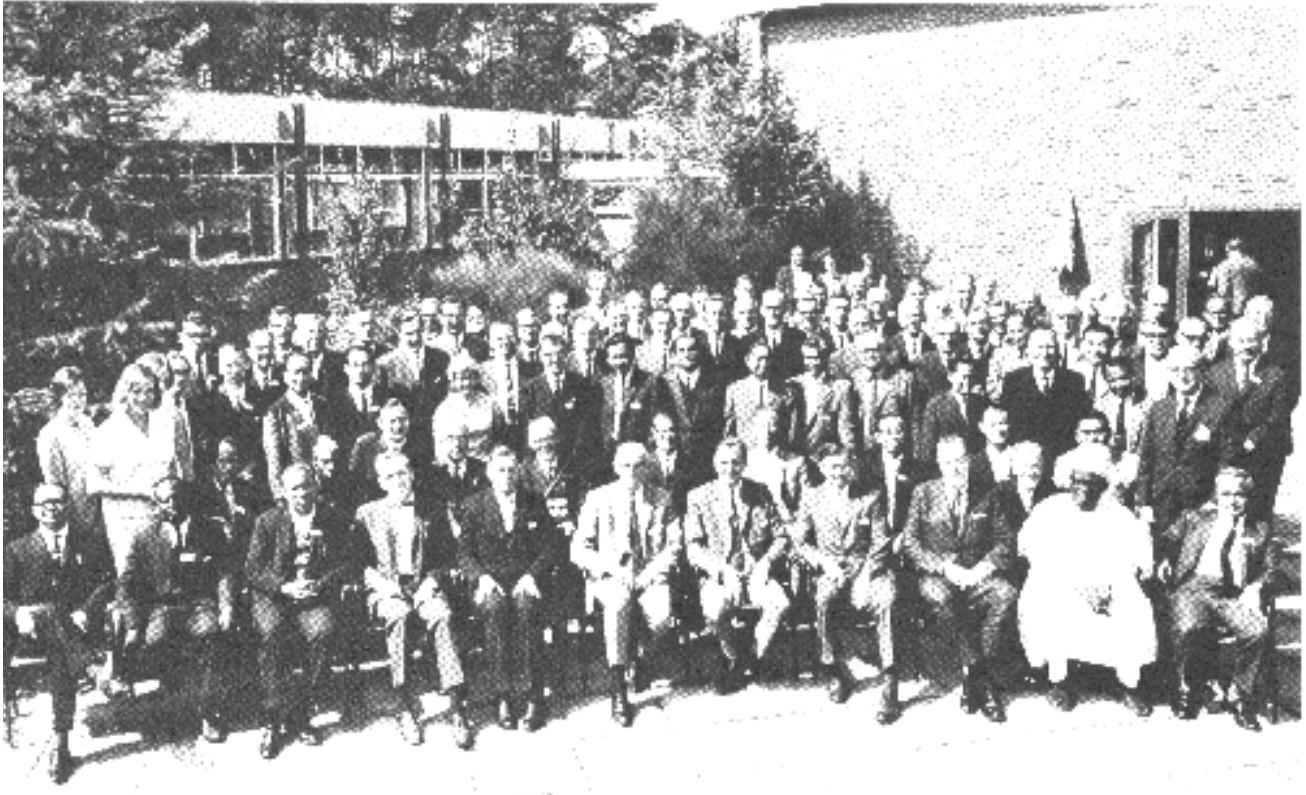


ORDAINED SERVANT



The 1968 Reformed Ecumenical Synod

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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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Editorial Notes

One of the high-priority concerns of the Christian Education Committee—and especially of the Subcommittee on Ministerial Training appointed directly by the General Assembly—is the Internship Program. During the past year the Committee funded 15 summer and 11 year-long internships. It is also worth noting that since 1983, more than 60 of the ministers presently serving the OPC participated in this program. One of these men—the Rev. Nathan Trice—has written an article for this issue of *Ordained Servant* in which he explains what he learned from this experience, and what he recommends to those who may participate in the future. It is our opinion that his recommendations are worthy of careful consideration by *both* parties involved in the program—that is, the pastor and session, on the one hand, and the intern, on the other. Our thanks to Rev. Trice for this contribution.

In the previous issue of *Ordained Servant* we presented the first section of the Rev. A. A. Allison's fine study of the biblical requirements for the office of deacon. In this issue we present the second section. It will be followed in the next issue by a third and final section. The value of Rev. Allison's previous study on the biblical requirements for the eldership have been widely recognized, and we believe the same will prove true of this sequel.

In previous issues of *Ordained Servant* we have presented material dealing with the difficult problem of the nature of creedal subscription. How tight should this subscription be? It is our opinion that previous articles have shown that there is no easy answer—just as there is no *form* of subscription that will ever guarantee a church's future orthodoxy. We are happy to continue the discussion in this issue

with an article from the Rev. Robert Letham, pastor of Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Wilmington, Delaware.

I expressed some thoughts on abortion in Vol. 4, No. 1 of *Ordained/Servant* that seemed to me to be pretty much ignored in what I've read from Reformed sources in North America. But this is not true any more. In Volume 8, No. 5 of *Credenda/Agenda*—an increasingly important periodical—I found an article that expressed some of these concerns in the most cogent and helpful way that I have seen anywhere. I want to urge all readers of *Ordained Servant* to read this article with care. Then, if you have something that you want to say on this subject please send it to me. Our thanks to the editors of *Credenda/Agenda* for permission to reprint this article in *Ordained Servant*.

What do you do when your church is without a pastor, and you do not *know* any pastor that you can call? I was challenged with this question recently when someone called on the telephone to ask for advice in just such a case. I did not have any quick and ready answers, but it did set me to thinking. The result is expressed (with a sense of inadequacy) in my article *On Calling a Pastor*. Perhaps some of our readers who have faced this problem, and found a way to deal with it, could add to this, or suggest a better way. We would welcome your input.

From time to time we get requests for back issues which are no longer available. We hope that we can remedy this in the near future via the OPC web site - <http://www.opc.org>.

On Calling a Pastor

by G. I. Williamson

The noted Reformed commentator William Hendriksen made a careful analysis of the qualifications for the permanent ecclesiastical offices. Our outline here is based on his findings. Of the qualifications:

A. Seven are positive:

The candidate must be a man who is:

- (1) Above reproach in the esteem of fellow members;
- (2) A man of unquestioned sexual morality;
- (3) Temperate in living habits;
- (4) Mentally self-controlled (not impulsive);
- (5) A man who has a well-ordered life-style;
- (6) A friend to strangers (hospitable);
- (7) Well grounded in biblical truth.

B. Seven are negative:

The candidate must be a man who is not -

- (1) Given to [much] wine;
- (2) Given to blows (belligerent);
- (3) Jealous for self (one who can yield);
- (4) Out for the almighty dollar;
- (5) A man who can't manage his own household;
- (6) Contentious (of a quarreling nature);
- (7) A recent convert.

C. One is special:

The candidate must be one who is -

- (1) Above reproach in the eyes of the surrounding community.

This summary is sufficient to give us a sharp reminder of one thing—namely, the fact that there is only one of these qualifications that could be considered primarily academic.

We can perhaps assume, tentatively at least, that a man who has received a diploma from a reputable theological seminary is “well grounded in biblical truth.” But how can we be sure—with anything like the same degree of certainty—that the other fourteen qualifications are met? When it comes to the choosing of a ruling elder or a deacon the difficulty is not nearly so great. Communicant members of a congregation usually get to know the men in their midst well enough to make an assessment of all these qualifications in casting their vote. But when it comes to calling a minister it is very difficult to do this. It is difficult for the simple reason that the communicant members who are called on to vote usually know very little about the man whose name is placed before them for a call. And because this is true it is our conviction that our sessions have a solemn obligation to ferret out as much information as they possibly can concerning any candidate that they recommend to their congregation for a call.

But how is this to be done? This, of course, depends on where the man is with respect to the ministerial calling. If he has not yet served any church, then the session should seek to obtain testimonials from those who have had some extended association with him. They might seek knowledge from the congregation in which he worshipped before going to seminary. Or they might seek information from professors of the seminary that he attended. Over a period of three or four years it ought to be possible for these teachers to get a fairly reliable appraisal of these fifteen qualifications. Information can also be obtained in the OPC, in some cases, as a result of the internship program conducted by the Ministerial Training Sub-committee of our Christian Education Committee. In this program those who seek to be ministers are asked to critically evaluate themselves, while the ses-

On the Calling of a Pastor

sion does likewise. It is often the case that these parallel evaluations are quite similar, indicating a high degree of accuracy. It is not surprising, therefore, that this program has usually been quite helpful to both the prospective pastor and the participating churches.

When a session is considering a man who is already in the pastoral ministry it may want to send two of its most experienced elders to visit the church in which he is presently serving to make an assessment. This option would be especially well advised, in our opinion, if this potential candidate is presently serving a congregation outside the OPC. However, where this is not possible—or for some valid reason not advisable—the session will need to seek reliable information by some other means. The aim should be to obtain enough reliable information to have adequate assurance that the qualifications summarized above are adequately met. We say ‘adequately’ because there is, of course, no perfect minister—no one who fully measures up to the high standard set by the Lord of the Church. This is well understood by even the best men who serve the church as elders and deacons. They know only too well that there is a difference between what they are and what they ought to be. So what is looked for is not perfection, but integrity. The man to be recommended for a call must be one who—in the considered judgment of the session—is genuinely striving to live up to the requirements set down by the Apostle.

But what if a man does not prove to have this profile? And what is a session to do when it comes to realize that this is the case? Is it not true that in too many cases the church that has this ‘problem’ will just pray that some other church will call their minister, and solve this vexing difficulty for them? And when some other church does call their minister, is there not too often a sigh of relief because some other church now has the problem? This ought not to be so. If a church has a minister that does not even approximate the profile set forth by the inspired Apostle, then the session ought to do both him and the church a kindness by initiating action to help him vacate the ministerial office. In our permissive culture today this is

very difficult. Elders who are willing to ‘bite the bullet’ so to speak and do something about ministerial misfits will probably be called ‘cruel, and hard-hearted.’ But, if they are right in their assessment, they are not ‘cruel and hard-hearted’ at all, but rather men who show compassion for the church of Jesus Christ.

Of course it is essential to follow ‘the book’ in any such case. Constitutional rights and due process must always be respected. But the bottom line is that this is where the buck stops. It is one of the primary duties of the ruling elders to see to it that the apostolic qualifications for the ministerial office are upheld. Where this is not done faithfully, grief will surely follow for the man himself, and the churches he serves. Where it is done—for the right reason and in the right manner—both the man himself and the churches will benefit.

Here is one of the urgent needs today: to do a better job of making certain that *all* the qualifications set down by the Apostle Paul receive the kind of consideration that they ought to receive when a congregation votes to call a pastor.

“Why have you, the people, called this pastor? There is one reason that surpasses all others. It is that he may proclaim God’s word to you. That he has been commissioned to do this is inherent in the call that you have extended to him. But if so, you have called him to declare to *all* of you *whatsoever* God commands, and particularly what God commands as it bears upon your duty, faith, thought and life.”

- John Murray

Ingredients of a Meaningful and Successful Intern Program

by

Rev. Nathan Trice

It has become my fervently held conviction that a pastoral internship should be considered indispensable to a man's preparation for the ministry: a rule that has, I believe, few exceptions. I hold this strong opinion as one who has just recently completed the first year of his first pastorate, and who can attest to the immeasurable benefit received from a well-placed internship in a local church. If my own experience gained as an intern could be likened to a well, then I could say that the bucket over it has rarely been still, as I've dipped innumerable times into it for assistance in adjusting to new pastoral responsibilities. As every minister will attest, the first year of ministry is filled with unique challenges, perhaps chief among them simply being the number of routine responsibilities assumed for the first time. I've called these the endless "first timers" that confronted me at the beginning of my pastorate: the first time to administer the Lord's Supper, the first time to teach a Membership Class, the first time to moderate a congregational meeting, and so on, all of which require that extra thought and effort to perform, and which, when in quick succession, can be somewhat overwhelming to a new pastor. An internship is at the very least an effective way to reduce the harrying number of "first timers" that a new pastor encounters in the his first pastorate.

However, I'm convinced that an internship provides much more than this. Though I could write here, in as many words, in support of the traditional structure of seminary education in which men undergo rigorous academic training for the ministry (I am not a critic of the seminary model!), I would yet insist that no formal educational program should be considered the *sole* means by which men are rendered "prepared" for the ministry. Such a program is invaluable for the equipping of men with many tools needed for the ministry, but it should not be assumed (or even expected, I would suggest) to fully prepare

men for the pastorate. That, it seems to me, falls to the work of the local church: to the oversight and instruction that can be best provided through the attention given to a candidate for the ministry in an internship program. Only through such an internship that specializes in the day-to-day applications of the tools and methods learned in seminary do I believe a man can be fully prepared for the day-to-day responsibilities of the ministry.

So what are the ingredients of a meaningful, successful internship? It has become clear to me, through my awareness of the experience of many of my colleagues in their pursuit of the ministry, that not all the church programs that bear the name "ministerial internship" prove to be either meaningful or successful. Based on the happy experience I myself have had in a solid internship program - still somewhat fresh in my memory - and the further insight I've gleaned in my first year of becoming acclimated to the pastorate, I'd like to submit what I would consider to be 8 essential ingredients to a meaningful and successful internship program.

1. Concerted time and attention from a mentoring elder. For an internship to have a meaningful role in a man's preparation for the ministry, it must be more than the typical staff position in a local church. The greatest need of a candidate for the ministry is to be "taken under the wing" of the minister himself, or one of the teaching elders, who can provide him the instruction and feedback that is vital to the assessment and improvement of his gifts. The ministerial candidate needs a mentor! For this reason, though in many ways the addition of an intern to the staff of the church can lessen the load of a minister, in other ways it should be expected to increase it. A mentoring minister or elder should schedule weekly blocks of time with the intern to, among other things, (a) review the sermons preached, and provide encouragement and critique, (b) consider the sermons being prepared, and provide direction,

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(c) review and discuss other designated responsibilities, and—what I found highly profitable for myself—(d) conduct a course of study and discussion on a topic relating to the ministry (for example: study together Charles Bridges *The Christian Ministry*, or similar work). An alert and inquisitive intern will be brimming with “How do you...?” and “What about...?” questions, and this would naturally furnish opportunity for the mentor to “download” invaluable experience to his disciple. Any and all such opportunities to converse on the responsibilities of the pastorate will be prove invaluable for the intern.

2. Consistent preaching and teaching responsibilities. Not only is this at the heart of the gospel ministry itself, but for many (certainly for me) it is also the most daunting of responsibilities to assume at the start of the pastorate. Even the best practical theology department in seminary cannot provide the consistency of preaching experience necessary to the steady improvement of a man’s gifts. Preaching at least once a week should be the goal, in my opinion, for it provides that critical opportunity for weekly assessment and progress. Here it is vital for the intern to receive straightforward critique of the clarity and exegetical integrity of his sermons, as well as practical pointers concerning delivery and pulpit demeanor. Strengths should be warmly reinforced and weaknesses gently corrected. If preaching is to be at the center of the ministry, it should also be central to an internship, and the greatest energy of the mentor should be focused on the further development and refinement of the intern’s preaching gifts.

3. Frequent leadership in worship. Since a certain ease and presence of mind before people is necessary for most any form of leadership in the church, an intern will only benefit from all responsibilities which put him “on the platform.” However, it is of special importance, I would suggest, for an intern to cultivate an effective manner of leading in worship. As much as possible, the intern should be given responsibility for leading the congregation in worship, including the so-called “pastoral prayer.” (If one is licensed to preach, presumably that includes the license to lead in the pastoral prayer!) The principles of Samuel Miller’s book *Thoughts on Public Prayer*,

as well as Spurgeon’s remarks on the subject in *Lectures to My Students*, would be helpful to underscore at this point, along with the regular doing of it.

4. Regular participation in the Session’s business. It may be of concern to some to allow an intern to be privy to all the deliberations of a Session, but there is undoubtedly no better way to prepare a man to be a member and moderator of a Session than to give him prior exposure to the inner workings of one. As a recent intern, I was granted privilege of the floor as a matter of routine, presented monthly reports along with the pastor, and entered fully into the discussions (and occasional debates) of the elders. Such a setting provides the intern with invaluable insight into the rudimentary elements of parliamentary procedure, as well as allows him to gain a “feel” for the leadership role of the moderator. On countless occasions in my own internship it was in the Session meetings that I learned about those duties of church leadership “that they never teach you in seminary”—as we used to say with humor.

5. Regular exposure to the work of the Deacons. I do not say “participation” in the deacon’s business out of recognition of the differences in office, and the fact that a pastoral intern is one who “aspires to the office of an overseer,” not a deacon. However, I’m quite strongly inclined to think that an intern will benefit greatly from being at least exposed on a regular basis to the work of the deacons. Attendance at their stated business should be a minimal goal. But further direct exposure to the diaconal ministries themselves, along with the deliberations and decision making that accompanies them, will stand the future minister in good stead, especially as he begins to interact with a diaconal board within his own congregation.

6. Assistance in counseling and pastoral oversight. This is an area in which a measure of discernment is necessary, of course, but which ought not be excluded in a normal internship. While there are some counseling situations in which it would be inadvisable to include an intern, there are certainly a number in which his presence would be welcomed by all involved. In such situations, the intern will inevitably learn a great deal about how to address pastoral issues in more personal setting, as he observes—and perhaps even

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participates with—a minister’s or ruling elder’s work. A particularly good opportunity for this kind of experience is in the pastoral visits of the elders. A practical suggestion would be that the overseeing elders as a matter of routine, when scheduling a visit, ask something to the effect: “Would you mind if I came with John, our ministerial intern?” This practice of including the intern in such pastoral situations will, if nothing else, serve to give him even more of a “pastor’s heart.”

7. Responsibility for administrative duties. If an intern has preaching and teaching gifts, but weakness in administrative duties, he might as well be confronted with this, and begin to account for it in an internship program! Otherwise, in countless ways he will be ill-equipped for the work of a pastor. An excellent way to develop the organizational and administrative gifts of an intern is to build into his job description a certain project or task. My intern experience included the organization and supervision of a new Vacation Bible School program for the church: a project which tested and strengthened my ability to supervise and motivate other people in a working relationship. The development of a specific evangelistic program, or small group ministry, or the like, could be similar ways to develop the administrative gifts of an intern. But a note of caution is also in order: Some such projects can become all-consuming, and should not be allowed to distract the intern from what are even more central duties of the ministry, as his preaching and prayer.

8. Attendance at meetings of the regional church. For reasons similar to those given regarding participation with the Session, the intern will benefit greatly from being exposed to the work of the Presbytery, and even of the General Assembly. It should be a priority of the mentoring Session to provide for the attendance of the intern to all such meetings, if possible. He hopefully thereby get a valuable “head start” on his growth as a functioning member of the regional church.

These are what I would propose as the main ingredients of a meaningful internship. But there is one further element needed to make an internship truly successful. At times, it may prove to be the most difficult part of the role of mentoring

minister or Session, for it will require serious deliberation and sometimes very sensitive dealing with an intern. I’m referring to the honest, summary assessment of an intern’s character and gifts that ought to come at some point during the internship program. Whether an internship is pursued before, during, or after the completion of a man’s seminary education, the church and its leaders who provide such oversight and assistance ought to have this question as their fundamental concern: “*Can we see in this man, by virtue of his character and the gifts manifested among us, evidence of God’s call upon him to the gospel ministry.*” In a day in which the call to the ministry is all too often seen as a merely private matter between God and a man’s heart, churches who provide internship programs should take to themselves the difficult responsibility of providing either outward confirmation, or—when necessary—a disapproval of his call to the ministry. In the latter case, the Session, after careful deliberation, and informed by the judgment of the church as a whole, will need to submit its serious reservations that the one serving as an intern is truly called to the ministry. In the former, more pleasant case, the Session will be able to offer a ringing affirmation of his sense of the call. But in either case it is here, in the context of the local church, and specifically a local church that has received a well-rounded representation of the man’s character and gifts, that a man’s desire and personal sense of call to the ministry can be given its needed external counterpart: the recognition and affirmation of the Church. It is particularly for this reason that I remain convinced that an internship program is indispensable in the preparation for the ministry.

Born in Columbus, GA (1969), and raised in the greater Roanoke, VA area, Nathan Trice came to Christ at an early age. Raised in a covenant home he was educated in both a home-school and Christian school setting, graduating from Covenant College in 1991 and Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL in 1994. He interned at Franklin Square OPC from June 1994 to December 1995, and was ordained and installed as pastor of the OPC in Matthews, NC in 1996. He is now completely work in the Th.M. program at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS - Part 2

by

Rev. Archibald Alexander Allison

Exegesis of I Timothy 3.10: "blameless"

Translation:

"But let these also first be tested, then let them serve, being *blameless*."

Structure:

Verse 10 is a complete sentence with two qualifications. The first is that deacons should be tested before they serve in the special office of deacon in the church. The second specifies what the result of that testing must be in order for a man to be qualified to serve in the office of deacon.

Comment:

The Greek word means "blameless" or "above reproach." It is a different Greek word from the word translated "blameless" in 1 Timothy 3.2, but the meaning is identical. This is confirmed in the list of qualifications for elders in Titus 1.6-7 where Paul uses the same word for elders as he uses for deacons in 1 Timothy 3.10. Paul uses this same word for both deacons and elders.

Paul says a deacon must first be tested. The result of that testing must be that the man is blameless or above reproach. If he is not above reproach, then he has failed the test and he is not qualified to serve in the office of deacon. A man may only serve in the office of deacon in the church, if he is first tested and he proves himself to be above reproach.

By "blameless" the Scripture does not mean that a man must be sinless in order to be a deacon. To be blameless is to be irreproachable. No one

should be able to lay a charge against a deacon and make it stick. To be blameless does not mean that one is able to evade accusation or conviction. Rather, a man is blameless or above reproach when his words and conduct conform to the holy commandments of God in Scripture so that he can not justly be accused or convicted of any chargeable offense. In the words of John Calvin "to be blameless means to be free from any notorious fault" (Commentary on 1 Timothy 3.10).

The Scripture says Job was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1.1). The people of God should be able to say that about every deacon in the church. The deacon's reputation should be above reproach. No one should be able to lay hold of him or assail him or reproach him because of his sins, whether in speech, conduct, or doctrine. Every Christian sins until the day he lays down this body of sin at death. Daily sins that are common to all men do not bring reproach and blame upon a person from others because they too are guilty of the same sins. A deacon, like an overseer, must have and maintain a good name. There should be no question as to his integrity or upright character.

John Calvin explains it this way: A deacon "ought not to be marked by any disgrace that would detract from his authority. There will certainly not be found a man who is free from every fault, but it is one thing to be burdened with ordinary faults that do not hurt a man's reputation, because the most excellent men share them, but quite another to have a name that is held in infamy and besmirched by some scandalous disgrace. Thus, in order that the bishops may not lack authority, he gives charge that those who are chosen should be of good and honorable reputation, and free of any extraordinary fault. Also, he is not merely directing Timothy as to the sort of men he should choose

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but he is reminding all who aspire to the office that they should carefully examine their own life” (Commentary on I Timothy 3.2).

Conclusions:

1. When the church tests and evaluates a man for the office of deacon, the man must prove over a period of time that he is blameless in order to be qualified for the office of deacon. The man must show that he is a man of mature character and integrity before God and men. He must show that he is above reproach.

2. If a man is above reproach, then he may become a deacon. Otherwise, he fails the test.

3. Only a man of such maturity, character, and integrity is trustworthy and will serve God's people faithfully in the office of deacon and glorify God in his work (see Acts 6.3-5).

4. Any man who has a stain upon his character or does not live a consistent, godly life does not meet this qualification and should not be a deacon.

5. A man in the office of deacon whose character and reputation are not above reproach, or whose authority is undermined by a recurring pattern of sinful behaviour in his life ought to be removed from office.

Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3.12:
"husband of one wife"

Translation:

12) Let deacons be the *husbands of one wife*,...

Structure:

Verse 12 is a complete sentence with two qualifications. The first has to do with a deacon's wife, and the second with his family and household.

Comment:

This qualification does not mean that a man must be married in order to be a deacon. The apostle Peter calls himself a fellow elder in 1 Peter 5.1: "Now the presbyters among you, I, who am fellow presbyter and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that will be revealed, exhort: shepherd the flock of God among you, being overseers...." We know from 1 Cor. 7.8-9 that the apostle Paul who wrote both 1 Timothy and Titus was unmarried. Yet he was "apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Tim. 1.1). As an apostle Paul was also an elder, an overseer among the flock of God.

Paul says in 1 Timothy 3.15 that he is writing this letter in order that Timothy may know how he ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3.15). Paul would disqualify himself from being an elder if he meant by "husband of one wife" in 1 Timothy 3.2 that an elder must be married. If an overseer, such as Paul can be unmarried, then a deacon may also be unmarried.

This requirement means that if a man is married or has been married, he must not have two wives in God's sight. This is an express prohibition of polygamy for a deacon. This same requirement is given in 1 Timothy 3.2 for the office of overseer. In the first century many men had more than one wife (see Chrysostom and Calvin on this). The New Testament confirms God's command from the time of creation that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and the two shall become one flesh (Gen. 2.24; Mt. 19.5; Eph. 5.31). Those who unlawfully (according to God's law) divorce their wives and/or marry another wife so that before God they have more than one wife at the same time, may not be deacons in the church which is the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. Deacons must be blameless before the law of God concerning marriage (and divorce). If a man can justly (keeping the precepts of Scripture) put away his wife with the approval of God and/or remarry, then he is still qualified to bear the office of deacon.

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Paul is not barring from office ipso facto anyone who is remarried (cf. I Tim. 5.14; 4.3; Rom. 7.2-3; I Cor. 7.8-9). If a man's wife dies and he marries another, he is still qualified to be a deacon in the flock of God. Whether married or unmarried the deacon must be an example to others of faithfulness and chastity in obedience to the seventh commandment. A married deacon must be faithful to his one wife as long as they both live. Sexual immorality and marital infidelity can not be tolerated among officebearers in the church. If there are two or three witnesses that a man has committed such sins, he may not hold the office of deacon in the church, nor the office of overseer.

As with the overseer, Paul assumes that the deacon will normally be married. That is generally the case both with officebearers and with all men, though to some it is given to be eunuchs 1) voluntarily for the sake of the kingdom of God, 2) by birth, or 3) by act of men (Mt. 19.12).

This qualification confirms our interpretation of 1 Timothy 3.11 regarding women. This verse clearly requires that all deacons be men. Paul uses the Greek word that means “men” or “males.” Women may not become deacons. Paul says that if these men are married, they must have only one wife at one time, in order to be qualified for the office of deacon. If Paul allowed female deacons in verse 11, he would not insist in the next verse that all deacons must be men or males. That would be a complete contradiction.

Conclusions:

1. It is important to know what the law of God forbids and allows concerning divorce and remarriage. In some cases that will be decisive as to whether a man has only one wife and is qualified for the office of deacon.

2. It is normal for man to marry and gain experience serving his household so that he may know how to serve the people of God. Also, a deacon's wife should be a great help to her husband in ministering to the needs of God's people.

Even a deacon's children can help him greatly in this important task.

3. Men who are unchaste, who are unfaithful, who divorce unlawfully, who marry unlawfully, or who do not shepherd their wives as they ought should not become or remain a deacon.

4. Women are excluded from the office of deacon.

5. It is not normal nor is it commanded that deacons remained unmarried. “Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13.4). Marriage is holy and ordained by God. The officebearers of the church, including deacons, ought to live in the married estate in holiness and obedience to God as an example to all the flock. Their experience as the head of their homes will be useful in ministering to the needs of the congregation and in building up the families in the congregation so that they glorify God.

Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3.12: “ruling their children and their own houses well”

Translation:

12) Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Structure:

This is the second of two qualifications in verse 12. This second one has to do with ruling over his children and his household in general. This is the last qualification that Paul gives for the office of deacon. Verse 13 speaks of a reward for those who serve well in the office of deacon.

Comment:

This is similar to the requirement for overseers in 1 Timothy 3.4-5. The point in verse 5 applies equally to deacons. Although deacons do

Biblical Qualifications for Deacons

not take care of the church of God in the same way as elders, they do care for God's people. If a deacon does not know how to rule his own children and household well, how will he be able to care for the church of God well? The obvious answer is that he will do a poor job caring for the church, if he does a poor job ruling over and caring for his family.

Paul says that a deacon must rule his own children and household well and take good care of their needs before he is given the office of deacon in which he must rule and care for the needs of God's family, the household of faith. A deacon must show that he has the gifts and abilities to care for his own family well before he is put in the office of deacon to rule and care for the church.

The Greek word translated "houses" has a wide range of meanings. In this verse it refers to several aspects of a man's household. First, a deacon must rule himself well. This is foundational to good government because, ultimately, good government is based on self-government. A man who does not rule himself well, and yet seeks to rule others and expects them to govern themselves, is a hypocrite. He will lose the respect of others and will be unable to rule over anything well. Proverbs 16.32 says: "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." Proverbs 25.28 says: "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls." Second, a deacon must rule his wife and children well. They must obey and submit to him and to God. There must be reverence, respect, and good order in the home. Third, a deacon must govern his servants, workers, property, and business affairs well.

In other words, a deacon must show that he has the ability to run his own affairs properly. He must show good judgment and discipline in his daily life. He must rule with a servant's heart. If he is deficient in these things, he will not be able to take care of the church of God. He will lack the abilities, the respect, and authority that are necessary. The argument is from the lesser responsibility to the greater responsibility. He who is faithful with a few things will be put in charge of

greater things. Compare the parable of the talents in Matthew 25.14-30.

A deacon's wife and children should be obedient, respectful, and godly. They should not be undisciplined and rebellious. They should fervently serve the Lord. A man who rules his home well will "command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18.19). A deacon's wife and children should be well-taught because the father knows what he believes and teaches his family a biblical, reformed confession of faith. This fits with the qualification in verse 11 that wives be vigilant ("temperate").

This qualification does not require that a man's children are all believers. What it requires is that he rules well all those in his household and all the children who are under his authority. While his children are in his home, if he rules them well, he will, like Abraham, command that they keep the way of the Lord and do righteousness and justice. If he rules them well, while they are in his home they will be obedient and respectful and will serve the Lord. When the children leave their father's home, the father no longer rules them. If a man has grown children who are unbelieving, it may indicate that he did not rule his household well when his children were at home under his authority. But that does not disqualify him from the office of deacon. What counts is how he rules his household now. If he still does not rule his household well now, then he is not qualified for the office of deacon. A man may have done a poor job ruling his children when they were at home, but now by the grace of God he does rule his household well. Such a man did not meet this qualification for the office of deacon in the past, but he does now.

A deacon's wife and children should be well-kept because the father cares for them well. They should be content and happy. A deacon's home should be harmonious and peaceful because the father maintains good order. Paul does not say

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that a deacon's home should be just average. No, this qualification requires a deacon's children and home to be exemplary. A deacon should set an example of ruling his household well.

John Calvin comments that deacons "should set an example of chaste and honourable family life and should keep their children and their whole household in a holy discipline" (Commentary on 1 Timothy 3.12).

Conclusions:

1. Part of a deacon's task is to take care of the church of God. Before a man can be trusted to care for the church of God, he must first rule his own household well, including himself, his family, and his daily affairs, and all that is under his authority.

2. If a man does not govern himself well, if his children while under his authority are unfaithful, insubordinate, or lead dissolute lives, if his wife is rebellious, or if his household is disorderly, he is unsuited to rule in the church of God and serve in the office of deacon. What counts is how a man rules his household now.

3. Paul does not require that a deacon be without experience in the ordinary life of men. Contrary to the Roman Catholic ideal, a man experienced in ordinary life and well-practiced in the duties that human relationships impose, is far better trained and fitted to rule in the church than a man who leads a hermitic life (cf. Calvin, Commentary on 1 Timothy 3.4).

4. Women are excluded from the office of deacon because this qualification requires a deacon to rule his house well. The Bible clearly forbids a woman to rule her husband. This qualification fits perfectly with male deacons because the Bible commands the man to be the head of his home who provides for and rules over his household.

5. This qualification also refutes the view that 1 Timothy 3.8-13 is about household servants rather than the office of deacon in the church. Household servants do not rule over their households.

Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3.10: "first be tested"

Translation:

10) But let these also first be tested, then let them serve....

Structure:

Verse 10 is a new sentence which has its own main verb. There are two qualifications in this sentence. The first is that deacons should be tested before they serve in the special office of deacon in the church.

Comment:

In the Greek text the first word in verse 10 is the word translated "also." This word indicates that deacons must first be tested and proved, just like the overseers referred to in verses 1-7. Both elders and deacons must be tested before they are placed in office by the church.

The word translated "tested" means to evaluate, to put to the test, to examine, to scrutinize. The point is that a man must first prove to be suitable and qualified for the office of deacon before he serves God's people in that special office. The focus in this passage is on the result of the examination. We prove that gold is genuine and pure by testing and evaluating it. Similarly, Paul is saying that the church should prove that a man is qualified for the office of deacon by putting him to the test and evaluating him.

Paul does not say how a man is to be tested before he holds the special office of deacon or overseer in the church. If the man has been a member of the congregation for a long time, his character and abilities may be well-known. In that case he has been tested and proved to qualified over the many years of his life and service in the general office of believer in the congregation.

A man who has not been a member of the

Biblical Qualifications for Deacons

congregation for a long time may come with attestation from other Christians that he does have proven character and he is gifted for the office of deacon or overseer. We read in the New Testament that the apostle Paul often attested to the proven character and gifts of a person who was coming to a congregation that did not know him. Colossians 4.7-8 is an example: "Tychicus, who is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here." In Acts 9 we read that Barnabas attested to Saul's (the apostle Paul) genuine faith and exemplary service before the apostles in Jerusalem so that they would receive him as a true disciple of Jesus Christ (Acts 9.20-30).

The process of testing men for special office in the church will vary from person to person and place to place. Testing and evaluation can be combined with a period of training spread over several months or even a year. Training can include not only studying, but also helping the deacons with some of their work in the church, such as visiting the widows, helping those with special needs, or planning activities for people in the church. The elders and deacons as well as the congregation can evaluate those being trained as they do various tasks in the church. If they show themselves to be qualified, if they pass the test, if they prove themselves to be gifted for special office, then the church should gladly let them serve in the congregation in the office of deacon. The same applies to prospective elders and ministers.

John Calvin writes in his commentary on this verse: "And this proving process is not for a single hour but consists of a long period of trial. In a word, the appointment of deacons should not be a rash and random choice of any who come to hand, but men who have commended themselves by their past manner of life should be selected, so that as a result of full inquiry they are found to be suitable."

Conclusions:

1. Both deacons and elders should be tested or evaluated prior to taking office in the church.
2. This evaluation or testing may be done in a variety of ways, but it should be more than just a hasty examination. A man should prove over a period of time that his character is above reproach and that he has the gifts and abilities to serve in a special office in the church.
3. We should not look upon the office of deacon as the bottom of the ladder, as it were, in the church. A deacon is not a "junior elder." It is wrong to put a man in the office of deacon in order to try him out or test him, and then if he does well, he can continue in that office or move up the ladder to the office of elder in the church. The office of deacon is not a testing ground. This qualification requires that a man be tested before he becomes a deacon.
4. Only men of godly character and good reputation who are governed by the Word and Spirit of Christ and who are gifted by Christ for special office in the church should be chosen as deacons and elders. Before a man is put in office the church must test his character and gifts and prove that he is qualified and worthy to hold special office.
5. New or immature Christians should not be put in the office of deacon.

The Rev. Archibald Alexander Allison is pastor of the Emmaus Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Fort Collins, Colorado. We are grateful for his diligent work in writing this series. The final installment will appear in the next issue.

Moving beyond “Pro-Life”

by

Douglas Wilson and Douglas Jones

More than two decades after the abortion carnage began, biblical Christians remain rather confused and battle weary in the pro-life struggle.

The causes of this are many. The first is that the pro-life movement has been often driven by the sorrow of sentimentalism rather than a zeal for biblical righteousness.

What follows is an introductory statement that admittedly goes against the grain of much current pro-life thinking. It is a view that requires careful exegesis, thoughtful debate, and extensive qualification. But the discussion must start.

We should begin by reviewing what the pro-life struggle has moved us to learn from Scripture. Only then will we be in a position to provide a biblically faithful challenge to our bloodthirsty culture. We should strengthen that which remains before we seek to press on.

First, man is created in the image and likeness of God. Even though the image has been defaced in our rebellion against God and is restored fully only in Christ, still that image is a shield against all lawless bloodshed. In Gen. 9:5-6, the Lord says: “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.” In this passage, even the animals are held accountable for taking the life of a man. In the abortion holocaust, we have fallen below the level of the beasts. The judgment of God will not be less than the outrage of this guilt.

Second, the image of God is not given at birth or sometime after. John the Baptist leapt for joy

while in the womb (Jn. 1:41). The law of God protected the unborn, granting the same rights of protection to them as to anyone else (Ex. 21:22-25). The psalmist marvels at the work of God within the womb (Ps. 139:13-16). According to the Scriptures, the unborn are sons and daughters, not bits of protoplasm.

Third, in a nation which has fallen to killing the unborn, the duty of Christians is plain. The required works of testimony, evangelism, charity, and hospitality are many. Regardless of what happens as our civil realm disintegrates, such works remain a central part of our ongoing duty as God’s people. We must testify faithfully against the evil. This testimony takes many forms—marching publicly, picketing the death clinics, distributing literature, and counseling participants. We must continue to show charity to women who for various reasons may contemplate abortion. As the gospel, food, shelter, and clothing are offered to these women, we show that Christ is the Lord of the stranger. By these means, many mothers have been drawn back from the brink of a great and unspeakable horror. We also show a profound hospitality as well, as we open the doors of our covenant communities, welcoming children into our midst by means of adoption. In this respect, the work which has been done has been truly honoring to God and should continue and increase. In none of this should we grow weary in doing good (Heb. 12:3,4).

At the same time, all is not positive. Our testimony against the evil, while clear in some respects, has been muddled in others. Christians have wanted to think biblically about opposing abortion, but we appear to have allowed the habits of our times to force us into using secular boxes and humanist absolutes. We proclaim the sanc-

tity of human life in the most general, unqualified terms, such as the refrain from the Republican platform: "The unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed."

But the real issue is the sanctity of God's law and the resultant dignity of human life. Because of how He created us, we do have a permanent dignity. This dignity is grossly insulted with the abortionists' weapons, but it cannot be removed. The suction tool does not exist which can remove the image of God.

But still, while having great dignity, human life is not sacred. When we speak as though it is, we leave the distinct impression that the foundation of our humanity is the source of our law, and thus the source of our protest. This is how much of our pro-life involvement has become humanistic instead of biblical. Human life has become a god instead of a gift, an idol instead of a valuable creature.

Such pro-life absolutism would force us to charge God with "anti-life" crimes for His destruction of the children of His enemies. As any Bible reader knows, He gave repeated commands to Israel's armies to utterly destroy various rebellious enemies (Josh. 6:21; 7:25; 8:26; Dt. 20:16). Sometimes God wanted His enemies to perish. Their lives were not sacred. God's law alone has this sanctity, and because He is holy, He visited the dignity of punishment upon rebellious creatures.

We have seen the tragic results of this confusion of sanctity and dignity within the pro-life movement. With those for whom the unborn have become the source of law (instead of victims according to the law), they have bombed clinics and shot abortionists. This is not surprising. But the most troubling thing about this is not the actions of a few fanatics, but rather how many responsible Christians, while knowing that such actions are wrong, have been unable to say why. The reason why many pro-lifers are embarrassed when asked why this sort of "pro-life" lawlessness is wrong is that they share many of the premises held by such fanatics, and which gave rise to the

reactionary violence. One such foundational premise is the claim that the life of any unborn child places an absolute claim upon us. But only God's law places an absolute claim upon us.

What we need is nothing less than a radical shift in the mentality of those who want to call themselves pro-life. This shift requires that we come to comprehend certain neglected biblical principles. When Christians come to this understanding, they will step beyond the term "pro-life," at least as that term is commonly understood.

First, whenever any descendant of Adam dies, he is receiving nothing less than what he deserves. In Adam we all die. This mortality, this bondage to death, is the result of our collective rebellion as represented in our first father. We are a cursed race, subject to death. The administration of this death, however, is in the hands of the sovereign God alone. The Lord gives life, and consequently the Lord is the only one who can authorize the taking of it.

Second, regardless of our sinfulness, and whether we are Christians or not, God requires that our persons be honored and respected on the civic level. We bear the image of God, and whenever anyone is slain outside of the due process of law, the land is defiled with blood. An individual does not forfeit his civic right to life simply because he is unregenerate. The defilement caused by any such murder occurs whether or not a nation professes to follow the God of the Bible or not. And when the murder is formally approved by that culture, as it has been in ours, the judgment of God is certain and inevitable.

Third, when a culture rebels against this ordinance of God in such a profound way, its days are necessarily numbered. Those followers of God within such a culture must prepare themselves for a deep civic division—a culture war—which will either destroy that nation or rend it to pieces. Wisdom says "all those who hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). A culture which loves death cannot stand. If any of the godly are present within a culture possessed with such a death wish, the

Moving Beyond 'Pro-life'

presence of two separate cultural orders will become increasingly obvious over time. At some point, two nations will emerge. Our fellow Americans will become to us Amalekites.

Fourth, when God judges a nation, His judgment does not fall only upon those who are eighteen and over. When God judges America for her contempt for her children, the judgment will fall not only on the adults, but also on the children—children considered so contemptible that even their own parents slaughter them.

In the hard providence of God, He sometimes allows His enemies to destroy themselves. When the pagan nations outside Israel sent their children into the fires of Molech, Israel wasn't called to blockade the fire and rescue the babies. And when Israelite kings followed Molech, the people were not commanded to revolt. Israelites were to make sure they didn't kill their own children (Lev. 20), but God-haters were left to destroy themselves (Is. 57:13; Jer. 5:19; 6:19,21).

God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ez. 18:23) and neither should we. But if they persist in loving death after hearing the truth over the course of decades, then we ought not force this emergent alien nation into external righteousness. Let them kill themselves, for “God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting” (Rom. 1:28), even “murder” (Rom. 1:29). This is the wrath of God.

Fifth, when God judges a nation, He spares those who provided a faithful and consistent testimony within that nation. We can and will face the anger of the humanist state—that tinpot deity!—but we will never have to face the wrath of God. Lot's duty was not to save Sodom, but rather to save himself and his house.

Our duty in providing a faithful testimony has three parts. First, we must continue to preach the holy law of God and the gospel of forgiveness. We provide faithful testimony as we preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15). Part of this testimony includes the insistence that abortion is murder. In this respect, every Christian must be

constantly pro-life. Second, we must flee when we are persecuted, if flight is possible (Matt. 10:23). Third, we must take up arms to defend God's covenant children (Neh. 4:14). But we may not use violence until they come after our children. We ought not take up arms to overthrow the established authorities or to defend the lives of Molech worshipers and their children. This is far more secular than biblical.

We must remember the antithesis. Scripture always remembers that deep chasm between those seeking to honor God and those who hate him. But this has not been a part of contemporary pro-life rhetoric.

The unbelievers are destroying themselves in a frenzy of child-murder and fruitless sodomy. Let them go. These are hard words. But Christians must learn to say them. Paul taught us that the children of God-haters are “foul” or “unclean” (1Cor. 7:14). We must come to the day when the Christian can truly rebuke those who are, “without natural affection” and say: “The ancient psalmist blessed the one who would take little ones of those who hate God and dash them against the rock (Ps.137:9). We see by your pro-abortion position that you clearly agree with this kind of treatment. And we in the Church, in a way you cannot truly comprehend, are now prepared to say amen.”

Douglas Wilson and Douglas Jones

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LESSONS FROM CHURCH HISTORY

BY

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether

#2 - Samuel Miller: Discipline on the Frontier

“No biblical gobbledygook. No prayerly rote. No fire, no brimstone. No pipe organs. No dreary eighteenth century hymns. No forced solemnity. No Sunday finery. No collection plates.” This is a partial description of the “Next Church,” a distinctly American form of Protestant worship that is flourishing today, according to Charles Trueheart in the August 1996 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. But as Trueheart notes, the revolutions in worship “style” are a function of greater changes wrought by these megachurches. The focus in these churches is shifting from the Sunday morning corporate worship to a full-service, seven-day-a-week church, with a dizzying array of services, ministries, and fellowship opportunities, all of which are succeeding in drawing thousands to their doors.

Perhaps more than anything else, the Next Church movement is a testimony to the triumph of the lay revolution in American Protestantism. Sunday morning sermons have been replaced by messages that are

augmented by testimonies, special music, dance, and dramatic skits, all performed by specially gifted laypeople. Lay leaders conduct customized ministries throughout the week. Adopting industrialized patterns of bureaucratic and organizational efficiency, churches hire multiple ministerial staff that engage in high levels of specialization. So the

professional staff might include a Small Group Leader or a Minister of Music or a Director of Recreational Ministries whose tasks are to assist the members of the church in identifying their gifts and then to equip and manage them for ministry. As one church growth leader put it, the twenty-first century pastor must graduate from a shepherd to a rancher. That is, the pastor no longer provides care, but he manages the lay care-giv-

ers. And so a megachurch leader might more readily be quoting management gurus like Peter Drucker than John Calvin.

All of this, advocates argue, is in service of the church’s minister to the new frontier: graying and disillusioned baby boomers or

“It is important, however, for Presbyterian officers to understand that the challenges presented by today’s megachurches are not that new. There were antecedents in the previous century, as Presbyterians—along with other Protestants—faced the challenge of ministry in the expanding American frontier.”

cynical Generation Xers who are turned off by traditional ways of doing church. It is important, however, for Presbyterian officers to understand that the challenges presented by today’s megachurches are not that new. There were antecedents in the previous century, as Presbyterians—along with other Protestants—faced the challenge of ministry in the expanding American frontier.

Samuel Miller (1769-1850) served as Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government at Princeton Theological Seminary for over forty years. Miller’s writings on the nature and purpose of Presbyterian church office reflected careful thinking on the challenges that confronted Presbyterian faith and order in the nineteenth century. As a pastor in New York city before accepting a call to Princeton, Samuel Miller witnessed the abuse of clerical power in episcopalian polity, and warned against the temptation toward a “Presbyterian papacy” that elevated the minister above ruling elders. Ruling elders were an important check on the tyranny of one-man rule in churches.

During his Princeton years, Miller’s attention focused on the rise of the laity. Untrained ministers were flourishing in anti-intellectual frontier towns, both in church pulpits and in moral-crusading voluntary societies. By stepping “beyond the limits” of general office and “encroach[ing] upon the appropriate functions of ecclesiastical office,” the laity, Miller wrote, became “a source of mischief, and not of benefit.” Ecclesiastical

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authority was necessary for discipline, without which there could be no true church. It was not possible for the pastor alone to exercise such discipline nor was it wise to entrust the task to the care of the laity. Effective discipline was a spiritual function of shepherding that must be carried out only through a plurality of elders who alone were authorized to perform it.

Miller’s book, *The Ruling Elder*, was a sustained effort to uphold the uniqueness both of the Minister’s exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacrament and Ruling Elders’ ministry of rule and discipline. Thus, for example, he eschewed the term, “lay-elder”, and insisted that if the clergy-laity distinction had any merit, elders belonged with the former. Miller refused to impale himself on the false dilemma that characterized much of the nineteenth century debate on office: was the elder a clergyman or a layman? To flatten the biblical teaching into merely two categories was to invite either clerical tyranny or anarchical rule of the masses.

Miller was also concerned about the proper deportment of Presbyterian ministers. In his *Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits*, he spoke on the need to maintain “the delicacy of polished manners”. Anticipating the charge of elitism, Miller claimed not to advocate a “starched, artificial, formal manners” for ostentatious occasions like ball-room dances, but rather “those manners which become the Christian gentleman; which naturally flow from the meekness, gentleness, purity, and

The Freedom and Limits of Christian Reflection by Robert Letham

Recently in the pages of *New Horizons* tensions have emerged in a range of areas, from women in public worship to the days of creation in Genesis. Some have called for the OPC to be of one voice on all issues so as to present a powerful and united witness. Implied in such requests, it seems to me, is the notion that uniformity of belief is essential to the health of the church. Again, many readers of *New Horizons* assume that any view expressed by contributors must represent the official stand of the denomination. In this case, too, the apparent assumption is that a church will only print what it endorses absolutely. I will argue that such assumptions are mistaken. First, the biblical teaching on the church allows a wide area of latitude for discussion and disagreement within a common commitment to the faith. Secondly, a vigorous commitment to Scripture and the Westminster standards requires the OPC to maintain the Christian liberty that those standards equally vigorously defend. To support this argument we must fasten our seat belts and take an excursion backwards in time, to see something of the ecclesiastical and theological matrix out of which Reformed theology, and thus the Westminster Assembly, emerged.

The paradigmatic role of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed (N)

This creed (popularly but erroneously called the Nicene creed¹) did at least three crucial and inseparably related things. First, it charted the boundaries of the Christian faith, defining what is and what is not the belief of the Christian church. Second, it summarized what the church confesses. The creed has been adopted and followed in this by both Eastern and Western churches ever since. It is a truly ecumenical creed, ecumenical in its historic orthodoxy. Liberals cannot confess it with historical integrity. Truly orthodox Christians can. Third, it functions as a hermeneutical paradigm, a window through which we can view the world of creation and grace. Its structure evidences its focus - the triune God, the incarnation, the church and sacraments. In this it is followed by the Westminster Assembly, which sees God's covenant as an outworking of the triune God and his decree, and goes on to an extensive discussion of church and sacraments.²

For our present purpose, we note the congruity between N, the Westminster Confession and Scripture on the nature of the church. N's famous fourfold description (*one holy catholic apostolic*) - reflects Paul's description in Ephesians 2:11-22. The church is one new man (*unity*: the church is one, not divided into a hundred thousand fragments) in which both Jew and Gentile are reconciled (*catholicity*: the church is found throughout the world) (14-18). It is founded on the apostles and prophets (*apostolicity*: the canonical writings determine the church's belief and practice) (19) and is in Christ a holy temple of God the Father, indwelt by the Holy Spirit (*holiness*: it belongs to Christ) (21-22). The Westminster Confession traces these elements too in chapters 25 and 26. The neglected chapter 'Of the Communion of the Saints' (ch 26) points to our union with all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus, entailing the inclusion in the church of others beyond the bounds of those adopting this Confession, a recognition of the current tension between what the church is and what it ought to be and what it will become. In chapter 25 it stresses the church's unity, catholicity and holiness. Its apostolicity is entailed by the magisterial treatment of Holy Scripture in chapter 1 and the supreme authority of the word of God in all synods and councils in chapter 31.

We should hold together these four elements (unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity) at all times. *Liberalism* went wrong by undermining the apostolicity of the church, departing from the authority of Scripture. It wanted unity but without apostolicity no proper ecclesiastical unity can exist. *Fundamentalism* went wrong by stressing the purity of the church at the expense of its unity and catholicity. Its leaders argue for the authority of the Bible independently of church confessions, often make particular interpretations of biblical passages normative, and many tolerate no divergence from their teaching. This is a problem endemic in American society, with its stress on 'rugged individualism'. As such, it is with us today with a vengeance. Here, Paul's words are pertinent

“Submit to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph 5:21).

As liberalism breached the church by abandoning apostolicity, so Protestant splinter groups cease to be the church and become sects by breaching unity and catholicity.³ For the OPC to be the church and not decline into a sect it must hold all four attributes together. In doing so, we will contend for the truth where this is necessary, and discuss freely and biblically within the boundaries of the Confession. There will be unity on systemic matters and lively debate on others. This the Confession itself allows, as we shall now observe.

Presbyterian confessionalism, Christian liberty and theological exploration

The Confession and Holy Scripture

The Westminster Confession teaches that the final authority in all controversies of religion is the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture. All church councils may err. Entailed is the possibility that the Westminster Assembly itself, while not strictly a church council, is capable of error. Thus Presbyterian office holders have subscribed to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in Scripture. Both the Confession and our church order maintain Scripture to teach a system of doctrine. That system of doctrine is enshrined in the doctrinal documents of the Assembly.⁴ The boundaries of our belief and confession are thus marked. The apostolicity of the church as expressed in N requires office holders to ensure that the system of doctrine is passed down in its integrity to succeeding generations, especially important in an age like ours, hostile to any unified or objective truth. The battle against liberalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was but one example. New challenges arise with successive generations.

The Confession and divergent views

On the other hand, the Westminster documents show the hallmarks of compromise in many areas.⁵ That is inevitable, given the size of the body. First, it is evident in its chapter on assurance, where Thomas Goodwin's distinctive views on the post-conversion sealing by the Holy Spirit had to be considered. Second, on the order of the divine decrees the Confession is clearly infralapsarian, although there were supralapsarians present (the prolocutor Twisse, for example). Thus while it affirms infralapsarianism, the other is not opposed. Third, the Confession is most readily interpreted as adopting amillennialism, but it is silent on questions disputed by pre- and postmillennialists. Since millennial views were rife in the England of the 1640s, this was no idle decision. Fourth, and most pointedly, the Assembly was

a collection of disparate ecclesiologies. There were many Presbyterians but a handful of Independents had disproportionate influence. Moreover, Erastians were present and a group of Episcopalians were members of the Assembly but never took their seats. Above all, the gathering had been summoned by Parliament to produce plans for the reform of the doctrine, worship and practice of the *Church of England*. Hence the Confession's ecclesiology has a certain elasticity. In addition, at the time Moyses Amyraut (a leading French Reformed theologian) had created a stir with his revisionist theology which, among other things, restructured the doctrines of election and atonement. Some Assembly members were disturbed that many of their colleagues were avidly reading Amyraut during Assembly debates!

In short, the Confession and Catechisms strenuously oppose Rome and to a lesser extent Lutheranism and the baptists, who at this stage were not as great a threat as they had been on the Continent.⁶ Within the Reformed camp (which still included many Anglicans) it allows divergences.⁷ The Assembly sought to preserve the unity and catholicity of the church at the same time as its apostolicity and holiness.

The Confession and erroneous views

Some may be surprised to learn that the Confession does not rule out some views that are plainly wrong! Here again we note its flexibility in points of detail that do not impinge on the biblical system of doctrine it contains. For instance, some opinions are exegetically wrong but confessionally acceptable. Preachers have often claimed that since, in John 21:15-17 there are two different verbs for love, *agapeo* and *phileo*, Jesus is drawing a fine distinction between true Christian love (*agapoo*) and a lesser form of tender affection (*phileo*), thus gently chiding Peter for his failure of discipleship. Linguistically, this is insupportable - the verbs were used interchangeably in the first century. However, preachers who make mistakes like this are not infringing the bounds of the Confession. Again, someone may not consider Paul calls Christ 'God' in Romans 9:5. While there are very strong syntactical grounds that he did call him 'God' in that passage, the Confession does not commit us to a particular exegesis of specific passages of Scripture. It is required we acknowledge that Scripture accords deity to Christ, but it is not required that we accept that Romans 9:5 does so, even though in my view it does. There are certainly plenty of other biblical supports for the deity of Christ.⁸

On a more far-reaching level, some opinions may be wrong theologically but acceptable confessionally. We saw how the Confession adopts an amillennial position. I

find it difficult to see how premillennialism, amillennialism and postmillennialism could all be right (although it may be possible to combine elements of the latter two). At least one, possibly two, of these viewpoints may be wrong. But the Confession does not explicitly oppose any - although in the context of 1640s England it had every opportunity to do so. Again, supralapsarianism is neither excluded nor affirmed. This cannot be taken to the extreme that any wrong theological claim is acceptable according to the Confession! That is plainly not what I am saying. What this does show is that within the Reformed faith there is a certain latitude concerning positions, both exegetical and theological, that do not affect the system of doctrine taught in Scripture, which the Westminster standards contain.

Thus we should fix clearly in our minds the important distinction between *what must we believe?* and *what may we explore?* The Confession, besides setting forth truth and providing a hermeneutical window on the gospel and the world, defines boundaries within which faithful Christian reflection may take place—*what we must believe*. It commits us to the great landmarks of God's grace and the paths that lie between - who God is, what this world is, who we are, our sin, God's covenant grace, Christ and his work, the Holy Spirit, the church and sacraments, God's requirements for our daily living, what he will do in the future. As to the tracts of land that lie within these markers there is scope for difference of opinion. Here are vast areas where we can explore, guided and directed by the Confession and, of course, Holy Scripture.

All this may be disconcerting to those used in independent circles to church leaders brooking no differences from their teaching, whatever it may be. Here is a situation where there will be debate and, on some issues, difference of opinion - where contributors to *New Horizons* may not necessarily reflect the official position of the denomination, if indeed there can be said to be one. It may help to remind ourselves of the church in Acts, where those at Berea subjected even the apostle Paul to critical scrutiny based on Scripture (Acts 17:11). It is possible to argue that where there is no such investigation no faith exists,⁹ only a false security, a confession within the Confession, indeed a barrier to growth. The task of the Christian church is a dangerous one, from the human angle a risk. However, we face new challenges in each generation and can only do so effectively if we continually hone our resources and forge fresh answers, answers that arise from the old army but forged anew in a changed battle. That requires of us deep commitment to the Confession and boldness in exploring new territory. It means committing ourselves afresh to the unity and catholicity of the church as well as to its apostolicity and holiness.

The Footnotes:

- 1 There is no trace of it in the records of the Council of Nicea (325), although a creed adopted then may underlie it. The Council of Chalcedon (451) refers to it as the faith of the fathers at [the Council of] Constantinople (381), although we have no written record of its adoption there either. It is available in *The Trinity Hymnal*, 846. The major point of contention between East and West, the filioque clause 'and the Son' added in the Western church, itself points to the crucial role the creed has played.
- 2 I have argued elsewhere that evangelicalism has a different focus on Scripture, personal holiness, evangelism and world missions. These are all necessary and important elements of the Christian faith but overall evangelicalism is strikingly at variance with historic Christianity: 'Is Evangelicalism Christian?' *The Evangelical Quarterly* 67 (1995):3
- 3 There are cases where separation has been unavoidable. Luther was excommunicated by the Pope, while Calvin and other Reformers had to flee for their lives from Roman Catholic jurisdiction. However, their departure was enforced, and it was not a matter of their own choice. They constantly emphasized their harmony with the fathers, claiming that the Roman church of their day had departed from the historic faith. Similarly, Machen and others were suspended indefinitely from office over essentially procedural matters.
- 4 That does not mean that the proof-texts of the Confession are authoritative. They were added reluctantly, at the insistence of Parliament, and produced hastily, often from memory.
- 5 Compromise is good or bad, depending on the context. If you and your wife are not prepared to make compromises on anything, your marriage will soon run into difficulties.
- 6 While a proliferation of sects had recently arisen, the great threat came from the high-church Erastianism of Charles I, with its perceived Rome-ward bias.
- 7 On the diversity-within-unity of Reformed theology, see my article 'Reformed Theology', in Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester / Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 569-572.
- 8 Exegesis of a particular passage may, on occasions, have wide implications if it is the catalyst for the framing of doctrine held to depart from the Confession and thus from the system of doctrine taught in Scripture, but in such cases the real issue lies here, with the doctrinal departure, not with exegesis qua exegesis.
- 9 Anselm, following Augustine's motto 'fides quaerens intellectum' (faith seeks understanding), held that Christian faith always seeks to deepen its understanding of its object.

Pastor to Pastor: The Minister's Treasure

Part 2

by William Shishko

Then He said to them, "*Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.*" (Matthew 13:52)

Octavius Winslow (1808-78) was descended from Edward Winslow, a Pilgrim leader who braved the Atlantic to come to the "New World" on the Mayflower in 1620. Though Octavius was born, raised, educated, and ordained to the Gospel ministry in New York (USA) he later moved to England where he became one of the most valued nonconformist ministers of the 19th century. He held pastorates in Leamington Spa, Bath, and Brighton, England. Well known for his earnest devotional ministry, he was distinguished as the preacher who was asked to give the opening address at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861. The prolific author of over 40 books, Winslow devoted his life to promoting an experimental knowledge of Christ and the doctrines of the Word of God.

For some years Octavius Winslow was a stranger to me, though I was in possession of one of his few volumes then in print *Spiritual Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul* (Banner of Truth Trust). I must confess that I feared the title! As a young Reformed minister why would I be concerned with personal spiritual declension?! In the late 1980s, however, I chose (for whatever reason) this mysterious book for my morning "pump priming." Winslow has been one of my favorite "pastors in print" ever since. Here was a master student of Reformed soteriology and piety who was also a master at applying these powerful themes in such a way that the reader was alternately humbled before the majesty of God and the cross of Christ, and lifted up by the love, mercy, and grace of the Saviour. Probing chapters on declension in love, faith, and prayer and declension in connection with doctrinal error (a particularly thought-provok-

ing section) were relieved by the balm of the closing chapters on The Lord, the Restorer of His People and The Lord, the Keeper of His People. What encouragement it was to know that my own spiritual warfare with its all-too-frequent defeats was hardly uncommon. Pastor Winslow reminded me that "there exists not a day that (every believer) stands not in need of the restorings of the Lord" - a statement that helped bring revival to both myself and my own ministry. What a rich introduction to the wealth of Octavius Winslow.

Soli Deo Gloria Publications, seeing the worth of this treasure of experimental divinity, republished two of Winslow's gems in the early 1990s *The Precious Things of God* was followed by *The Glory of the Redeemer*. I cannot give too much praise to these choice volumes, and especially for their use in conjunction with your early morning devotional readings or pump-priming times.

In the uniquely rich pages of *The Precious Things of God* Winslow unfolds the various things that God Himself regards as precious, and how they become practically precious to the believer in Christ. The preciousness of Christ (the obvious first chapter), the preciousness of faith, the preciousness of God's thoughts, the preciousness of God's children and eight other "precious things" called such in God's Word were all treated in such a way that they became something far more than doctrinal truths buttressed with proof texts. Pastor Winslow made them live - the way pastors are meant to make these things live through their own ministries. How frequently I have made use of his material on the preciousness of trial, in a chapter which contains a magnificent summary and overview of the role of trial in the life of a Christian as it opens up I Peter 1:7, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes"

"Trial is precious because it increases the

preciousness of Christ...To know fully what Christ is we must know something of adversity. We must be tried, tempted, and oppressed—we must taste the bitterness of sorrow, feel the pressure of want, treat the path of solitude and often be brought to the end of our own strength and of human sympathy and counsel. Jesus shines the brightest to faith's eye when all things are dark and dreary...Shrink not from, nor rebel against, that which makes you more intimately acquainted with your best Friend, your dearest Brother, the tender, sympathizing Beloved of your soul. You will know more of Jesus in one sanctified trial than in wading through a library of volumes or in listening to a lifetime of sermons." (pps. 87f.)

Here is "preaching" that preaches to the preacher before he preaches to others. Here is theology that is truly "practical" and that engages the heart as truly as it transforms the will. Here is material that helps the pastor as he deals with the day in and day out challenges faced by his people and by himself. What a magnificent way to fill one's personal storehouse with things old, and yet ever new.

The Glory of the Redeemer was, like all of Winslow's work, invaluable in helping me to keep the riches of Christ dominant in all of my preaching. Themes like the nature of the new covenant, God's glory in the pardon of sinners, the character of effectual calling, and the meaning of the mind of Christ were woven into ten superb chapters on themes like The Pre-Existent Glory of the Redeemer, The Typical Glory of the Redeemer, and The Glory of the Redeemer in His People. How rare it is to find a volume that opens up the objective realities of Christ's person and work (the very ground of our salvation) with theological precision and devotional application at the same time. Here is a treasure to enrich our resources for the work of preaching Christ as we preach the Word:

"The Word of God is full of Christ. He is the sun of this Divine system, the fountain of its light and beauty...The Scriptures testify of Jesus. Every doctrine derives its substance from His person, every precept its force from His work, every promise its sweetness from His love. Is it not to be feared, that in the study of the Scriptures, it is a much forgotten truth, that they testify of Jesus?

Are they not read, searched, and examined with a mind too little intent upon adding to its wealth, by an increased knowledge of His person, and character, and work? And thus it is that we lower the character of the Bible." (pps. 340f.)

I would suggest that material like this, wed to the insights of responsible biblical theology, would help our pastors avoid the twin errors of "applicatory preaching" that is not clearly rooted in the person and work of Christ and "redemptive-historical preaching" that becomes divorced from the practical realities of the Christian life. Would this not help us to be better householders, bringing out of our storehouses things old and things new? Cf. Matt. 13:52.

Other volumes by Octavius Winslow which also will richly reward their purchase and use (especially for those all-important early morning "pump priming" times!) are *No Condemnation in Christ Jesus* (Banner of Truth Trust), a verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 8 (a volume that many of the men within our own congregation have found immensely helpful), *The Sympathy of Christ* (Odom Publications), a thematic treatment of many of the emotions of Christ's humanity, and *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Banner of Truth Trust), one I have yet to treat myself to in the months ahead.

What a feast of expositions of our rich faith is offered in these pages and so many like them! Fellow ministers, elders, and deacons: Stir up your love of Christ and His word by making time to work through some of these volumes, and by indulging yourself in the spiritual food and drink they offer you. Your service in Christ's Church will take on new life as you do!

I value your suggestions and questions in connection with this series of articles. You can e mail me at shishko.1@opc.org. In the next article I will offer some of my suggestions for Bible commentaries that I have found to be particularly valuable for enriching the storehouses of "scribes" who desire to be "instructed concerning the Kingdom."

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BOOK NOTES (Vol. 6 #2)

by

Rev. William Shishko

One of the many encouraging signs of the increasing influence of reformational theology on the arid desert of American evangelicalism is the growing number of younger writers who are seeking to bring the Reformed faith to bear on our culture in popular ways that do not sacrifice the rich doctrinal content of the Scriptures and our confessions.

Leading the pack is the prolific Michael Scott Horton, President of CURE (Christians United for REformation). Following the publication of his popular presentation of the Reformed faith (*Putting Amazing Back into Grace*), he has subsequently produced significant critiques of the heresies prevalent in much of modern charismatic theology (*The Agony of Deceit*), the dangerous elements of cultural Christianity in the United States (*Made In America*), and the diversions from preaching the Gospel and making faithful Christian disciples inherent in America's so-called "culture wars" (*Beyond Culture Wars*). His sequel to the latter volume, *Where In the World is the Church?* (Moody Press), offers a wealth of helpful thoughts on the whole subject of the application of the Christian faith to culture. Building on the insights of Abraham Kuyper, the book gives special attention to the arts, science, and work. It is a helpful addition to the plethora of works on the subject of how Christians can be in the world but not of it.. His most recent work *In The Face of God* (Word Publishing Co.) builds on the many volumes now surveying the Gnostic roots of so much modern "spirituality". His emphasis on the mediation of Christ, the church, the Word and Sacraments, and biblical worship are refreshing affirmations of historic Reformed principles.

Despite Horton's affinities with a Lutheran view of the law, Orthodox Presbyterians will appreciate (among many other things) his debt to the memory and thought of J. Gresham Machen. Indeed, *Beyond Culture Wars* is dedi-

cated to Dr. Machen. For stimulating reading CURE's Modern Reformation magazine is superb. (The September/October, 1996 edition was dedicated to the theme of "*Polemics: A Defense of Defending*," and included, among other things, Dr. Machen's lecture on "*Christian Scholarship & the Defense of the Faith*"). Information on all of CURE's material can be obtained by writing to them at Box 2000, Philadelphia, PA 19013, or by phoning them at 1-800-956-2644. The e-mail address is: cureinc@aol.com. Net surfers will find a wealth of material available on their web page at :<http://members.aol.com/cureinc>.

Lesser known, but no less incisive is Douglas Wilson, author of a number of volumes which seek to apply the Reformed faith to modern issues in a presuppositional manner. One evening I treated myself to *Persuasions: A Dream of Reason Meeting Unbelief* (Canon Press), and enjoyed reading this intriguing collection of imaginary conversations between an evangelist/apologist and various characters who are stuck in the quagmire of unbelief. The book illustrated particularly man's unwillingness to believe the truth, cf. Jn. 5:40. It's a great read for people who are growing in their apologetic skills. Related to Wilson is the magazine *Credenda / Agenda* (Phone (208) 882-7963 E mail cefmain@moscow.com. Web page <http://www.moscow.com/Resources/Credenda?>) Its articles run the gamut from thoughts on schooling and child rearing to church government and Protestant vs. Catholic views of the authority of the church (Volume 8, number 5). While I weary of the multiplication of periodicals—many of which are only a waste of the paper they are printed on—*Credenda / Agenda* and *Modern Reformation* are well worth your attention, even if only because they treat relevant topics with an unashamed commitment to historic Reformed orthodoxy. One certainly cannot say that about Christianity Today!

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