"...Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

—Acts 2: 38, 39
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................... i-ii

COVENANT OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP .......... iii-iv

PART 1

I. Professing Our Faith ................. 1 - 4
II. The Basis of Our Faith ............... 5 - 7
III. The Object of Our Faith ............. 8 - 10
IV. The Commitment of Our Faith .......... 11 - 13
V. The History of Our Faith .............. 14 - 19

PART 2

VI. The Dimension of Our Faith ......... 20 - 25
VII. The Practice of Our Faith .......... 26 - 30
VIII. The Witness of Our Faith .......... 31 - 34

Conclusion ........................................... 35 - 36

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus of Nazareth talked to people during His earthly thirty-three years, He talked in terms of the "Kingdom of God." This way of talking was not to get people's attention, but rather Jesus was simply putting things together like they really are.

The Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship comprises a community of people committed to Jesus Christ and to the Gospel which He preached. It has been given to us by Jesus to make clear to any and all what that Gospel is and its urgency — just like He did — and to live out before the world the lifestyle of the Kingdom of God. As we do these things, we have been assured by Jesus that He will be at work to draw others to Himself and into the fellowship of that Kingdom. It is Jesus therefore Who both draws and receives persons into this Kingdom, and hence the Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship simply seeks to be responsive to His directions.

When persons are led by Jesus to confess Him as Savior and Lord and to identify with a congregation of His people within the Reformed Presbyterian Church, they are asked to respond to seven questions. It would seem, therefore, that the meaning and intent of those questions, if explained and examined, can provide a simple and honest approach to any and all who desire to look into the matter. The following study has been prepared with this objective in mind.
On the next page you will find those questions in their proper order and stated in full. However, study 1 actually takes up the last (number 7) first, in order to show that all of the questions relate to a person's "profession of faith." It is the prayer and desire of us in the Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship that the Lord Jesus will continue to exercise His power in the saving of His people, and that as He leads others to identify with us, we may together exhibit to Colorado Springs, El Paso County, something of the glory of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"... Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

COVENANT OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life?

2. Do you believe in the one living and true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Scriptures?

3. Do you repent of your sins; confess your guilt and helplessness as a sinner against (n) professing Jesus Christ, Son of God, as your Savior and Lord; and dedicate yourself to His service? Do you promise that you will endeavor to forsake all sin, and to conform your life to His teaching and example?

4. Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America? Do you recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?

5. To the end that you may grow in the Christian life, do you promise that you will diligently read the Bible, engage in private prayer, keep the Lord's Day, regularly attend the worship services, observe the appointed sacraments, and give to the Lord's work as He shall prosper you?

6. Do you purpose to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in all the relationships of life, faithfully to perform your whole duty
as a true servant of Jesus Christ, and seek to win others to Him?

7. Do you make this profession of faith and purpose in the presence of God, in humble reliance upon His grace, as you desire to give your account with joy at the last Great Day?

- iv -

STUDY 1 - "PROFESSING OUR FAITH"

Question 7 - Do you make this profession of faith and purpose in the presence of God, in humble reliance upon His grace, as you desire to give your account with joy at the last Great Day?

1. Understanding what it means to make a "profession of faith and purpose".

When Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, He confronted persons with:

a) His authority - He actually commanded them, not just invite them.

b) The necessity of repentance - a radical change of direction in their life.

Look at Mark 1:15 and write what it says to you.

You will find the same thing when you look in the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 7. Notice the following illustrations:

a) Two gates - Matthew 7:13-14. What are the differences in these?

b) Two houses - Matthew 7:24-27. What is the solid foundation?

Therefore, Jesus confronts persons with only two choices: Himself, or anyone (anything) else. When He finished preaching in Matthew 7, how did His listeners respond? Look at verses 28 & 29.

Jesus sent not His disciples in Matthew 28:19 with an objective. What was that objective?
a) Jesus assumes the position of the disciple's Lord and King, and
b) The disciple gives himself to hear and obey Jesus.

A "profession of faith and purpose", therefore, when related to the Gospel of Jesus Christ means:
"I have been brought by the grace of God to recognize the authority of Jesus Christ on my life, and I am therefore identifying with His above all other identities in the world."

In making one's profession of faith in Christ:


b) Where is this profession to be made? See Matthew 10:32-33, <ref>Entry 547</ref>

Later studies will consider what this profession includes, but at this point it should be clear that it is Christ Himself Who calls for this profession, not the church.

'1. Understanding my relationship with others who have made this profession.'

When God looks upon a person who has committed himself to Jesus on Jesus' terms, He sees him not as an individual, but rather as a member of a "people".

Look for example at 1 Peter 2:9-10. What terms are used here to describe God's people?

No doubt the word most commonly used in our own terminology -- and very often in the New Testament -- for God's people is the term "church".

- 2 -

a) Church in an English word which comes from "belonging to the Lord".
b) Church in the New Testament stands for "called out ones", or "called together ones".

Putting these together, "church" is not a club or essentially an organization, but rather a people who have been called by God into a relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ. They are citizens of Christ's Kingdom.

Looking again at 1 Peter 2:9-10, the church maintains a two-way relationship:
a) In God Himself, and
b) In the world around them.

Since the church comprises a group of persons, or a "body" instead of just a collection of individuals, two aspects of the church emerge:
1) The Church, as a people, is a God-centered COMMUNITY.
An example of this can be found in Acts 2:42-47. What are some of the evidences of that "community"? (community = "with unity") See also Acts 4:32-35.

Not by external power or pressure, Christians, having submitted all they have and are to the authority of Jesus Christ, respond to His Spirit in sharing in the purposes, joys, and burdens of God's people. Community in the Bible is first an attitude, coupled with purposeful action. While all the people are one in Christ, the practical out-working of it all comes essentially through a local congregation.

2) The Church, as a people, has leaders called LEADERS.
An example of this, together with their purpose,
can be found in Acts 20:28. (If you want to learn why elders are necessary, then read a few verses more.)

In Acts 21:42, we read of the four things the New Testament church made its constant concern. What four things are these?

The elders (or overseers), therefore, have the responsibility to help the members of the congregation grow in their relationship with God; and since God has ordained such leaders, He desires the members to grow together under their leadership. This relationship can be seen in 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Summary:
A “profession of faith and purpose”, therefore, means:
a) A commitment to Jesus Christ as the supreme authority or King, and
b) A public identification with His people, the citizens of God’s Kingdom, in the world.
A final consideration is the “sign” or mark of that profession. As you read Acts 21:41, What would you say it is?

It is therefore in obedience to Christ that disciples are to receive this mark of their profession and of their identity with Christ’s church.

- 4 -

STUDY 2 - "THE BASIS OF OUR FAITH"

Question 1 - Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God the only infallible rule of faith and life?

I. Jesus Christ our Lord tells us how we should regard the Bible.

Until the time Jesus’ apostles wrote the books which were to become the New Testament, the “Bible” (or “the writings”) was the Old Testament only. Jesus obeyed the Old Testament as authoritative as evidenced by
a) The way He came into the world - see Matthew 1:22-23 & 2:1-6
b) His resorting to the Word of God when He was tempted - Matthew 4:1-11
c) Where He went to minister - Matthew 4:12-16
d) The place He gave the Word when He taught - Matthew 5:17-18
e) His method of teaching - Matthew 13:34-35
f) The events surrounding His crucifixion - Matthew 27:18-10

So it is correct to say that the life of Jesus Christ was directed by the Word of God. How does Matthew 26:39 demonstrate this once again?

Now if this was Jesus’ response to the Old Testament as God’s authoritative Word, then it is no wonder His disciples ever since have considered the Bible authoritative in matters of faith and life.

II. The Apostles of Jesus Christ wrote the New Testament to complete God’s authoritative Word.

When we use the word “authoritative”, we mean the Bible is not something extra or in addition to Christ’s authority, but that Christ exercises His authority by
this Written Word, Christ's written Word, this in John 5:39-40. Do you see how?

According to 2 Peter 1:20-21, how were the writers of the Old Testament guided to write those many and varied books, yet with one central message?

What promise did Jesus make to His apostles in John 14:25-26 to assure that He would also guide them?

Having therefore the same Holy Spirit to unlock to them God's truth, the apostles taught and wrote with the same authority as Old Testament writers. And because these persons were "borne along" as it were by the Holy Spirit, the Bible, therefore, was infallibly (without error) inspired.

But why do we say the Bible is the "only infallible rule" of faith and practice? Or, why do we not expect other writings to be of equal authority and significance?

a) According to Hebrews 11:1-3, the Old Testament prophecies of a Savior have historically been fulfilled in Jesus Christ; so as a basis of faith and life, no further word is needed for man's salvation.

b) Since the New Testament is the record of that fulfillment worked out in history once and for all, the Bible, as we now have it, has become the measure (or "can on") for judging any additional writing or teaching. You can see this illustrated in Galatians 1:6-9, as well as in Revelation 22:18-19.

Summary

We, therefore, agree that we must, along with Jesus and His people, submit to the authority of the Old Testament; and because of Jesus' position now, we must also submit to what He directed His apostles to write, called the New Testament. This infallibly inspired Bible thus becomes the exclusive authority for the faith and practice of citizens of God's Kingdom and the Church.

Look at the summary in Ephesians 2:19-22. Who is the "One Who actually puts this conviction into these fellow-citizens?"

An Additional Questions

Question 1 should NOT be interpreted to mean:

a) that there is no other truth apart from the Bible, since all of God's creation contains and unfolds truth, as Psalm 19 beautifully declares,

b) nor that all parts of the Bible are to be read in exactly the same manner, since some is poetry, some history, some teaching, and still other prophecy,

c) nor that everything in the Bible can be easily understood or is equally plain,

d) nor that other books outside the Bible have little or no spiritual value, nor can they help us understand the Bible,

e) nor that the Bible is only concerned with ideas and what we think, and not concerned with our conduct and what we do,

There is much more to be said about the Bible, of course, like how it is put together, the grouping of books, etc., but these notes are to help you understand the plain meaning of question 1. Our profession of faith is not an experience unrelated to the facts. The truth of the Bible really measures whatever one's experience is and whether one's experience, his faith and practice, can be believed to be actually Christian or not. The Colorado Springs Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship bases its commitment and life together on the Bible, God's Word. The Bible is the LAW in the Kingdom of God.
STUDY 3 - "THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH"

Question 2 - Do you believe in the one living and true God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Scriptures?

I. The God of the Bible Claims Exclusive Rights.

When a person begins to read the Bible, he is in the very first sentences introduced to or informed of God. The Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, we understand to profess faith means in principle to acknowledge and submit to Him as God.

The God of the Bible assumes the authority to have first place in all things, very obviously stated in the first of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3; but in addition, He makes clear that in fact He is the only God there is! Notice Isaiah 43:10-13.

Anytime, then, the Bible speaks of any other deity or object of worship, it is always in terms of a false substitute. For example, idols are mentioned in Psalm 115. How are they described? Why are they called "gods"?

This question above makes clear that belief in the God of the Bible is not belief in "a" god. Many persons find this hard to accept in our day, but what ground for this claim can be found in the two following passages?

a) Isaiah 42:1-6

b) Revelation 4:11

While it is apparent from the way the Bible has been written, yet it is important to understand that God has "being", or as the question above puts it, He is "living". And since we have been made in His image, we can begin to grasp how our being or personality is reflecting something of God's being.

As His creatures, however, we should never inter-

pret this to mean that God is in His creation, as the pan-theist would say. Man's personality reveals not only man's worth, but the transcendent worth of God's Person! And because He is living and true, man can actually know Him personally, note how Jesus put it in John 17:3.

So, the God of the Bible claims exclusive rights as:

a) The only God there is,

b) The One Who is living and knowable, and

c) The One Who has created all things.

II. The God of the Bible is One, Yet Exists in Three Persons.

The "mystery" of the Trinity is beyond human comprehension, not because it doesn't make sense, but because God is so much greater than His creatures. However, there are solid grounds for this description of God.

Look for example at the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:30-30. How many "Names" did Jesus say were to be the basis of Christian baptism? How many persons?

Furthermore, at Jesus' own baptism in Matthew 3:16-17, how were all three Persons of the Trinity in evidence?

This makes clear that there is not one God with three different "manifestations", but rather three distinct Persons all at the same time. How would John 17:3 add weight to this?

Returning even to Genesis 1:1, the word for God in the Hebrew is in the plural, yet the verb remains singular. How does this compare with Genesis 1:26?
There are many groups who deny the validity of the Bible's description of the trine God, but the historic Christian view has unwaveringly been to state that the Bible teaches exactly that: God is three Persons in One.

In real life, the concept of "trinity" has many parallels -- this of course is not hard to understand if indeed God did create the universes and fill everything with His glory -- but the term "university" itself speaks of a unity with diversity. However, in the Kingdom of God as revealed by the Bible:

a) The Father is God
b) The Son is God
c) The Spirit is God

-- and as one God, they are equal in power and glory. Look at 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

One final illustration: have you noticed that Christian worship always concludes with the benediction in the Name of the Trinity? This has come to us as what is known as the "apostolic benediction", and reflects again the authority of the Bible. You can find such a benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Summary:

When we profess our faith and purpose, therefore, we make plain that our God is the God of the Bible, just as He has made Himself known. We only acknowledge what He has said about Himself; and where it goes beyond our ability to fully comprehend or explain, we humbly bow and confess Him as our God. As we grow in our Christian life and experience, we get to know Him better, but we still always bow to Him as God.

STUDY 4 - "THE COMMITMENT OF OUR FAITH"

Question 3 - Do you repent of your sins; confess your guilt and helplessness as a sinner against God; profess Jesus Christ, Son of God, as your Savior and Lord; and dedicate yourself to His service? Do you promise that you will endeavor to forsake all sin, and to conform your life to His teaching and example?

I. Professing one's faith in Jesus Christ means acknowledging a body of truth and accepting it as my commitment.

a) In question 1 we made clear this body of truth has been revealed in the Bible. Remember John 17:17?

b) In question 2 we recognized the God of the Bible for Whom He is, and on this body of truth really comes from Him. Look at Psalm 33:6-9.

It is true, however, that the Bible is not just a collection of ideas to be abstractly looked at, pondered, debated, and then judged. Rather, the Bible is the record of God's "plan of salvation". It is the record of God's sending His Son Jesus into the world to save a people for His Name. That is the essence of John 3:16. But look at 1 John 5:9-12.

We must understand something of this plan (or "covenant") by which God has been doing this, in order to make our response on truth, not just feelings. On page 13 you will find a diagram by which this plan or covenant can be visualized to some degree.

The question above assumes that a person has heard this explanation of the Gospel and has become persuaded by the Holy Spirit that it is true. But then God calls that person to respond accordingly.
III. Proceeding one’s faith in Jesus Christ means responding to God’s call to salvation by personal faith and repentance.

a) What is faith? Simply put, faith in Jesus Christ is receiving and resting upon Christ alone for eternal salvation, just like He is offered to us in the Bible.

b) What is repentance? Also simply put, it is turning from sin to God for forgiveness through the finished work of Christ on the cross, and thereafter following (obeying) Christ with one’s whole being.

Both of these “saving graces” are necessary for salvation, and God requires anyone who will be saved to believe and repent. Jesus repeats these demands of the Gospel over and over again, as in Luke 18:9-14 and John 3:16. These are called graces inasmuch as God graciously works in His elect people to affect these results in their life. Persons are made aware of these graces in their life by the Holy Spirit’s making their consciences sensitive, and their sense of responsibility in coming to Christ.

The following passages will help illustrate what is stated in question 3 that we can determine how to respond in the way God desires.


c) John 15:10, 14. What lifestyle identifies a true believer?

d) Romans 6:1-2. What becomes of the old lifestyle?

e) 1 Peter 2:1-25. What pattern are we to follow?

In a word, it is all bound up with our receiving Christ, rather than rejecting Him and His work on the cross for some other way. Note John 1:11-13.

Summary:
This “demand” (and invitation) of the Gospel is

really too much for anyone, but recognizing that it is what Jesus Christ has done for sinners that counts, we are, by trusting His grace, to respond. The Holy Spirit gives the desire and the power to all who will be truly saved. So this particular question focuses on your personal response to God’s call in the Gospel. Do you believe in Jesus Christ for your own salvation? Do you turn from your own ways and surrender your life, from now on, to His ways? Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and then read Romans 10:13. Have you done what Romans 10:13 bids you do?
STUDY 5 - "THE HISTORY OF OUR FAITH"

Question A - Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A.? Do you recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?

In order to understand the meaning of this question, we will consider it in two parts: the history behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A., and the standards characterizing her united profession of faith. Study 6 will take up the subject of standards. Now let’s look at the history behind the Colorado Springs Fellowship of the R.P.C.N.A.

I. There is a Flow of History for the People of God.

On pages 2-3, number 2, we introduced the term “church” as the people of God. Since God first made the covenant promise in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15), in every age there has been a “people of God.” Hebrews 2:10-3:1 promises such for every generation.

When a person publicly professes his faith in Jesus Christ, he then becomes identified with this great people, a “body” whose Head is Christ. This body -- the Church -- spans ages and national boundaries. And Ephesians 4:4 says, “There is one body…” So, the Kingdom of Christ cannot be limited to any particular time or place.

And this means we have a “connection” both with Christ and with all of those who are His. Which, among other things, means that history is important. We stand as it were as links in an historical chain, and our children are the next link. Hebrews 11 speaks of many of these persons who through history lived and died by faith. What is significant about verses 39 & 40?

So, it is valuable to grasp something of the way the kingdom has been progressing, so we can fit in and pass on our legacy to others yet to come. We are to value that legacy, and not lose something God has given us. Proverbs 22:16.

II. THE REFORMED PRESbyterian CHURCH HAS HISTORICAL ROOTS.

While the church is one and is ruled by one Head, Jesus Christ, historically the people of God have emerged as many branches. (We do not believe denominations are in itself a good thing, so such a review should not be interpreted as an attempt to prolong divisions within the body!) Where then are the “roots” of the R.P.C.N.A.T?

a) In the Apostles’ doctrine of the New Testament. Based on the authority of the Bible, this branch of Christ’s body maintains with all true Christians the content of the historic Christian faith. We agree with the Apostles’ Creed.

b) In the Protestant Reformation in Europe. The Church historically grew both East and West, but a division developed between what has now become known as the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox branches. During the Middle Ages, things became so corrupt in the Western Roman church that the apostles’ doctrine in the Bible was no longer the final authority. In its place, what the church itself said became authority. The Holy Spirit moved, nonetheless, in persons who still read the holy Scriptures, and they came to know the grace and power of Jesus Christ in their lives. So through such men as Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in Switzerland, a “reformation” of the true Church took place. That is, doctrine and practice once again became based solely on the Bible, and not on men’s traditions or the pronouncements of a pope. This root shows itself in “Reformed” in R.P.C.N.A.
Sootland, they spread out to Talwan, as the roots are willed to be planted throughout the whole body, and the Kingdom of Christendom.

Note with a legacy (a) that He alone is sovereign, and therefore to that extent, (b) in terms of covenants or divinely given to "establish" the true Church, and (c) in the history, in terms of "covenants," we see that He taught in the New Testament, "I have given you a kingdom, have set it before me in the place of the kings of the nations." This is a profession of power, of sovereignty, of mission. We pray for the true Church to see, "I have given you a kingdom," to become the instrument of the true Church to see, "I have given you a kingdom," to become the instrument of the true Church to see, "I have given you a kingdom," to become the instrument of the true Church.

In the history of church and government themselves, when after the Reformation, Presbyterianism, including the R.C.P., was established in England, the union of church and government was seen as necessary, and therefore it is not surprising that the Reformers saw both church and state. In history, particularly in the United States, the Reformed Presbyterians

In the history of church and government themselves, when after the Reformation, Presbyterianism, including the R.C.P., was established in England, the union of church and government was seen as necessary, and therefore it is not surprising that the Reformers saw both church and state. In history, particularly in the United States, the Reformed Presbyterians saw the growing problem between the Colonies and England, the conflict between the people of God and the king. In the early years of the United States, the people of God saw the king as persecuting them, and they witnessed during the time of persecution, that He alone is sovereign, and therefore to that extent, in terms of covenants - or divinely given to "establish" the true Church, and in the history, in terms of "covenants," we see that He taught in the New Testament, "I have given you a kingdom, have set it before me in the place of the kings of the nations." This is a profession of power, of sovereignty, of mission. We pray for the true Church to see, "I have given you a kingdom," to become the instrument of the true Church to see, "I have given you a kingdom," to become the instrument of the true Church to see, "I have given you a kingdom," to become the instrument of the true Church.

In the history of church and government themselves, when after the Reformation, Presbyterianism, including the R.C.P., was established in England, the union of church and government was seen as necessary, and therefore it is not surprising that the Reformers saw both church and state. In history, particularly in the United States, the people of God saw that when after the Reformation, Presbyterianism, including the R.C.P., was established in England, the union of church and government was seen as necessary, and therefore it is not surprising that the Reformers saw both church and state. In history, particularly in the United States, the people of God saw that when after the Reformation, Presbyterianism, including the R.C.P., was established in England, the union of church and government was seen as necessary, and therefore it is not surprising that the Reformers saw both church and state.
IV. The Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship Possesses a Particular Purpose.

Why did God bring this Fellowship into existence? According to Scripture, it is Christ's will that the Gospel be preached to all the world, including Colorado Springs, and that preaching is to produce disciples. In this ministry then and consistent with the roots of its history, the Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship accents two things:

1) The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls people into a relationship with God so that they may glorify Him in all aspects of life here and now...in Colorado Springs. This city should be known for the way the people of the Springs in all their life glorify God in Christ. "He is the Lord of all."

2) The Fellowship is committed together as a community in Christ to show the way to such a goal. As Reformed Presbyterians we are bound together to seek the glory of Christ in all things. The word "Fellowship" (having in common) is a word we are asking the Lord to give special reality to here in the Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship.

One might say, therefore, the vision of the Fellowship may be stated as follows:

Since all of life is under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we believe as a Christian community we are to live all parts of our life as citizens of His Kingdom. Furthermore, we seek to see Christ exalted as Lord over all aspects of life in the larger community, and to this end we unite with other citizens of His Kingdom in Colorado Springs in praying and laboring for visible evidences of Christ's Kingdom here and throughout the world awaiting its fulfillment in the new heaven and the new earth at Christ's return.

Summary:

When a ship is at sea and out of sight of land, there is a simple way to tell if that ship is turning or holding course: look at this ship's wake. The history (wake) of the people of God can help one see something of their course under their Master. In our next study we will look more closely at R.P.C. Standards.
STUDY 6 - "THE DIMENSION OF OUR FAITH"

Question 4 - Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the R.P.C.N.A.? Do you recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?

Having considered the history behind this question, we now look at the substance of it. We can do this by considering three general areas.

I. The Area of Doctrine or Teaching
In 2 Timothy 1:16-17 Paul states that the Bible contains first of all "teaching" or doctrine. The system of doctrine taught in the Scripture has been set forth in principle in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. This statement of faith drawn up during the 17th century over a 7 year period of time concisely sets forth basic Christian truth. As a "confession" (which means "to say the same thing as") it seeks to systematize what the Bible teaches about salvation in Christ. This perspective has become known as the "reformed" viewpoint.

There are only three basic viewpoints concerning man's salvation. One: man accomplishes it by his own self-effort alone. Two: man cannot accomplish it by self-effort alone, hence man and God "cooperate". Three: man, though active in salvation, is actually helpless and totally dependent upon the gracious action of God alone. The Westminster Confession of Faith sets forth the viewpoint of position three. And this means that salvation is completely the unmerited gift of God, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, and effective to the complete and ultimate salvation of God's elect people, the subjects of His Kingdom.

While the R.P.C.N.A. holds to this Confession together with many other branches of the Church, it has also tried to update its witness by speaking to each generation. Its Declaration and Testimony seeks to be such a statement of witness. A "testimony" is a witness to truth as a "defense" or proof. For example, in this Declaration and Testimony one will find evidence of a witness to Christ's sovereignty over nations as well as individuals and the church; a witness which grew out of history. The Testimony also expresses a witness warning against specific teachings and associations which tend to distract persons from a clear and simple walk with Jesus Christ. For example, secret oath-bound societies which bind persons together under oath with unbelievers are considered in this category. Another witness comes in the area of social problems. For example, consider the problem of drunkenness and alcoholism. As a Christian community, the Reformed Presbyterian Church has agreed to refrain from the use, sale, and manufacture of alcohol beverages, which cause so many to stumble. The point of our Testimony is that our witness as a Christian community be positive and active in any given time in history. "You shall be My witnesses."
II. The Area of Worship
In its Directory for the Worship of God, the R.P.C.G. seeks to set forth that manner of worship which God desires. This worship is expressed in a number of ways, according to the Bible, but perhaps most significant in the corporate assembly, when the congregation comes together for the purpose of worshipping God. However, family worship, private worship, and small group fellowship are also called for in God's Word. Worship ranks number one in the life and habit of the true Christian community.

However, the R.P.C.G.N.A. seems unique today because of its use of the Psalms unaccompanied in the worship of God. At the heart of Christian worship is the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross by which way alone sinners may find acceptance with God. This central idea of worship should never be eclipsed. Obviously this focus should be the hallmark of Reformed Presbyterian worship; even though it may seem unique in some other ways.

But looking closely at what God accepts in worship brings us back to the Second Commandment where it seems plain that in principle God is to be worshiped only in terms He has commanded. For this one basic reason, the Psalms are used in worship. There does not seem to be biblical basis for anything else, especially in the light of the 150 Psalms of the Bible given to us. This practice, therefore, has its roots in the Bible, and does not in any sense represent what the R.P.C. prefers to use from pragmatic reasons. While at one time many branches of the church held to this practice, the R.P.C. has not found either need or reason for change.

Musical instruments are not used, although there seems to be much Scripture to support their use, basically because these were ordered in connec-

- 22 -

...tion with the Old Testament ritual of sacrifice. With the cross of Christ, those practices relating to the temple and priestly rites were fulfilled and hence replaced. Neither history nor the New Testament practice show either the need for or the appropriateness of instrumental music in the worship of God. So, R.P.C. congregations sing unac-

accompanied in worship. But let it be added that this should not be interpreted to mean they do not believe in "musical instruments".

III. The Area of Church Government
How shall we organize? The term "presbyterian" comes from the Greek word in the New Testament for ruler, and here in a word we find our answer to organization. Just as every professing Christian is to be identified with a congregation of God's people, so he has the privilege of being under the care of "overseers" or shepherds ordained by Christ for the care of His people. These shepherds called "elders" or "bishops" are chosen from the people, but called by Christ on the basis of qualifications set forth in such passages as 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

In that same passage, another office can also be found: the Deacon. Look at verses 8-13. Deacons (literally "servants") are first seen in the New Testament in Acts 6:1-7 when men were needed to relieve the apostles so the preaching of the Word might go on unhindered. Deacons, therefore, also chosen from and by the congregation on the basis of qualifications established by Christ, stand able to fulfill many of the functional activities of a congregation. They ensure that no one is neglected, especially in the area of material need, but also in other ways as well.

What marks presbyterians can perhaps be best seen in contrast to two other common forms of
church governments: the episcopal and the congregational systems. In the first, there are a series of graded offices with one person holding the top position. For example, the pope is top in the hierarchy of the Roman system. Congregationalism gives the power to the people in the congregation. Authority lies under Christ in the vote of the people. And each congregation within a given group or "conference" may act independently.

Presbyterians somewhat cut across the two of these. In Scripture the congregation chooses their leaders, based on Scriptural qualifications. But these elders ruled on the basis of Scripture. Also, they participated in what seem like "superior courts" when some issue troubled the whole church, and their conclusions carried authority. You remember Christ gave His church authority? See Matthew 18: 18-19. So there is a corporate authority under Christ the Head. Chosen officers must rule, but congregations retain those powers given them by Christ. Officers may be deposed if they fail to meet their responsibilities, and doctrinal issues require the vote of each congregation's elders.

In this regard, it should be noted that Christ has invested in His Church the responsibility to discipline the members who may be in need of it. God chastens whom He loves, according to Hebrews 12:5-6. In the Book of Church Discipline steps are outlined for the duties and limits in processing such discipline. There are five kinds of discipline each more serious: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition, and finally excommunication. While you may not have heard of such practice, Jesus made clear how grievances are to be handled which may arise with Christians. Note Matthew 18:15-20.

Positively speaking, church discipline becomes a tremendous support to the weak, and a restraint on the strong. Officers as well as members, therefore, have responsibility to preserve the holy and loving testimony of the people of God to the world. There is an oneness to God's Kingdom which He desires, and which proves a great blessing to those who respect it. Church discipline, therefore, is something to be encouraged and practiced.

Summary

This rather short question has, therefore, produced some rather extended explanations. However, it is not expected that persons making profession of faith understand all of the details of these things. But they should have reasonable assurance that the congregation with which they identify be honoring its faith and practice on the Word of God. That is the intent of the expression in the question "based upon the Scriptures." They should also know something of that commitment of those officers under whose leadership they expect to hear the Word of God expounded and applied. For this reason rather extended explanations have accompanied this section in our study. Submission to the church must be done in the Lord, but there must be submission to walk together as God's people. (Deuteronomy 13:17) "And where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty." 2 Corinthians 3:17.

- 24 -
STUDY 7 - "THE PRACTICE OF OUR FAITH"

Question 5 - To the end that you may grow in the Christian life, do you promise that you will diligently read the Bible, engage in private prayer, keep the Lord's Day, regularly attend the worship services, observe the appointed sacraments, and give to the Lord's work as He shall prosper you?

There is something spontaneous about the Christian life. That is, just as the Holy Spirit imparts life causing a person to be "born again", so that same Holy Spirit motivates the true Christian to follow Christ. Look at Romans 8:14. The Christian community, therefore, gives itself individually and corporately to obeying Christ, but particularly to those "means" by which Christ graciously activates, instructs, and guides. You will notice then that the question above concentrates on such "means of grace", as they have been called. That is the meaning of the expression "to the end that you may grow..." Let's look at these means and how they help us grow in Christ.

I. Bible Reading
   According to the following, what does the Bible do for us?
   a) Acts 20:32 -
   b) Hebrews 4:12 -
   c) John 15:7 -
   d) 2 Timothy 3:16-17 -

Therefore, it has been the concern of the Christian community that persons be able to read the Bible; and to assist in this, great effort has been expended to put the Bible into the language of the common people. Christians are to take per-

sonal time to listen to God's Word "to the end that they may grow."

II. Private Prayer
   As a corollary to listening to God, prayer (or talking to God) provides the other half of our communication with our Lord. What aspect of prayer is stressed in the following?
   a) Matthew 6:6 -
   b) Matthew 21:22 -
   c) Mark 11:25 -
   d) John 14:14 -

Now prayer becomes a difficult thing for many to do simply because it does require faith. Furthermore, persons must be taught how to pray. But as we experience God's gracious answers, we grow in our Christian life.

III. Keeping the Lord's Day
   Unlike what many understand, the "Sabbath" was instituted at Creation, and has been built into God's order of things for His Kingdom. The Pharisees during Jesus' earthly life often criticized Jesus for His use of the Sabbath, but they thought of the day legallyistically, rather than "remembering" it as a way of honoring God and a means of grace.

There are great blessings bound up in the proper use of this day-in-seven, and the following show something of this. What are the blessings?
   a) Exodus 31:16-17 -
   b) Deuteronomy 5:12-15 -
   c) Isaiah 58:13-14 -

In the New Testament, believers began to meet on the
first day of the week as testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and this became the Christian Sabbath. Hence, every Lord's Day (as it is called) reminds us of God's creation, of Christ's resurrection, and the final rest Christians are to enjoy in heaven, as referred to in Hebrews 4:9-11.

IV. Regularly Attending the Worship Services

In the same manner that all of these "means of grace" are to be used, so is what is commonly called "church attendance". The healthy Christian does not have to be reminded of this; he really wants to meet with his fellow-believers. He is hungry for spiritual food, and he also wants to share in encouraging his brothers and sisters in Christ. To neglect all of this or to drop it down on his priority list means inevitable negative results in his Christian life. The following portions use "one another", a term which requires at least one other person. What are we to do for one another in:

a) Hebrews 10:25 -

b) Hebrews 3:12-13 -

c) 1 Peter 4:10 -

d) 1 Thessalonians 4:18 -

So, in order to grow and help others grow, Christians regularly meet together for worship and fellowship. What does God think of this?

Malachi 3:16 -

V. Observing the Appointed Sacraments

Two ordinances which Christ established for the people of God are a type of "sign language", and they provide strength from Christ to true believers.

a) Baptism - by which is pictured the sinner's cleansing from sin, or in other words his being united to Christ in His death and resurrection. Again, it is a sign of his participation in the covenant of grace. It becomes a mark of identity for the Christian community. Romans 6:1-11.

b) The Lord's Supper - by which is dramatized the believing community's feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ for life, and at the same time bearing witness to His death until He returns. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

In the case of baptism, it is administered only once; while the Lord's Supper is frequently repeated. In neither sacrament is there any intrinsic or magic quality, but rather believers by faith receive grace from their union with Christ by these means, and so are enabled to grow. Children of believers by virtue of their position in the covenant relationship are to receive Christian baptism. Acts 2:38-39.

VI. Giving to the Lord's Work

This Christian practice does not usually find itself considered to be a "means of grace", but rather a demonstration of Christian grace. However, in spite of the fact that churches often give the bad impression of always wanting money, the Bible attaches great blessing to the grace of giving. Giving thus becomes a wonderful channel to growth in understanding and enjoying our Christian life. What principles of giving do you find in:

a) Luke 6:38 -

b) 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 -

c) Malachi 3:10 -

- 29 -
These are only a few of the practices which giving Christians learn by experience come true. However, the practice of tithing (giving a tenth) shows up early in the Old Testament, and has served as a guide for Christians over the years. Tithing as a practice should only serve as a guide, and not eclipse the fact that we are responsible stewards of ten tenths. The principle holds: he that sows bountifully also reaps bountifully.

Summary:
These practices then are not necessarily signs of one's being a Christian. The sign of discipleship is love for the brothers and sisters, according to John 13:34-35. On the other hand, Christians practice these things that they may grow. Like the infant who must be taught certain things in order to keep himself fed and healthy, these disciplines are not made in themselves, but seems to becouse Christian, and thus reflecting the glory of God. So just as Christ challenged His first disciples to "abide" in Him, so His disciples today are challenged and instructed in the same way. As a person exercises himself in these things by the power of the Holy Spirit, he will grow in the faith becoming hardy and robust. His lifestyle will demonstrate both his dependence upon, and his love for, His King.

STUDY 6 - "THE WITNESS OF OUR FAITH"

Question 6 - Do you purpose to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in all relationships of life, faithfully to perform your whole duty as a true servant of Jesus Christ, and seek to win others to Him?

We now direct our attention to the lifestyle of the citizen of the Kingdom of God. In giving His final words to His disciples, Jesus used a particular term in Acts 1:6. What did He say they would be? Where?

How would they be able to do this?

In principle then Jesus directs His disciples' attention to their mission, Their mission in the world determined their lifestyle, And that is really the focus of this question.

I. WE WITNESS TO OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST BY THE GOAL WHICH WE SEEK.

Perhaps this is the most distinguishing feature of the Christian's everyday life: He seeks the goal of the Kingdom of God. Look up Matthew 6:33 to find the expression "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness". Now look at verses 31-34. How does the Christian compare with Gentiles (unbelievers)?

This difference of purpose shows itself a thousand ways a day! It's true we are buffeted by opposite pressures, and we find ourselves often giving in to them. But this bothers the true Christian, for it cuts across the root principle now having begun to grow in his life. How does Hebrews 11:9-10 describe Abraham's lifestyle?

Now consider two implications of this objective.
A) When we "seek first the Kingdom of God", we are thinking about our long range hope and expectation, not just our own personal accomplishment. In other
words, our focus is in fact that state of things where all of life is under the rule of Christ. As Christians we know that one day this is exactly the way it will be. 2 Peter 3:11-13 reminds us, so we just take every day with that goal in mind. We begin to live now like it will ultimately be then.

B) We do not limit the Kingdom to any one or two spheres of life, but to all our relationships. As we grow, God keeps revealing more and more of the marvel of His person and works, and we apply the principle that He is lord of all. He is King and Head of His Church, but he is also the King of all the created universe. As I begin to apply this, I sometimes run into problems with my surroundings—a culture not committed to God—but I must surrender no part of life to the dominion of the Evil One. It all belongs to Christ!

So, as we demonstrate this goal for our life, it declares to the world that Jesus Christ is King over all and in fact it shows He is bringing in His Kingdom through us. We ourselves are a testimony that Christ's Kingdom is real.

II. We witness to our faith in Jesus Christ by the way we live our life.

When Jesus was showing His disciples how they were to live out their relationship to Him and to each other, He used the term "servant." Notice Mark 10:42-45. To what supreme example of the "servant heart" did He point?

Can you think of a modern term in our language that depicts the idea of a servant?

It is not strange, therefore, that this question should make clear what our position becomes when we confess Christ. As citizens of Christ's Kingdom, we are now privileged to be His servants, but requires knowing His desire and will. What does He want?

You can easily recognize that every person automatically becomes a witness to the world because his way of life is serving Christ and His people. As Mark 10:42 shows, this is different!

But something else is this matter of "faithfulness". What does the apostle Paul say about being trustworthy in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2?

If Christ has committed to one of His servants a trust or assignment, no matter what the circumstance, it is the concern of the servant to be faithful. Often we fail, but how does 1 John 1:9 speak to this problem?

For example, take the matter of being honest. A theory often considered to be Christian goes like this: "Honesty is the best policy." But it is not Christian. Christianity is not built on what seems to "work best", but rather on the will of the King. In a society where dishonesty has become a way of life, doing what the King says can be costly. But when the Christian obeys His Lord and refuses to practice dishonesty and even questionable things for the sake of being faithful, the world observes. Historically, honesty has become a mark of true Christianity the world over.

III. We witness to our faith in Jesus Christ by seeking to win others to Him.

While it is true that both the goal and the style of our life bear deep, lasting impressions regarding Christ's Kingdom, Jesus also calls us to the mission of "verbal" witness. He wants us to tell people about the Gospel. How does this show itself in Matthew 28:18?

In Mark 10:15?

There are many ways such witness comes about, but
here our concern is that persons come under the
"sound of the Gospel", Can you see why this is im-
portant according to Romans 10:12-157

However, winning others to Christ is not a "do-it-
yourself" program since after all it is Christ Who
draws persons to Himself. He does it through per-
sons whom He chooses to use at a given time in a
given place. Therefore, it is our first concern to
keep ourselves ready, as 1 Peter 3:15 says, and
then just expect Christ to use us. Knowing that it
is Christ Who draws men to Himself, we also give
time to praying for those yet in their sins...and
for those who are called to give their time to
preaching and teaching the Word of God. Finally we
join together as a congregation and the larger
Christian community to bring the Word of the Gospel
to all those needing to hear it. This means both
where we live and also to those in other parts of
the world to which special workers are sent.

Summary:
The mission of the people of God, therefore, centers
in glorifying God in the world by a clear goal of
Christ's Kingdom, a faithfulness to be servants of
Christ as Kingdorn citizens, and a concern for bring-
ing still others into His Kingdom. It becomes evi-
dent then that when the people of God pray, "Thy
Kingdom come,...", they are personally working and
looking for the full realization of this objective.
And the wonderful thing is that Christ as King is
already ruling and assures us that He is exercising
His power to really bring everything into submis-
sion to Him! How great to be a servant of this
King!

CONCLUSION

While we began with Question 7, it is appropriate to
note it again as we conclude the study. In Study 1 we
considered in some detail what it means to make one's
"profession of faith" in Christ. And then we explored
some of the aspects of the content and conditions of
that profession.

An important part of this Question 7 centers on the ex-
pression "in humble reliance upon His grace". Going
over these questions may have left you with many unan-
swered questions of your own. Perhaps some of these
have come as a result of this study; you didn't have
them before, but you have them now. Of course, if
they are impressing you as extremely important, you
should have them discussed. On the other hand, Jesus
does not expect us to know all the answers nor to have
sorted out all the problems before we profess our faith.
Much more, He does not expect us to be perfect in or-
der to meet His standards, perfect that is by our own
standards.

On the contrary, we are to profess our faith (our trust)
in Jesus alone and His finished work on the cross. Our
questions, our shortcomings, our sins...we cast them
all on Him and trust Him to meet our need. The Church,
of the people of God, is comprised of those who have
been brought by God's grace to recognize their need
and to put their confidence in Christ alone. Christ
then not only brings us to God through His perfect
sacrifice so we can be justified, but by His Holy
Spirit He brings to work in us a building program to
build us up in knowledge (answer our questions) and
strengthen us to walk in holiness (give victory over
our temptations). This is the lifetime process called
sanctification. So in every way when we profess our
faith in Christ, we humbly rely on His grace.
We therefore encourage you as you complete this series of studies to:

a) Review your position before God, recognize His call upon your life, and commit yourself unreservedly to Christ.

b) Make your profession publicly, identify with a congregation of God's people, and seal it with the sacrament of baptism.

c) Entrust your growth and future into Christ's hands, giving yourself to learning His will and obeying it, moment by moment, day by day.

d) Review any problems you believe may be preventing you from making such a profession, and make an appointment with the elders/session to discuss them in the light of Scripture.

e) Request a copy of the CONSTITUTION OF THE REFORMED PRESbyterian CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA if you need to make additional study. The Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship will offer classes to fit your needs that you might study with God's people, share what His Word says to us, and to grow together as we search it together.

The Colorado Springs R.P. Fellowship is committed to helping and encouraging others to enter the Kingdom of Christ and join them in serving their King. If God led you to recognize this as His call for you, then we urge you to be prompt to obey His

"...Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation..." 2 Corinthians 6:2.