Test Results
Worship & Sacraments
1/31/2014

Section I
Reformed Liturgical Heritage

OPEN BOOK REQUIRED
THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND
BOOK OF ORDER ONLY

Phil and Sarah are members of the congregation you serve as pastor. They ask to meet with you to plan the baptism of their infant daughter. You review with them the baptismal vows described in the Directory for Worship. You read to them the citation that says, “Those desiring the Sacrament of Baptism for their children or for themselves shall make vows that ... renounce evil and affirm their reliance on God's grace” (W-3.3603(b)). Phil responds by saying, “I am not sure I can make that vow. I don’t think evil is something a human being can renounce.”

REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) specific passage from at least three (3) different documents in The Book of Confessions, articulate a Reformed understanding of infant baptism.
2. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, discuss the significance of making the vow (W-3.3603(b)) in the church's celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism in the Reformed tradition. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

**Answer**

1. A Reformed understanding of Baptism includes three main points. 1) Baptism is a sign and seal of God's work. 2) Baptism represents God's covenant with God's people. 3) Christians only need to be baptized once.

A definition of the Sacraments can be found in the Heidelberg Catechism which says, "They are visible, holy signs and seals instituted by God in order that by their use [God] may the more fully disclose and seal to us the promise of the gospel...[that God] grants us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life" (4.066, cf. 6.149). In other words, the two sacraments, baptism and communion (4.068) are signs and seals which are given by God as visible markers that God is merciful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We are not baptized because we have chosen God, but instead, baptism is a sign that God has chosen to show us mercy.

Throughout all of history, the Lord God has been calling people into relationship with God's self. In 3.21, the Scots Confession explains the relationship between baptism and circumcision. In Genesis 17, God made a covenant with Abraham to be his God, calling Abraham and Abraham's descendants God's own. God continues to call people to God's self today. Instead of giving the sign of circumcision to signify that we are the people of God, Christians now have the sign of baptism.

Because baptism is a sign of God calling people into a covenant relationship, Christians only need to be baptized once and can be baptized as children. The Second Helvetic Confession affirms, "There is but one baptism in the Church of God...[it] is a perpetual sealing of our adoption" (5.186). In other words, because baptism seals that a person is a member of the family of God, they only need to be baptized once, just as a child would only be adopted once. Coming into the family of God is the work of God alone, and baptism is the seal of God's work.

2. When baptizing children, parents are asked to make four vows before the congregation including a vow to "renounce evil and affirm their reliance on God's grace" (W-3.3603(b)). In the Reformed Tradition, baptism is understood as a sign and seal which marks the fact that God has claimed us and brought us into God's own family. By saying that we "renounce evil," the Christian community is making a promise to live in accordance with God's will to the best of our ability. Christians will never be able to fully be free from sin and evil (6.076), but when we vow to renounce evil, we are recognizing that God calls us into a life of with God. In baptism, we are participating in Jesus' death and resurrection (W-2.3002). So in baptism we believe that God is calling us into a life of turning away from evil and towards God. This is only done by the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

**Reader Responses**

| S | The understanding of infant baptism is expressed well. An understanding of the congregation's role could have been expressed more fully. The question was read accurately and the response demonstrates an understanding of infant baptism in the Reformed tradition. |
| U | This response lacks a focus on infant baptism. |

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**Section II**
Constructive Theological Reflection on Worship

OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND

BOOK OF ORDER ONLY

Bob and Anne, members of the congregation you serve, were at a recent public event where a local minister offered a prayer to “the God of our Founding Fathers.” They are divided about the language of that prayer. They have asked you to address the subject of prayer with the congregation. They asked, “Pastor, you wouldn’t pray like that in our church, would you?”

REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of Christian prayer. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write a newsletter article about the language used in Christian prayer in response to Bob and Anne’s concern.

Answer

1. The Reformed tradition has much to say about the nature of prayer. It discusses the importance of prayer, the types of prayer, and the language of prayer.

"Prayer is at the heart of worship," the Book of Order reminds us (W-2.1001) and Calvin spoke of prayer saying that it is one of the primary expressions of faith in God. All Christians are called to pray because "in prayer, through the Holy Spirit, people seek after and are found by the one true God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ" (W-2.1001). In other words, prayer is essential to the life of all Christians because it is a time when Christians intentionally seek God and wherein God reveals God’s self to people. Also, as the Heidelberg Catechism states, prayer is "the chief part of gratitude" (4.116). It is a way in which we show thankfulness to God for what God has done in our lives.

The Reformed tradition teaches that there are many different types of prayer. According to W-2.1002, prayer can include: adoration, thanksgiving, confession (see also 4.117), supplication, and self-dedication. Prayer does not need to be spoken, but instead can be sung (W-2.1003) and may not even use words (W-2.1004). In fact, prayer is often a form of listening to God and waiting on the Lord, a point emphasized by Calvin in the Institutes and also mentioned in the Directory for Worship (W-2.1001). Sometimes prayer is expressed "through actions as well as speech" including kneeling, hand clapping, and laying on of hands as explained in W-2.1005.

Several places in the Book of Confessions, the authors admonish Christians to pray as Christ prayed and to use the Lord’s Prayer as a model for our prayers (see 4.120-4.129 and 7.098-7.107). The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Our Father” and we are encouraged to do likewise because this reminds us to have a “childlike reverence and trust toward God” (4.120). The Second Helvetic Confession also reminds us that the language of prayer matters, emphasizing that Christians should pray publicly in a language that all can understand (5.218). All prayers should be directed toward the one Triune God, who can be called “Father” because this is how Jesus taught us to pray or to the Lord Jesus Christ because Christ alone is the mediator, through the power of the Holy Spirit (5.218).

2. Newsletter Article--
Language of Prayer

I am thankful to be leading a congregation in which prayer is central to the life of the worshiping community. Many of you have been asking me to talk about the language we use when we turn to God in prayer. I am glad to talk with you all about a Reformed understanding of prayer.

First, we want to remember that prayer does not always require language at all. When we are listening and waiting on God to act, we are in a form of prayer. When we are in worship, kneeling in silence or clapping in joy, we are expressing actions of prayer. Prayer by its very definition a time when we recognize that God is revealing God’s self to us and when we give gratitude to God for meeting us where we are. Whether we are in a time of sorrow or joy, the apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians to pray without ceasing.

When we do use words to pray to God, it is good to keep some things in mind. First, Jesus himself has taught us to pray by calling God “Our Father.” One of the glorious mysteries of our faith is that in Christ we have been adopted into the family of God and can call God our Father. This truth reminds us that we are God’s children, and therefore we can come before God with a childlike reverence and with total trust. Another thing to keep in mind is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one true mediator. We do not need to pray to anyone, dead or alive, to intercede on our behalf in prayer. Instead, Christ alone goes before us.

I know that some in the congregation were concerned about the recent prayers offered at a public event in which the leader prayed to “the God of our Founding Fathers.” I think your concern is that this prayer was not prayed to the one Triune God. I do not know the minister who lead this prayer, and I am not sure how this minister understands the “God of our Founding Fathers.” Therefore, I do not want to condemn his words. Let us instead keep in mind that when we pray, we are standing before the One God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thank you for your continued prayers for me, for our church, for all Christians, for the nation, and for the world. It is a blessing to worship with you as your pastor.

Reader Responses

| S | An adequate understanding of prayer in the Reformed tradition is demonstrated in the answer to the question and in the newsletter article. However, the lack of inclusive language is a distraction. A review of the denominations commitment to inclusiveness as expressed in W-1.2005 and W-1.2006 is strongly recommended. The response could have been strengthened by use of a fuller range of biblical imagery for God. |

| S | The newsletter article dodges the question. |

Section III

Application to Ministry, Option B

OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND

BOOK OF ORDER ONLY

CHOOSE ONE: A OR B
B.

You are the solo pastor of a rural congregation and will be gone for a month in the summer. At a recent meeting the worship committee began to make plans for how they will lead Sunday worship during your absence. The discussion focused primarily on the weekly communion service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John:</th>
<th>I have been coming for the last couple of years, so I will be glad to lead the prayer of thanksgiving.</th>
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<td>Betty:</td>
<td>I don’t see why we need to celebrate the Lord’s Supper so often. The service will be over sooner if we cancel the communion part.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin:</td>
<td>Oh, we always have communion. Someone can just say the words of institution and then pass the bread and cup.</td>
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**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, identify and discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each of these comments regarding the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to the worship committee making certain that you address the concerns raised by John, Betty and Martin.

**Answer**

1. When discussing how to lead Sunday worship in my absence from the church over the summer, the worship committee raises some excellent questions about what is proper for Presbyterians to do when celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

John seems to think that any regular attender can lead the prayer of thanksgiving. However, this is not true. According to W-3.3613, the one who is presiding over the Lord’s Supper is to lead the people in prayer.

Betty seems to think that the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated less often. It is good to be reminded of the importance of the Lord’s Supper. W-2.4001 reminds us that the Lord’s Supper is a sign and seal of being in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is very important in the life of all believers and should be celebrated frequently. Moreover, practically Betty cannot unilaterally make the decision about how often to celebrate communion. Instead, it is the job of the session to make sure that the Lord’s Supper is celebrated frequently and to make plans for these celebrations (W-2.4012a).

Martin seems to think that anyone is permitted and able to lead the taking of Communion, as lead by the words of the institution. In reality, the Book of Order states that Communion should be “administered by a teaching elder or ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service” (W-2.4012c). In other words, only those who have been approved by the session and authorized by the Presbytery can preside over the Lord’s Supper.

2. Worship Committee,
Thank you for your service to our worshiping community. I am so glad that you are meeting now and planning ahead for the services while I am absent over the summer. While you are planning to make adjustments in the services, we need to discuss several issues involving communion. First of all, the Presbyterian Church (USA) states in the Directory for Worship that only teaching elders or ruling elders who have been commissioned to pastoral service can preside over the Lord’s Table. In other words, we cannot have congregation members saying the words of the institution nor can they lead the prayer of thanksgiving. If we are going to continue to have communion over the summer while I am gone, we will need to invite in a person who meets these qualifications to lead communion.

Personally, I would like to see the church continue to have communion each week. In the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, we are reminded of Christ’s death and resurrection and invited anew to truly share in communion with Jesus Christ and with one another. This is an important part of the service. However, neither you nor I can actually make a decision about how frequently we celebrate communion. It is the session’s job to make this decision and any changes we want to make to the schedule for the Lord’s Supper must be voted on by the session.

Again, thank you for your service to the congregation. I am so grateful that you are planning well in advance. I know that the Lord is going to bless the work of your hands.

Reader Responses

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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>The exam in Section III demonstrates an understanding of the Lord’s Supper in the Reformed tradition. The issues are fully explored and the members of the worship committee are answered in an affirming, pastoral and sensitive way. A strong grasp of the importance of the Directory for Worship is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>This response provides an adequate understanding of the issues raised by the worship committee.</td>
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Overall Evaluation

General Comments for Examinee and/or Presbytery

Please include here any comments about the examination as a whole or notes for the presbytery committee/commission overseeing the examinee’s preparation for ministry.

Reader Responses

- Insight and knowledge are demonstrated in the writing of the exam.
- This exam would be helped by a deeper discussion of the sacraments.