READER'S EVALUATION SHEET IN THEOLOGY

I. EVALUATIONS OF THIS EXAMINATION. The examination consists of three sections, each designed to be completed in one hour. All three sections must be answered. Section III has two options, from which the candidate is instructed to select one. Each section must be evaluated as either “Satisfactory” (S) or “Unsatisfactory” (U). The reader must also assign an overall evaluation for this examination. If any section is omitted it will receive an evaluation of “O”; the examination must then receive an overall evaluation of “Unsatisfactory.” The examination must receive an “S” on at least two out of the three sections to receive an overall evaluation of “Satisfactory.”

Each examination will be evaluated independently by two readers. If both overall evaluations are “S,” the conveners will record a final evaluation of “Satisfactory.” If both readers evaluate the exam overall as “U,” the exam receives a final evaluation of “Unsatisfactory.” If the two readers disagree in their overall evaluations, the exam will be given to a third reader. The conveners will record the final evaluation based on the two concurring overall evaluations.

II. THIS EVALUATION SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. Each reader’s comments should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper. These comments are read by the candidate and the candidate’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Use the back of this sheet OR attach a separate page for comments explaining the evaluations assigned to each section of this examination.

III. EVALUATIONS:

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<th>S, U or O</th>
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IV. OVERALL EVALUATION

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE A MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. (Please check if applicable.)

Renee A. van Dyke
Reader’s name printed

Reader’s Signature
Reader's Evaluations:

Section 1: Obedience to Christ
The paper is an excellent discussion of the Confessional continuities and changes throughout the centuries. It displays insight as well as knowledge in regards to Reformed faith, traditions and heritage. The paper is thoughtfully prepared and ideas are well executed.

Section 2: Joy
The paper again demonstrates good understanding of the Reformed tradition and successfully supports its ideas regarding Christian joy with reference to appropriate Scriptures, classic and contemporary theology. The theological concepts presented are woven together nicely to create good flow and discussion of each idea presents a good foundation upon which the paper builds and offers to continue building in future "classes". This paper makes great effort to ensure the material is easily understandable, yet challenging enough to stimulate discussion in an adult educational setting.

Section 3: Tool for Ministry
A strong grasp of the church's unity, and especially unity in diversity, is well demonstrated in response to questions 1 and 2. The paper provides excellent discussion of the Reformed church's claim to "oneness" as well as recognizing challenges that disrupt that claim. Comments to Esau and Naomi are pastorally appropriate validating their opinions while utilizing the conversation as an opportunity for education.

Comments to the CPM
READER'S EVALUATION SHEET IN THEOLOGY

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IV. OVERALL EVALUATION

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE A MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. (Please check if applicable.)

Donald L Genereux
Reader's name printed

[Signature]
Reader's Signature
Reader's Evaluations:

Section 1: Obedience to Christ
1. The essay did a good job in discussing the continuities and changes in the Book of Confessions. It placed the changes in the historical context of when the confession was written. It referenced both Reformation era and twentieth century documents and it discussed the continuities and changes.
2. The brief theological reflection on obedience in the ordination question was built on the discussion in the essay. It discussed that personal "obedience takes place within the church for the sake of the world."

Section 2: Joy
The talk on Christian joy referenced multiple resources: Westminster Confession, Scripture and contemporary theology. The talk emphasized the union with Christ and communion with each other. It discussed many reasons for Christian joy, particularly in fellowship at the table.

Section 3: Tool for Ministry
1. Church unity and diversity. The essay discussed well church unity and diversity and used multiple, appropriate resources: Scripture and contemporary theology. It emphasize unity in the diversity: of the Body of Christ, gifts and talents, languages, and all the socio-economic factors.
2. The paper responded theologically to two issues: Esau - about disagreement in the denomination, and ability to disagree well; and Naomi - about diversity in hymn language. The responses were pastorally sensitive and seemed to be a "teachable moment."

Comments to the CPM
The reformed tradition has always emphasized both the duty of obedience for our discipleship in Christ as well as our difficulty in achieving it because of our sinfulness. On the one hand, the “law of God is most just, equal, holy and perfect, commanding those things which, when perfectly done, can give life and bring man to eternal felicity” (3.15). Jesus summed up the law through the dual commands to love God and love our neighbor. Yet we cannot keep this law perfectly “for by nature [we are] prone to hate God and [our] neighbor” (4.005).

Within this “dilemma of obedience” where we cannot do that which we ought to do (cf. Rom. 7), the Reformed tradition has continuously emphasized certain points. First, the tradition has affirmed that in Adam the law bound us to obedience as a “covenant of works” (6.101), yet in Christ we now have entered the covenant of grace. That is, we are justified by grace through faith. Yet this grace does not render the law and its duty of obedience null, but instead, through our rebirth by the power of the Holy Spirit, we now have the capacity for obedience.

Second, though we gain this capacity, sin still clings to us. Thus the Heidelberg Catechism states: “even the holiest of [people] make only a small beginning of obedience in this life” (4.114). The Reformed tradition has therefore continuously emphasized that our obedience does not become a “works righteousness” because if that is what obedience means, then we are all hopeless. Instead, even our obedience is a product of the gift of grace, for the ability to obey comes by the Spirit, whom we most certainly cannot claim as our own.
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Third, this obedience to the law has always been understood as obedience to Christ himself. For we know that Christ did not come to abolish the law, but instead not the least jot or tittle will pass away (Mt. 5). Calvin rightly saw that in addition to the law's accusing us of our sin and providing a model for the civil law, its third use was to instruct us in our life in Christ.

The tradition has not been frozen in time, so there have been changes in the understanding of obedience to Christ down the years. The Reformation era documents strongly emphasize the covenant of grace as opposed to the covenant of works (one of Luther's great discoveries). Accordingly, when they speak of obedience they are quick to place it within the dilemma of the duty to obey the law and human inability to do so. In contrast the modern confessions, having internalized this vital lesson, emphasize instead the historical nature of obedience and its potential to lead to conflict in a broken world. These changes are matters of emphasis rather than aberrations from the tradition's understanding as a whole.

The Confession of 1967 states "Obedience to Jesus Christ alone identifies the one universal church and supplies the continuity of its tradition. This obedience is the ground of the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand" (9.03). It notes that its model in obedience is Jesus Christ whose "complete obedience led him into conflict with his people" (9.08).

While never negating the Reformation era focus on the individual believer's dilemma of obedience to Christ, this modern confession places that dilemma in the broader context of the obedience of the universal church. I believe this emphasis
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reflects the historic position of the modern church in the post-Christendom world. The church cannot assume, as it once could, that obedience to Christ is going to look the same to everyone at all times. Instead, it clearly emphasizes that obedience today must be understood in openness to what “new occasions, in God’s providence, may demand.” Therefore, as the church negotiate a world in which its beliefs and assumptions are no longer shared by most, or at least are not the dominant worldview, it recognizes its obedience to Christ is one of the main things to set it apart and preserve its identity. (This recognition is of course made within the primary understanding that our identity is not based on what we do (the Donatist heresy) but on the grace of the God who calls and elects us.) While individual believers still wrestle with their own obedience and are assured by the gospel of grace, their struggle for obedience is no longer a common struggle in the society, in the sense that everyone agrees what is the right way to live. Instead, obedience to Christ for the individual is more explicitly a way of being a member of Christ’s body; that is, in obedience to Christ, more than ever, we grow closer together as the covenant family of God.

The second change of emphasis we see in the Confession of 1967 is how Christ’s obedience led him into conflict. This insight also reflects the church’s position today. The church can no longer assume that the ruling powers of the world will accommodate, let alone outright support, its mission. Therefore, as the church follows and is obedient to Christ in his mission to enact the kingdom of God on earth, it is apt to encounter resistance. For obedience to Christ’s kingdom means a life and society of justice (seek first the kingdom and its dikaiosune—
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righteousness/justice). In a world marked by unjust systems of exploitation, a people determined to live justly and to work against injustice will encounter resistance.

2.

To affirmatively answer this ordination question today is to recognize, along with the Reformed tradition that any obedience I can accomplish will come by the unmerited grace of God. Therefore, to answer "yes" is simultaneously to ask for the Spirit's strength, which enables obedience. In asking for the Spirit's power for obedience, I am able to be patient with my own shortcomings, knowing that God who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion.

But answering "yes" is also to recognize, with the Confession of 1967, that my obedience takes place within the church and for the sake of the world. Personal obedience and holiness do not lose their importance, but instead their importance is enhanced as I, with others, engage in the difficult work of living as the obedient and reconciled people of God and the perilous (but also blessed) work of seeking justice in the world.

Lastly, seeking to obey Christ today, for the church or for an individual minister, requires the willingness to be reformed by what God in God's providence seeks to teach us. For obedience is not obedience to some non-temporal law, but to the living Christ and to his mission in the material and historical world in which we live.
Section II.

I want to talk to you about joy today. In our world authentic joy is not necessarily an easy thing to come by. On the one hand, as we watch the news, as we reflect on the state of our political system, our economic system, even the divisions within the church itself, we rightly mourn, though we work to avoid despair. On the other hand, we are bombarded with images of carefree people enjoying the latest product and we are exhorted to a life of "happiness." We recognize that true happiness is important, yet we also see that the "happiness" on offer is too often thoughtless and detrimental to what it means to be a human created in God's image.

I think it is for these reasons that joy can leave a bad taste in our mouths. That is, if we are paying attention to the state of the world, we think of advocates of joy "how can you be joyful when there is so much brokenness?" We are annoyed or even repulsed by a joyfulness that glides over the hardships of life and the miseries of the world. Or we wonder whether joy becomes a religious mode of the happiness advertised on TV. Christ becomes a commodity and joy is the way he makes me feel.

So then if we live in a world of sorrow and dysfunction and yet cannot settle for a mindless, consumeristic happiness, where does joy, which is obviously looked upon favorably in the New Testament, fit in? Not only is joy important in the New Testament—as a fruit of the Spirit, for instance—but also in our Reformed tradition it is part and parcel of what it means to be human. For how does the Westminster catechism answer the question of what is our chief end in life? It says our chief end is to love God and enjoy Him forever. What then is joy? Joy, I want to argue today, is
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the product of our life in Christ and it is our power to engage in his mission to the world.

Saint Augustine queried "And what is our joy, which [Christ] says shall be full, but to have fellowship with Him?" To know Christ is to know joy. We know then that this joy cannot be an opiate that avoids the destitution that surrounds us. For Christ, the man of sorrows, entered into the life of the marginalized, the poor, the weary, and the forgotten. To be in union with him is to be similarly open to the poor. Yet even though Christ engaged with such persons, and did not shy away from such pain, he was accused of being a partier! He was known as a glutton and a drunkard. His joy was not diminished by his life with the poor; instead, one wonders whether he was joyful precisely because he lived such a life. I will come back to this question.

Speaking of eating and drinking, let's consider what Paul says about the kingdom. He says in Romans that it is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14). I think that in order to understand joy, we need to place it in the context of the kingdom of God. Rather than being a solitary affect or emotion, joy is a product of our life in Christ and a power for the kingdom of God.

Life in Christ by the power of the Spirit should lead to the fruit of joy. It should be a product of that life, but sometimes we have a hard time sensing it in our own lives. While this lack may be due to some inward or personal sin that is blocking joy from welling up within us, it may also be due to our failure to exercise joy. (We can talk in later weeks about the relation between personal sin and joy.)
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As the kingdom of God is joy in the Holy Spirit, so we also know from Scripture that the kingdom is not a matter of talk but of power. If joy is our power to engage in Christ's mission to the world, what happens if we don't engage in that mission? Some of you, I know, like to exercise. I've seen you at the gym. Well, what happens if you get busy at work, get sick, or something like that, and you don't make it to the gym for a few weeks or a month? How is it when you come back? It is terrible isn't it? You can't lift the same amount of weight you used to, you can't run on the treadmill as long; in short, your muscles, however slightly, have atrophied. Their power has grown weak from lack of use. The same goes for joy. While Scripture more specifically refers to joy as a fruit than as a power, we must recognize that the fruits by which we shall be known are not like some collectibles that we accumulate just so they can be put on display. Instead, to mix metaphors, they are fruits that we must, as it were, put to work. Or better, they are like fruits that if not used in or consumed by mission, rot and become worthless.

So perhaps there is in fact a connection between Christ's ability to enjoy life in God while entering into the pain of the world. The man of sorrows knew joy because he risked knowing pain. Kahlil Gibran wrote that our joy is our sorrow unmasked. As we seek justice in an unjust world, relying on Christ's strength, our joy becomes used up, but by grace, is refilled. To be in Christ is to be in mission, for the living Christ goes before us into the world. And Jesus promised us that his joy would be in us and our joy would be complete (John 15). This relation of using up our joy by entering into sorrow seems paradoxical to us, but it is right in line with
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the logic of the gospel. For whoever seeks to save his life (or we might add, his joy) will lose it.

The German theologian Johann Baptist Metz spoke of joy in relation to the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an exercise in "dangerous memory" for it is a remembrance, in sorrow, of Christ's death, but also "dangerous" because it is at the same time hopeful that Christ will come again and joyful that we have communion with him even now. Here too joy is the other side of sorrow.

Our tradition affirms that the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of our union with Christ. As Augustine said, joy is our having fellowship with this Christ. Not only does the table seal our union with Christ but also it places us into communion with one another. It is the prime example of how in the life of the church those who are comfortable and those who are not are of one body. Just as Paul chastised the Corinthians who sought to separate the love feast of the rich from that of the poor, so we ought to challenge ourselves to enter into the lives of the marginalized today. In that place, there is no shortage of sorrow, but in Christ, who goes there before us, no shortage of joy either.

Section III. B.

1.

Alongside the Scriptures, the Reformed tradition affirms that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father over all, who is in all and through all" (Eph. 4). We affirm that the Church is one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church. The
Reformed tradition has never understood itself as setting up another Church than the one Christ instituted. Instead, in its criticism of the Medieval Roman church, it sought to make the Church what Christ intended for it to be, to not allow the earthly institution to obscure the gospel of justification by grace through faith. This is in part what the doctrine of the invisible church seeks to maintain: that Christ knows who are his, whom he has called, and that despite the multifarious sects, his church is one.

Yet this unity is not univocity. That is, the oneness of the church does not make it a uniform monolith. Instead, the Reformed tradition has always affirmed unity in diversity. This emphasis comes directly from the Scriptures. As Paul writes in Galatians 3:27-28: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus have clothed yourselves with Christ, so there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The locus classicus of diversity in the body of Christ begins by affirming what is the most emphatic sign of our unity—baptism.

In addition to culling its understanding of unity in diversity from Scripture the Reformed tradition has also relied upon theological reflection. Just as there is one baptism and it is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so Karl Barth speaks of church unity in relation to the life of the Trinity. Just as the Three Persons of the Godhead are one, yet are also differentiated within that oneness, so the church knows difference within itself.

This recognition of unity in diversity is reflected in the church’s life together. The church, reflecting the hospitality of God toward sinful humanity, invites those
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who are different into its ranks. The PC(USA) in particular seeks to be racially, ethnically, socio-economically diverse and condemns any discrimination on the basis of race, gender, nationality or similar traits. The Book of Order encourages the use of a local group’s language in worship, even recommending that the bread served in the Lord’s Supper should be common to the community. Unity in diversity is not an interesting theoretical problem, reflecting the ancient philosophical relation between the one and the many, but is instead a practical call and task for the church wherever it finds itself. It is the natural result of the church’s faithfulness to the command to welcome the stranger.

Coming back to the early confessional language of “one, holy, catholic, apostolic church” it is helpful to reflect upon what “one” means in relation to some of the other terms. For instance, the word catholic stems from the Greek compound kata holos, which means “according to the whole.” Catholicity refers to universality; but, again, this is not an abstract universality where all the colors bleed into one, so to speak. But instead, echoing the Greek meaning, the philosopher Charles Taylor defines catholicity as “universality through wholeness.” Relating this back to the meaning of “one” we see that church unity is not such that in order to be united with the church a person needs to pare off part of their identity (except insofar as sin is concerned). Instead, the church gains in unity and strength as diverse people come into relation with one another.

The word “apostolic” also informs what it means to be united. As the church is sent into the world it encounters difference among various peoples. And as the gospel takes root among those peoples the result is nonetheless the formation of
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one church, even among various denominations. Just as the gospel is translated into many languages, yet remains one gospel, so the church, sent into the various cultures and nations of the world, remains united. Similarly, as God the Father sends Christ into the world and reveals Godself to be God for us, we are sent. God being for us does not diminish the unity of the Godhead, and the church’s being for the world does not dilute its unity.

2.

Esau, I think you are right that disagreeing is part of being the church. I actually really appreciate that you "revel" in the diversity. I myself see the church’s ability to disagree well as central to what it means to love one another. (I like to think of it as our engaging in the "long fight" of peacemaking.) But I’m not sure that no one should expect us to agree on much of anything. Surely, there are some things we can and should agree upon? How about the claim “Jesus is Lord”? Of course, we all agree on that. Or consider the Nicene Creed, it is universally agreed upon as well. I suppose I bring up these examples in order to shift the emphasis back to unity. The church is not a mere plurality, or a bunch of solitary individuals. Instead, it is united as the body of Christ. When Paul talks about all the various members of Christ’s body or the various gifts of the Spirit in Ephesians 4, it is always in the context of a unified body. It’s not that we don’t agree on anything, but that we agree on what is essential and love one another enough to disagree on what is not. Perhaps times even come when we disagree on what is essential, but that always takes place within the context of our unity.
Naomi, I understand the feeling that too much diversity can bring. It can be overwhelming at times. But generally, I am not sure that diversity is overemphasized in our church. For the most part, for instance, the Presbyterian Church is composed of white people and not necessarily in proportion to their numbers in the wider population. Even though you might not have understood the hymn's language, others probably did. And those others might not often understand the hymns in English. Perhaps English is their second language so that when they sing they are also translating in their mind. I imagine that can get tiresome for them. I think that is why the Book of Order suggests that the church in worship make a point of using hymns in languages other than that of the majority when it would be helpful or a blessing to minorities in the congregation. Diversity is only overemphasized when it obscures what we hold in common, and I don't think the hymn did that. After all, the hymn, whether or not you knew the words, praised Christ, whom we certainly all have in common.