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ORDAINED SERVANT



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ORDAINED SERVANT

Statement Of Purpose

Ordained Servant exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal *Ordained Servant* will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

Editorial Policy

1. *Ordained Servant* publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of *Ordained Servant* or of the Church.
2. *Ordained Servant* occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Ordained Servant* does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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Dr. James Gidley, Mr. David Winslow, Rev. William Shishko and Rev. Peter Wallace

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This issue of *Ordained Servant* marks the beginning of the tenth year of publication of this periodical. And it is the sincere desire of the Committee on Christian Education—and especially the subcommittee that has direct oversight of this publication—that it has been a useful instrument for the office-bearers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. As we begin this tenth year, therefore, we invite all of you who receive *Ordained Servant* to give us some feedback. Please write us (email is fine) to tell us a few things: (1) Have you found *Ordained Servant* helpful to you? (2) Are there specific aspects of your work as a pastor, ruling elder or deacon that you would like to see addressed in future issues? (3) Do you find the articles too long, or too difficult—or do you find them too short, and too easy? The Scripture says that even ‘wounds’ can be a blessing when they come from a friend (Prov. 27:6). So please ‘let us have it’ if you must, but in any case give us some feedback!



Dr. Richard Ganz is of Jewish descent, and he grew up in the New York City area. His article on the issue of adultery committed by pastors may strike some as overly severe. And, of course, if you take issue with him you can respond with your reasons. But as one who has lived long enough to see a change from the time when such a thing was simply unheard of in the pastoral office to a time of rather astonishing tolerance, I thought Dr. Ganz’ article was both timely and powerful.



Dr. James Scott has contributed an article on a subject of increasing importance in this time of rapid change. I think most of us were surprised when *World Magazine* broke the news

concerning Zondervan's plan to introduce a Gender-Inclusive edition of the *New International Version*. And we can thank them for alerting us all to the need for vigilance. In this article Dr. Scott helps us to see the weakness of the sort of argument that is used in support of this radical change. It is, in our opinion, both timely and helpful.



We are surprised that requests still come to the editor for copies of past issues, and the like, even though the official notice page clearly states that all such requests should be directed to our distributor Mr. Stephen Sturlaugson. Please—before you call or write anyone about *Ordained Servant*—take the time to read the small print carefully.

The Belgic Confession - Article XXXI

The Ministers, Elders, and Deacons

We believe that the ministers of God's Word, the elders, and the deacons ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the Church, with calling upon the name of the Lord, and in that order which the Word of God teaches. Therefore every one must take heed not to intrude himself by improper means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him; that he may have testimony of his calling, and be certain and assured that it is of the Lord.

As for the ministers of God's Word, they have equally the same power and authority wheresoever they are, as they are all ministers of Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church.

Moreover, in order that this holy ordinance of God may not be violated or slighted, we say that every one ought to esteem the ministers of God's Word and the elders of the Church very highly for their work's sake, and be at peace with them without murmuring, strife, or contention, as much as possible.



ROADBLOCKS LIMITING CHURCH EFFECTIVENESS - Part 3

by

J. G. Vos

III. THE ROADBLOCK OF ANARCHY,

or

CONTEMPT FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

The government and discipline of the Christian Church are of divine institution and authority. Back of them is the command and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, which means, of course, ultimately, the authority of God. Therefore any disintegration of the government and discipline of the church must be viewed with alarm. It is the disintegration of something which is of divine authority and therefore of the greatest importance for the well-being and future of the Kingdom of God in the world.

We live in an age of relativism and expediency, when hardly anything is regarded as an absolute matter of principle, a clear-cut issue of right and wrong, any more. So it comes to pass that not only is there the greatest diversity of opinion and practice concerning church government and discipline, but also that the whole subject seems to be falling into neglect and decadence, apparently with the tacit approval of most Christian people and most churches.

Church discipline is a Scriptural Ordinance

I shall speak chiefly of church discipline, though of course church government and church discipline go together, and cannot really be separated. They are separate functions, but they are inseparably connected and interrelated. Without church government there cannot be any real church discipline. Church government is the authority which administers church discipline. A nonexistent or impotent government cannot enforce anything. On the other hand, church government without church discipline is futile and useless. It is like the government of a nation which does not even attempt to enforce the laws and administer justice within the realm. Church

government without church discipline becomes a mere paper government, a mere matter of form, serving no true purpose.

The following Scriptures, among many others, prove that church discipline is a divine ordinance in the Christian Church: Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 1 John 2:18, 19; Rev. 3:18-23.

The church is in the world but it is not of the world. Since Adam's fall, there has been an antithesis between two kinds of people in this world—the antithesis of Cain and Abel, of Satan's kingdom and God's Kingdom, of the world and the church.

Abraham was commanded by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees. The man who was to be the nucleus of the church could not remain in an environment dominated by the world. God put a difference between Israel and the Egyptians. Again, God insisted upon strict separation between the covenant people of Israel and the races of Canaan. And today God requires an antithesis and a separation between the church and the world.

The world must be kept out of the Church

The requirement that the world be kept out of the church is obviously Biblical and necessary. But how can this be accomplished? In some countries of Europe where an official or state church exists there is hardly any distinction between citizens and church members. Citizenship virtually includes church membership. There are of course exceptions in the case of Roman Catholics and Jews, as well as other minority groups; but apart from these, church membership seems to be practically automatic for the mass of the population.

The Puritan Attempt to Exclude the World

It is often wrongly supposed that the criterion of church membership is regeneration. We are told that the church should exclude all who are not born again. Years ago in Manchuria a Chinese evangelist said to

me: “Pastor, in this church, let us baptize only those who are truly born again.” I replied, “Well, Mr. Chang, that is a high aim. But tell me, how are we going to decide with certainty which are really born again and which are not?” To which Mr. Chang replied: “Oh, that will be very simple I will tell you which they are, and you can baptize them.” But it turned out later that some whom the evangelist had approved were not truly born again, so far as we were able to judge.

It was the error of the early Puritan churches of New England that church membership is based on proof of regeneration, or, as they called it in those days, “real saintship.” The applicant appeared before the church and related his religious experience, and if the congregation or elders judged him truly converted he was admitted to membership. This theory broke down in practice, however. Many who had a good command of the English language were able to convince the church that they were truly regenerate, when as a matter of fact they were only good salesmen. And many others, who no doubt were truly the Lord’s, did not have the boldness to make such claims for themselves, and remained outside of communicant membership in the visible church. This in turn led to the unscriptural system known as the “half-way covenant,” by which adherents of the church who had been baptized—but had never themselves made a public profession of faith or partaken of the Lord’s Supper—were nevertheless allowed to have their children baptized, and so on, from one generation to the next, without any personal profession of faith.

Proof of Being Born Again not Required

The whole idea, however, is wrong and unscriptural. It is interesting to note that this old controversy is reflected in the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (adopted 1806), which rejects as an error the proposition “That saintship is the criterion of church-membership, so that the visible church may not, without guilt, receive any who is not really a saint, or exclude any who is regenerated” (Chap. XXII, Error 3; in Constitution of R. P. Church, page 191).

According to the Bible and sound Reformed theology the true criterion of church membership is not “saintship” or proof of regeneration, but a credible profession of faith and obedience. Simon the sorcerer

was baptized and a church member, but clearly he was not regenerate. Peter told him that he was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Similarly, those mentioned in 1 John 2:19, who went out from the church because they were not truly of it, were obviously former members who had once been received to the church’s fellowship; otherwise, they could not have “gone out from” the church. The true criterion, therefore, is a credible profession of faith in Christ and of obedience to Him.

A Credible Profession of Faith and Obedience

A “credible” profession means a profession that it is possible to accept at face value. It does not mean a profession that compels acceptance. The applicant does not have to prove that he is converted. His profession is to be taken at face value unless there is evidence to the contrary. The burden of responsibility is on the applicant, not on the church, to decide whether he is truly born again.

A credible profession—a profession that it is possible to accept—is a profession that is adequate in content (not ignorant) and that is accompanied by a consistent life (not scandalous). The church, of course, must decide what constitutes such a profession, and must weigh the profession of the individual applicant for membership to determine whether it is indeed a credible profession; that is, the church must satisfy itself that the applicant is neither ignorant nor scandalous. By maintaining this Biblical standard for admitting members to the status of communicant membership in the church, the world is kept out of the church.

Bible Standards Often Ignored Today

It is notorious, however, that this standard is commonly violated today. Many denominations have virtually open membership, open baptism and open communion. Thus the dividing line between the church and the world is blurred or effaced. It is reported that a Unitarian Church had a wayside signboard bearing the name of the church and the added statement: “All who believe in the good life are welcome here.” I suppose that even the devil himself believes in the good life, if he be allowed to define in his own way what he means by “good.” Where open church membership exists, or where virtually open church membership exists, the gates are thrown open

for the world to enter the church

Only by insistently maintaining Biblical standards can the world be kept out of the church. Needless to say, this must be done in the sight of God and utterly without respect of persons. Who a person is related to has absolutely nothing to do with his or her right to be a communicant member of the Church of Jesus Christ. Only those are to be admitted who really make a credible profession of faith, accompanied by a corresponding life. The ignorant and the scandalous must be kept out at any cost.

The Church Must be Kept from Becoming Like the World.

The Bible standard of faith and life must also be insisted on in the case of those who are already members of the church. It should not be easier to remain a member than it is to become a member.

I understand that the U. S. Customs Service has a list of books which cannot be legally imported into the United States. These books, for one reason or another, are excluded. But the strange thing is that many of these same books are freely printed and sold by publishers in the United States. They cannot get in, but they can be in and stay in. A strange situation, certainly. Yet it is not unlike the situation which exists when a church tries to maintain high Biblical standards in admitting new members from the world, yet tolerates serious evils and abuses among those who are already members, and have been members for years. Certainly it should not be easier to stay in than to get in.

Discipline a Duty of the Whole Church

The officers of the church are to watch over the members to see that the Bible standard of faith and life is maintained. This task, however, cannot be placed wholly and solely upon the ministers and elders. It is also the duty of the church as a whole, and of each and every member of the church. It is, indeed, first of all the duty of members as such. Members are to have a care for one another, to admonish one another, and so forth. Only when all this has failed of its purpose, must official action be taken by the courts of the church.

When the duty of mutual admonition and discipline is taken seriously by both the membership and the officers, then the church will be kept from

becoming like the world. Scandals and troubles will be nipped in the bud, before they become extreme and desperate cases. Troubles will be cured before they become incurable. But both members and officers are often extremely reluctant to undertake this task. We all tend to be like Cain, who asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” It may be, we fear, a bit unpleasant or embarrassing—it may, indeed, be extremely unpleasant and highly embarrassing—so we tend to put it off, if not to neglect it altogether.

Then things drift along from one thing to another until by and by some member is so far off the right track that it seems almost impossible to reclaim him. And finally, after he has become totally indifferent and has perhaps not attended public worship for several years, his name is dropped from the roll, to the accompaniment of a pious remark about the travel fund. But this is not Scriptural church discipline; this is certainly not what the Bible requires us to do.

When people begin to get off the track, the others should note this and restore them in a spirit of meekness. They should remonstrate with them and urge them to do right. The real purpose of church discipline is not to take a name off the roll after all other action has already become hopeless, but to prevent things from becoming hopeless by doing something about them in time.

What Kind of Conduct Requires Discipline?

In general, any conduct on account of which a person could be kept from becoming a member is proper ground for action in the case of one who is already a member. Scandal is not everything which is sinful, or which displeases someone else, but something so important that if committed by one not a member, it would be sufficient to debar him from membership until duly repented of.

Church Discipline has Almost Vanished

In view of these facts, it must be regarded as a most extraordinary thing that, even in churches which regard themselves as pure and faithful, church discipline has all but vanished from the life of the church. The statements of the Testimony and of the Book of

¹ At this point Dr. Vos cites statements from the official standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church

Discipline on this subject are virtually a dead letter today. In all but the most extreme and shocking cases, nothing is done and everyone knows that nothing will be done. But it is not such extreme and shocking cases that are ruining the church today. It is the common cases of neglect of the means of grace—of openly violated covenant vows—of disregard of the Sabbath—of neglect of baptism—of needless and habitual absence from the ordinances of worship—of gossip, slander and evil speaking—of miserly refusal to render due financial support to the church—it is cases such as these that cry aloud for Scriptural action and yet seldom is anything done about them until it is too late.

John Calvin on Church Discipline

The Reformer John Calvin at Geneva regarded church discipline as so important that when matters came to a head between himself and the city council and assembly of Geneva, he absolutely refused to compromise on this issue. He was willing to yield on several other matters which did not involve vital matters of principle, but with regard to church discipline he absolutely refused to yield. There must be Scriptural church discipline; it must be in the hands of lawful church officers without interference by the Civil magistrates; it must debar the ignorant and scandalous from the Lord's Supper; and it must, if and when all other measures failed, terminate in the sentence of excommunication.

This was too much for the pleasure-loving, worldly-minded people of Geneva. But Calvin would not compromise, and neither would the citizens yield. Instead, they voted to banish Calvin from their city, and he went reluctantly into exile, until—in the providence of God—the city of Geneva was constrained to call him back again.

Church Discipline is not a Method of Getting Rid of People

There exists a common misconception of church discipline, which regards it as merely a legal method of getting rid of people whose names are an embarrassment on the church's membership roll.

Discipline is more than "Purging the Roll"

Bring up a discussion of church discipline in a meeting of presbytery sometime, and see if within a

few minutes some of the delegates are not using the expression "purging the roll" as equivalent to church discipline. The only kind of discipline many people know is the final erasure of a person's name after all other measures have become hopeless. Things have been allowed to drift for years; all truly Scriptural discipline has been avoided and neglected. Finally matters become desperate and the session decides to "purge the roll"—a surgical operation in which perhaps twenty or thirty names are simply stricken off the roll of communicant members in good standing. There are no charges, no trial, no admonition, no patient dealing with the parties. They may be sent a letter informing them that they have been "purged," or perhaps they may not even be informed of the session's action. Thus Biblical discipline is corrupted into a last resort for getting rid of "dead wood."

Discipline is not a Method of Saving Money

There is still another view of church discipline which is even worse in my humble judgment, than the view which regards it as merely a matter of "purging the roll." This worse view is the view which regards church discipline exclusively from the financial point of view. This is not only common, but even prevalent.

Bring up the matter of church discipline in a meeting of session, and see if one or more elders do not almost immediately offer the comment that by removing the names of such-and-such members, the congregation could save so-and-so much on the travel fund of presbytery and Synod. It is true, of course, that a congregation pays its travel fund according to its membership as shown in the public statistics. And it is true that the elimination of names will reduce the amount that the congregation is required to pay to the travel funds. Yet this is the merest sidelight on the subject of church discipline. Suppose a congregation could save, say, twenty dollars a year by "purging the roll," still, I say, this would be the merest by-product of the exercise of church discipline.

It strikes me as truly shocking that in a matter involving the immortal souls of men and women, some church officers cannot seem to see any other aspect than the money! If a member of your family were very sick, would you sit down with paper and pencil and figure up how much you could save on your annual grocery bill if he were to die? It is truly shocking when the subject of church discipline is approached

chiefly, if not exclusively, from the standpoint of church finances. And yet I can assure you that this is commonly done. This impresses me as really profane. A matter which concerns the honor of Jesus Christ, the spiritual welfare of His Church, and the eternal weal or woe of men's souls, is discussed from the standpoint of the treasurer's ledger. The honor of Christ and the recovery of erring members are the real objects of the church discipline—not a saving of dollars and cents on the travel fund.

Scriptural Discipline a Continuous Process

It is a great mistake to think of church discipline as limited to the final step of church discipline, namely, removing a person's name from the roll. Scriptural church discipline is a long, continuous process, not just a way of getting rid of a name from the roll. The steps in church discipline are graded steps. The process moves from one to another. These steps are admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition (in the case of church officers), and excommunication. At each stage of the process there is renewed opportunity for the person to repent, renewed prayer on the part of the church that he will repent, renewed dealing with the person that he may repent. When this is faithfully done by the church, it will be accompanied by an increasing pressure of the Holy Spirit on the offending member's conscience, which will result, eventually, in his repentance and restoration, or if resisted to the end, in his complete hardening, his becoming "like a heathen man and a publican."

The common practice of "purging the roll" is not really discipline at all. It really concerns only the church's own records and statistics. It makes no real effort to deal spiritually with the offending member. Instead, it simply takes the ultimate step of erasing names from the roll, very much as the names of those who have died are erased from the roll. This is something very different from the church discipline required by the Bible and set forth in the historic church standards.

Only One Sin Justifies Excommunication

There is really only one sin which can properly result in the final sentence of excommunication. That sin is not murder, nor theft, nor drunkenness, nor perjury, nor adultery, nor Sabbath-breaking, nor blasphemy, nor any other such sin. The one and only

sin for which a person can properly be excommunicated, or put out of the church, is the sin of stubborn refusal to repent. Where there is repentance, all other sins are forgiven, and the person can be a member in good standing in the church, even though he may be in prison under sentence to be hanged for murder. But the person who stubbornly refuses to repent when he is exhorted and commanded to do so, cannot be a member in good standing in the church. It makes no difference whether the sin that he refuses to repent of is a "big" sin or a "little" sin. It may be telling a lie, or making a mean, slanderous remark about some other member. If he refuses to repent, in the end, after all other measures have been faithfully tried and have failed, he must be excommunicated. Our Lord Jesus Christ said so—if he will not hear the church, he is to be treated as a heathen man and a publican, as an unsaved sinner who needs the gospel just as much as the heathen on the foreign mission fields need it. The apostle Paul said so—he said to the Corinthian church, "Put away that wicked person from among yourselves." But when that wicked man later repented, Paul also directed that he be restored to membership in the church.

Forms of Contempt for Church Discipline Today

If anything is characteristic of the Church today it is contempt for Scriptural church discipline. We see today not merely neglect of church discipline, but actually contempt for church discipline. There is a relativistic attitude in people's minds today which causes them, when this subject is brought up, to discuss, not what is right but what will in their opinion be likely to have desirable results. People are concerned not so much with what God requires in His Word, as with what they think will be likely to "win friends and influence people."

When church discipline is regarded from the standpoint of expediency, and people weigh the probable results before they are willing to take any action, then church discipline is regarded wrongly; it is regarded with contempt; it is regarded as of merely human authority, not of divine authority.

The real question about church discipline is not whether it is wise and prudent, nor whether people will like it, but whether it is right—whether God commands His Church to do it.

“Relativity” Causes Contempt for Discipline

Another form of contempt for church discipline exists where the session is unwilling to exercise necessary discipline because of “relativity.” People in a congregation may be closely related by ties of blood or marriage. If the session could find someone who is not related to anybody, they might be willing to exercise Scriptural discipline; but when a person is closely related to three or four of the most prominent families in the congregation, including some of the elders themselves—that is another matter. Under such circumstances sessions rarely exercise Scriptural discipline even when it is clearly called for.

Carnal Fear of Consequences

Another form of contempt for church discipline arises from a carnal fear of consequences. It is feared that if Mr. A, who is a communicant member but has not attended church for eleven years, is dealt with by church discipline, then family B and family C, who are closely related to Mr. A, will leave the church in a huff.

It cannot be denied that such situations exist. But what shall we reply? Whether church discipline is to be applied to Mr. A is a question of right and wrong to be decided on its merits. What families B and C will think about it has nothing whatever to do with the question. We are opposed to corruption in our civil courts; what about improper influences in church courts? The old Latin proverb said *Fiat Justitia, ruat coelum* (“Let justice be done, though the heavens fall”). It is not our job to keep the heavens in place by corrupting justice.

And what about families B and C? Well, if their loyalty to Christ and His Church is so superficial and flimsy that they can be kept in the Church only by a policy of appeasement which handles them and all their relatives with kid gloves, then they are no asset to the Church. If families B and C can be kept in the Church only by calling black white, then families B and C are a liability to the Church, and if they leave, the Church will gain in spiritual power and purity what it loses in membership statistics.

Threats to “Leave the Church”

Another form of contempt for church discipline is the threat to “leave the church” if discipline is applied.

This is far from imaginary; it has been carried out in practice only too often.

Mr. X is a flagrant Sabbath-breaker. He goes on long auto trips in the interests of his worldly business, using the Lord’s day for his travelling time. Now if the session so much as mention this to Mr. X—let alone taking any real action or pronouncing any real censure—if the session so much as speak to Mr. X about his Sabbath-breaking, what will he do? In nine cases out of ten such a person will become very angry, will announce loudly to all and sundry that he will not be a member of a church that interferes with his business, and will before the next communion season ask for his letter of standing and join a “tolerant” church which will make no demands whatever upon his life. That church will receive him with open arms and may even honor him by making him an officer.

Discipline Blocked by “Christian Love”

Another obstacle in the way of exercising Scriptural church discipline arises from the attitude of those church officers who object to the exercise of discipline on the ground that it is contrary to Christian love for the erring brother. A false antithesis is set up between discipline and love. These are regarded as mutually exclusive—it is held that we can exercise either discipline or love, but not both at the same time. Discipline is regarded as ruled out by the duty of Christian love.

This kind of obstacle in the way of Scriptural church discipline has been observed again and again in church courts. The plea of Christian love is put up in a very plausible and appealing manner by brethren who are universally honored and respected. This results in putting those who call for Scriptural discipline in a very bad light. They are regarded as lacking in Christian love. Sometimes, indeed, those who call for Scriptural discipline are openly declared to be actuated by a desire for revenge. The call for Scriptural discipline has even been represented as a demand for “a pound of flesh.” Thus the plea of love for the offending brother results in a very unloving imputation of bad motives to the brethren who call for discipline.

Sometimes the plea is that the matter—whatever it may be—be dropped altogether. More often, perhaps, it is conceded that the time may come when discipline must be exercised, but it is pleaded that that time has

not yet come. Discipline should be postponed in the interest of love. The time when Scriptural discipline can be exercised, like Felix's "convenient season," never arrives.

All of this of course results from the false antithesis between discipline and love. Scriptural discipline is not to be regarded as a manifestation of hatred or desire for revenge. On the contrary discipline itself should be regarded as an expression of love—not only love for the truth and love for the Church as a whole, but even love for the offending brother. It is no kindness to an offending brother to leave him unrebuked in his sin. The truest love will seek to apply the remedy appointed in God's Word that he may be humbled and recovered.

Congregation should Support Session's Acts

Still another form of contempt for Scriptural church discipline is found in the attitude of many church members who instead of backing up the session's actions with real moral support, will rather commiserate the disciplined member, tell him it is "too bad" that the minister and elders "cracked down" on him, that the session certainly had no business doing so, and so forth.

Thus church discipline is regarded merely as a private matter of the session—the minister and the elders. The other members tend to dissociate themselves from it, to deplore it, to lament it, and to comfort the unfortunate person who has been dealt with by the session. The person is told by other members that they would not stand for it themselves, and they don't see why he stands for it

Needless to say, this sort of thing breaks down and destroys the effectiveness of all church discipline, just as in the home when one parent disciplines a child and the other parent comforts the child and tells him it is a pity he was treated so harshly, all parental discipline is broken down and destroyed.

Actually, of course, discipline is the act of the whole congregation. It is carried out by the session, but the session acts in the name of the whole congregation. The entire congregation should back up the session's action with moral force. They are not to count the disciplined person as an enemy, but they are to make it plain, when occasion arises, that they approve of the

session's action and they hope and pray that the offending member will repent.

Every member who is admitted to communicant membership has promised to submit to Scriptural church discipline. He has promised "due subordination in the Lord" to the courts of the Church. How many take this promise seriously? How can we explain the fact that people will leave the Church in anger if their sins are even mentioned to them? It is to be feared that many have taken their vows as a mere formality with no serious intention of keeping them.

Church Discipline and Revival

There is much discussion of revival today. But real revival will never come until the church becomes serious again about drawing a clear dividing line between itself and the world. That dividing line is a credible profession of faith and obedience, maintained by proper exclusion of those lacking such a profession, and proper discipline of those who violate their profession after becoming members.

A Matter of Honesty

Church discipline is really a matter of honesty. Just plain honesty requires that the dividing line between the church and the world be drawn and maintained. God is an honest God, and He requires honesty of His people and His servants. When that dividing line is faithfully drawn and faithfully maintained, we will receive spiritual blessings that we can never get by programs, drives and campaigns.

Church discipline is a matter of honesty; it is a matter of facing realities. God will honor and bless honesty in His church and people. Without honesty we cannot expect God's blessing and we have no right to pray for revival. If the treasurer of a congregation were to report to Synod that he had paid the pastor \$100 more than he had really paid him, that would be dishonest. All right-minded people would object to it and would call for correction of the false statement. But for a session to report to Synod that there are, say, 150 communicant members on the roll, when the real truth is that several of them are "paper" members only and could not be considered in good standing by any stretch of the imagination, is also dishonest. It is really an untruth; it gives a false impression of the facts.

We must maintain honesty even if half of the members become angry and leave the church. We do not glorify God nor accomplish His purposes by dealing in dishonesty and untruth. Suppose that half the members do become angry and leave the church. That would in itself be a great calamity. But there would also be something gained. The name and honor of Christ would have been vindicated, and the purity of His Church safeguarded. The dividing line between the church and the world would have been faithfully maintained.

God Will Bless His Own Ordinance

Church discipline is an ordinance of God, instituted for these purposes. Where it is faithfully and honestly used, God will honor and bless it. Sometimes the attempt to exercise discipline is objected to on the plea that "It won't do a bit of good." But how do we know that it won't do a bit of good? Remember, it is an ordinance of God, commanded in His Word. Then how dare we say that it won't do a bit of good? Do we not have faith in the Word and promises of God? If we do what God commands, He will honor His own Word and bless His Church.

This involves stepping out on faith. But there is no other way. We have to step out by faith, counting on God to honor His Word. Those denominations that maintain Scriptural church discipline, such as the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and the Christian Reformed Church, have proved in actual practice that God honors and blesses this divine ordinance. Of course, they have lost some members; but they have been greatly strengthened spiritually at the same time. And they have reclaimed many, many erring members over the years.

Scriptural Discipline Necessary for Revival

The prevalent prayer for revival, in the face of neglect of Scriptural church discipline, is dishonest and hypocritical. God will not bless it, for it disregards His own Word and commands. Prayer for revival when the church is unwilling to exercise Scriptural discipline is hypocrisy and escapism.

There is much talk today about the need for more prayer, for more revival, and for more evangelism. We can readily agree that there is need far much more of all of these. But prayer is no substitute for obedience

to the revealed will of God. I fear that many people today regard prayer as a substitute for the action that God calls them to do.

When God called Abraham to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah Abraham did not say "This is a difficult situation. We need more prayer. I will call a prayer meeting." He already knew what God required of him, and he went about doing it. When the children of Israel at the shore of the Red Sea were paralyzed with fear because of the pursuing Egyptians, the Lord said to Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Ex. 14:15).

There is no Substitute for Obedience

When God has clearly revealed His will in His Word, He requires us to obey it. Nothing else will take the place of obedience to the revealed will of God. Prayer will not do it; revival will not come without it; evangelism will not serve as a substitute. The first requirement for real evangelistic advance is the integrity of the church itself. An army honeycombed with disloyalty, disobedience, threatened desertion, and contempt for discipline, is in no shape to face the enemy and win any battles. Simply to give the order, "Forward, march!" without first making sure of the soundness and loyalty of our army is not faith but foolhardiness, and will lead to disaster and disillusionment rather than to success and victory.

There is a crying need for more evangelism. I grant it. I believe it. But the first essential for true and successful evangelism is the moral and spiritual integrity of the church itself. Without that, evangelism will be a mere flash in the pan, and its anticipated benefits will prove a mere mirage.

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The Concept of 'Authoritative Teaching' and The Role of Women in Congregational Worship

by

R. Fowler White, Ph. D

Introduction.

The recently coined phrase “authoritative teaching” and similar terminology are current among some PCA pastors when they discuss the propriety of women teaching (preaching) in the gathered church under the oversight of elders. The expression derives from the position advocated in works like Susan T. Foh’s *Women & the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979) and James B. Hurley’s *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981). At the center of the discussion is their exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12 (see Foh, pp. 122-28, 246-58; Hurley, pp. 201, 224-29). In my judgment, the concept of “authoritative teaching” is exegetically untenable and ought to be given no weight in deciding the role of women in the church.

Consider the following points.

The distinction between authoritative and non-authoritative teaching. We need first to get a clarification of the distinction between authoritative and non-authoritative teaching in this discussion. Basically, the difference is this: “authoritative teaching” is teaching done while holding the elder office, and “non-authoritative teaching” is teaching done while not holding the elder office. Foh and Hurley and their followers take this distinction to mean that qualified women as well as qualified men may teach the church while not holding eldership. The need for sound argumentation at this point arises because the differentiation is crucial, even necessary, to maintaining the position that would permit women to teach the gathered church under the oversight of elders. What, then, is the basis of the distinction?

The “one activity” exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12. The distinction between “authoritative teaching” and “non-authoritative teaching” has its roots in a particular exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12. The interpretive question is, In 1 Tim 2:12 is Paul restricting women with regard to two activities (functions) or one? That is, does Paul mean to forbid women “to teach authoritatively” (one activity/function), or “neither to teach nor to exercise authority” (two activities/functions)? According to Foh (pp. 125-26) and Hurley (p. 201), Paul is not talking about teaching on the one hand and exercising authority on the other; rather, he is talking about teaching authoritatively, about assuming the office of teacher, about engaging in the habitual teaching function of an elder. Thus, Foh and Hurley speak of “authoritative teaching” or of “the office of teacher/elder.”

Problems with the “one activity” exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12. As we look elsewhere at the citations of 1 Tim 2:12 by Foh and Hurley, however, we discover that they are not consistent in their interpretation of that text. To be sure, the “one activity” view of 1 Tim 2:12 dominates their thinking, but the “two activities” view surfaces in their denial that eldership is open to women. Look first at Foh. In her discussion of 1 Timothy 2 on pp. 125-26, she argues for the “one activity” view, connecting Paul’s prohibitions to women occupying the office of teacher/elder. Yet later, when she argues against women’s ordination on pp. 238-40, she presumes a “two activities” view, asserting that 1 Tim 2:12 “means that the teaching and ruling office(s) of the church are not accessible to women” (p. 239). Her inconsistency is patent. Hurley is similarly equivocal. After taking a “one activity” view on p. 201, he refers again to 1 Timothy 2 on p. 226, but there

writes of elders having tasks in the “areas [my emphasis; note the plural] of ‘teaching and exercising authority over men.’” These “two activities” statements by Foh and Hurley are plainly at odds with their “one activity” exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12. Regrettably, this diplopia occurs precisely where they must be clear.

A second problem with the Foh-Hurley concept of authoritative teaching is their treatment of the syntax in 1 Tim 2:12 (which forms the basis of the concept). They make no effort to prove that their exegesis of the text’s syntax is even within the range of known usage. On this point, see the recent essay by Andreas J. Köstenberger, “*A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12*,” in A. J. Köstenberger /T. R. Schreiner/H. S. Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church* (Baker, 1995), pp. 81-103 (note especially pp. 90-91). He has shown that the “one activity” view has no basis in the syntactical evidence. Alternatively, there is ample support for the “two activities” view. Similarly, see the essay by Douglas Moo, “*What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15*,” in J. Piper/W. Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Grand Rapids: Crossway, 1992), pp. 179-93. Though Moo makes his case differently than Köstenberger, he has argued with both clarity and accuracy that 1 Tim 2:12 refers to two activities, not one. In short, there is strong evidence favoring the “two activities” view; on the other hand, there is no syntactical evidence to support the claim that 1 Tim 2:12 speaks only of the official teaching function of the elder.

Third, Foh and Hurley affirm that the teaching eldership and the ruling eldership are not open to women. I agree, but I do so because, among other things, I am persuaded that Paul’s references both to teaching and to exercising authority find expression in, respectively, the teaching eldership and the ruling eldership of the church (1 Tim 2:12 with 1 Tim 5:17). (These activities also find expression outside the office of elder [e.g., teaching, Col 3:16; ruling, 1 Tim 3:4-5].) However, if I rely on the “one activity” view of 1 Tim 2:12 to reach that conclusion, I

deprive myself of a crucial piece of biblical evidence on which my position rests. On the “one activity” exegesis, Paul excludes women from only one activity, namely, from the authoritative teaching function of an elder. On this same exegesis, Paul does not exclude women from a second activity, that is, from the ruling function of an elder. Only if we take the teaching and exercising authority in 1 Tim 2:12 as two activities do we have any explicit biblical basis for limiting the teaching eldership and the ruling eldership to men. Presuming the Foh-Hurley exegesis, the text gives no grounds for excluding women from both the teaching and the ruling offices; at least ostensibly, the ruling office remains open to them.

In sum, the biblical basis for permitting women to teach the assembled church under the oversight of elders has not been established. The “one activity” exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12 on which this practice has been based is simply not tenable. Apart from this exegesis, no biblical basis has been put forth for prohibiting women from teaching the assembled church authoritatively while permitting them to teach the assembled church non-authoritatively. The syntactical evidence, which supports the “two activities” view, has been neither examined nor refuted. There is therefore good reason to object to the position and practice of those who have cited the Foh-Hurley exegesis of 1 Tim 2:12 to justify permitting women to teach the church in a non-official capacity. Whether their teaching occurs while in an office or not, whether under the oversight of elders or not, women should not be permitted to teach the gathered church. This conclusion dovetails with the following point.

The analogy of women prophets. Following Foh and Hurley (among others), the claim is frequently made that women prophets were permitted to address the assembled church, and therefore women teachers should also be permitted to do so. Let me offer only a brief commentary on this consideration.

Unless I’m missing something, the Hurley-Foh view of women and speaking gifts in the NT gives us a church in which the teaching gift was exercised

according to a different set of principles and regulations than the prophetic and tongue-speaking gifts. As a result, women could prophesy to the assembled church but they could not teach the assembled church (at least not officially).

Against Hurley and Foh I would argue that the same principles and regulations governed all speaking gifts (prophecy, teaching, etc.) given to the church. Observe that the principles and regulations presented in 1 Timothy 2 and 5 (1 Tim 5:2; 3:11; 5:9-10, 14; see also Titus 2:3-5; and 2 Tim 1:5) are also cited and applied in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 (1 Cor 11:5 and 14:26-35). We will return to the principles and regulations of 1 Timothy 5 below, but for now notice two points. First, notice that the family-church analogy is at work in all four chapters. Second, consider that in each chapter the point Paul urges is that the distinct roles assigned to men and women in marriage and family should carry over into the distinct roles assumable by men and women in the church. If this interpretation is right, it would mean that female teachers and prophets participated freely in the meetings of God's household when it came to praying, singing, giving thanks, and the like (1 Cor 11:5 with 14:15-19; cf. Acts 1:14; 2:17-18); but when it came to giving instruction to the gathered church via the exercise of their gifts, they were at least ostensibly to be silent (1 Cor 14:19 with 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:12). At the same time, as "mothers" in God's household, women with speaking gifts (or without) instructed other women, even as Paul's directives to Titus indicate (Titus 2:3-5).

The "one another" commands and the episode in Acts 18:26. Some might say something like this: "In light of all the 'one-another' commands in the NT and the example of Priscilla teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26), it is clear that women can teach the church collectively or its men specifically as long as it takes place under the oversight of elders." But the appeals to the "one another" commands and to the Priscilla-Apollos episode do not make matters as clear as advocates suggest they should.

First of all, we have to question whether the instance of Priscilla teaching Apollos really consti-

tutes a ground for permitting a woman to teach in the church as any unordained man might. The two situations are clearly not identical and only problematically analogous. For example, Priscilla's words to Apollos were part of an explanation to which her husband Aquila contributed as well, and at that they were spoken in a private meeting between the three of them. Certainly, unlike Apollos, Priscilla is not portrayed as speaking in the meeting of the synagogue. Luke in fact contrasts Apollos' "*speaking out boldly in the synagogue*" (18:26; cf. 18:28, "in public debate") with Priscilla's and Aquila's "*inviting him to their home* [NIV; NASB and NKJV, "*taking him aside*"] to explain the way of God more accurately to Apollos. In my opinion, if we are looking for the best analogy between the Priscilla-Aquila-Apollos episode and something relevant for the church, we would do better to look to Paul's words concerning women speaking at home vis-à-vis in church (1 Cor 14:34-35).

Second, certain "one another" commands might be cited as constituting a ground for permitting women to teach non-authoritatively in the meetings of the church. But if we are going to use this kind of argumentation, someone could with equal justification cite the "submit to one another" command in Eph 5:21 and argue that it provides a ground for permitting women to exercise authority over the church and thus for having the church submitting to women in the role of at least ruling elders. To be sure, we could cite 1 Tim 2:12 to counter this argument, but only if we adopt the "two activities" view of that text. Consider also the relevance of 1 Tim 5:1-2 for understanding the application of the "one another" commands, as summarized below.

The analogy of family and church. In the give and take that characterizes all biblical interpretation, exegesis is inevitably and decisively influenced by existing commitments and larger frameworks of understanding. Trying to identify and address these controlling factors is an equally necessary and potentially more profitable way to work at resolving the issues in dispute among us. In this last section, let me explore what I believe is one of those controlling

factors. Though he is not responsible for my application of his thought, I am indebted to Vern Poythress's essay in Piper/Grudem, "The Church as Family," pp. 233-47, for what follows.

I have come to believe that the differences among us are due in large measure to an inconsistent application of the principle that the distinct roles assigned to men and women in marriage and family carry over into the distinct roles assumable by men and women in the church. According to Paul, the fundamental principles governing relationships in human households are applicable to the church as God's household (1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2; cf. 3:4-5). His point is that, in God's household, as the members relate to one another, they are obligated to take into account whether their fellow members are men or women, young or old (1 Tim 5:1-2). The application of Paul's principles would go something like this. A woman, as capable and gifted as she may be, can never function as a father in a human household. Likewise, a woman, as capable and gifted as she may be, may never function as a "father" in God's household. She may indeed function as a "mother" in God's household (cf. Sarah, 1 Pet 3:6), and exercise the roles indicated in 1 Tim 5:2; 3:11; 5:9-10, 14; Titus 2:3-5; and 2 Tim 1:5. But, just as the roles of men and women are not interchangeable in human families, so they are not in the church family.

Based on the preceding argumentation, Paul's restrictions on women's roles in 1 Tim 2:12 are a natural outcome of the analogy between the church and the human family. Likewise, we should interpret and apply the "one another" commands of Scripture according to the principle of 1 Tim 5:1-2. In addition, as I suggested above, we should interpret and apply the Acts 18:26 episode in terms of 1 Tim 5:1-2 (as well as 1 Cor 14:34-35). As I see it, the view that would permit women to teach the gathered church loses sight of Paul's analogy between the church and the family, and it results in permitting a woman to function as a "father" in God's household in every way but the name. This view is therefore a departure from the fundamental principles that govern relationships between men and women in the church.

Conclusions

The text of 1 Tim 2:12 places restrictions on *two* activities (teaching and ruling), not *one* (teaching authoritatively). As such, the text does not support the concept of "authoritative teaching" often derived from it. Moreover, Paul's principal instructions in 1 Tim 5:1-2 bring clarity to our understanding of women's speaking roles in general, the "one another" commands, and the relevance of Acts 18:26.

The emerging frequency with which some churches are allowing women to teach (preach) under the oversight of elders is creating a class of de facto women elders. If the practice continues, gifted women who teach the church will almost certainly teach as often as, and possibly even more often than, any ruling elders, and yet we still have to maintain that they are not teaching elders. Let me state my point differently: all things being equal, by permitting women to teach in a non-official capacity, such permission is, in effect, creating a class of teachers who function as teaching elders and "fathers" in God's household, though they are "mothers" in God's household and lack the name and the official authority. What Scripture denies to women de jure is being granted to them de facto. These things ought not to be.

The Speaker's words in Eccles 3:7b sum up Paul's doctrine in 1 Tim 2:12 and related verses: when it comes to giving instruction, there is a time for women to be silent, and a time for them to speak. Accordingly, let us affirm women, especially those with speaking gifts, as "mothers" in God's household, encourage their teaching ministries to other women, and thereby uphold the principles that should govern church and home alike.

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THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL:

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE NON-ELECT

by Stephen D. Doe



For more than fifty years the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has had a controversial document on its hands. In the minutes of the 1948 General Assembly there was a report, authored by two Westminster Seminary professors and Orthodox Presbyterian ministers, John Murray and Ned Stonehouse.¹ Their report on the “free offer of the Gospel” has been reprinted, discussed, and attacked ever since it first appeared.

That question, whether God sincerely desires the salvation of those whom he has not elected to salvation, continues to stir up controversy wherever Reformed theology is discussed. For instance, in his recent book, *The Love of God*, John MacArthur mentions some of the postings on the internet that alerted him to the spread of a denial of the free offer of the Gospel.

He read things like:

- God does love many, and those whom he loves, he will save. What about the rest? They are loved not at all.
- Sheer logic alone dictates that God would save those whom He loves.
- God loves His chosen ones, but His attitude toward the non-elect is pure hatred.
- Not only does God not love everyone,

¹ Found in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 4, pp.113-132. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 198

there are multitudes of people whom He utterly loathes with an infinite hatred. Both Scripture and consistent logic force us to this conclusion.²

MacArthur summarizes the issues this way:

“There are some who flatly deny that such invitations [to believe on Christ for salvation] constitute any sincere offer of mercy to the non-elect. As far as they are concerned, the very word offer smacks of Arminianism...They deny God would ‘offer’ salvation to those whom He has not chosen. They deny that God’s pleadings with the reprobate reflect any real desire on God’s part to see the wicked turn from their sins. To them, suggesting that God could have such an unfulfilled ‘desire’ is a direct attack on divine sovereignty. God is sovereign, they suggest, and He does whatever pleases Him. Whatever He desires, He does.”³

Any leader in the OPC who has encountered this issue, knows of the report by Murray and Stonehouse, and certainly this subject has occupied many books and articles, but in our day it is well, perhaps, to look once more so that the ordained servants of Christ in the OPC might understand the issues and why they continue to arise.

² MacArthur, John Jr. *The Love of God*. Dallas: Word Books, 1996, pp. 101-2.

³ MacArthur: *ibid.*, p. 108

Definition

Before we can consider any issue we need to understand what the issue truly is. The debate over the Gospel offer is a plant that could only take root in the soil of Reformed theology. Arminianism assumes a free offer, but Reformed thinkers have to wrestle with it because we say that salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9), God is the Savior from first to last, choosing from all eternity those whom he will save (Ephesians 1:4ff, Westminster Confession of Faith III). It is only where men take the sovereignty of God in its fullness that this question will arise.

This is how R. B. Kuiper, another professor at Westminster Seminary and Orthodox Presbyterian minister, put it:

“When the Reformed theology describes the universal offer of salvation as sincere, it does not merely mean that the human preacher, who obviously cannot distinguish with certainty between the elect and the non-elect, must for that reason issue to all men indiscriminately a most sincere offer of eternal life and an equally sincere invitation to accept that offer. It most assuredly means that, but it means incomparably more. The Reformed theology insists that God himself, who has determined from eternity who are to be saved and who are not, and therefore distinguishes infallibly between the elect whom he designed to save by the death of Christ and the reprobate whom he did not design to save, makes on the ground of the universally suitable and sufficient atonement a most sincere, bona fide, offer of eternal life, not only to the elect but to all men, urgently invites them to life everlasting, and expresses the ardent desire that every person to whom this offer and this invitation

come accept the offer and comply with the invitation.”⁴

First of all then, the denial of the free offer of the Gospel is *not* to deny that the Gospel is to be *indiscriminately proclaimed*. That is to say, those who deny the free offer of the Gospel agree that the Gospel is to be preached to *all* men. The issue is: Can promises of forgiveness in Christ be made to those are not *known* to be elect? Can Christ as Savior be *sincerely* offered to those who may, in fact, not be elect, whom God does not love in a saving way, and thus to whom he gives no power to respond in repentance and faith to the Gospel that is being offered? The indiscriminate use of the Arminian phrase, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life” is rightly rejected in Reformed evangelism. Is it Reformed, however, to say to man under God’s decree of reprobation, “Come to Christ, he will receive you”? Does that both deceive man and dishonor God?

This question, then, leads us to ask whether God has a non-redemptive love, a love of benevolence, toward the reprobate. So Murray and Stonehouse face up to the scriptural basis for saying that there is this love of benevolence in God. Those who deny that God desires the salvation of those he has not elected to salvation, *must* also deny this love of benevolence. Yet that love of benevolence is seen throughout the Word of God, notably in passages like Matthew 5:43-48 and Ezekiel 18:23,32, 33:11. It is seen in the very task of the Church to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8). The will of God to announce to all of

⁴Kuiper, R.B. *For Whom Did Christ Die?* Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1982, p.86. Also see Kuiper’s *God-Centered Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961, Chapters 2 & 3.

humankind the salvation wrought in his Son, discloses to us something of the benevolent love of God for a fallen race (cf John 3:16-21). This Gospel call must, of course, be distinguished from the effectual call which results in the salvation of the elect (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q/A 31). God demonstrates his love of benevolence by calling his Church to announce to a sinful, fallen world, the good news of redemption in his Son, even though only those chosen in Christ will attend to the message.

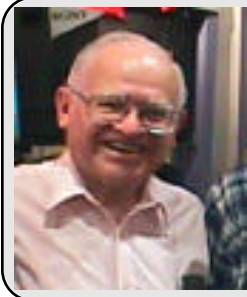
Again it important to remember that it is not the preaching of Christ or the Gospel indiscriminately which is being denied by some within reformed circles. It is rather the indiscriminate offer of Christ which is brought into question. When the Church speaks of Christ, does God the Spirit, through the preaching and teaching and the witness of the Church, truly promise Christ's saving benefits to all those who are hearing, upon condition of repentance and faith?⁵ Does Jesus mean what he seems to be saying in Matthew 11:28, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*? Are those words intended for the elect or for lost sinners in general, are all invited to come and all promised rest should they come? The Larger Catechism (Question 68) speaks of those who are "outwardly called by the ministry of the Word," but goes on to say that while non-elect sinners "have some common operations of the Spirit" they by "their wilful neglect, and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ." The Larger Catechism is distinguishing here be-

⁵ Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith V11.3, cf. X.4, Shorter Catechism 85-87. Also see the Canons of Dort, Head 1, Articles 3 & 4; Head 11, Articles ~ & 6, cf. Article 3; Heads 111 & IV, Articles 8 & 9, also see Articles 15 & 17.

tween the Gospel call and the effectual call. If the two calls are collapsed into one, there will be ground for confusion and a denial of a truly-meant offer of Christ to all sinners.

The genius of the free offer is that Christ does call men to himself without the prior qualification of the determination of whether they are elect or not. It is those whose qualification is to be "weary and burdened" who are invited to come and promised rest in coming to him who ended the soul-damning battle with sin by his cross. It is a good word to sinners, as sinners, which Jesus speaks. The intention of the effectual call is plain, God is saving his elect by drawing them to faith in Jesus Christ (John 6:44,65). In the Gospel call God also has a good intention, an intention of benevolence, to display his mercy toward his creatures, though not ultimately in an eternally saving fashion. The idea of the well-meant offer, the idea espoused by Murray and Stonehouse takes seriously the passages of Scripture, notably Matthew 5:43-44, 23:37, Luke 13:34, Ezekiel 18:23,32, 33:11, Isaiah 45:22, and 2 Peter 3:9 arguing that God does indeed have a non-saving, non-redemptive love toward men, even reprobate men, as his creatures. Precisely this kind of non-redemptive love has been denied at various points in time since the Reformation and it is to a brief history of that denial which we hope to turn in a subsequent article.

We again welcome a contribution by Stephen D. Doe, who is currently serving as Pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Barre VT. We also look forward to a further article from him on this subject.



Have We Gone Too Far?

by

G.I. Williamson

I grew up, as a covenant child, in the old United Presbyterian Church of North America. And there is one thing I can't recall from that time which has now become rather common. I refer to the fact that ministers and elders who have been divorced—and even guilty of the sin of adultery—are serving as church officers. And I am troubled by this fact.

It is *not* because I believe that everyone who has been divorced is necessarily a 'guilty party.' And it certainly is not because I believe adultery to be 'the unpardonable sin.' It is the glorious truth of our Christian faith that there is complete forgiveness for all who repent of their sin and put their trust in Jesus. But the error I see in at least some instances, today, is that of thinking that forgiveness is all that matters. It is certainly true that it matters more than anything else. But it is not true that it is the only thing that matters.

Let me give a couple of examples that I've come across during the years of my ministry. Mr. A. was divorced after several years of marriage and the birth of several children. By civil law the children now (under court order) are part of the time under the authority of the mother, and part of the time under the authority of the father. The result is that Mr. A. cannot rule his own house (i.e. his children) in a manner that provides a suitable example for the congregation of God's people. My point is that events have transpired in Mr. A.'s life that cannot now be changed. And they remain in effect in such a way as to undermine one of the clear requirements set down by the Lord through his apostle in 1 Tim. 3:4,5. It was much the same in the apostolic age (and, by the way, this situation still exists in some African churches). Here is a man who is by all testimony one of the godliest men in the church. Ah, yes, but he also has three wives. If he was to send two

away, they might very well die for lack of sustenance. No, he must continue to care for these women—equally. But he can't be an elder in the church, not even if he repents of having gotten into polygamy.

There are, in the church today, men who have had two, and even three, different wives and yet some seem to think that there is nothing to prevent them from continuing to serve as elders or ministers. It doesn't seem to occur to them that they have seriously damaged their reputation. The Scripture says an elder must be "*blameless*" (1 Tim. 3:2), one who has "*a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*" (1 Tim. 3:7). Those who are not God's people are experts in discerning inconsistencies in the church. And they see inconsistency when the leaders of the church do not meet this standard.

Now if the mere fact that a person is born female is enough to disqualify *her* from being an officer in the church, then surely the same can be said of a *man* who becomes encumbered with such liabilities as we have mentioned above. It is easy, of course, to make a firm stand for high standards sound cruel and heartless. (That is precisely the argument used with such effect, in recent years, in the Christian Reformed Church. 'How can we be so heartless as to deny our daughters this thing they so ardently desire?') But it is *not* cruel and heartless to stand firmly against the watering down of the requirements our Lord himself has established.

I believe there is an unscriptural kind of compassion for the sinner that has led many to go too far in relaxing the standards for holding the offices of minister, elder and deacon. The irony of it is that, in the long run, this not only harms the church as a whole, but also endangers the individual involved—the very thing the apostle warns us against in 1 Tim. 3:7.



ACCESS DENIED

by

Richard Ganz

One of the great disgraces of the Christian church today is that one of the most evil and destructive sins in society has become a plague within the church's own walls. This is the sin of sexual immorality, specifically adultery. It is a sin that has made a mockery of the Christian ministry.

While Christians disapprove of and actually speak against this sin, the loathsomeness of it is not appreciated. I say this because of the way pastors and elders guilty of this sin are treated in most churches. There is some temporary discipline, generally accompanied by acceptable levels of sorrow and shame. Then everyone tries to restore the man's "ministry."

I believe that the Scriptures present a different view and a different discipline. This must be our overarching principle, with NO alteration permitted: If you are in the ministry, there is no adultery! If there is adultery, you are out of the ministry. Perhaps the main reason this sin is so rampant in the ministry is because of how inadequately this principle is considered.

I also believe the Scriptures teach us how to guard more vigilantly against this hideous sin without acting in an "unloving" way toward the parties involved. Simply put, churches must take seriously the requirements for the eldership. Three in particular are relevant to this sin.

The first of these requirements is that the elder is to be "*the husband of one wife*" (1 Tim. 3:2). The literal translation of these words is that the elder is a "*one-woman man*." This does not mean the elder is simply a man who has only one wife. What kind of high-level requirement is that? Are we to suggest that other members of the congregation may have more than one wife? Or that this requirement was

only a safeguard against the polygamy of the cultures into which the Gospel was moving? I believe it is a far more positive requirement than that. It is an indication of how a godly man is to view his wife and his marriage. He is devoted to his wife and loves her deeply. Furthermore, this passage does not teach that the elder is to be a "*one-woman man*" only if he is married. Rather, it is a requirement that the candidate for the eldership be a married man who has proven himself over time as a husband in his devotion to his wife.

When your church considers a man for the eldership, does the board of elders (a session in Presbyterian churches) ever interview his wife, as well? In our congregation, the elders interview the wife not only to see that there is a devoted marriage, but also to make sure that she is a spiritual woman on a par with her husband. This is the requirement of 1 Tim. 3:11, which says, "*Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.*" John Calvin says of this verse, "He means the wives both of deacons and elders, for they must be aids to their husbands in their office, which cannot be, unless their behavior excel that of others."

The elder and his wife are in a deep partnership. Wives were given to help husbands (Gen. 2:20), and if there is one place that a husband needs help, it is with the problems of the ministry. The only way he can get adequate help is from a spiritual wife. If the elders in the churches took time to really examine the spiritual depth of the man who has been set forward, his wife, and the two of them together, many potentially explosive sexual snares could be avoided. They would know whether the man fulfills the biblical requirements regarding his marriage.

A second biblical requirement churches must consider is that pastors and elders be “*above reproach*” (1 Tim. 3:2, NIV). As we have seen, the Scriptures teach that the elder must be a “*one-woman man*.” If he commits adultery, he is a two-three- or four-woman man, and therefore cannot be in the ministry. But his adultery also disqualifies him by rendering him no longer “*above reproach*.”

This requirement means that he is to be “*blameless*,” or “*without blame*.” Whatever else may or may not be included in this requirement, one thing is clear: Once a pastor has committed adultery, he will never again be entirely above reproach, “*without blame*.” In fact, there is nothing more reproachable than an adulterer. He has broken the most solemn and sacred covenant that human beings enter. He is a man whose own wife will never again fully trust him. Therefore, how can a congregation have this man as their spiritual leader? He has lied and betrayed his wife. He is an untrustworthy and reproachable man. He may, if he repents, be forgiven. He may be restored in his marriage, if his wife chooses to remain with an adulterer. But he cannot be returned to office.

A third requirement for the ministry is also relevant to this issue. The pastor/elder is to be “*self-controlled*” (I Tim. 3:2, NIV). We all know that there are temptations out there. What is to separate the pastor from others is his “*self-control*.” If he commits adultery, he has demonstrated that he does not possess this requirement and must be excluded from the ministry. Our people need to learn not only that all sin, even adultery, can be forgiven, but that it really is possible to stand against the temptations of our age. They need, above all else, to have models of godly, self-controlled behavior in their pastors and elders.

Isn't it time for the church to take the moral high ground in dealing with sexual sin? What do we think it means when the Scriptures teach, “*he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to*

death” (Lev. 20: 10)? How can we minimize the Wisdom Literature that teaches, “*Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul*” (Prov. 6:32)? Are we to have leaders who lack judgment? And yet again, “*I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they commit adultery and walk in lies...*” (Jer. 23:14a). Jeremiah condemns the spiritual leaders for adultery and living a lie. We must deal with this sin squarely.

In the New Testament, Paul gives a special place of notoriety to adultery when he says in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that the people of God must “*flee sexual immorality [adultery]. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.*” In marriage, the two are one (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31). In adultery, the deepest possible sin against that oneness has taken place.

The church must, when the pastor or one of the elders sins in such a manner, make it clear that he is excluded permanently from ordained ministry in the church. This can bring a healthy fear of God into the hearts of the people and of other elders. It does no good for anyone, after a particular pastor commits adultery and is restored to the ministry, to try to justify the exclusion of any other pastor or elder from holding or retaining an office. The standard will inevitably be lowered. Men who are substandard will lead our people, preaching a tolerance that is big enough to embrace their own sin.

Let's start cultivating elders who are men, who, along with their godly wives, meet the requirements of the eldership. We've all heard of preventive medicine. This is preventive eldership. It's also called godliness.

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Paul, the Apostle of Gender-Inclusive Translation?

by

James W. Scott



Most of the arguments for gender-inclusive Bible translation come from linguistics and modern translation theory, and they stand or fall with the validity of that human wisdom. But D. A. Carson, in *The Inclusive-Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), puts forward the striking claim that the apostle Paul deliberately adopts a gender-inclusive translation when quoting the Old Testament. If that were true, one could hardly argue that gender-inclusive translation undermines the biblical view of gender or is otherwise improper. But is Carson correct? Is there in fact an inspired precedent for gender-inclusive translation?

On pages 19–20 of his book, Carson argues that Paul, when quoting 2 Samuel 7:14 in 2 Corinthians 6:18, changes “son” to “sons and daughters.” In 2 Samuel 7:14, God says regarding Solomon, “I will be a Father to him, and he will be a son to me.” Quoting that passage, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:18, “I will be a Father to you [pl.], and you [pl.] shall be sons and daughters to me.” At the very least, Carson concludes, “the apostle himself does not think that Hebrew singulars must always be rendered by Greek singulars, or that the Hebrew ‘son’ should never be rendered by the Greek ‘sons and daughters.’”

At first glance, it may indeed seem that in 2 Corinthians 6:16b–18 the apostle is translating, or quoting translations of, a series of Old Testament passages. Verse 16b looks like it has been drawn from Ezekiel 37:27 or Leviticus 26:11–12, verse 17 from Isaiah 52:11, and verse 18 from 2 Samuel 7:14.

However, the resemblance in each case is only approximate. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the situation is more complex than it appears at first to be. In each of the three verses, Paul evidently expands his base text by adding words from

thematically related passages. In verse 16b, assuming that the base text is Ezekiel 37:27 (as I think it is), Paul adds “and walk about (among them)” from Leviticus 26:12. (Alternatively, if verse 16b is based on Leviticus 26:11–12, as most commentators think, the shift to third person pronouns shows the influence of Ezekiel 37:27.) Verse 17 brings in portions of Ezekiel 20:33–34 (“says the Lord” and “and I will receive you”). In verse 18, “says the Lord Almighty” repeats the words of 2 Samuel 7:8 that introduce the speech (at 7:14) upon which verse 18 is based.

How, then, do we explain Paul’s expansion of “son” to “sons and daughters” in verse 18? First, we must recognize that in verses 17–18, Paul is not simply combining Old Testament texts, but applying their message to the Corinthians. The word “therefore” introduces verse 17 as an application, so that the scope of “you” includes the Corinthians (as 7:1 makes even clearer). To maintain this application to “you” in verse 18, Paul changes the third person, singular pronouns of 2 Samuel 7:14 to second person, plural pronouns. When he comes to the singular “son,” then, he must similarly change it to the plural “sons” in order to maintain grammatical consistency: you (pl.) can only be “sons,” not “a son.” This is theologically appropriate, as well as grammatically necessary, because the “son” of 2 Samuel 7:14 is most fully Christ (Heb. 1:5), and thus the verse has a secondary application to all those who are in Christ, namely, the adopted “sons” of the Father (Rom. 8:14–15).

But where does “and daughters” come from? Since a pattern of conflation characterizes the rest of 2 Corinthians 6:16b–18, where every other phrase has its counterpart in a specific Old Testament passage, we should expect that “and daughters” has been added from an Old Testament passage. Most commentators, accordingly, believe that the reference to daughters comes from Isaiah 43:6, where the Lord promises that

Most of the arguments for gender-inclusive Bible translation come from linguistics and modern translation theory, and they stand or fall with the validity of that human wisdom.

“my sons” and “my daughters” will be gathered together from all nations for salvation. (Isaiah 49:22 and 60:4 have also been suggested as sources, though less plausibly, in my view.) Now if “and daughters” was added from Isaiah, “sons and daughters” cannot be regarded as a gender-inclusive rendering of “son” or “sons.”

But why did Paul add “and daughters,” whether from Isaiah or not? If he was operating in accordance with gender-inclusive translation theory, he added “and daughters” because the receptor language (Greek) would not have recognized “sons” as a generic term that included women. But that was hardly Paul’s understanding of Greek, for he often speaks of Christians of both genders being the “sons” of God (e.g., Rom. 8:14). His consistent usage throughout his epistles refutes the notion that he added “and daughters” in 2 Corinthians 6:18 so that his readers would understand that women were also in view.

Paul’s purpose for adding “and daughters” was not to include women, but to emphasize them. By mentioning them explicitly, not just implicitly, he emphasizes that women, no less than men, partake of the promises of salvation (cf. Acts 8:12; 1 Cor. 7:15; Jas. 2:15). That is, Paul underlines the fact that women, equally with men, have that filial relationship with the Father (vv. 16b, 18) that requires them to lead holy lives (v. 17). The reason for focusing on both men and women is clear in the context: Paul is using this conflation of Old Testament texts to strengthen his call for holiness and purity particularly in the relationships between men and women (6:14–16a; 7:1). He does not want either men or women to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. He wants both men and women to see their bodies as the temple of the living God. He wants both men and women, in their relationships with each other, to be cleansed from all filthiness. Therefore, he speaks pointedly to both “sons” and “daughters.”

Thus we see that Paul has combined, adapted, and applied several Old Testament passages to produce a

smoothly flowing message on the subject of what it means to be the holy people of God. Contrary to Carson’s analysis, then, Paul is not simply “rendering,” or translating, 2 Samuel 7:14 in 2 Corinthians 6:18. Rather, in this verse Paul combines words derived from three Old Testament verses, and makes the necessary grammatical changes for it to follow verse 17. We may be sure that if Paul had sat down to translate 2 Samuel, he would not have translated 7:14 with the words that appear in 2 Corinthians 6:18.

Furthermore, there is every reason to think that Paul is combining Greek texts, and not working with Hebrew texts at all. The words of 2 Corinthians 6:16b–18 generally correspond to the words of the Greek Septuagint closely. (Note especially

the verb *eisdechomai*, an uncommon word that occurs both in Ezekiel 20:34 LXX and in the New Testament only in 2 Corinthians 6:17.) And wherever Paul’s words differ from the Septuagint, they do not show any particular affinity with the Hebrew text. In this passage, then, Paul is not doing any translation, and thus is not doing any gender-inclusive translation.

Neither is Paul quoting with approval a gender-inclusive translation from the Septuagint. Since the phrase “sons and daughters to me” is not taken from one Greek text, but rather is crafted from two texts (2 Sam. 7:14 and Isa. 43:6), it is Paul’s creation. He is not borrowing someone else’s gender-inclusive translation.

But even if 2 Samuel 7:14 were the only passage contributing to 2 Corinthians 6:18, we would still not have an example of gender-inclusive translation. The gender-inclusive equivalent of “son” would be “son or daughter,” not “sons and daughters.” To get from “son” to “sons and daughters,” Carson has to argue first that it is perfectly all right to translate Hebrew singulars with Greek plurals, even changing person (as “him” and “he” become “you” [pl.]). Once he has the plural “sons,” he can get to the gender-inclusive “sons and daughters.” But his five examples of such changes in person (pp. 175–76) prove nothing, for one is

mistaken (Hebrews 1:6 quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX, not Psalm 97:7), and the other four passages are so periphrastic that the change of person is insignificant. In any case, as we have shown above, Paul substitutes plurals for singulars in 2 Corinthians 6:18 simply to maintain grammatical continuity with verse 17.

When Carson again considers how the New Testament uses the Old Testament (pp. 175–81), he first repeats his assertion that “son” in 2 Samuel 7:14 “is quoted” in 2 Corinthians 6:18 as “sons and daughters,” and infers that “we should be careful about insisting on an exactitude of [masculine] form that actually masks [gender-inclusive] meaning” (p. 175). Carson gets great mileage out of this one (misinterpreted) passage, but he conveniently ignores the rest of the New Testament, where the opportunities to adopt gender-inclusive renderings are consistently rejected.

In Romans 4:8, for example, Paul quotes Psalm 32:2: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Why did Paul not replace “man” with “man or woman,” or at least with “one” (as the gender-inclusive NRSV treats Romans 4:8) or “those” (as the NRSV treats Psalm 32:2)? Similarly, why is Psalm 22:22 quoted in Hebrews 2:12 so that Christ speaks only of his “brothers,” not of his “brothers and sisters” (as the NRSV handles both passages)? Again, why is Moses (in Deut. 18:15) quoted as saying that Christ would be

raised up as a prophet “from your brothers” (Acts 3:22), not “from your brothers and sisters” or “from (among) your own people” (as the NRSV presents the passages)? Why does Carson ignore these passages and focus exclusively on 2 Corinthians 6:18? Even if his interpretation of that passage were correct, his presentation of the New Testament evidence would be highly distorted.

The fact of the matter is that the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament, including 2 Corinthians 6:18, do not exhibit gender-inclusive translation. This does not mean that gender inclusiveness is necessarily inappropriate in all cases. However, let us not suppose that the apostle Paul was a gender-inclusive translator.

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