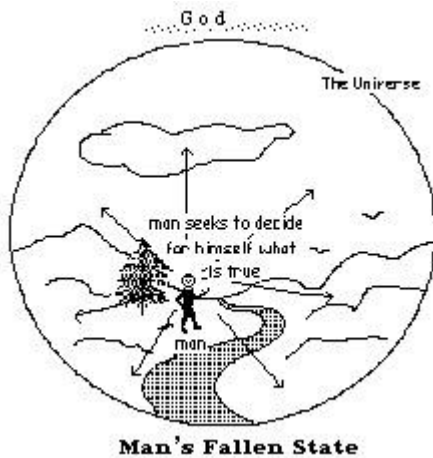


THE CONCEPT ILLUSTRATED

Now if we go back to the book of Genesis we can see how this original situation enabled man to know truth. In Genesis 2:19-20 we read that Adam named the various living creatures when God brought them before him, and that "whatever the man called the living creature, that was its name" (v. 19). What this means is that Adam's words were true descriptions of these animals. Adam's words were "picture words." For example, an animal such as an elephant might be given a name such as "mighty" or "powerful." A bird such as a swan might be called "beautiful" or "graceful." We know, as a matter of fact, that words were used after this manner in the beginning because Adam's own name means "man" or even "mankind," and is an accurate description of this man because the whole human race is derived from him! The name Eve was also a true description. The word meant "life" or "source," because that is what Eve really was. This process of naming things correctly was possible because Adam's mind operated correctly. In his original sinless state he could accurately perceive the true nature of things created by God. But we must not fail to note that God also gave Adam a direct word revelation (Gen. 2:16-17). By this word revelation Adam received information not available to him from the study of nature. This information was about God's control of reality. He received a clear warning of the disastrous consequences which would follow if he failed to obey God's commandments. By sticking to God's word—and doing what God required—Adam would remain wise and firmly rooted in the truth. By departing from God's word—and doing what was forbidden by God—Adam would lose possession of the truth.

We all know, of course, what Adam actually did. Genesis 3 tells us. And again, we want to represent this—in a simple way—in the diagram below (diagram 2). In this diagram we again represent God, man and the universe. But in this second "picture" we see how man set himself in opposition to God. Now it is quite clear that, in one sense, things remain much as before. Man is

still living in the same universe, the universe created by God. Also, man himself can still be described as a being created in God's image. Yet, in another sense, everything is now quite different. It is different because man now denies the truth. He now pretends that there is no way to come to a knowledge of "the truth" except by the "trial and error method." Please note what it says in Genesis 3:6. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it." What she was doing was simply this: she was thinking up her own list of possibilities. Or, to say the same thing in different words, she was seeking truth from within her own personality. She was, in effect, saying, "the only way to be sure about what will happen—if I eat of the fruit of this tree—is to try different things and find out for myself." And in this sin Adam willingly joined her!



AUTONOMY

This is what we mean when we speak of man's (pretended) autonomy. We mean that man has set himself up as the final source of truth. Starting from himself—depending on his own resources (brains, research, and so on)—he tries to work out his own conclusions. He endeavors to create his own interpretation of reality, and thus acts "as if" he himself is God. (But of course man is not God, and he can never attain to this false goal. That is why we call it a *pretended* autonomy.)

In the pages that follow we will try to show what has happened because of man's attempted autonomy. Here we simply want to make one important point: the two positions outlined above are the only two consistent positions that man can take. Every philosophy, and every religion, has to take one or the other of these two positions (or attempt to blend the two together). Only one of these is the right view, and it is the Christian position. This may sound like a bold statement, but it is true. Only Biblical Christians, today, understand the truth. The reason is quite simple. When Adam sinned and fell the whole human race sinned and fell with him (Rom. 5:12). This means that all men—with the sole exception of Jesus Christ (who is both human and divine)—moved away from the situation shown in diagram 1 and into the situation shown in diagram 2. All men therefore operate on the basis of autonomy unless and until they are redeemed through the blood of Jesus. We say this with emphasis for the following reason: when man once moved from the original situation as shown in diagram #1, to the situation shown in diagram #2, there was no way that he

could get back to the original situation by his own efforts. It is of the utmost importance to understand that this is true, and also why.

A TWOFOLD IMPOSSIBILITY

When man moved from theonomy (diagram 1) to autonomy (diagram 2) two things of momentous importance resulted. (1) The first was that God's wrath was aroused against man because of man's apostasy. We cannot deal with this point at great length just now. But we must note that God is absolutely holy. There is no way that God can just overlook sin. To do so would be a denial of his own holy nature. And the Bible plainly tells us that God cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Therefore sin must be punished, and will be punished. There was no way that man could ever get back again to a happy and blessed relationship with God unless—and until—something was done about this problem. (2) The second thing that resulted was that there was now enmity against God in the heart of man which man himself could never remedy. This is one of the hardest things for us to accept. But the Bible clearly states that we are—by nature—dead in trespasses and sins. It uses this term "dead" because no other term teaches man's complete inability so clearly. It was impossible for us—once we became autonomous—to bring ourselves back into humble submission to God. It is not hard to see why, because—if we ever did humbly submit to God's revelation in the Bible—we would have to admit that we deserve eternal damnation. And that is the one thing we do not want to do so long as we are in our natural state.

ONLY TWO CONSISTENT POSITIONS

In a later section we are going to see what God did about these two things. But what we want to emphasize here is the fact that there are only two consistent positions—theonomy or autonomy. We all live in the same universe but we live with radically different ideas about it. Some people prefer to think that the world was not created—that it is just an accident—and that the only "truth" we can ever know is what we determine for ourselves. That is why so many people today will only say, "It's true for me." But there are other people who learn to think of the world as it really is. They are biblical Christians. They come to understand that the universe is created, and that real truth—unchanging truth—can only come to man from God the creator. Our intention in the lessons that follow is to understand why our historic Christian faith is, indeed, the only solution.

QUESTIONS

1. Do people today know more, or do they know less, than Adam knew before the fall? Explain.
2. Why do many people today give a "No" answer to the question "Can we know the truth?"
3. Why do believers say "Yes" to the same question?
4. Why was Adam, before the fall, able to know the truth?
5. Find proof in Genesis 2 that Adam understood the truth.
6. Find proof in Genesis 2 that Adam had knowledge about God's plan for the future of the world.
7. After man fell, how was the situation the same as before?
8. How was it very different?
9. What do we mean when we say fallen man wants to be "autonomous"?
10. Are there other possible positions in addition to those represented in diagram 1 and diagram 2? Why?
11. What were the two momentous changes that resulted from man's apostasy?
12. Why is it impossible for man to bring himself back from the situation depicted in diagram 2, to the situation depicted in diagram 1?
13. Why is it important to understand these two opposing concepts?

Chapter 2

How Can I Come to *Know* the Way of Salvation?

In the first part of this study we saw what happened to us because of Adam's first sin. We saw how we moved from theonomy (being subject in all things to God's law) to autonomy (making ourselves the final authority). Here we begin our discussion of what God has done to bring us back to a right relationship with himself. But how can we do this? How can we, who rebelled against God, presume to discuss what he has done to save us? Well, the answer is that we can't—unless we are willing to receive what He tells us.

If we understand this we can begin to grasp the meaning of the vows we take as professing Christians. In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church there are four vows. We will consider each of these in the course of this study. Here we deal with the first vow, which reads as follows:

Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

You will note that the first vow has to do with the Bible rather than with the Lord Jesus directly. The reason is quite simple: *the only way that we can know Jesus, accurately, is through the infallible Scriptures*. But how do we come to know that the Bible—and the Bible alone—really is the true word of God? Well, the answer to that is found in the Bible itself.

(1) First of all, *the Bible claims divine authority for itself*. Every careful reader of Scripture will notice this constantly. For example, note how often a phrase such as this occurs: "This is what the LORD says" (Jer. 30:1, 4, 10, 12, 17-18). Jesus said the Scripture cannot be broken. Paul said all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. And we could multiply other examples.

(2) But other books also claim to be inspired. So why should we believe the Bible rather than—for example—the book of Mormon? The answer to this is simple: *the Bible alone has the internal evidence to support its own claim*. We will give a few examples. The Bible tells us how the world was created. But how is this possible? No man was there when the world was created, so how could anyone know about this? How, indeed, except by direct revelation from God. Again, the Bible tells us what it will be like on the great day of judgment. But how could this be known since it is still in the future? How, indeed, unless the true God (who knows the future as well as the past) has revealed it? The Bible was indeed written by man—in fact, it was written by many men, living in different centuries and even in different cultures. How is it, then, that the Bible contains no contradictions? How is it that the Bible all adds up to one great unified message? How, indeed, unless the true God inspired all of the various authors in such a way that he himself remained the ultimate author of it all? Other books may claim that they are the word of God. Only the Bible provides the evidence which substantiates the claim.

(3) But—you may ask—why, if the Bible really is what it claims to be, do so many fail to admit it? How can so many read it and yet insist that they just can't "see it"? Well, the answer to this is also easy: it is because they are blind. Jesus put it this way: "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (Jn. 3:19-20). What

this means is this: only inward enlightening, by the Holy Spirit, enables us to see that the Bible is the inspired word of God. This is exactly what Paul had in mind when he said—speaking not only for himself, but for all believers—"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand" (1 Cor. 2:12). We call this "the testimony of the Holy Spirit." By this we do not mean that the Holy Spirit speaks to us in an audible voice, or a vision, or that he says something in addition to what he has already given us in the Bible. No, what this means is that he opens the eyes of our mind—the eyes of our understanding—in order that we might be able to see what really is already there in the Bible. When we are able to see the evidence which is already there, in the Bible, then we know it is God's inspired word.

When the Holy Spirit makes us alive (wakes us from the dead—opens the eyes of our understanding—so that the light of his word can enter into our minds and hearts) then we will realize certain things. (1) We will realize that God's word is infallible. By this we mean that God cannot lie (see Num. 23:19; Tit. 1:2). Since God cannot lie, and the Bible is his word, there cannot possibly be any error in Scripture. (2) The second thing we will understand about the Bible is the fact that it is clear. This is not the same as saying the Bible is easy to understand. A thing may be perfectly clear and yet require a bit of hard work to learn. Think of algebra, or calculus! Think of learning a foreign language! A particular language may seem very difficult to us. Yet a child—brought up where that language is spoken—soon learns to understand it very well, proving that it is clear! It is not true, in other words (as the Roman Catholic Church has taught), that only the church, or trained ministers, can understand the Bible. No, the Bible was not written for scholars only, but was intended to be understood by ordinary people. The Bible itself commands us to read and to study it. In fact, God forbids us to rest our faith on what other people say about the Bible. So every person who will make the effort to get an understanding of the Bible—using, of course, such aids as a dictionary and a concordance—can come to a clear understanding of the way of salvation. And that, after all, is what the Bible is all about! (3) The third point is that God's word is sufficient. By this we mean that the Bible tells us everything we need to know in order to glorify God and enjoy him forever. If the Bible was still incomplete—as it was for many centuries during Old Testament times—we could not say this. But now the great work of salvation has been completed by Jesus, and that complete salvation is fully revealed in the Bible. The old ways of God's revealing himself—that is, by dreams, visions and direct revelation—are now ended (Heb. 1:1-2:4). Therefore the man of God today (the Christian who is armed with the Bible) is completely furnished for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17). This being the case, it is not to be wondered that God pronounces a curse on anyone who presumes to add anything to, or subtract anything from, the scriptures (Rev. 22:18-20).

It should be quite clear to anyone who understands what happened to man at the fall, that deliverance could only come from God. It should also be self-evident that two things were needed. (1) The first need had to do with God's wrath against man because of sin. God is holy and because he is holy he cannot possibly "go easy" on sin. For this reason man's sin has to be punished. This means that either (a) the sinner himself will have to suffer punishment for his own sins, or (b) a substitute, approved and provided by God, will have to bear this punishment for him. The good news is that God loves us so much that he has provided a Savior as a substitute for us. This is really the main thing taught in the Bible. In the Bible we have the inspired record of the great events of salvation history, together with a true explanation of the significance of these events. We will first represent this in the following diagram, and then discuss the various historical sections.

Right after the fall of man God spoke a word of judgment (Gen. 3:14-19). It was clear, from this, that God would not go easy on sin. However, with the word of judgment God also gave a word of promise (v. 15). God promised that he would put enmity between Satan and Eve, and between Satan's "seed" and her "seed." God promised that her "seed" (meaning a certain descendant of the woman) would crush Satan's head, though he (this descendant) would also be wounded by Satan in doing so. Now everything else that follows—in the Old Testament—in a sense "fills in" this original word of promise. Here we can only give the very briefest summary of it.

(A) The first section of Bible history takes us from the time of Adam's fall to the time of the great flood (Gen. 3-6). And what is the main lesson taught in this first part of the Bible? It is this: man, left to his own resources, always deteriorates. God created man good. But what did God see here on the earth as this first period of history drew to a close? Here is the answer: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). How clear it became that man had no ability within himself to change his own sinful nature. So God sent the flood, and the human race was almost wiped out. In this way God showed to some extent how great His wrath against sin really is. Yet in spite of this—and this is the second thing revealed in that period—God did not forget His promise. That is why Noah and his family were spared.

(B) After the flood the family of Noah multiplied and developed into many nations. One might have supposed that the terrible judgment of the flood would serve as a perpetual warning which would restrain man from further acts of wickedness. But this was not the case. We see this clearly in the attempt made, after the flood, to build the tower of Babel. "Come" they said, "let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens, let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). This was, of course, in direct conflict with what God's command to Adam and to Noah (Gen. 1:22, 9:7). How clear it was, then, that even the awesome display of God's wrath against sin—by means of the terrible flood—did not make man want to forsake his pretended autonomy. To the contrary, it was very clear that man's nature remained just as evil after the flood as it was before. Therefore, to frustrate man's sinful attempt to evade his mandate to fill the earth—which they tried to do by staying together to build the tower of Babel—God "scattered them" by causing confusion of language (Gen. 11:9).

(C) Then, after mankind did begin to spread out over the earth, God called a man named Abram. Abram did not deserve this any more than anyone else. God simply chose him, out of his sovereign good pleasure. God did this in order to enter into a covenant with him—and with his "seed" after him—for an everlasting covenant. Because of this God changed his name from Abram (which probably meant "exalted father") to Abraham (meaning "father of a multitude"). This covenant was not a thing negotiated by the two parties, as human covenants often are. No, this covenant was "unilateral"—it came wholly from God's side to begin with, in other words—though Abraham was, of course, obligated to respond. God summoned Abram to forsake all in order to serve him, binding himself to be the God of Abraham—and the God of Abraham's children—through all the subsequent generations. With this event God began to reveal, more and more clearly and fully, his great plan

of salvation. In the midst of many nations walking in darkness God began, through Abraham and his "seed," to raise up one nation to be the instrument by which he would at last send the Savior. In this development two things are clearly revealed: (a) the other nations did not improve but rather degenerated further, and (b) the covenant nation (developing out of Abraham's descendants) showed the same tendency to degenerate also. The rest of the Old Testament record makes this abundantly clear.

(D) It is not easy to summarize the rest of the Old Testament "story." It tells us of so many great events (such as the amazing, and miraculous, deliverance of the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt). It also brings before us some very great people who were true servants of God. Think of some of the great Kings of Israel for instance (such as David, or Solomon), or some of the great prophets (such as Elijah or Jeremiah). There were even a few people who left other nations to join themselves to the descendants of Abraham (such as Rahab, a Canaanite, and Ruth, a woman from Moab). Yet the main question is this: when we add it all up what does it really come to? The answer is that Israel also degenerated. It did so in spite of all the special blessings that God gave to them alone among the ancient nations. That is why the Old Testament history comes to a conclusion with (a) the record of the Babylonian captivity of Israel, and then (b) the restoration which followed some 70 years later, wherein a very small remnant of the nation of Israel came back to Palestine in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. As we study the books that were written during all this history, then, one great lesson emerges. "All lines converged" to make one thing perfectly clear: the only hope for the Jew, as well as the Gentile, was that God would send the promised Messiah. When even the very best in the great men of Israel was sadly defective, it became increasingly clear that there was really no hope unless God sent a Savior.

(E) And that is what the New Testament is all about. It tells us how God kept his covenant promise. He did it by sending a Messiah—a Savior—who was born in a different way than any other human being who ever lived. Jesus had a human mother, and was born of her—and so there can be no doubt that he was (and still is) truly human—and yet, because he had no biological father, it was still possible for him to be born without sin. What we read about, then, in the New Testament account is the sinless life of the Lord Jesus. We also read about the terrible death he died. He died as if he had been the world's greatest sinner. And in a certain sense he was, according to the Scripture, because it says God "made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). These two things, then: (a) his sinless life and (b) his accursed death, are the basis of our salvation. Because He gives us his own righteousness and takes upon himself our sin, we can have eternal life. As a little child's catechism puts it: "He kept the whole law for his people and suffered the punishment due to their sins." It is on the basis of this "finished work" of the Lord Jesus Christ that God's wrath against us is turned away, and he can regard us as righteous. It is on the basis of this that he is willing to receive us—and our children—into fellowship with himself.

But this is not the only problem. No, there is also (2) the problem of our natural enmity against God. This is something we learn again and again in the Bible. Man by nature hates God. He loves darkness rather than light. He does not want fellowship with the true God. No, what he wants more than anything else is to remain autonomous. But the good news is that this problem too has been solved from God's side. This is so because (a) Christ rose from the dead, (b) ascended into heaven (where he now rules with all authority in heaven and earth) and (c) then poured out his Holy Spirit in order to give life to his people. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to awaken men to their true situation. And then he uses the word to reveal to them what God has done for them in sending the

promised Messiah. He persuades—and enables—they to flee from the wrath which is to come by receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Now from all this it should not be hard to understand why the Bible comes first when we make our Christian profession. It comes first because the Bible alone contains the "good news" that we need to hear. This does not mean that we will be saved by merely reading the Bible. As a matter of fact most of us are saved not by reading, but by hearing (Rom. 10:14-17). The Bible says God has chosen "the foolishness of preaching" as the usual method of bringing people to faith (1 Cor. 1:21-25). He does it this way because he knows we would never seek "the truth" on our own initiative. Therefore He sends someone to preach it to us! Then, as the truth is proclaimed "the light" breaks through, and as the Holy Spirit works we are converted. As this sovereign work of the Holy Spirit takes place in us we see that God really has given us the complete solution. We see the solution to our guilt problem in what Christ has done for us on the cross. And we see the solution to the problem of our enmity against God, when that enmity is replaced by God-given faith and repentance.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between theonomy and autonomy?
2. Why do we say the only possible hope for man's restoration lay in God?
3. What did God mean by "the seed of the woman" in Genesis 3:15?
4. What is the main lesson taught in the period of Bible history from the time of Adam to the flood?
5. Was man's nature improved by the judgment of the flood? Give Biblical proof.
6. How did God frustrate man's sinful unwillingness to replenish the earth?
7. Why did God wait until the time of Abraham to establish a separate covenant people?
8. What is the main lesson to be learned from the history of the covenant people of God during the Old Testament period?
9. Was Jesus truly human? How do we know this for sure?
10. If Jesus was truly human, how is it that he could "succeed" after many others had failed?
11. Thinking back to diagram 2, what were the two main problems Jesus needed to solve in order to be our Savior?
12. How did he solve the first problem?
13. How does he take care of the second?
14. Try to state, in your own words, why it is right to speak of the Bible first in our vows.
15. What are the three facts that explain why we accept the Bible as the word of God?
16. What do we mean when we say the Bible is infallible? clear? sufficient?

Chapter 3

What Must I *Do* To Be Saved?—Part 1

We have seen that the Bible is the only infallible source of a true knowledge of God. But it is also the only infallible source of a true knowledge of ourselves. And both of these are referred to in the second membership vow of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It reads as follows:

Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

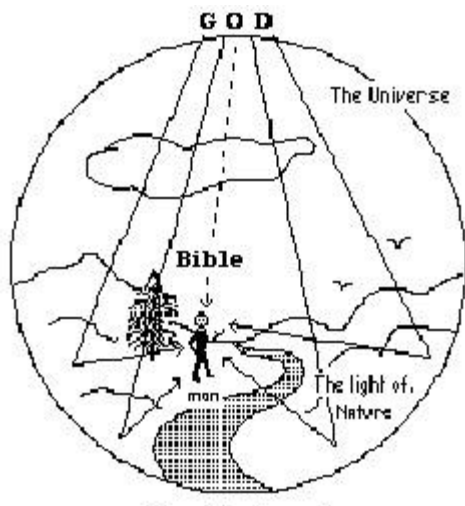
Two things are quite clear in this vow. (1) The first is an awareness of our lost condition as fallen creatures. This condition includes two aspects. (a) One is our guilt before God. By this we do not

mean mere guilt feelings. One may have strong guilt feelings and be guilty in fact. But a person may also be guilty in fact when he does not feel guilty. The reason is this: the fact of guilt does not depend on the feeling of guilt, but on the judgment of God. God is holy. The law, which is summarized in the ten commandments, reveals his unchanging will for man who was made in His image. Whenever a man violates any of God's holy commandments, in any way, he incurs guilt. To be guilty means to be deserving of, and therefore liable to, God's just punishment. To put it another way: because this is God's universe, all sin must be punished, and it will be punished—either by the eternal damnation of the one who sins, or by the punishment of a Substitute who stands in his stead. This is one aspect of the matter. (b) The other aspect is what we call man's total depravity, and consequent inability. What this means is not that every unsaved person is already as bad as bad can be. A condition such as that (which is found only in Satan, the demons and lost men in hell) would have to be called absolute depravity. And we can be thankful that God so restrains the wickedness of men, in this life, that few if any ever reach the point of absolute depravity. No, what is meant by "total depravity" is that the whole of man's personality has been affected by the fall and is now polluted or corrupt. Man's mind has been darkened, his heart is deceitful, and his will is therefore in bondage. It is sometimes imagined that "the natural man" (by which we mean man as he is "by nature" since, and because of, the fall) is able to do something about his own lost condition. But this is a sad delusion. How can a man do something to remedy his lost condition when "every intent of the thoughts of his heart [is] only evil continually"? (Gen. 6:5). We might just as well expect a leopard to change the color of its spots, or a man the color of his skin (Jer. 13:23). It is for this reason that we are told repeatedly in the Bible (Ps. 14, 53, and Rom. 3) that when God looks down from heaven to see if there is anyone, anywhere, who—of his own volition—is seeking for God, he finds none. The reason is plain: since man's character became depraved it has no affinity with the good. That is why the natural man can do nothing pertaining to his own salvation or conversion (1 Cor. 2:14). It was for this reason that our Lord said (to his disciples) "it is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing...therefore I have said unto you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (Jn. 6:63, 65).

(2) The second thing we must be aware of, then, is the fact that our salvation is from God alone. It is not from ourselves in any way whatever. This cannot be emphasized too much. Our salvation comes from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father acted to save us when he decided to save us by sending His only begotten Son to redeem us (Gal. 4:4). The Lord Jesus Christ acted to save us when He humbled himself, took upon himself our nature, lived a sinless life and then died on the cross as our substitute. The Holy Spirit acts to save us when He regenerates us and draws us to Christ, and then sanctifies us until we are finally like Jesus. In this brief summary we are not saying the work of the three divine persons can be put in separate "water tight" compartments, as it were. One could as well say, in other words, that the Father and Son regenerate us through the operation of the Holy Spirit, as to say that the Spirit does it. There is always unity—as well as diversity—in the work of the three persons of the divine being. But at this point we simply wish to emphasize two things. (a) One is the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. This can best be understood if we learn the concept of imputation. Imputation is the act by which something originally belonging to one person is "regarded as belonging to"—or "placed to the account of"—another person. To effect our salvation there had to be a double imputation: our sin (with its guilt and punishment) was laid to Christ's account, and his righteousness (with its merit and reward) was regarded as belonging to us. (b) The other is God's enabling grace. By this we mean the unmerited gift of God—the gift of the saving work of the Holy Spirit within us— which precedes everything that we ourselves do. God, in saving us, acted in a

unilateral manner. The whole thing started from his side, in other words. By the operation of the Holy Spirit we, being dead in sin, are made alive. We are regenerated, or made new creatures. It is only because of this initial act of God—and out of the new nature thereby created—that we are able to respond to the gospel offer in repentance and faith.

It will be clear, from all this, why we must never give ourselves the credit for any part of our own salvation! No, our attitude toward "self" will rather be one of abhorrence. And just because we find no resources in self, we will look to Jesus alone for our salvation. Again, it should not be hard to see why we, as Reformed Christians, do not for a moment think of ourselves as "better" than other Christians. As a matter of fact we do not even think of ourselves as "better," in and of ourselves, than unbelievers. It is not the case that we are better. Not at all. But that we are different. We are different because it is our intention to reject the false position of autonomy completely, taking an uncompromising stand in submission to the authority of the Bible. We are therefore willing to acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty in election. Because we admit the truth as to man's fallen condition, we do not take offense when the Bible says it is God who has the final say as to who will—and who will not—be saved. We deserved no mercy. And it was not that we—out of some vestige of goodness left in our hearts—took the initiative in seeking a restored fellowship with God. No, it was God who took the initiative. But it was not His good pleasure to save everyone. That is why the Bible says He elected some to everlasting life, and determined to pass others by (Rom. 9:11). This doctrine is, of course, very distasteful to an autonomous person. An autonomous person does not want to even hear of such things. Such a person will argue vehemently against this truth, saying "This is not fair!" (Rom. 9:14), or "God is unjust [when he finds fault with helpless people]" (Rom. 9:22). We as Reformed Christians, on the other hand, have a very different attitude. We do not presume to argue with God. No, to the contrary, we remember what Paul once said to those who argue with God! "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" (Rom. 9:20). Because we understand the magnitude of our own sin and guilt—and realize we are helpless to save ourselves—we know there is no just basis to argue against God's sovereignty in election. As a matter of fact we recognize that election—far from being an evil thing—is really the sinners only hope.



Salvation restores man to a relationship with God which is much like what we saw at the beginning (see diagram #4, above). God is supreme. Man is once again in willing submission to the Word of

God which is now deposited—in its entirety—in the Bible. By means of the truth of the Scriptures—because of the regeneration of our hearts by the Holy Spirit—we again know what we are to believe, and what we are to do in order to please God. This is, of course, the way it really is in essence—but it is also the way it ought to be consistently worked out in our lives. However, as we shall see, there is a constant danger of compromising this basic position. To this we will turn in the next section.

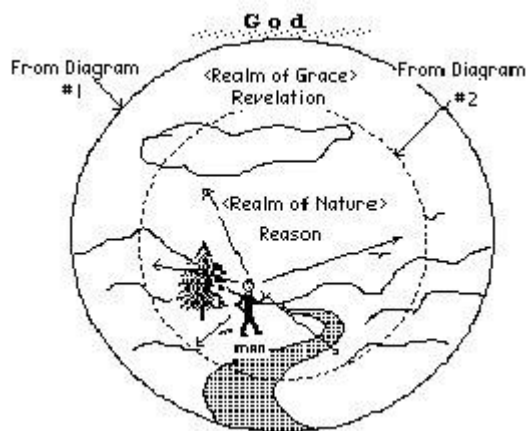
QUESTIONS

1. What does Reformed Christianity seek to reject completely?
2. What two central concepts are contained in the second covenant membership vow?
3. What are the two elements we need to understand regarding man's fallen condition?
4. What is guilt?
5. What is depravity?
6. What is the difference between "total" and "absolute" depravity?
7. For what two things does a believer look away from himself entirely, and to Jesus only?
8. If Christ alone is our Savior, is it wrong to give credit for our salvation to the triune God? Why?
9. How do Reformed Christians differ from other Christians?
10. Why do Reformed Christians raise no objection to God's sovereignty in election?

Chapter 4 What Must I Do To Be Saved?—Part 2

In the second membership vow you promise to "trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone." It is to the last word—alone—that your attention is directed in this chapter.

How clear—and simple—everything would be if everyone chose one, or the other, of the two basic viewpoints described in lesson one. The fact is, however, that people are not very consistent. Because of this there is a constant tendency toward synthesis. What is synthesis? It is the "putting together" of two differing things. In this instance, it is the attempt to mix autonomy with theonomy, but to do it in such a way as to make it appear that there can be peace between them. In actual fact, of course, this is a delusion. The two can never be harmonized.



The Medieval Synthesis

It was precisely this problem—synthesis—that made the Reformation necessary in the 16th century. We again represent this with a picture (diagram 5, above). In it we see how the old unified world-and-life view of the early church was gradually replaced by a dualism. On the one hand there was what was called the realm of nature, and on the other hand the realm of grace. It was a nature/grace dualism. This dualism was evident in many different ways during the Middle Ages. It is for this reason that Roman Catholic theology (which preserves this false synthesis of the Middle Ages) can be called the "and" religion: faith *and* works, the merits of Christ *and* the merits of the virgin Mary and the saints, Scripture *and* tradition, and so on. What was happening was this: in the realm of nature man thought he could operate in an autonomous way, while allowing a measure of theonomy in some higher "spiritual" realm. But, the fact is that such a synthesis is always destructive of the Christian faith. When we act "as if" man can—in some things—operate in an autonomous way, we really deny what is basic to the Biblical view. To get a better understanding of how this attempt at synthesis worked out in the realm of doctrine, we give a comparison of the doctrinal teaching concerning the way of salvation. In column 1 we have the view taught in the Bible. In column 3 we have the view expressive of man's attempt to be autonomous. In the center column we have the view which expresses the attempted synthesis of the Middle Ages (remaining today in Roman Catholic teaching). It will be readily seen that this synthesis denies God his proper glory just as truly (though not as obviously) as the more blatantly expressed autonomy. If—after God has done all he can do to save—man remains unsaved until he adds his own indispensable part, then man becomes—at least in part—his own savior (see diagram 6 below).

Biblical Christianity	Romanism/Arminianism	Humanism/Modernism
<p>Total Depravity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is dead (Eph. 2:1) • He can do <i>nothing</i> to save himself 	<p><i>Partial Depravity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is sick • He can do <i>something</i> to save himself 	<p><i>No Depravity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is O.K. • He can do <i>whatever is needed</i> to save himself
<p>Unconditional Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one merits <i>any</i> mercy • The Father chooses some unconditionally 	<p><i>Conditional Election</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All men deserve <i>some</i> mercy • God chooses those who choose him (conditionally) 	<p><i>Man Chooses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is not fallen • Man determines his own destiny
<p>Limited Atonement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ the Son gave his life as a ransom for <i>many</i> 	<p><i>Universal Atonement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ died for <i>all</i> men without exception 	<p><i>No Atonement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ merely provides an example

<p><i>Irresistible Grace</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit regenerates the elect only 	<p><i>Resistible Grace</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit regenerates all who do their part 	<p><i>No (Special) Grace</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit is not needed
<p><i>Perseverance of the Saints</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God keeps his elect from falling (Phil. 1:6) • They strive, because God works in them (Phil. 2:12-13) 	<p><i>Possible Perseverance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God helps those who cooperate with him • God lets them fall if they cease to cooperate 	<p><i>No Perseverance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is entirely up to man to continue imitating Jesus

The great Protestant Reformation was a powerful movement back to a "theonomy" view similar to diagram 1 ([lesson 1](#)). At that time—because of the Reforming influence of the Bible in society—it was generally accepted that the universe was created by God, and that he has given man the privilege of investigating it. It is no accident, therefore, that many of the early scientists who went to work discovering things, did so because they believed it made sense to do this. They had faith, in other words, that there is order and meaning in the universe because it was created, and is sustained, by God. They also believed that God created men in his own image so that they could learn to understand his creation. What we need to realize is this: the viewpoint set forth in diagram 2 ([lesson 1](#)) would never provide the basis to do this. We say this because—on the basis of autonomy—there is no assurance that there is any meaning "out there" in the universe, or that man can ever arrive at any real truth. So it was on the basis of a theonomic view that the great scientific discoveries began to come in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. Man began to advance by great leaps and bounds, as it were, in his knowledge of, and control over, nature.

With the passing of time, however, something began to happen. It came about very gradually. But of one thing there is no doubt: there was a return to synthesis. Again, as in the medieval period, this was done by splitting life into two parts. Things such as scientific work were gradually shifted back to the old autonomous basis, while things such as personal religion and worship were (supposedly) kept on the Reformational basis. Here once again we represent this diagrammatically (diagram 7).

Chapter 5

What Must I Do To Be Saved?—Part 3

True religious experience is very important. As a matter of fact no one can be saved without it (except for "elect infants, dying in infancy"). We see this, for example, in what Jesus said to Nicodemus, who was supposed to be a teacher of the one true religion. Jesus said no one can see or enter the Kingdom of God except by being born again (or born from above, Jn. 3). It is to this subject that we now turn in this section of our study. But, before we do this there is one thing we must emphasize. It is the fact that there is something far more important than our own

experience. That far more important thing is God's covenant promise. Any true religious experience that we may have must always rest back upon this as its solid foundation.

Most of us were baptized as infants. When we were baptized we did not realize what was happening. We did not know, for example, that when we were born into the world we were born in sin, that we needed the precious blood of Jesus to save us, or that we needed to be born again from above. Why then were we baptized? The answer is simple: this is what God commanded. The command was given back in the time of Abraham. At that time God instituted his covenant, saying: "I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your seed after you, throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and your seed after you" (Gen. 17:7). When God made this covenant, he appointed circumcision as its sign and seal. And he not only required Abraham himself to be circumcised, but also all his male children (Gen. 17:12). It was also made clear that this covenant would stand forever (Gen. 17:7, 13). This much is quite obvious from the text quoted above. But is it not also self-evident—we ask—that no one could ever annul this covenant? No, not even God could annul it, because—if He did—he would have to deny his own word. And the Bible says God cannot deny himself. Now add to this the fact that nowhere in the Bible has the Lord, who included children in his church from the beginning, at a later time made them outsiders. To the contrary, the New Testament clearly teaches that this covenant that God made with Abraham is still in effect (Gal. 3:14, 29). Even though we are not Jews "by nature" we are engrafted into God's covenant nation (Eph. 2:11-22, and Rom. 11). Peter said, at the very beginning of the New Testament era, "for the promise is to you and to your children." In saying this he made it abundantly clear that God's covenant remains in force. And that is not all. We certainly see the reality of it constantly. Is it not true, for example, that most Christians today were themselves children of Christian believers? (Yes, this is true of the Baptists too, even though they fail to acknowledge the rightful place of their own children in the church?) As Orthodox Presbyterians we thankfully acknowledge that we are included in this covenant that God made with Abraham. We baptize our infants because of what God commanded from the beginning. There is a difference, of course. At the present time in history baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign and seal of the covenant (Col. 2:11-12), just as the Lord's Supper has replaced the Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). Since baptism is called circumcision in Scripture (Col. 2:11-12), it is clear that it has the same meaning and purpose. This sign, then, marks out our children as born to privilege. No covenant child—being brought up in the faith—stands in the same situation as a child of unbelievers. Baptists may say there is no difference between the children of believers and the children of unbelievers, but the Bible says there is (1 Cor. 7:14). One big difference is this: covenant children are taught the way of salvation in Jesus Christ from earliest years. They are taught—at least the parents promise that they will be taught—that the promise is for them! They, of course, must respond in due time. But even this is not in doubt because God has promised to call many of them to eternal life by the power of his Holy Spirit—and that is just what He does. The writer was converted as an adult. But why did this happy event come about? The answer is: it happened because God brought it about. Long before the time of his conversion the writer, as an infant, had received baptism. Then, as he was growing up, he heard the Bible story from his parents. Baptism—received in infancy—is all the more wonderful exactly because it reminds us that God's work in our lives comes first, and our experience comes second. As the Apostle John truly says: "We love him because he first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). Our first need, then, is to understand—and confess—that we owe our conversion to God's covenant sovereignty and faithfulness.

But again we repeat it: there must be saving religious experience. The person making the second vow ([lesson 3](#)) a right must know what it means to be converted (Mt. 18:3). But what is conversion? It has been defined as a radical change that takes place in the heart or mind of a person who was, by nature, dead in sin, but has now been awakened by the work of the Holy Spirit. As the above diagram tries to show, it consists of two distinct (but never separate) parts. These are faith and repentance. These are simply two sides (or aspects) of the same great change of mind and heart that always takes place in those who are saved by the Lord Jesus. We must note, further, that there are three distinct elements—or, perhaps we could say "levels"—in this process of radical change. There is (1) first, the level of knowledge, (2) then a yet deeper level of feeling, and (3) then finally (out of this line) comes an act of the will, or a decision. In the illustration be sure to look up the texts of Scripture.

A man who is "born again" (or, in other words, regenerated by the Holy Spirit), is enabled to understand the message of the Bible. He therefore begins to realize that he sinned in Adam and fell with him in his first transgression. He becomes aware of the fact that his own nature has been corrupted by this fall, and that he—as a consequence of all this—deserves God's wrath and damnation. At the same time, however, he begins to understand that Jesus came to the world in order to die as a substitute for unworthy sinners! He also comes to see that all those—and only those—who trust in him will be counted as righteous. He is enabled to understand what Paul meant when he said God made Jesus to be sin, for us, that we might be made righteous in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). This is the first element. We must come to know. The second element is a sense of conviction. He begins to feel the awesome reality of these truths. He begins to feel, deep within his heart, that he really is what the Bible says he is. He begins to have a sense of awe and reverence toward Jesus, and amazement that he was willing to come to the earth to die for such hell-deserving sinners as he knows himself to be! The third element is a change in the will. The regenerate man determines that he will flee from the wrath which is to come. He resolves to forsake his sin, and to come to Jesus. This coming to Jesus is not by any physical act—such as raising the hand, or going forward in a revival meeting. No, it is a radical change that takes place within "the mind or heart" of such a person.

So conversion involves the whole personality—knowing, feeling and willing. It is important at this point, however, to make one thing very clear. The Bible does not say that there is just one type of conversion. The Bible does not say, for instance, that we everyone has to be able to state the exact date of his, or her, conversion. Some people we learn about in the Bible had a rather sharply defined conversion. This is probably true of such people as Abraham, Jacob and Paul. It is probably for this reason that they received new names during their adult lives. Others, however, did not have such this sudden type of conversion. Think of Isaac, or of John the baptist (who was filled with the Holy Spirit even while yet in his mother's womb, Lk. 1:15). The Lord did not change their names, and the probable reason is that they were already regenerated from an early time in life. Such persons as these would never be able to name a specific time when they first began to repent and believe. So the important thing is not the ability to say when we were regenerated, or converted, but to be sure that we are repentant believers right now. If it is true that I now repent of my sin and I now trust in the Lord Jesus, then I can answer the second question in the form for public profession.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it should we emphasize God's covenant more than our own experience?

2. Why were infants of Abraham's household circumcised?
3. Why are infants belonging to Christian believers baptized?
4. Cite texts in the discussion which prove: (1) that baptism is New Testament circumcision; (2) that the Abrahamic covenant is still in force; and (3) that the children of believers, having once been "put into" the Church, have never been "put out" again.
5. How do we know God's covenant is still in effect even among believers (such as the Baptists) who don't realize it?
6. Of what is baptism a "sign" with respect to covenant children?
7. How can infant baptism have a deep and profound meaning for those who are converted as adults (even though they were baptized as children)?
8. What are the two aspects of conversion?
9. What are the three necessary elements of conversion?
10. How do we know there is no single type of conversion experience?
11. What is the one thing of which we must be able to testify as "the converted"?

Chapter 6

How Shall I *Live* as a Christian?

The Christian life begins with conversion. But it does not end with this. No, conversion is only the beginning. A person who really has come to Jesus Christ to be justified—that is, made righteous by receiving the imputed righteousness of Jesus as his own—will surely be grateful for this amazing blessing. No one can possibly realize that Jesus died for him, went to hell for him, paid the price of sin for him, and gave him the gift of "a robe of perfect righteousness," without having a sincere love burning in his heart for the Savior. Out of this will come the heartfelt desire to live for him. It is therefore appropriate that we give, at this point, the third vow:

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your sinful nature, and to lead a godly life?

Observe that this question does not ask more than it should. For instance, it does not ask us a new convert to promise to be instantly perfect! We may not make a promise like that because—as the Bible makes very clear—there is no such thing as "instant perfection." After all, even the great Apostle Paul had to say: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do—forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14). It is right here that we see one of the most important reasons to stress—as we do in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—the need for faithful attendance at the stated worship services each Sunday. There is no quick and easy way to learn how to serve Jesus according to his word. The Bible tells us how to live—how to be good citizens—how to live as husbands or wives, employers or employees—how to witness to unbelievers, and how to live with our fellow believers. What we are saying, then—in this third vow—is not that we have already arrived. No, but what we are doing is committing ourselves to learn more of the teaching of the Bible, in order that we might know how to strive, more and more, to obey it. It is precisely because this is difficult that we can only promise to do it "in reliance on the grace of God." This is just another way of saying that we know very well we could never do it in our own strength. It is not easy to take our stand against the world. It is not easy to mortify (or kill) the old nature within us. It is not easy to lead a godly life. And this question does not pretend that it is easy. This question does not ask us to claim more than we actually have, in other words, at the

time of our public profession. The one thing it does ask is whether or not we—with the help of God—are determined to keep striving to do these things. One could put it like this: "are you now beginning to fight the good fight of faith? And can you sincerely say that there is, in your heart, a determination to press on to the goal set before you in Scripture?"

Clearly implied in this third vow, then, is faithfulness in our church attendance. Our fathers had a name for this. They spoke of "a diligent use of the means of grace." What they meant was this: God has commanded his people to come together on the Lord's Day to hear his word, to worship him, and to receive the sacraments. He has ordained this for his own glory, to be sure, but also because of our need. For it is only through the use of these things which God has provided that we will be enabled to attain our goal. Peter put it like this: "having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides for ever...therefore...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 1:23, 2:1-2). It would be as foolish to expect a newborn Christian to grow without the means of grace as it would be to expect a newborn baby to grow without milk. So anyone who says "yes, I do" in answer to this third question, ought to realize that it involves—from the start—faithfulness in church attendance. And one thing soon becomes apparent to any observant person. Those who do make progress in the things promised here are invariably such as love the worship services of the church, and the fellowship of God's people. This does not mean that everyone who is regular in church attendance will automatically—or necessarily—become a strong Christian. No, but what it does mean is that no one will become a strong and growing Christian who neglects the means that God has appointed. The means of grace are not magical, in other words, but they are essential.

It is not our purpose in these lessons to go into great detail. It will perhaps be of value, however, to give a brief summary of what it means to live a godly life. We will do this by giving a simple explanation of the central meaning of each of the ten commandments. These commandments are God's own "brief summary" of His holy will (see diagram 9 below). We need to know the whole Bible in order to work out the detailed application of the principles contained in these commandments. But the place to start is by trying to get a firm grasp of the basic principles contained in each of these laws. (1) First of all, then, the ten commandments really deal with two main subjects. Our Lord Jesus shows us this in two interesting statements. In Mt. 4:10 we read that our Lord gave this as his final answer to Satan, when he was tempted: "Away with you, Satan! For it is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.'" So the whole duty of man, to God, can be summed up in two words—worship and service. (2) In Matthew's gospel Jesus gave another summary in two great principles. "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (22:37-40; see diagram 9, below).

Before we discuss the various commandments individually, we do well to grasp at least a few of the general principles which apply to all of them. (1) There is an order of importance in the arrangement of these ten laws. The organizing principle is the centrality—or supremacy—of God. Man, by nature, fails to comprehend this. He thinks that he is "not too bad" if he refrains from stealing, murder or adultery, while he pays not the slightest heed to the higher duty of worship. Yet, in actual fact, the greatest sins of men are precisely in the sphere of worship. (2) Each commandment, when properly understood, teaches us both what is required and what is forbidden. Eight of the ten commandments are stated in a negative way: "You shall not...." Two of these

commandments are stated positively. But when we compare Scripture with Scripture we learn that when God gives one of these, the other is always implied. (3) The ten commandments are sufficient. In the Bible the number ten is often used to indicate completeness. For example, when the bridegroom—in "the Song of Solomon"—praised this wife's beauty by mentioning ten things, it was as if he was saying "you are perfect." Well, God's ten commandments are perfect. There is no need for anything to be added to them.

Without going into great detail, then, we want to show, by a few examples, how each of these commandments ought to function in the life of the Christian.

1. THE OBJECT OF TRUE WORSHIP—THE ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD!

The first commandment says: "You shall have no other gods before Me." (or, in a more literal translation: "To you there shall be no other gods before My face"). The Bible reveals the one true God. This one true God is revealed as existing in three distinct (but not separated) persons. It is also stated in Scripture that no one has the true God as his God if he rejects any of these three persons. "Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father" (1 Jn. 2:23). It is commonly imagined that adherents of other religions do, after all, worship the same God that we do as Christians. This, however, is precisely the error of all errors. When anyone makes his own definition of God he makes an idol! And an idol is a false God. We, as Christians, are not allowed to have anything to do with such man-made gods. You can see, then, that one of the great sins today is the sin of joining together in worship, or prayer, in a situation in which this truth is not faithfully maintained. Much so-called "ecumenical worship" today is really false worship. Only Churches that hold a common faith in the one true God should ever worship together.

2. THE MANNER OF TRUE WORSHIP—ONLY AS GOD HAS COMMANDED

The second commandment reads as follows: "You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments." The reader will note that this commandment has two parts: the first part forbids the making of any carved image or flat picture of God, whether it be of the Father, of the Son, or of the Holy Spirit; the second part forbids the use of any such image or picture as an aid to devotion. Anything that originates in the imagination of man, rather than from God's revelation in Scripture, is illegitimate as a means of worship. Man-made statues, pictures, ceremonies and so on, are wrong because they are not authorized by God, and not revealed from him (see Lev. 10:1-2). It was for this reason that our fathers, at the time of the Reformation, put away all such things from their old Roman Catholic way of worship. They put them away because they did not find any warrant for them in the Bible. The thing we should always ask first—when we come to worship God—is this: how does God want us to worship Him? Only the Bible can tell us.

One other thing needs comment here. Observe that this commandment warns of harm to our children if we disobey this commandment. Why is this? The answer is not difficult: children tend to accept, uncritically, the practices of their parents. So, when parents adopt ways of worship that are not Biblical, the children tend to do the same. For example: in many Protestant Churches today

you see stained glass windows with pictures of Jesus. Some of the older people in these Churches were quite uncomfortable when these were first brought in. They sensed that these were not right. But the children brought up in these churches do not have any negative feelings at all. They are used to these things and accept them as normal. This is what the commandment means when it says children are visited with the sins—not just the punishment that follows the sins—of their parents. God does not put the punishment children instead of the parents, but with them because they share the same sin.

3. THE ATTITUDE OF TRUE WORSHIP—WITH A SINCERE HEART

The third commandment says: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." But what does it mean to "take" the Lord's name? We take the Lord's name when we become Christians, much as a wife takes her husband's name when she gets married. We profess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, in other words, and thereafter are called by His name. We take it in vain when we do not really mean what we say when we make our profession of faith. The principle is this: even if we worship the true God—in a form or manner commanded by Him—still we take His name in vain if we do not do it sincerely. When we read that the Lord "will not hold anyone guiltless" who takes His name in vain, we are to understand that those who profess with the lips, without a real commitment of the heart, are still unsaved (see Mt. 7:21-23).

The first three commandments are extremely important, and must be seen together. We must (1) worship the true God, (2) in the appointed way, and (3) with a sincere heart.

4. THE TIME OF TRUE WORSHIP—ONE WHOLE DAY IN SEVEN IS THE LORD'S

Here is the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." This commandment reminds us that God himself worked six days and then rested. It also tells us that man was created in his image. This is the ultimate reason for the duty set forth in this commandment: we ought to reflect God both in our work and our rest and worship. We cannot, in this brief treatment, go into all the arguments that people have raised against the observance of the first day of the week—the Lord's Day—as the day of rest and worship. But perhaps the most important objection is that which has been raised by the Seventh-day Adventists. They say this commandment requires us to observe the last day of the week, rather than the first, as the Sabbath (or, in other words, Saturday rather than Sunday). But observe: the commandment does not say "remember the last day (of the week)." What it says is "work on six of the days of the week, and then worship God on the seventh." What the commandment requires is that one day out of every seven be set aside for worship. It is, in other words, a statement about proportion, not order. It is much like the tithe, which means "the tenth". What God requires is that we give the tenth portion to him. But which portion is "the tenth?" The answer is that it all depends. A person could give the first portion, or the last, and yet it could still be one tenth. Only from other texts of the Bible do we learn that we should give God the first portion. It is much the same with "the seventh" as respects the days of the week. We know from

the New Testament that Christ himself, after his resurrection, always called his disciples together on the first day of the (seven day) week (see Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1, 19). We also know that this practice was followed by the Apostles (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). In the Old Testament period it was, of course, the last day of the week. Now it is the first day of the week. But either way it remains "the seventh" (that is, one whole day out of the seven). It is for this reason that almost all of our churches have both morning and evening worship services on the Lord's Day, even though many other churches today do not. Faithful Christians ought to remember that this day is not their own, but the Lord's. (Isa. 58:13 tells us what it means to keep this day holy).

5. REVERENCE FOR GOD-GIVEN AUTHORITY—BECAUSE IT IS REALLY GOD'S

Did you ever notice that civil rulers (Isa. 49:23) and church elders (1 Cor. 4:14-15) are called "fathers" in the Bible? For this reason we must understand that the fifth commandment states a principle which applies not only to the family, but also to the Church and the State. Paul says "let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resists the power, resists the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:1-2). Thus in the home (1 Tim. 2:12; Eph. 6:1), the Church (Acts 20:17-18; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17) and the State (Rom. 13:1-2) we are required to render due obedience in the Lord to those whom God has clothed with authority over us. This phrase "in the Lord" means that we are to obey human authorities, appointed by God to rule in their respective sphere, in all their lawful commands. In other words, so long as they do not command anything God forbids—or forbid anything that God commands—we ought to obey them. However, if there is ever a direct conflict between what they command, and what God commands, we must obey God (Acts 4:19).

6. REVERENCE FOR HUMAN LIFE—BECAUSE MAN WAS MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

The proper translation of the sixth commandment is not "You shall not kill" but "You shall not murder." This fact becomes very clear when we note that the Bible itself sanctions some kinds of killing. For example, if a criminal is killed by someone acting in self-defense it is not an act of murder (Ex. 22:2). Or, again, if a person accidentally—and quite unintentionally—kills someone it is not murder (Deut. 19:4-5). And that is not all. Some kinds of killing are a solemn duty. For example, civil authorities ought to kill murderers (Gen. 9:6-7). Indeed, if a murderer is not put to death, then those who have God-given authority to execute them become guilty themselves (Num. 35:31-33). Civil rulers are also supposed to use the sword to defend the people over whom they rule from crime and foreign aggression or invasion (Deut. 20:1). What this commandment really forbids, then, is quite clearly this: the taking of human life unjustly (or, in other words, unless God himself has authorized it). It is this commandment, by the way, which provides us with the principle we need to guide us in issues such as smoking and drinking. The Bible teaches temperance (or moderation) in the use of all material things (see Prov. 25:27; 1 Tim. 5:23; Gal. 5:23; etc.). The reason for reverence for human life is that man was made in God's image (Gen. 9:6).

7. REVERENCE FOR MARRIAGE—WHERE GOD'S IMAGE IS REPRODUCED AND NURTURED

We live in a day of widespread sexual immorality. The Christian must therefore be certain he does not think as the world does about sex. There was also widespread sexual immorality in the Roman Empire in Paul's time. Because of the blatant sexual perversions of that day some Christians

reacted by reprobating sex completely. They thought it would be most conducive to holiness if people repudiated marriage and became celibate (which means "doing without sex entirely"). This can be made to seem very pious, yet Paul does not hesitate to call this a doctrine of demons (1 Tim. 4:3). No, it does not promote holiness to treat all sex—even sex in marriage—as something inherently evil. To the contrary, the Bible speaks of marriage—and sex in marriage—in a very positive way. Because of so much sexual immorality all around, says Paul, for most people it is best to marry because this is the means God has appointed for most of us, so that we can avoid these evils (1 Cor. 7:1-2). Those who are already married—even if one partner is not a Christian—should remain together, if possible (1 Cor. 7:10-15). Only adultery—or desertion of a believer by an unbeliever—frees a Christian from the bonds of marriage. Other forms of sexual deviation—more common today as our own culture deteriorates (such as homosexual behavior, incest and even bestiality)—are utterly condemned in the Bible (cf. Ex. 18). It is a sad fact that there are even so-called churches today that go along with a permissive attitude toward these sins. A faithful church will never lower the standard of God's law to accommodate such abominations.

8. REVERENCE FOR *PROPERTY*—OUR STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S CREATION

Why is it wrong to take something that belongs to someone else? It is wrong because the Biblical view is that God alone is the giver of all that we rightly possess. He gives a high I.Q. to one man and a low I.Q. to another. He gives different opportunities, a different family inheritance, and so on. We therefore have no right to think we have an automatic right to "as much as other people have". We are to obtain our property—or wealth—in one of three ways: (a) by our own labor, (b) by inheritance, or (c) as a gift. Any other way (such as by winning in gambling) is condemned in the Bible. It is for this reason too that false business practices are condemned in Scripture. These are just different ways of stealing (see Lev. 19:35-36). It is also a form of stealing when we do not give honest work in return for our wages (1 Tim. 5:8; Lev. 6:2-4; Prov. 11:1; 20:10). And, of course, the employer also steals if he does not pay a fair wage for work done by his employees. There is a thief in the heart of each of us, by nature. But the call of God is that we "steal no longer" but rather labor with our own hands so that we will have something to share with the needy (Eph. 4:28).

9. REVERENCE FOR *TRUTH*—BECAUSE WE ARE TO REFLECT GOD AS HIS IMAGE

Speaking the truth—in love—ought to be the hallmark of the Christian. But what does it mean to speak truth? It is (1) first of all to say what we believe to be true. Just think what a change there would be in the world if everyone we talked to did this! So often people do not say what they really think is true, but only what they think we would like to hear, or what they think may gain them some advantage. (2) In the second place, we need to be sure that what we believe to be true actually is true. Here we can see why gossip is severely condemned in the Bible (Lev. 19:16; Prov. 18:8; etc). We are not allowed, for example, to receive an evil accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by at least two (or, better still, three) witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). It is easy—too easy—to pass along something we hear without making sure it is accurate information. God wants us to make sure that what we are saying really is true.

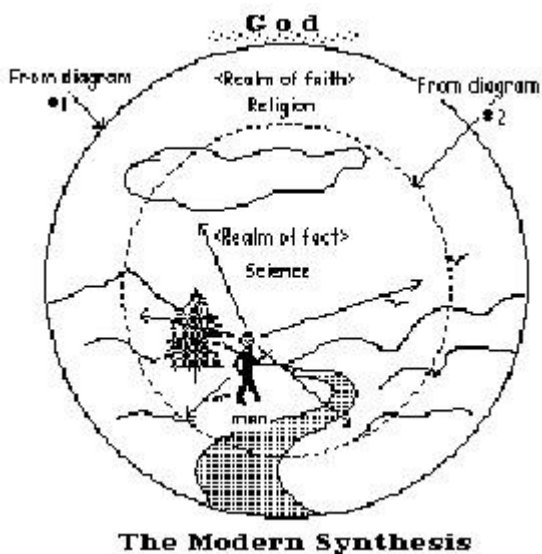
10. REVERENCE FOR GOD AS OUR CHIEF *DESIRE*—THE HEART-SEARCHING COMMANDMENT

The Bible says coveting is idolatry (Col. 3:5). From this we see that the ten commandments are a unity—like an unbroken circle. The root of all desire to go against God's law is simply this: a heart

that does not have God himself as our supreme desire and reward (see Gen. 15:1). We should take note of the fact that this is the only commandment that deals entirely with what is inward—the desire of the heart—rather than outward acts. We can speak of all the other commandments in terms of doing, or not doing, some outward act. But this commandment reaches down to something deeper, namely, to the attitude of the heart. It was this commandment that finally made the Apostle Paul realize that he was a sinner. He had been able to deceive himself into thinking that he had kept all the other commandments (because he had not committed any outward act that he, or others, considered to be shockingly bad). But he could not say "I have kept the tenth commandment too." So it was this commandment (applied to his heart by the Holy Spirit) that first began to convince him that he needed Jesus Christ as his Savior (Rom. 7:7). We should also take note of the fact that after he was converted Paul could say, even of this commandment, that he delighted in it (Rom. 7:22).

QUESTIONS

1. What is the Christian's primary reason for keeping the ten commandments?
2. Why is "reliance on the grace of God" essential to this third membership vow?
3. Underline the words in the third vow which imply faithful church attendance.
4. In what two basic concepts can the content of the ten commandments be expressed?
5. In your own words express some of the general principles that apply to all the ten commandments.
6. State a common practice that violates the first commandment.
7. What two things are equally forbidden by the second commandment?
8. What does it mean to "take" the Lord's name?
9. Why should a faithful church have two services each Sunday if possible?
10. How do we know the fifth commandment has a wider reference than to our own immediate family?
11. How do we know a single life is not more "holy" than married life?
12. Why is gambling wrong?
13. What two elements are vital in order to "tell the truth"?
14. Why is "covetousness" called idolatry?
15. Why was the tenth commandment the one that "got to" Paul's conscience?



When we stop and think about it, this attempted synthesis is an astonishing thing. Was it not already clear, from the Middle Ages, that theonomy and autonomy can never really be blended together successfully? Was it not equally clear that synthesis is always to the detriment of the Biblical view? This is so because autonomy always tends to become more and more dominant. It becomes the primary thing, controlling everyday life, while the word of God is pushed more and more into the background. As a matter of fact, when you really grasp what has happened, you will also see why the Christian view does not even receive a subordinate position, not really. No, it is actually eliminated because the Christian view does not stand any more when it is made subordinate to human autonomy at any point.

Let us try to see this from a practical illustration. Take the situation in our public schools. In these schools today practically everything is dealt with on the basis of what we label (above) as layer #2 of the synthesis. God is not mentioned in the school classroom because God is not considered important for daily life, or for scientific knowledge. There is no reference to the Bible because the Bible is not considered relevant to scientific investigation. Everything in the realm of science is looked at from the standpoint of man as autonomous. Man starts from himself—and uses only his own resources—as he seeks to work out his own answers. Religion, then, is treated as if it has nothing whatever to do with the world of science. Take the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for example. Now the truth is that the resurrection of Jesus is a fact—just as historical and scientific as any other fact—because Jesus actually rose from the dead physically. How can there be any true science, then, when this—the most important fact in history—is ignored? But it is ignored in our public school instruction. The result is that the Christian view—the only view that really is true—is treated as if it was (at best) only a matter of "spiritual concern", something that only has to do with the "inner life" of the individual.

Here, then, is what happens in synthesis. The false view of man as autonomous undermines the true Christian view in a devastating way. Man, beginning from himself—and in dependence only upon human sources and resources—works out his own explanation of reality. He decides that nothing can be true except what he determines for himself. And since he does not experience the things the Christian world-view teaches, he insists that they have no proper place in the "real world" of everyday life (layer A, in diagram 4). The ironic thing is that he even thinks he is being generous when he says "you Christians can enjoy your religious freedom in the personal and private realm of faith." But in truth he is not being generous at all. This is what we must see. What he is doing, in fact, demanding is that we deny the truth by accepting this false synthesis. What we need to do as Christians is to turn the tables, and put the biblical world-and-life view back in its rightful place. This means—first of all—that we must reject the synthesis now dominating our culture. We must reject it completely. In order to do this we must learn how to discern the things that differ. In the sections below we will deal with this further.

QUESTIONS

1. If theonomy and autonomy are radically different, why is it that so many people do not realize it?
2. What do we mean when we speak of "synthesis"?
3. Why was a Protestant Reformation necessary?
4. Give a few examples of the dualism in the medieval synthesis.
5. Is it what *God* does—or is it what *man* does—which is decisive in man's salvation in the Roman Catholic view? Be ready to show this from the chart.
6. Why does the autonomy view give no incentive for scientific effort?

7. Is the synthesis of our present time the same as that of the Middle Ages? Explain.
8. Does synthesis really allow true religion its proper place? Why?
9. Give an example of the effect of synthesis on public school education.
10. Give a practical example of what Christians can do today, to turn the tables against synthesis.

Chapter 7

How Does God *Keep Me*?

We have seen something of what it means to trust in Jesus alone as Savior, and of what it means to live for him. Now we come to the final question in the form for public profession of faith in which we learn see God's provision for my safekeeping through the government of the Church. Here is the vow:

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

In order to understand what is involved in this vow, we first need to have some understanding of the Presbyterian form of church government. The term is derived from the Greek word "presbuteros" (πρεσβυτερος), meaning elders, and is used to denote church government by elders. These elders govern in a system of church assemblies, namely, session, presbytery and general assembly. The elders of a local church are collectively called "the session". Elders who come together, by delegation, from a number of churches in a given region are called a "presbytery." Finally, elders are delegated by several presbyteries to the largest assembly of elders called the "general assembly." It is not correct, in our view, to speak of "higher" and "lower" assemblies of the church (as many commonly do). The correct distinction is not one of higher/lower, but rather larger/smaller. Since all authority really belongs to Christ, the only king and head of the Church, no church assembly is higher and no church assembly can have any ultimate or final authority. No, ultimate or final authority belongs to the Lord alone, and this—in turn—means that the Bible alone is the supreme standard for the church's faith and life.

Some churches are *congregational* in government. Churches with this form of government do not recognize any governing authority except what exists in the local church. The great weakness in this form of government is that there is no right of appeal against decisions made in a local church if they are unbiblical. We believe this conflicts with the clear teaching of Acts chapter 15. This portion of the Bible proves that there was the right of appeal in the apostolic church. The general assembly had the authority to settle matters which could not be settled in the local church.

There are also *hierarchical* churches. In this form of church government many congregations are bound together under the authority of an ascending series of officers, such as priests, bishops, archbishops, etc. It will be evident that the authority of the local church, in this form of government, is drastically reduced. Since all decisions come from the top down—in this type of government—there is no right of appeal. For example, to whom would a Roman Catholic appeal against a decision of the Pope?

The *Presbyterian* form of church government is the only system that safeguards these two important principles: (1) each part of the church is in due subjection, in the Lord, to the whole church; yet (2) no part of the church is given supremacy over any other. The following chart will

illustrate the six principles of church government—clearly revealed in the Bible—as they are, or are not, honored in the three types of government.

We show this in diagram 10, below.

Biblical Principles	Cong.	Heir.	Pres.
1. Christ alone is head of the Church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18)	Yes	No	Yes
2. Elders are chosen by the people (Acts 6:1-11)	Yes	No	Yes
3. All elders/bishops are equal (Tit. 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28)	Yes	No	Yes
4. Each church has at least two elders (Acts 14:23)	No	No	Yes
5. Elders/bishops are ordained by presbytery (1 Tim. 4:14)	No	No	Yes
6. The right of appeal (from smaller to wider assembly—Acts 15)	No	No	Yes

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is Presbyterian in its form of government. In doctrine it *Catholic* faith because it still believes—and teaches—the doctrines expressed in the great ecumenical creeds. The word "ecumenical" means "universally accepted." This is also the original meaning of the word "catholic." What is commonly called "the Apostles' Creed" is the best known example of an ecumenical confession. (2) Our church is also *Protestant*. In the sixteenth century there was a massive division in the Western Christian church. In this division the Protestants did—while the Roman Catholics did not—hold to certain Biblical doctrines such as these: (a) the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, (b) the priesthood of all believers, and (c) justification by faith alone. One could put it this way: the Protestants said "the Bible only" (as the final authority for faith and duty), "Christ only" (as mediator between God and man), and "faith only" (that is, we are not righteous by our own works, but are made righteous by Jesus through faith). (3) Our church is also *Reformed*, rather than Lutheran or Arminian. [Diagram 6](#) (in lesson 4) will indicate the differences between these systems of teaching, and should be reviewed at this time. It is only in the Reformed system of teaching that a consistent application of Catholic, and Protestant, principles can be found today. We do not mean, by this, that we think of our church as "the one true church." The Orthodox Presbyterian Church makes no such claim. It is, in fact, willing to admit that it falls short of what it ought to be. What we are talking about here is not churches, but systems of teaching. It should not be forgotten that many denominations in America originally held to Reformed teaching. Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Reformed churches all held—originally, and to a large extent—to the type of doctrinal teaching we are referring to in this section of our study.

A person taking the fourth vow, then, agrees to submit to the teaching authority of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Such a person knows in advance, in other words, that the instruction will be of the character outlined above. It therefore follows that no person who is already convinced that Reformed teaching is wrong could take this fourth vow with integrity. The very least that is essential is that the person taking this vow will be humble (not claiming to know it all, already), and therefore willing to receive further instruction out of the Bible. This does not mean that we, in taking this vow, make an absolute promise in advance to agree with anything and everything we may later be taught. That is why the right of appeal is there—and that is why it is so precious. If we become convinced that the church is wrong in what it is teaching at some point, we can then go to the session—and if this does not bring the needed correction—to the presbytery, and even to the General Assembly. This can be done by any member of the church, and it actually has been done. But what is important to stress here is that we are—as this fourth vow shows—a confessional church. This means that we do not think of Christian profession in a purely individualistic manner.

In I Corinthians 12:12-31 there is a beautiful description of the principle of corporate relationships and responsibilities. The church is compared to a human body. As in the body, so in the church, no member can "go it alone." Thus, in our church, if you become a problem member (like an injured finger would be on the body) the elders of the church will come to you to exhort and admonish you. They will talk to you about your wrong ideas, or your wrong actions. And one of the things you promise, when you say "yes" to the fourth vow, is that you will always welcome this expression of care by the church, and submit to it. This is exactly what our Lord himself commanded (Mt. 18:15-20). It is sad to note that sometimes in our church people who make this promise later on decide that they do not like what is involved. When they are visited by the elders they act as if the elders have no business to come and exhort and admonish them. Now it may be, in a given instance, that the elders are wrong in what they do, or in the way they do it. Yet even in such an instance we should be willing to receive them with deference and honor, being thankful that we are part of a church that cares. And that is not all, because they are also required to listen to us when we turn to the Bible to show them our concern. And then—don't forget—if it ever becomes necessary, we have the right of appeal. So our attitude should always be this: "as long as the elders come to me in the name of Christ, and with the Bible as their only final authority, I will always honor them and receive them. This I solemnly promise, not to men, but to God." The is what God himself requires of us, when He says: "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account" (Heb. 13:17).

QUESTIONS

1. What does the word *Presbyterian* mean?
2. What is the relationship between a session and a presbytery?
3. What is the distinctive feature of congregational church government?
4. What is the distinctive feature of hierarchical church government?
5. What are the two vital things safeguarded by Presbyterian government?
6. How many of the six biblical principles of church government can you write out from memory?
7. What are some of the principles for the sake of which Protestantism arose?
8. What do we mean when we say the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is Catholic? Protestant? and Reformed?
9. If it is not right to say "our's is the only true Church," why is it right to say "the Reformed Faith is the one true faith"?
10. In your own words, what is the main difference between the Reformed Faith and the Catholic/Arminian type of teaching?

11. Can a person take the fourth vow if there are still things in the Reformed Faith about which full understanding and conviction has not been reached?
12. Should a person take the fourth vow if one is already convinced the Reformed Faith is not Biblical?
13. What should a church member do if he (or she) later on becomes convinced there is something wrong in what the church is teaching?
14. Quote a phrase from 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 which shows that no Christian is allowed to be autonomous.