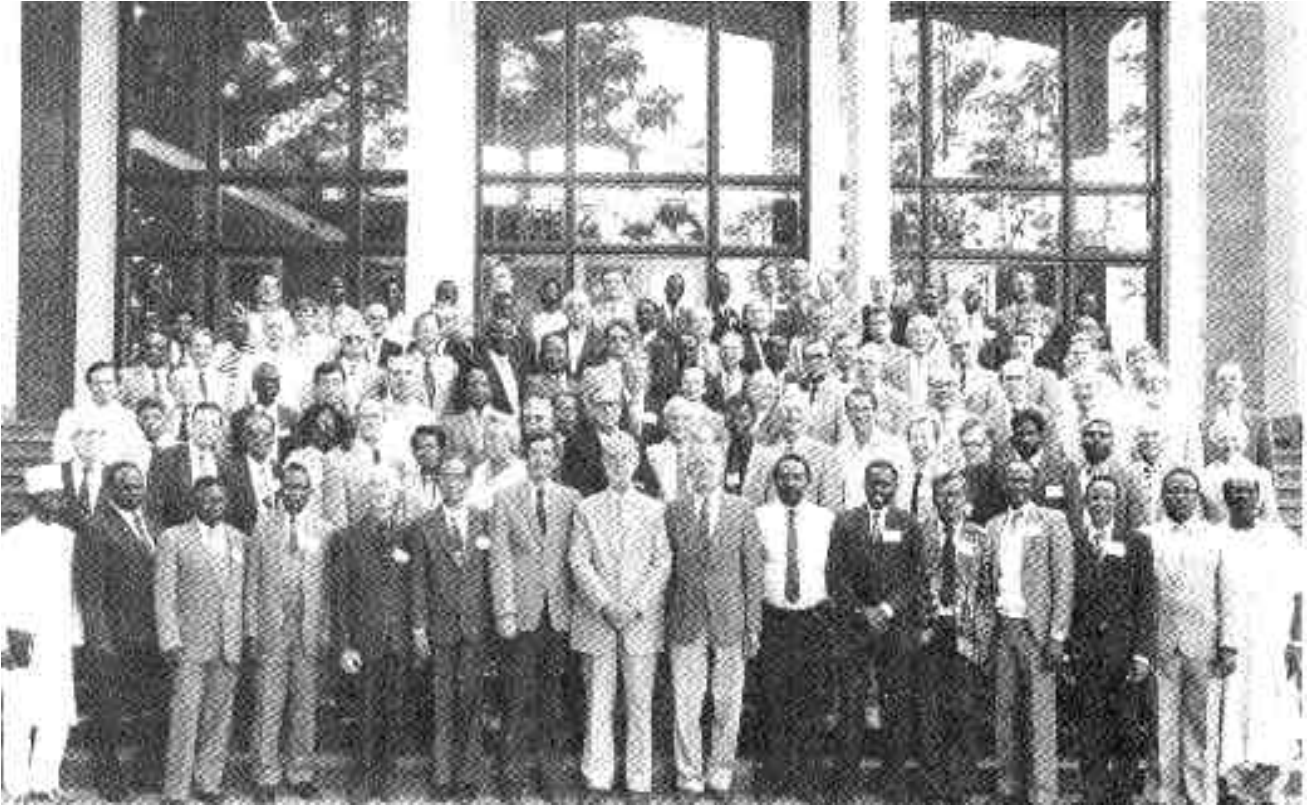


# ORDAINED SERVANT



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THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# 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.

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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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# BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS

## Part 3

by

Rev. Archibald Alexander Allison

Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:13

Translation:

13 - For those who serve well *as deacons* obtain for themselves a good standing and great confidence in faith in Christ Jesus.

Structure:

Paul concludes the list of qualifications for the office of deacon with two benefits that God gives those who serve well in the office of deacon in the church.

Comment:

The phrase "as deacons" in verse 13 is not stated in the Greek text. The context makes it clear that Paul is talking about serving in the office of deacon. I have indicated this by placing this phrase in italics in my translation above.

Verse 13 does not contain any qualifications for the office of deacon. It simply says that men who serve well in this office gain two benefits. Some deacons serve better than others. Those who serve well gain a good grade or a good standing. This is similar to 1 Timothy 5:17 where Paul says that presbyters who rule well are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. A man who serves well in the office of deacon will gain the honor, esteem, respect, and praise of the congregation. That is what it means to gain good standing. The congregation will honor him and esteem him highly because he has done a good job as a deacon. The church will have a high regard for a good deacon. That is good. It is an honor when those you serve

think well of you and trust you. It encourages you to continue your good work and excel still more in it, for the glory of God and the good of God's people.

The second benefit Paul mentions in this verse is that a deacon who serves well gains "great confidence" or "great boldness" in faith in Christ. When a man serves well in the office of deacon and gains the respect and honor of the church, he also becomes more confident in faith in Christ. He gains assurance that what he believes and what he does in service to Christ and his church are pleasing to God and to the church. He becomes bolder and less inhibited in his work as a deacon in the congregation. His trust in Christ becomes stronger and he is able to serve Christ with greater boldness. He is more confident that he knows how to apply God's Word to the needs of people whom he serves in the office of deacon. Those who do not serve well in the office of deacon become more and more timid.

In the first or second century after the apostles the practice of choosing presbyters from among the deacons was introduced in the church. People cited 1 Timothy 3:13 in support of this practice, as if the apostle Paul were saying that those have been faithful deacons should move up a step into the office of elder in the church. The text does not support this interpretation. In the words of John Calvin, it is true "that the diaconate may sometimes be the nursery from which presbyters are chosen" (Commentary on 1 Timothy 3:13), but this verse simply says that those who serve well as deacons are worthy of great honor.

In other words, the office of deacon is not a menial task, but a highly honorable office. We should not look down upon the office of deacon as though it were inferior and less honorable than the office of elder. Deacons assist the elders, but that does not make one office more honorable than the other. God

says that those who hold either office are worthy of great honor. Paul's point in this verse is that when the church carefully chooses qualified men to be deacons and they perform the duties of their office faithfully and well, not only does the church benefit, but the deacons gain esteem and reverence as well as boldness in the faith.

### Conclusions:

1. This verse states two benefits for those who serve well as deacons. First, they gain a good standing, that is, the honor, esteem, respect, and praise of the congregation. Second, they gain confidence or boldness in faith in Christ.

2. This verse does not support the ancient practice of choosing presbyters from among the deacons as a promotion to a higher rank. A deacon may be chosen to be an elder, but a man who is not a deacon may be more qualified to become an elder than the deacon is.

3. The office of deacon is not a menial task, but a highly honorable office. The church should be careful to choose well-qualified men to be deacons. Deacons should strive to serve well in their office. The church should highly honor and respect deacons who serve well, just as the church gives double honor to presbyters who rule well. This encourages deacons to continue their good work and excel still more in it, for the glory of God and the good of God's people

4. The church also profits greatly from faithful deacons who serve well.

Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:11, "wives"

### Translation:

11) Wives likewise must be reverent, not slanderers, vigilant, faithful in all things.

### Structure:

Verse 11 lists four qualifications for women. The structure of this sentence is similar to the structure of verse 8. Neither sentence has a main verb. Both verse 8 and verse 11 depend grammatically on verse 2.

### Comment:

This verse raises many questions. What is Paul talking about in verse 11? Are these qualifications for women-deacons as some commentators argue? Should the first word of the verse be translated "women" or "wives"? Why does Paul use the word "likewise," the same word he used in verse 8 when he began a new set of qualifications?

In classical and Hellenistic Greek the word translated "wives" can mean either a woman, a female in the generic sense, or it can mean a man's wife. This seems strange to people who speak English, but other languages have this same ambiguity. For example, the German word Frau can mean either woman or wife. We have to figure out which is meant by the context in which the word occurs.

The question in verse 11 is this: Does Paul give four qualifications for the wives of deacons or four qualifications for female deacons? There are several good reasons that compel us to conclude that Paul is talking about wives, not female deacons.

First, if some women were deacons just like men are, there would be only one list of qualifications. No special qualifications for women-deacons would be necessary. For example, in the United States Congress we have both male senators and female senators, but there is only one list of qualifications for senators in the Constitution of the United States. Both men and women must meet that one set of qualifications in order to be elected to office. There are no separate qualifications for any category of senator, whether white, black, male, female, blond, red-haired, or otherwise. All senators must meet the same qualifications.

Second, the word "likewise" does not imply a separate class of office bearers, as some commentators argue. The word "likewise" simply indicates that these qualities required of wives are similar to the qualities required for deacons. The qualifications in verse 11 are similar to the qualifications for deacons in verses 8-9. In fact, some are identical. Further examination shows that the qualifications for both deacons (verses 8-9) and their wives (verse 11) are similar to the qualifications for overseer in verses 2-7. Again, some are identical.

This brings us to a third point. The word “their” is not in the Greek text. It is not unusual in the Greek language to omit an article or demonstrative pronoun. However, in verse 11 Paul may have had a good reason to leave out the word “their.” If Paul had used the word “their,” most readers would refer the qualifications in verse 11 to the wives of the deacons only because Paul is talking about deacons in the immediate context. By leaving out the word “their” Paul refers not only to the wives of deacons, but also to the wives of overseers (ministers and elders). In other words, in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 Paul gives the qualifications for both overseers and deacons. In the midst of that, specifically, in the midst of the qualifications for deacon, the apostle says that the wives of both overseers and deacons must have certain qualities which he lists in verse 11. This interpretation also fits with the fact that both verses 8-9 and verse 11 share the main verb in verse 2 and thus are grammatically dependent upon verse 2.

Fourth, 1 Timothy 2:12 forbids women to teach or exercise authority over a man. This means that women may not hold special office in the church because ministers, elders, and deacon all exercise authority over men. None of the apostles were women. None of the original deacons chosen in Acts 6 were women. Acts 6:3 specifically states that the deacons were to be men. There is no record in the New Testament of a woman being an elder. There is no record in the New Testament of a woman being a minister. In fact, 1 Timothy 3:2 requires an overseer (minister and elder) to be “the husband of one wife.” This disqualifies all women from the office of overseer. Similarly, 1 Timothy 3:12 requires a deacon to be the husband of one wife. No woman can meet that qualification.

For Paul to speak about female deacons in verse 11 would contradict many other passages of Scripture. Female deacons also do not fit with the four points mentioned above. Some argue that in Romans 16:1 Paul calls Phoebe a deacon. It is true that the Greek word in Romans 16:1 is the same word used in the New Testament for the office of deacon in the church. However, in the New Testament that word (*diakonos*) does not usually refer to the office of deacon in the church. It is just the ordinary Greek word for “servant.” That is what it usually means in the New Testa-

ment. Phoebe was a servant, just as every member of the church should be.

John Calvin comments on verse 11 that Paul “refers here to the wives of both bishops and deacons, for they must help their husbands in their office and they can do that only if their behaviour is better than other people’s.”

Conclusions:

1. Verse 11 gives qualifications for the wives of both overseers and deacons. If a man’s wife does not have the four qualities stated in verse 11, he may not become a minister, elder, or deacon in the church.

2. In verse 11 Paul does not give special qualifications for a female deacon, a deaconess, or some other special class of women or special office for women in the church.

Comment:

We now consider each of the four qualities that wives of both overseers and deacons must have:

### 1. “Reverent”

This first quality is the same word as the first qualification for deacons in verse 8. The wives of both overseers and deacons must be “reverent,” which means that they must be worthy of respect or honor. The wives must be noble or dignified. They must not turn everything into a joke. They must be serious about things that are important. The wife of an overseer or a deacon must be a respectable person. In order to be worthy of respect and honor, she must be above reproach. If the wife of a deacon or overseer can be justly accused and convicted of sin, she is not worthy of respect and honor and the people in the congregation will not hold her in high esteem. Such a person does not meet this first qualification. Therefore, her husband may not hold a special office in the church.

The people of God should venerate the wives of overseers and deacons because they are admirable women. The congregation should have love and affection for these wives. To be reverent is to be worthy of this esteem and honor.

Conclusions on “Reverent”:

1. The wives of overseers and deacons must have upright character and integrity before God and men so that they are worthy of the respect, honor, admiration, love, and affection of God's people. Like deacons, the wives must have a good reputation.

2. Any wife whose manner, conduct, thoughts, or attitude is not honorable, worthy of respect and admiration, and dignified does not meet this qualification. Her husband should not be an overseer or deacon.

3. The congregation should revere and honor the wives of overseers and deacons who serve in their midst.

### 2. "Not slanderers"

The Greek word translated "slanderer" is "diabolos" which is one of the names the Bible uses for Satan. The English word "diabolical" comes from this same Greek word. This word is translated "Devil" thirty-five times in the New Testament. It is translated "slanderer" three times in the New Testament when it refers to people (1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3).

Satan is called the Devil because he slanders God's people. He falsely accuses them of sin in the vain hope that God will condemn them and they will suffer eternal punishment with the Devil and his angels. See Matthew 4:1,8,11; 1 Timothy 3:6-7; 2 Timothy 2:26; 1 Peter 5:8; and Revelation 12:9-10.

Paul says that the wife of an overseer or a deacon must not be a slanderer like the Devil who tries to get as many people to fall into his trap of reproach and condemnation. Slander is a false tale or report that one maliciously utters in order to injure the reputation of another person by causing others to esteem him less, by exposing him to impeachment or punishment, or by impairing his means of living. The wife of an overseer or a deacon must not spread false reports which defame or injure a person's good name. She must not falsely accuse people. She must not say things about people in order to damage their reputation. She should not make up stories about people that tend to impair their good name or make others esteem them less.

Two striking examples in the Bible of women who slandered other people are Potiphar's wife who slandered Joseph (Genesis 39:7-33) and King Ahab's wife Jezebel who slandered Naboth (I Kings 21).

God forbids slander in the ninth commandment (see Exodus 20:16 and what the catechisms teach about the ninth commandment). In Titus 2:3 Paul says that especially all older women should have this same quality. They should not be slanderers. John Calvin comments: "Talkativeness is a disease among women and old age usually makes it worse. In addition to this, women are never satisfied with their talking till they have become prattlers and scandal-mongers attacking everybody's reputation. The result is that old women by their slanderous garrulity, as by a lighted torch, often set many homes on fire" (Commentary on Titus 2:3). The wives of those who bear special office in the church should not imitate the Devil and set homes on fire. They should help their husbands preserve, encourage, and build up God's people, not devour them by slandering them.

Conclusions on "Not Slanderers":

1. The wives of officebearers in the church must not slander other people, that is, say false things which damage other people's good name. Rather, wives should assist their husbands in building up others and equipping them for every good work.

2. Every person, including every woman, should cultivate this quality, but especially the wives of ministers, elders, and deacons.

3. A man whose wife does slander other people is not qualified for the office of overseer or deacon in the church.

### 3. "Temperate"

This Greek word can mean: sober, not intoxicated, clear-headed, self-controlled, moderate, frugal, continent, sober-minded, prudent, reasonable. The King James Version translates this Greek word as "sober" in 1 Timothy 3:11, and "vigilant" in 1 Timothy 3:2. The New King James Version uses the translation "temperate" in both places. We usually use the English word "temperate" to mean moderate, such as a temperate climate. In 1

Timothy 3 Paul does not use this Greek word in the sense of restraint in using intoxicating drink or moderation, but rather in the sense of how a person thinks and reacts in general. There are several reasons for this conclusion.

First, Paul uses this Greek word in 1 Timothy 3:2 in the qualifications for overseers. In the next verse (1 Tim. 3:3) Paul specifically states that an elder must not be given to wine. This same qualification regarding the use of wine is in Titus 1:7 also. Since Paul later deals specifically with the use of wine, it would seem that “temperate” here does not focus on the same point. It is logical that when Paul uses this same word again in verse 11 for the wives of officebearers, since the context of the word is the same, he means the same thing as for elders in verse 2.

Second, in verse 2 “temperate” begins a list of qualities that have to do with the general character of an elder’s behavior, thinking, and attitudes. Temperate is followed by sober-minded. The translators of the New King James Version used these two English words interchangeably in the New Testament. For example, in Titus 2:2 we read: “that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.” The word translated as “temperate” in Titus 2:2 is the same word as “sober-minded” in 1 Timothy 3:2. The translation of these words has been interchanged in Titus from what we have in 1 Timothy 3:2. If the words “temperate” and “sober” were two totally different ideas, clearly distinguished from one another, then it would be erroneous to interchange the translation. These two (Greek) words are closely related and have almost the same meaning in the New Testament. The translators of the New King James Version understood this.

Third, in Titus 2:2 and Titus 2:6-7 Paul uses the word “temperate” and the word “sober-minded” (same word as “sober”) in the context of a man’s general character. The context of these passages makes clear that Paul is not talking about a man’s restraint in drinking wine.

In 2 Timothy 4:5 we have the verb form of the word translated “temperate” in 1 Timothy 3:2. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, they have itching ears, they will heap up for

themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things...” (2 Tim. 4:3-5). The qualification we are discussing means to be watchful and on guard against turning aside to nice stories and fables in place of the truth of the Gospel of Christ. It means to be wise, stable, and discerning.

Paul uses this same verb in 1 Thessalonians 5:6: “Therefore let us not sleep, as others, but let us watch and be sober.” This time the verb is translated “be sober.” It is placed parallel to “watch.” Paul uses the same verb again in verse 8: “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.” The qualification we are discussing means to be on guard, to be diligent in faith, love, and hope, to pay attention to the things of God in order that we might persevere until the Day of the Lord (cf. Hebrews 2:1; 6:11,12). It is for this reason that the King James Version uses the translation “vigilant” instead of “temperate” in 1 Timothy 3:2, and “sober” instead of “temperate” in 1 Timothy 3:11.

The apostle Peter uses this same verb several times in his first letter. In 1:13-14 he writes: “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance.” The idea in this verse is that we must pay attention, be serious, and think clearly. We must be able to give diligent heed to the truth of God’s Word and consequently obey with determination. In 4:7 we read: “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful unto prayer.” The command to be watchful is parallel with the command to be serious. The end of all things is about to come. Be alert! Be wide awake! A drunkard or an indifferent person pays little attention to what is going on. His senses and faculties are neither sharp nor keen. This is the opposite of what it means to be vigilant or clear-headed or sober. When warning the saints of the Devil who walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, Peter says: “Be sober, be vigilant...” (1 Peter 5:8).

Conclusions on “Temperate”:

1. The sense of the original word is better conveyed by the translations “vigilant” and “sober” which the King James Version uses in 1 Timothy 3:2,11.

2. The wife of an overseer or deacon must be on guard and alert. Her senses must be sharp. She must watch out for wolves and anything that would devour her or any of God's people. She should not be a babe in Christ who drinks only milk and is unskilled in the word of righteousness. Rather, she should be mature and able to eat the solid food of Scripture. Her senses should be exercised by use so that she is able to discern truth from error (Hebrews 5:12-14). She must watch carefully over her own life and heart lest there arise any root of bitterness; unbelief; sinful patterns of life, speech, or thought; neglect of the things of God; or disobedience to the commands of Scripture. She should be able to help her husband, her family, and others guard against sin and error. This is required of overseers (1 Timothy 3:2), older men (Titus 2:2), and all God's people (1 Peter 5:8).

3. The wife of an overseer or deacon should be wise, stable, and discerning. She should have a clear mind and sound judgment. A man whose wife does not have this quality, but is gullible, a babe in Christ, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:6-7) is not qualified for the office of overseer or the office of deacon.

#### 4. “Faithful in All Things”

This Greek adjective means trustworthy, faithful, dependable, reliable. The wife of an overseer or deacon must be faithful in every respect. Her husband should be able to trust her completely in everything. He should have no doubt that she will be faithful to him in marriage. He should have no doubt that he can trust her not to tell others about confidential information that he tells her. He should trust her to teach and train his children. He should trust her to manage the household. He should trust her to be prudent and gracious to others. She should be a trustworthy advisor and helper to her husband. Her word should be reliable. Her husband should be able to depend upon her no matter what the situation.

The Bible says that every wife should be faithful in all things. Proverbs 31:10-12 provides a model which every wife should follow: “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts in her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.” Verses 13-25 give examples of her faithfulness in every aspect of daily life as she manages the household and helps her husband. She is a faithful steward in all things. Verses 26-31 conclude: “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.’ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

These verses from Proverbs 31 describe a wife who is faithful in all things. A man who can not trust his wife to be faithful in all things is not qualified to be an overseer or a deacon in the church.

#### Conclusions on “Faithful in All Things”:

1. Every wife should be trustworthy and faithful in every area of life. Her husband should be able to trust her completely. Proverbs 31 illustrates a godly wife who is faithful in all things.

2. If a man's wife is not faithful in all things, that man is not qualified to be an overseer or a deacon in the church.

.....  
● **This concludes the series on the**  
● **qualifications for the offices of Elder**  
● **and Deacon in the Christian Church.**  
● **We are grateful to Pastor Allison for**  
● **this consistently fine exposition. Rev.**  
● **Archibald Alexander Allison is cur-**  
● **rently serving as pastor of the**  
● **Emmaus Orthodox Presbyterian**  
● **Church in Fort Collins, Colorado.**  
●  
.....



# Strange Fire Continues to Burn

## An Historical Reflection on Modern Revivalism

by

Gregory Edward Reynolds

Jonathan Edwards' *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746) has been referred to as the first great American psychological treatise; and is now, I am told by a local antiquarian book seller, highly sought after by students of philosophy. However, great philosopher and psychologist though he was, The Rev. Jonathan Edwards was by his own intention first and foremost a pastor-theologian. Twentieth century attempts to co-opt the obvious genius of Edwards fail miserably upon a cursory reading of the *Religious Affections*, not to mention their failure in light of a careful consideration of Edwards' historical context. Like Luther Edwards stood *contra mundum*. Acutely aware of Enlightenment thought and its impact on the theology and practice of the churches of New England, Edwards used every ounce of his genius to oppose the *zeit geist* with a solid exposition of Biblical Calvinism.

It is also significant that Edwards was a Presbyterian at heart.<sup>1</sup> One may profitably wonder what difference Presbyterian church government might have made in standing against the tidal wave of Unitarianism and Deism that has overwhelmed the Puritanism of New England.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the Individualism fostered by the Great Awakening found a comfortable home in the democratic structure of Independency. In our century even secular sociologists have noted with alarm the destructive effects of Individualism. Witness Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* (1978), and Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (1985).

The present essay is an historical reflection on revivalism, prompted by a front page article in

the *New Hampshire Sunday News* (March 2, 1997): "Fire, Brimstone, Not an Empty Seat." The article compares a present "revival" in Pensacola, Florida, with The Great Awakening in New England. Page 14A gives the headline: "Minister Says His Revival May Be Third 'Awakening'." Associated Press religion writer David Briggs reports people "running down the aisles, stepping over the bodies of teenage girls and middle age-men already 'slain in the Spirit'." 43 year old missionary evangelist Stephen Hill preaches, "Get on your face before God. ...You've got 40 seconds left, What on earth are you waiting for? ...11, 10, 9, hurry, hurry, hurry." The "contemporary worship style ...allows participants the freedom to cry, dance, sing or do whatever else the Holy Spirit tells them to do."

While this may remind us of the excesses of the Great Awakening, which most of its most ardent supporters deplored, there is little else in Pensacola that compares with the spiritual reality of that great eighteenth century work of God. It reminds us more of the "Toronto Blessing". This manifestation of the Vineyard Movement of John Pember is an extreme example of a modern "revival". To be fair Hill, amidst the histrionics, preaches the reality of heaven and hell and calls people to repent, believe in Jesus Christ, and "follow an exacting code of holiness". But in such an environment radical Individualism, the legalism of the Assemblies of God, and "easy believism" come into their own. At the conclusion of the article Briggs asks, "How many souls have been saved? Perhaps 100,000, say revival organizers. But in random interviews over a three-day period, no one said they were 'born

again.' Yes, they had rededicated their lives to Christ, they said - but these were people who had previously accepted Jesus as savior." Then Briggs tellingly observes, "Studies indicate that many who promise to change their lives slide back into old habits once they are away from the highly charged revival."

What is the difference, then, between the Pensacola "revival" and The Great Awakening? The inspiring, insightful and cogent answer to that question was written by Jonathan Edwards two and a half centuries ago. The remainder of this article will survey Edwards' assessment of the Awakening. As Cyprian of Carthage once said of Tertullian "Da mihi magistrum" [Give me the master!].

Edwards begins *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* in his Preface with the state of the question, the most important question a person can ask: "What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favour with God, and entitled to His eternal rewards? ...What is the nature of true religion? And wherein do lie the distinguishing notes of that virtue and holiness that is acceptable in the sight of God?"<sup>3</sup>

Edwards, ever a physician of the soul, looks for the answer to his eighteenth century *diagnostic question* in the Scriptures. "But though it be of such importance, and though we have clear and abundant light in the word of God to direct us in this matter, yet there is no one point wherein professing Christians do more differ one from another."<sup>4</sup> Edwards cuts to the quick, separating the wheat from the chaff, affirming the true work of God against the rationalists and distinguishing it from the excesses of the enthusiasts.

There were two poles between which answers to this question were given in Edwards' day. On the one pole there were the Old Light rationalist Arminians, like Charles Chauncy of Boston, who were essentially moralists, to whom regeneration was a distasteful idea. The Great Awakening was decried as pure "enthusiasm" [an eighteenth cen-

tury word for "fanaticism"]. This was the mindset that made way for Unitarianism and Transcendentalism: Christian morality without the redemption of a crucified and risen Christ. On the other pole were the New Light antinomians, like James Davenport of Southold, Long Island, whose authoritarian declamations of everyone who didn't share his "enthusiasms" knew no bounds. For such The Great Awakening was an unmixed blessing. This was the mindset that made way for the radical Individualism that has plagued New England Christendom ever since.

As early as 1735 Edwards began to reflect on the nature of true religion after the first wave of the Awakening (1734,5). *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737) was an expansion of a letter to his Boston correspondent Benjamin Coleman. This was more of a positive account than his later, more critical and mature reflections. In 1741 *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* was published. Here he began to examine the difference between essential and nonessential marks of the Spirit's work. A year later *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (1742) distinguishes between the "occasional" and "proper" causes of visible phenomena. The "proper" causes being the fruit of the Spirit. Finally in 1746 Edwards' mature assessment of The Great Awakening was published in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*.

In Part I, "Concerning The Nature of the Affections, and Their Importance in Religion," Edwards begins by defining true religion: "True Religion, in great part, consists in Holy Affections."<sup>5</sup> "The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."<sup>6</sup> The will (inclinations) approves or disapproves of the objects (thoughts and ideas) beheld by the mind (heart). *Holy* affections are distinguished by "vigorous exercise of the inclination and will towards divine objects."<sup>7</sup> In a letter to Benjamin Coleman, Edwards states that new converts "seem to be brought to a lively sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ." After

surveying several Biblical categories of Holy Affections Edwards concludes: "true religion consists so much in the affections that there can be no true religion without them."<sup>8</sup> True religion consists of hearts enlightened by the truth and affected with the "power of godliness".

Parts II is an exposition "Showing What Are No Certain Signs That Religious Affections Are Truly Gracious, or That They Are Not."

1. It is no sign one way or the other, that religious affections are very great, or raised very high.
2. It is no sign that affections have the nature of true religion, or that they have not, that they have great effects on the body.
3. It is no sign that affections are truly gracious affections, or that they have not, that they cause those who have them to be fluent, fervent, and abundant, in talking of the things of religion.
4. It is no sign that affections are gracious, or that they are otherwise, that persons did not make themselves, or excite them of their own contrivance, and by their own strength.
5. It is no sign that religious affections are truly holy and spiritual, or that they are not, that they come from texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to mind.
6. It is no evidence that religious affections are saving, or that they are otherwise, that there is an appearance of love in them.
7. Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another, is not sufficient to determine whether they have any gracious affections or no.
8. Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of the affec-

tions by this, that comforts and joys seem to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience, in a certain order.

9. It is no certain sign that the religious affections which persons have are such as have in them the nature of true religion, or that they have not, that they dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship.
10. Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections by this, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God.
11. It is no sign that affections are right, or that they are wrong, that they make persons that have them exceeding confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good estate.
12. Nothing can be certainly concluded concerning the nature of religious affections from this, that the outward manifestations of them, and the relation persons give them, are very affecting and pleasing to the truly godly, and such as greatly gain their charity and win their hearts.

Parts III is an exposition "Showing What Are Distinguishing Signs of Truly Gracious and Holy Affections."

1. Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious do arise from those influences and operations on the heart which are spiritual, supernatural and divine.
2. The primary ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are in themselves; and not

- any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest.
3. Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things.
  4. Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.
  5. Truly gracious affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.
  6. Gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation.
  7. Another thing, wherein gracious affections are distinguished from others, is, that they are attended with a change of nature.
  8. Truly gracious affections differ from those affections that are false and delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with, the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temper of Jesus Christ.
  9. Gracious affections soften the heart and are attended and followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit.
  10. Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion.
  11. Another great and distinguishing difference between gracious affections and others is, that the higher gracious affections are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of soul after spiritual attainments increased. On the contrary, false affections rest satisfied in themselves.
  12. Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.

Edwards concludes: "But if we had got into the way of looking chiefly at those things which Christ and His apostles and prophets chiefly insisted on, and so in judging ourselves and others, chiefly regarding practical exercises and effects of grace, not neglecting other things, it would be of manifold happy consequence. It would above all tend to the conviction of deluded hypocrites, and to prevent the delusion of those whose hearts were never brought to a thorough compliance with the straight and narrow way which leads to life. It would tend to deliver us from innumerable perplexities, arising from the various inconsistent schemes there are about methods and steps of experience. It would greatly tend to prevent professors neglecting strictness of life and tend to promote their engagedness and earnestness in their Christian walk. It would be become fashionable for men to show their Christianity, more by an amiable distinguished behavior, than by an abundant and excessive declaring their experiences. We should get into the way of appearing lively in religion, more by being lively in the service of God and our generation than by the liveliness and forwardness of our tongues, and making a business of proclaiming on the house tops with our mouths the holy and eminent acts and exercise of our own hearts."<sup>9</sup>

Weighed in the balance of Edwards' exposition what today passes for "revival" must be found seriously wanting. The centrality in present "revivals" of those things which Edwards denotes as "no sure signs of true religion" is deeply troubling in itself. But what is profoundly more troubling is the relative absence of those things which Edwards denotes as "sure signs of true religion."

While Edwards did not experience the manufactured "revivals" of recent American Christianity, he was very clear in asserting that true revivals are initiated by the Sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, as Distinguishing Sign #1 attests. The external phenomena of the Great Awakening bear a marked resemblance to contemporary excesses. Edwards was not as concerned to prevent such

excesses as he was to assess them properly. Between the Devil and our own sinfulness, emotional excesses will probably always be present in varying degrees, wherever the true work of revival is present. The absence of such phenomena in the Bible should be our primary *desideratum* in assessing these phenomena. There when the Spirit works in a person's heart the understanding is illuminated with truth and the affections are moved to ardent pursuit of the Savior in holy living (cf. Acts 2 and Luke 24). How opposite this is to barking, howling and being "slain in the spirit". Such responses are not in accord with Scripture. They are more akin to pagan rites such as the Bacchanalian feasts.

Edwards also emphasized the centrality of Scripture and its exposition along with the abiding nature of Christ likeness in converts. "The impressing divine things on the hearts and affections of men is evidently one great and main end for which God has ordained that His Word delivered in the holy Scriptures should be opened, applied, and set home upon men, in preaching."<sup>10</sup> Preaching to the emotions, instead of to the affections was already a problem in Edwards' day. Preachers used methods that "have a great tendency to stir up the passions of weak and ignorant persons, and yet have no great tendency to benefit their souls."<sup>11</sup> Certain ordinary means have a tendency to stir up true religious affections. "Such books, and such a way of preaching the word, and administering ordinances, and such way of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, is much to be desired, as have a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means."<sup>12</sup> These, Edwards lamented, were falling out of favor. A new methodology compatible with a rising anti-intellectualism and subjectivism was invading the churches. Experience oriented spirituality is reflected in and cultivated by the absence of searching expositions of Scripture in modern evangelism.

Furthermore Edwards insisted that the chief fruit of genuine conversion is Christ-like humil-

ity and love. Modern revivalism, on the other hand, promotes the very self absorption of which people should be called to repent. Distinguishing Sign #2 warns us against using religion for self-interest. The accent of modern revivalists, even in revivalistic calls to *repent*, is often on self-improvement, instead of self denial. "The Scriptures do represent true religion, as being summarily comprehended in love, the chief of the affections and the fountain of all other affections."<sup>13</sup> Distinguishing Signs #8 and #9 paint a lovely picture of holiness. 8. Truly gracious affections differ from those affections that are false and delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with, *the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temper of Jesus Christ*. 9. Gracious affections *soften the heart* and are attended and followed with a *Christian tenderness of spirit*" (emphasis added). The "highly charged" atmosphere of contemporary revivals is not conducive to what Edwards refers to as "habitual"<sup>14</sup> holy affections. The lasting reality of Christ-likeness is replaced by the momentary thrill of the spectacular.

The tragedy of present "revivals", from the perspective of reformed Christians, comes clearly into focus when one realizes that for the uninformed secular public there are only three alternatives: secularism, Liberalism (and its New Age cousins), and Fundamentalist-Charismatic fanaticism. Our task is to communicate to our culture an alternative of which they are almost entirely ignorant; by preaching, living, talking and writing about *true religion*; and praying fervently for the revival of the same in New England.

This historical critique is not meant to deny the genuine work of God in Christian circles where some of the cited abuses seem most obvious. Indeed it is offered with a sense of urgent need and out of deep concern for the health of the whole church and the integrity of its witness to a dying world. If the theology and practice of Jonathan Edwards is our model, then reformed Christians too must admit failure. We have not presented the whole counsel of God to the world

## Strange Fire Continues to Burn

with the vigor and energy that our theology warrants. Nor have we pleaded for the lost in prayer before the throne of our sovereign and gracious God as we ought. Each of us must begin at home in the presence of our God if we really want revival and reformation in our day.

1 From August 1722 to May 1723 Edwards supplied the pulpit of a newly formed Presbyterian church in New York City. In a letter to friend and correspondent John Erskine he remarked, "I have long been out of conceit of our unsettled, independent, confused way of church government; and the Presbyterian way has ever appeared to me most agreeable to the word of God, and the reason and nature of things." Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, Vol. II, p. 59, fn.

2 Cf. A. Donald MacLeod, "Alexander Blaikie's Presbyterianism in New England," *New En-*

*gland Reformed Journal*, Issue 2, Winter 1997, 9-20.

3 Jonathan Edwards, *Treatise Concerning The Religious Affections*, Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. III (No city: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p. 15. Hereafter: *Religious Affections*.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, 23.

6 *Ibid.*, 24.

7 *Ibid.*, 29.

8 *Ibid.*, 49.

9 *Ibid.*, 381,2.

10 *Ibid.*, 44.

11 *Ibid.*, 51.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*, 35.

14 *Ibid.*, 48.

### The Family in God's Plan of Grace

The instrumentalities of the family are chosen and ordained of God as the most efficient of all means of grace - more truly and efficaciously means of saving grace than all other ordinances of the church. To family piety are given the best promises of the gospel under the new, as well as under the old, dispensation. How, then, should a wise God do otherwise than consecrate the Christian family, and ordain that the believing parents shall sanctify the children? Hence, the very foundation of all parental fidelity to children's souls is to be laid in the conscientious, solemn, and hearty adoption of the very duties and promises which God seals in the covenant of infant baptism. It is pleasing to think that many Christian who refuse the sacrament do, with happy inconsistency, embrace the duties and seek the blessing. But God gives all his people the truths and the promises, along with the edifying seal. Let us hold fast to both.

(From R. L. Dabney's Parental Responsibilities)

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*, by Gary North, 1134 pages. \$34.95. Published by I.C.E., Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711. (A 50% discount is offered to all church officers if the order is submitted on your church's letterhead stationery). Reviewed by the Editor.

I first became interested in what I will call the Machen era while I was a student at Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary. Edwin Rian's book had whetted a strong desire to know more about this incredible history, but such information was not easy to find. It was for this reason that I asked for—and was granted—a personal interview with Clarence E. Macartney to get his slant on these events. But even this did not fill the void. Now, however, this vacuum has at least begun to be filled with the publication of such books as Longfield's *The Presbyterian Controversy*, and Hart and Muether's *Fighting the Good Fight!* I have found all of these to be helpful, but in many ways this contribution from Gary North tops them all.

For one thing, North's survey of that era is much more comprehensive. (1) He clearly and convincingly traces the roots of the failure of the conservative effort in the PCUSA back to the Old School/New School divisions, and to the doctrinal compromises that came with the restored 'unity.' (2) He also shows more effectively than anything I've seen the strategy and monetary sources of the liberal onslaught. It was never so clear to me before how much the Rockefeller millions affected the whole process of change in both the church and the nation. (3) And most important of all I think he really does prove the validity of the book's title. When men at Princeton Seminary agreed to work with men at Union Seminary in the production of a theological journal it was already apparent that serious compromise had been made. And, as North demonstrates (in my opinion at least) the basic problem really was the problem of 'crossed fingers.' How could the men at Princeton insist on full subscription to the Westminster Standards when they themselves

allowed for such errors as theistic evolution. I think North is also correct in showing that this 'crossed fingers' syndrome (meaning the taking of vows with mental reservations) paralyzed all attempts to discipline on the basis of these Westminster Standards. The whole problem with the attempt to choose five doctrines out of the Westminster Standards and make them the test of orthodoxy—together with the Auburn Affirmationists' response—was only proof of the fact that the Westminster Standards were no longer regarded by either party as authoritative. (It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the conservatives in the RCA just recently attempted the same thing, with similarly futile results).

Gary North has definite opinions and he expresses them quite pointedly. This offends some people, but quite frankly I find it refreshing. I don't always agree with his opinions, but saying what you really think (instead of what people want to hear, or are willing to accept) is a rare commodity today, and most welcome. It is for this reason that this massive book is also interesting in what I would call its incidental features. Think of names such as Woodrow Wilson, Harry E. Fosdick, Margaret Sanger or Pearl S. Buck (and a host of other players in the drama of this era). North gives his opinion of many of these together with at least some of the evidence that brought him to form his opinion. And—for what it is worth—in nearly every case I found myself somewhat surprised at the extent in which our opinions are in agreement. Hardly any of the men who were considered 'big wheels' or 'great men' in that era are now considered (by North, or by me) to be great men or worthy men at all. It would, in fact, be a waste of time to even consider writing a 100 page book about most of them. But then there was J. Gresham Machen. And even though North finds it necessary to quite candidly point out some very serious weaknesses in Machen's *position*, the man's *character*—and worth—shine forth in this fascinating book with greater lustre than ever before.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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There is more—much, much more—that could be said about this massive and fascinating book. But to conclude this all too brief review let me just say that I hope every OPC minister, ruling elder and deacon will read this book. And, pursuant to this, let me urge all office-bearers of the OPC to see to it that your church has a copy available for both the office-bearers and members to read. There are many lessons to be learned from this (which is, after all, our own) history, and it would be a great pity if knee-jerk reaction to Gary North's name (or the Theonomic advocacy for which he is famous) kept anyone from reading this remarkable book. I recommend it highly.

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*Power Preaching for Church Growth, The role of preaching in growing churches*, by David Egly. Published in 1996 in the Mentor imprint by Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Great Britain. \$15.95. [Available from Evangelical Bible Book Store (1-800-450-5858) for \$12.80 plus postage].

This is a small book (192 pages). But it has an important message. The message is a defense of the biblical statement that preaching—faithful and full-orbed—is the power of God unto salvation. And the author sees this as the number one need thing that is lacking, and therefore urgently needed, in the Protestant churches of North America.

The book is based on the teaching of the book of Acts because this book tells the story of the early church in which the power of preaching is so clearly manifest. The author first argues from the text of this book his conclusions, and then adds comments from many of the great Reformed preachers and teachers of both the past and present. These well-chosen quotations help to underline the point that the writer is making. I found this feature a most interesting aspect of this fine little book.

After more than 40 years in the pulpit I am now more often in the pew, and from both perspectives I am in hearty agreement with the basic thesis of this book. It may be just the thing that you need to encourage you to redouble your efforts to preach the whole counsel of God with power.

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*Battle to Destroy Truth, Unveiling a Trail of Deception*, by Claris Van Kuiken. Published by the Educational Research Group, Inc. P. O. Box 1213, Tinley Park, IL 60477. \$15.95, plus \$3.75 for shipping first class, or \$2.75 for book rate (total, \$18.70, \$19.70). Illinois residents only add 7½ % tax.

As you no doubt know the OPC recently ended its fraternal relationship with the CRC. It was not an easy thing to do, after some six decades of fellowship. Yet, as our General Assembly determined, it simply had to be done. And if there is any lingering doubt concerning this decision, this book will go far to dispelling it.

Claris van Kuiken—who is now a member of the OPC (Palos Heights, Chicago)—was a lifelong member of the CRC. As an alert, covenant keeping mother, she became concerned about uncritical acceptance of New Age heresy in the Christian Schools, and even her own church. It was not that she wanted to draw up a list of forbidden books. Far from it. But what she objected to was the fact that books promoting deadly heresy were being classified as Christian. So she went to work to alert the office-bearers of her church to this fact. And it was right there that the frustrations began.

The office-bearers of her church—relying on 'expert' testimony, rather than their own careful reading of the material—declared the writings of Madeleine L'Engle to be Christian. This was a devastating blow in the face of the facts as she had come to know them from her own careful reading of this New Age writer. But though she was 'down'



she was not 'out.' No, she—with others—took the matter to the classis. And the classis (Chicago South) fully agreed with her assessment. Here is what the classis said:

1. *L'Engle denies that the atonement, the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, was a substitutionary sacrificial payment for the sins of God's people.*
2. *L'Engle denies that Jesus' incarnation is qualitatively unique, uniquely "God with us" Immanuel.*
3. *L'Engle denies that there will be a final separation between God and some persons as proclaimed in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the Majesty of His power."*
4. *L'Engle denies the unique authority of the Bible as the final arbiter in all matters of faith and practice.*

One would think that this would be sufficient, yet—as Mrs. van Kuiken goes on to show—it was anything but! And the reason is that a spirit of relativism has fallen upon so many of the office-bearers of the CRC that nothing seems to be clear any more. To read the torturous account of the devious methods, evasive responses and political (behind the scenes) fixing, ought to convince anyone that a great calamity has indeed befallen the CRC. When men of high standing—and responsibility—in the church can no longer answer simple, straightforward questions put by a sincere and concerned member of the church, then it is only the blind who cannot see that something is radically wrong. It was to this reluctant conclusion that Claris was driven, and in this remarkable book she tells us why.

Dr. Lester De Koster—former professor and librarian at Calvin College and Seminary, and

editor of the Banner—says: "Rarely has the never-never-land underside of church politics been more vividly described than in this outspoken account of courageously futile tenacity." We would agree. It is also more clear to us than ever before that even worse than the ambiguous actions of the CRC in recent years is the mindset of relativism so clearly displayed in this account.

I might add that this book is also valuable because of the information it provides regarding New Age concepts—information gleaned from the extensive research that Mrs. van Kuiken has done in the course of these events. When the writing of such authors as Madelaine L'Engle are widely praised as Christian—even in such colleges as Wheaton, Trinity, Calvin and Dordt—it is time for the elders of the church to sharpen their ability to perceive the spirit of the times. And it ought to be a humbling and sober reminder to us all that it sometimes takes the courage and persistence of someone who is *not* a pastor or elder to make us aware of our own need to be more discerning *and* diligent in watching over the flock of God.

We thank God for the courage and persistence of Mrs. van Kuiken. May the Lord use her testimony to awaken many to what is really going on in the CRC. And may it also help the office-bearers of the OPC to avoid such a mindset like the plague.

*The Arrogance of the Modern: Historical Theology Held in Contempt*, by David W. Hall. Published by the Calvin Institute, Oak Ridge, TN 37830. 308 pp. \$21.95 but available on the Frequent Reader's Discount for \$17.56 + \$3 for shipping and handling. Reviewed by the Editor.

It was Solomon who said there's nothing new under the sun—a truth of which we have been reminded again with the welcome publication of Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. All the more regrettable, then, that the rich legacy of the past is so often neglected because of a preference

for the novelties of today. This is the basic thesis expounded in the sixteen essays that make up this welcome book. This, in my judgment, is the kind of emphasis that is sorely needed in the Protestant churches of North America—Reformed as well as more broadly Evangelical.

It is not the argument of the author that the fathers were (are) always right, or that 'the way we've always done it' has final authority. Not at all. But he *does* show—convincingly I think—that in not a few vital areas the way it was done in the best days of church history is a lot better than the way it is too often done today. Take the tendency to treat the 90s (or any other limited time slot) as if such is so unique as to require a whole new approach to deal with this 'crisis.' In confronting this mindset of what has been called our '*now generation*' Hall writes an essay entitled *On Not having a Strategy for the Decade*. He calls, instead, for a return to the strategy laid down for all ages and places in the scriptures written in the age of the inspired apostles. True, this strategy may *not* produce mega-churches over night. But it could produce churches that are firm in the faith in the midst of a sea of unbelief.

One of the most fascinating essays to my mind is the one entitled "*Holding Fast the Great Concession of Faith: Science, Apologetics and Orthodoxy*." In this essay Dr. Hall has the courage to go right against the widely held opinion "that Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and others erected theories compatible with a 16-18 billion year old cosmos..." (p. 164). In other words, he takes issue with "the frequent assertion that the orthodox strain of beliefs on creation has always allowed wide latitude...rendering the ancients virtually indistinguishable from modern" (Ibid). I think he demonstrates that this frequent assertion is without any solid foundation. I think he is also right in faulting the great Princeton divines because of their willingness to make concessions to the findings of modern science that the ancient fathers were never willing to make (pp. 176-180). In an

1856 review, for instance, Charles Hodge makes this statement: "If science should succeed in demonstrating that the earth is millions of years old, then we will with the utmost alacrity believe that the days of creation were periods of indefinite duration." Is it any wonder, then, that "Abraham Kuyper implicitly and explicitly accused Hodge of conceding too much to the realm of autonomous fact." Hodge—and Warfield—held to a realm of neutrality wherein the facts could speak for themselves. Yet, as Kuyper pointed out, there is no such neutrality: "every scientific reproduction of the knowledge of God must fail, as long as this sense [i.e. the fall of man, and the reality of sin] remains weakened...it will not do to omit the fact of sin from your theory of knowledge" (p. 178).

In his essay entitled *Heresies that Transform, Deform and Re-Form* Dr. Hall shows how relevant a knowledge of the past is for the present. The sects and heresies of today are little more than a re-tread of some what the church has already encountered *and* overcome. In another entitled *Reformation Era Welfare Reform* he shows, again, just how relevant the church's past experience can be to our so-called modern problems. For those who—like myself—are always interested in learning more about that great Dutch thinker the essay on *Groen Van Prinsterer: Political Paradigm* alone makes it worthwhile to have this book.

The past hundred years or so in American Protestantism have been years of declension. Most of it is the result of a constant stream of innovative gimmicks. It is therefore my hope that we have now reached the place where a straightforward presentation of classic Reformed theology—and ethics—sounds amazingly new and revolutionary. It just might be that the hour is near when it will be widely proclaimed—and heard—again throughout the land. This is certainly my prayer. When it does come I believe the labors of Dr. Hall will be recognized as one of the means that God has used to return the church in North America to better days. Highly recommended.

# WHY MACHEN HIRED VAN TIL

by

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether

When J. Gresham Machen left Princeton in 1929 to start Westminster he insisted that Cornelius Van Til be the professor of apologetics at the new seminary. To students who would later study with Van Til Machen's resolve was obvious; the Dutch Calvinist's presuppositional apologetics was the backbone of a truly Reformed education. But to Machen's former students and colleagues and Princeton his choice of Van Til was odd. Van Til's apologetical method broke with Old Princeton's evidentialism and appeared to undermine Machen's claim that Westminster was perpetuating Princeton.

Orthodox Presbyterians have tried to fit together the pieces of the Machen-Van Til apologetics puzzle if only because of the importance of both men in shaping the identity of their denomination. For instance, the late Greg L. Bahnsen argued that Van Til's presuppositionalism was fundamentally compatible with Machen's reliance upon rational proofs and that the apparent tensions between Machen and Van Til stemmed from a misreading of both.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Charles G. Dennison has tried to show that Machen in his later years was learning from the new faculty at Westminster and so would have come around to Van Til's position in due course.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the merits of these explanations, Machen's choice of Van Til could not have been better given the context of the ecclesiastical and theological struggles of the 1920s and 1930s. That decision also continues to be instructive for Orthodox Presbyterians today who desire to preserve the unique and faithful witness of the church.

## The Public Relations Value of Van Til

Cornelius Van Til was crucial to the founding of Westminster Seminary, not because he was brilliant, not because he was militantly Calvinis-

tic, and not because he was Machen's trusted friend. All of these attributes may have been true of Van Til. But his importance to Machen was much simpler. In order for Machen to claim that Westminster was the perpetuation of Old Princeton he believed that at least half of the original faculty had to come from the older seminary. Westminster began with eight professors and Machen, along with Robert Dick Wilson and Oswald T. Allis, both of whom taught Old Testament at Princeton, were committed to serving on the faculty of the new seminary. But Machen needed a fourth and Van Til was the only one who could fit the bill of having taught at Princeton.

At first Van Til declined Machen's invitation. After serving as a pastor in rural Michigan from 1927 to 1928, Van Til taught apologetics at Princeton for the 1928-1929 academic year. He had no intention of remaining at Princeton after the seminary's reorganization that year put modernists on the board of trustees and after Machen, to protest the changes at Princeton, had decided to start a new seminary. But neither did Van Til want to teach at a fledgling seminary in downtown Philadelphia. He and his wife had just given birth to a baby boy and he was looking for a call to a Christian Reformed congregation back home in Michigan.

When Machen received word of Van Til's decision he was very disappointed. First he sent Ned Stonehouse, a fellow Dutchman, to Michigan to persuade Van Til to reconsider. When this did not work Machen himself traveled to Michigan despite his heavy responsibilities in creating a seminary virtually overnight. So desperate was Machen that he decided, with the consent of other faculty members, to give Van Til free reign in the department of apologetics and offered whatever salary was necessary. As a last resort

Machen suggested that Van Til only come for one year in order to “rescue...the Princeton tradition.” Under the pressure of Machen’s arm twisting Van Til finally accepted the offer. The rest, as they say, is history.

The circumstances under which Machen chose Van Til may indicate that apologetical method mattered less than the politics of starting the new seminary. In other words, if Machen had been able to choose a professor of apologetics strictly on the basis of what he perceived as the theological merits of the individual, perhaps he would have chosen someone more in harmony with Old Princeton’s tradition of evidentialism. Though this hypothesis is plausible, Machen’s choice turned out to be astute because of the congruity between Van Til’s apologetics and Machen’s understanding of the relationship between church and culture.

### **The Problem of the Enlightenment**

For a variety of historical reasons American Presbyterians throughout the nineteenth century were fully committed to the Enlightenment and scientific methods as the surest means for arriving at truth. Though still believing in the authority of Scripture, the best—or at least the most widely accepted—way of demonstrating the truth of the Bible was by appealing to reason and Scripture’s harmony with nature and the self-evident truths of human experience. Even though the Presbyterian theologians who taught at Princeton Seminary, such as Charles Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, believed in and defended the sinfulness of man, including human reason, their fundamental acceptance of the Enlightenment also produced apologetics that in many cases deemed the mind to be a reliable and authoritative guide to truth, including the truths of the Bible.

Old Princeton’s apologetic also implied a certain attitude toward the American nation. The United States was heavily indebted to the Enlightenment. Having rejected the crown or established church as a way to maintain social stability, the Enlightenment ideals of science and reason provided America with a rival form of cul-

tural authority, one that was available to all right-thinking people and did not depend upon family/blood and place/land. The scientific method and right procedures of argumentation gave to Americans public criteria for determining the true, the good and the beautiful. Thus, the church and the nation shared a similar outlook. Unlike the situation in Europe where the Enlightenment was explicitly anti-clerical (e.g. the French Revolution), in the United States most Protestants imbibed the ideals of the Enlightenment and supported the War for Independence which rested upon those ideals.

This was the tradition out of which Machen worked as an American Presbyterian and a member of Princeton Seminary’s faculty. Yet, his argument against Protestant liberalism questioned the close identification of the church with American culture, a tradition that extended back to the American revolution. Machen recognized that the church was fundamentally different from society, and that its faith and practice stood above (and at times against) the norms of America. The mainline churches, he argued, had compromised their witness because they had substituted the ideals of liberty, democracy and equality for the good news of the gospel.

Machen’s recognition of the antagonism between church and culture made him sympathetic to confessional ethnic communions like the Dutch Calvinist tradition from which Van Til came. He admired, for instance, the confessional witness of the Christian Reformed Church, its practice of catechetical sermons, its system of Christian schools, its college and seminary. He also esteemed the CRC’s separateness from the wider culture, its ghetto mentality as it were, rooted in the conviction that the church must avoid all associations that might compromise its witness. In an editorial for the *Presbyterian Guardian* written shortly before founding of the OPC, Machen praised the CRC’s practice of church discipline which “preserved its separateness from the world.” This was precisely the opposite of what Machen saw in Protestant mainline denominations where in order to gain the acceptance of the world churches had adjusted their preaching and

ministry. As Machen wrote in *Christianity and Liberalism*, “religion is thought to be necessary for a healthy community; and therefore for the sake of the community [people] are willing to have a church.” But, he added, Christianity could not be treated this way. “The moment it is so treated it ceases to be Christian...Christianity refuses to be regarded as a mere means to a higher end.”

Van Til was not only reared in the CRC but he came out of a tradition with a fundamentally different attitude toward the Enlightenment. Because in Europe the great philosophical developments of the eighteenth century were so hostile to the church, Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, took a dimmer—if not hostile—view toward the Enlightenment. A good indication of this difference is the name of Abraham Kuyper’s political organization in the Netherlands, the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Van Til’s apologetics extended this insight from the intellectual and political realms to that of theology and the defense of the faith. Thus, he made the antithesis, that is, the fundamental difference and antagonism between believers and non-believers, central to the task and method of apologetics. The authority for believers was God’s Word, not reason. Appeals to the reasonableness of Christian truth were doomed to fail because without the effectual calling of God’s spirit human rationality was in rebellion against God and would not be persuaded of the gospel’s truth.

### **The Church Against the World**

Van Til was a great choice to teach at Westminster because his apologetics provided the theoretical foundation for Machen’s conception of the relationship between church and culture. If Machen wanted the church to be separate from the world, Van Til’s methods supplied the reason for this separation. To be sure, believers and unbelievers hold some things in common—thanks to the grace God showers upon both groups through his providential care. But Machen recognized that the task of the church, namely, proclaiming the gospel and nurturing the faithful, was fundamentally different and at odds with

the agenda of the world. Van Til simply put flesh on the skeleton of his mentor’s understanding of the antithesis. Machen may not have blamed the Enlightenment for American Presbyterians’ failure to maintain the antithesis. But remarks he gave before a Dutch Calvinist gathering on the importance of Christian schools suggest that only three years before the end of his life he saw how the project of a public rationality had undermined the identity and separateness of the community of faith.

“. . . the religion of the Christian man embraces the whole of his life. Without Christ he was dead in trespasses and sins, but he has now been made alive by the Spirit of God; he was formerly alien from the household of God, but has now been made a member of God’s covenant people. Can this new relationship to God be regarded as concerning only one part, and apparently a small part, of his life? No, it concerns all his life; and everything he does he should do now as a child of God. It is this profound Christian permeation of every human activity, no matter how secular the world may regard it as being, which is brought about by the Christian school and the Christian school alone...a truly Christian education is possible only when Christian conviction underlies not a part, but all of the curriculum of the school.”

Machen recognized the deadly consequences of the church’s failure to see that the claims of Christ upon his people were all-encompassing and excluded all other loyalties. He believed the church of his day had become worldly in the sense that it had exchanged “the glory of the cross” for “human opinions about the social problems of the hour or easy solutions of the vast problem of sin.” Rather than being intolerant of ideas and practices that denied God’s truth, the church in America had become a public institution, tolerating all views and opinions in the same way that the United States protected freedom of thought. Even though Machen may not have understood or even agreed with all of Van Til’s ideas, his choice of the Dutch Calvinist to teach apologetics was wise. For Van Til deepened

Machen’s insights and articulated systematically the fundamental antagonism between the church and the world.

The OPC has benefited mightily from the antithetical posture of Machen and Van Till. When tempted to compromise its Reformed identity for the sake of wider influence and outreach, either by forming alliances with non-Reformed Protestants or by confusing the spheres of the church and the state, the OPC has by God’s grace insisted upon the otherworldly nature of the gospel and, thus, the anti-worldly character of the church. Is the situation today any different from that faced by Machen and Van Til? No matter what one’s assessment of the culture in which the OPC now ministers, the antithesis is no less a reality now than it was for the early church. As Machen wrote, the antithesis was the “great principle” of the church and it continually needed “to be taken to heart.” And he warned that “if the sharp distinction is ever broken down between the church and the world, then the power of the church is gone. The church then becomes like salt that lost its savour...”

Footnotes

1. Bahnsen, “Machen, Van Til, and the Apologetical Tradition of the OPC,” in *Pressing Toward the Mark. Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, ed. Charles G. Dennison & Richard Gamble, (Philadelphia: The Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1986), ch. 17.
2. Charles G. Dennison, “Tragedy, Hope and Ambivalence: The History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church 1936-1962,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 9 (1993), 26-44.

**D. G. Hart and John Muether are coauthors of *Fighting the Good Fight, A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. Both are ruling elders in the OPC—Mr. Hart at Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA and Mr. Muether in Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.**

In a time deeply marked by “concession,” at all events, it is worth our while to remember on the one hand that “concession” is the high road to “heresy,” and that “heresy” is “wilfulness in doctrine”; and on the other, that God has revealed his truth to us to be held, confessed, and defended, and that, after all, he is able to defend and give due force to the whole circle of revealed truth. And surely it is worth our while to recognize the most outstanding fact in the conflicts of our age—this, namely, that the line of demarcation between the right-thinking and the wilfully-thinking lies just here—whether a declaration of God is esteemed as authoritative over against all the conjectural explanations of phenomena by men, or whether, on the contrary, it is upon the conjectural explanations of phenomena by men that we take our stand as over against the declaration of God. In the sphere of science, philosophy, and criticism alike, it is the conjectural explanations of phenomena which are put forward as the principles of knowledge. It is as depending on these that men proclaim science, philosophy, and criticism as the norm of truth. We are “orthodox” when we account God’s declaration in his Word superior in point of authority to them, their interpreter, and their corrector. We are “heretical” when we make them superior in point of authority to God’s Word, its interpreter, and its corrector. By this test we may each of us try our inmost thought and see where we stand—on God’s side or on the world’s.

— B. B. Warfield

# Pastor to Pastor: The Minister's Treasure

(Part 3) IF I ONLY HAD FIVE COMMENTARIES

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)

Reformed pastors in the United States are usually blessed with rich libraries. Until we see how sparse a pastor's library often is in a Third World country (sometimes with no more than a dozen books in addition to the Bible) we have no idea what spiritual wealth is ours in this land of mass publications, ease of shipping, and relatively low costs.

Occasionally I have wondered which commentaries I would choose if I could only have five of them. I urge you to try this mental exercise, too, because it will make you ask yourself what is truly helpful in the plethora of biblical commentaries available in our day. It's also a fruitful way to increase your own ability to give guidance to young Christians (perhaps even a future minister!) who are beginning libraries that are meant to be wisely-chosen and useful tools for a lifetime.

Keeping in mind the principle that a minister's treasure, including the treasure of expositions of the Word of God, includes "things new and old," I have selected some of each as I offer you my selection. In every case they are chosen as books that I have found "tried and true" to help me both as a Christian and as a pastor.

If I'm moving to a mission field and I can only have five commentaries (no full sets, please, they are simply too large to carry!), what would they be?

First on my list would be Charles Bridges' *Commentary on Proverbs* (Banner of Truth Trust).

While current Semitic research has no doubt enhanced our understanding of everything from "conies" to "strong drink," no findings have been so significant that they would outdate this 19th century pastor's compilation of exposition, parallel references, quotations from earlier writers, and just plain sagacity and Christian wisdom. The footnotes alone are a library in themselves. And all of this comes in a package that brings Christ and the Gospel to the forefront without resorting to allegorizing. I would not want to be without Pastor Bridges exhorting and challenging me,

and that he does in this masterpiece.

Second (with a bit of cheating since the commentary is in three volumes) would be Charles Spurgeon's *The Treasury of David* (MacDonald Publishing Company). Jesus spoke of all the things "written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms" concerning Himself, cf. Luke. 24:44. If I couldn't have helps for the first two of these portions of the Old Testament, I would certainly want something that treats the Psalms, and nothing even comes close to Spurgeon (and the hundreds of other writers that he cites in the "Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings" which follow Spurgeon's own expository notes on each Psalm). Here again Christ and the Gospel are

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central as Psalm after Psalm is opened up by the “Prince of Preachers”. Yes, there are some weeds and a little bad fruit in this garden of exposition, but what a delight it is to smell the various flowers of devotional commentary, to study the stalks and buds and roots of exegetical remarks on words and phrases, and to eat the sweet fruit of the promises of God which are ripe for the picking on every page of this delightful set.

Third on my list (with a little more cheating, since these are also multi-volume works) are Bishop J.C. Ryle’s *Expository Thoughts On The Gospels* (Banner of Truth Trust). In these 19th century gems, as in the ones above, are pithy, insightful applications of the well-outlined Gospel narratives, as well as a compilation of exegetical notes showing the author’s familiarity with various schools of interpretation and theology. Many a time these precious volumes have helped me know how to open a passage of the Gospels and make applications which otherwise I would have missed. If I could only take Bishop Ryle’s treatment of one Gospel it would be the one on Luke (my favorite Gospel, and—I think—the best of this series by Ryle), but if I could make the space I’d surely try to pack the one volume each on Matthew and Mark, and the three on John, too.

Since my tiny commentary library (now marked by the writings of two Anglicans and a Baptist!) would hardly adorn my Presbyterian convictions, fourth on my list would be Professor John Murray’s *The Epistle To The Romans* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company). Yes, I know this has been updated by the two volumes by Cranfield, but Cranfield just isn’t Murray! Professor Murray’s exegetical and interpretative precision is a model I would want to follow as a pastor, and this volume is simply the best example of the precision that made Professor Murray the revered theologian that he was. How easy it is to go off track making our way through the rich

summary of the Gospel given in Romans. Wherever I am, I want Professor Murray’s steady hand directing me.

And last of all would be anything by William Hendricksen (*Commentaries on Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans, Galatians & Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy & Titus* all published by the Banner of Truth Trust). I’m not at all surprised when I see Hendricksen’s superb commentaries on the shelves of pastors in some of the most remote areas of the world. Here is Reformed theology at its best coupled with lucid treatments of some of the most difficult passages, concise summaries of the range of interpretation in controverted points, technical linguistic notes, and suggested applications all in one volume!

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If I could take all of Hendricksen’s commentaries I would, but give me at least one!

There’s my list! I’d be interested to know what yours would be. It’s helpful to keep us away from the worst if we will take a bit of time to ask ourselves what is really the best!

A postscript: Most of us are not limited to just five commentaries! For some excellent guidance in purchasing numbers six and beyond, you will do well to get *Old Testament Commentary Survey* by Tremper Longman III (now in the second edition) and *New Testament Commentary Survey* by D.A. Carson (now in the fourth edition) both published by Baker Books.

For some insightful and frequently humorous comments on older commentaries get a copy of Charles Spurgeon’s *Commenting and Commentaries* which has been reprinted by various publishers.

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# Elders in Pastoral Visitation

by Tim Worrell

The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America enjoins upon sessions their duty of inquiring “into the knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the church members under its care...” (BCO 12-5). The Book of Church Order further states in paragraph 8-3 that, “It belongs to the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to their charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein.” In Acts 20:28, Paul commanded the Ephesian elders/overseers, both teaching and ruling to “shepherd” or “pastor” their flock of God. Shepherding requires intimacy with the people of God, and this cannot be accomplished solely on the Sabbath day. Elders must not only be willing to show hospitality to the people committed to their charge, but visit them in their homes as well. Paul himself affirmed that he “kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.”

In our day pastoral visitation has become a much neglected duty among elders, but it has not always been so. Pastoral visitation has a long standing tradition with the Reformed churches. In 1648 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland ordained that every elder should have a district assigned to him which he was to visit regularly and report to the session any scandals and abuses found in it. Pastoral visitation as it was practiced among our Puritan and Presbyterian forefathers was viewed as a stewardship from God, and was performed out of love for the brethren. It also was spiritual in its focus and was carried out in dependence on God.

If we are to be faithful in this duty of pastoral visitation we must first be gripped with the fact that the Chief Shepherd has given us a stewardship in which He expects, yes, demands, faithfulness. The writer of the books of Hebrews, in seeking to buttress his plea for church members to obey and submit to their rulers, states that the rulers “watch for your souls as they must give account” (Heb. 13:17). When we recognize that we have been given a trust by God, our efforts will be to please God and not men. The Apostle Peter exhorts elders to “Feed the flock of God,” promising that faithfulness to the task would ensure their reception of a crown of glory at the Chief Shepherd’s appearance (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Secondly, the people under our care must be dear to us. We must be willing to impart to the sheep not only the gospel of God, but also our very own souls. The flock

must see this love demonstrated in sincere affection and gentleness toward them (1 Thess 2:7,8). As David Dickson has written, “much of our usefulness will lie in not only knowing the wants, natural and spiritual, of our people, but in having that heart-sympathy with them which will make us open our hearts to them, and will lead them to open their minds and hearts to us in return.” When the sheep see our love for them they will more willingly accept our reproof (Prov. 27:5-6). Richard Baxter said it well when he stated, “Most men judge of the counsel, as they judge of the affection of him that gives it.”

Thirdly, our desire for those under our care must be that they would walk worthy of God, who has called them unto His kingdom and glory. To that end we must speak God’s Word to them, exhorting, comforting, and charging them as a father his own children (I Thess 2:11-12). Samuel Miller exhorted regarding pastoral visitation, “Let there be as much of heavenly wisdom, of solid instruction, and or solid impressive exhortation as you can possibly crowd into the time allotted.” Our visits with our sheep should not be merely social visits. The intent of our visits should be to build up the brethren. Our teaching should demonstrate integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech which cannot be condemned (Titus 2:8).

Lastly, we must carry out our duty in the recognition that without Christ we can do nothing. In our attempt to present every man perfect in Christ, we must labor as the Apostle Paul, “striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col 1:29). Not only must we ask the Lord to bless our feeble efforts to communicate God’s truth to our sheep, we also must pray fervently that our sheep would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col 4: 12).

Many in our churches recognize the need for deeper fellowship and accountability among the brethren. We need no new programs in the church for this task. Let us return to the Biblical model of pastoral visitation practiced by our Puritan and Presbyterian forefathers.

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# F E E D B A C K

by the Editor

We received a letter recently which is too long to reproduce here in its entirety. But the substance of it was to question the notion that godly men may serve as elders even if they are not married. This view was set forth a recent Ordained Servant in A. A. Allison's articles on qualifications for the offices of elder and deacon. The letter similarly questions Rev. Allison's statement to the effect that a man is not necessarily a requirement for office in the church that a man's children all be believers.

Let me respond by quoting the classic exposition of John Calvin (who, in turn, cites that of John Chrysostom). Says Calvin: "The only true exposition...is that of Chrysostom, that in a bishop he expressly condemns polygamy,<sup>1</sup> which at that time the Jews almost reckoned to be lawful. This corruption was borrowed by them partly from the sinful imitation of the Fathers, (for they who read that Abraham, Jacob, David, and others...were married to more wives than one at the same time, thought that it was lawful for them also..., and partly from neighbouring nations; for the inhabitants of the East never observed that conscientiousness and fidelity in marriage which was proper...Polygamy was exceedingly prevalent among them; and therefore with great propriety does Paul enjoin that a bishop should be free from this stain."

Monogamy was, of course, the divine ordinance from the beginning. But what was to be done with those who were already involved in polygamy when they were brought into the apostolic Church? Well, says Calvin, "what had been once done, and could not be corrected, he reluctantly endures, but only in the common people. For what was the remedy for those who, under Judaism, had fallen into the snare of polygamy? Should they have divorced their second and third wives? Such a divorce would not have been free from doing wrong.

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<sup>1</sup>"That he condemns in a bishop the having of two wives living at the same time."

Since, therefore, the deed was done, and could not be undone, he left it untouched, but with this explanation, that no bishop should be blemished by such a stain." I believe this to be the correct understanding because—like all valid interpretation of Scripture—it does full justice to the historical situation as well as the biblical context.

One thing further: as I understand 1 Cor. 7:8 the apostle Paul was not married. Yet we know that Peter was (1 Cor. 9:5). And while it is true that we are not apostles, it is also true that Peter claimed the office of elder (1 Pet. 5:1). I can see no reason to deny the same with respect to Paul since he is very insistent that he is "not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). It is for this reason that I've never felt the slightest need to question the claim of such men as J. Gresham Machen and John Murray to the office of elder (though the latter, of course, finally married).

With respect to the children of elders is not the point simply this: that the whole family of the elder—all who live in his household—are in due subjection to his authority so that they live as Christians? When one of Abraham's sons manifested rebellion Abraham sent him away. I knew an excellent elder who did the same (and, in that case, the discipline brought later change). But the point is that the man must not allow anyone to remain in his home who does not submit to the yoke of the Christian. I do not see that this can be rightly understood in such a way as to make even such godly men as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob unfit for the office of elder.

And now one final (and perhaps most important) point. None of this is written with the idea that we need no reformation. It is my opinion that the modern church has been far too lax in upholding these requirements. But that does not change the fact that we see is no compelling reason at all to dissent from the view of the great Reformer.