

# Missions

Ordained Servant

May 2023



# *Ordained Servant Online*

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**May 2023**

### *From the Editor*

Variations in human perspective often surprise us. Marcus Mininger's "The Epistle to the Romans: Profound Theology and Ethics for the Sake of Missions" looks at Romans from a different vantagepoint, as a missionary document, without diminishing its theological importance. It was originally preached at the installation of Rev. Bruce H. Hollister to be Regional Home Missionary of the Presbytery of the Midwest. It is especially intriguing because Mininger demonstrates the importance of mature life and theology as a prerequisite for healthy mission work.

I present chapter 4 of my book *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the primacy of preaching in the Bible and church history. Chapter 4 presents a church historical overview. Next month I will begin part 2 (chapters 5–8) of the series, "The Good Shepherd Speaks Today," chapter 5, "God's Medium: Tongues of Fire." The hubris of post-Enlightenment modernity leads us to believe that electronic means are always superior; thus, Christians and their leaders need to be encouraged to highly value live pastoral preaching, i.e., the regular preaching in the local church.

David VanDrunen capably tackles the question of the place of public aid for Christians and churches in "Christians, Churches, and Public Aid, Part 2," where he specifically looks at ecclesiastical responsibilities and pastors.

Alan D. Strange continues his "Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church" with chapter 4C dealing with the rules of trial proceedings in judicial cases.

An Older Elder presents us with another letter to a younger ruling elder. "The Elder's Wife" asserts the importance of maintaining a strong marriage relationship for married elders. These letters would be worth reading aloud at session meetings or shared in print with younger elders.

I rarely publish anonymous articles or reviews; *Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church* is an exception to protect the safety of the author. Anonymity is necessary for the protection of all missionaries serving in countries where the government is hostile to their endeavors. This review fits well with the theme of the May issue of *New Horizons*.

Cynthia Rowland reviews a wonderful children's book, *The Best Day of the Week*, encouraging young people to delight in the Lord's Day.

In important news the board of trustees of Great Commission Publications is seeking a new executive director as Mark Lowery intends to retire after his many years developing the Sunday School curriculum along with many other publications, and in recent years guiding this joint venture between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America through the difficult years of the pandemic.

Our poem this month is “Virtue” by George Herbert (1593–1633). It is composed in one of my favorite forms, the heroic or interlaced quatrain. It may at first seem morbid, until the final stanza reminds us that the first three are building a contrast to accentuate the beauty and solidity of human virtue. It also reminded me of Psalm 15 in which we are shown the perfection required to dwell on the holy hill of Yahweh, a perfection found only in Christ, but toward which we are enjoined to aspire.

The cover photo is of several ruined columns of the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Rome, Italy. I took the photo in 2020. The twin gods figurehead on Paul’s Alexandrian ship mentioned in Acts 28 is of Castor and Pollux, “After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead” (Acts 28:11).

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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*Ordained Servant* exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.



# Servant Word

## The Epistle to the Romans: Profound Theology and Ethics for the Sake of Missions<sup>1</sup>

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By Marcus A. Mininger

My sermon text tonight is in some ways the entire book of Romans, because what we will be reflecting on is the relation between the content of Romans and its stated purpose. The former of these is in many ways quite familiar to us in our tradition. Yet the latter is significantly less so, I believe, and this is why we have read Romans 1:1–17 and 15:14–33, since those passages frame the entire body of the letter and also comment directly on Paul’s reason for writing it.

The book of Romans is such a heavily used book of the Bible in our Protestant tradition. I wonder what mainly comes to your mind when you think of it.

I am sure most of us here tonight can mentally scan through much of the theological content of Romans without effort, from its opening announcement of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation for all who believe in 1:16–17; to its memorable description of natural revelation and God’s wrath in 1:18–32; to key prooftexts regarding total depravity (3:10–18), universal sinfulness (3:23), propitiation (3:25–26), and justification by faith alone (4:4–5); to its magisterial federal theology in 5:12–21; to its clear insistence that justification should not lead to antinomianism (ch. 6) yet that the Law itself is also unable to sanctify us (ch. 7); to the great conflict between flesh and Spirit as well as rich reflections on Christian assurance and future hope (ch. 8); to its stalwart depiction of God’s sovereignty in election and reprobation (ch. 9); to its insistence on one way of salvation for Jews and Gentiles throughout chapters 9–11 and elsewhere; to its clear description of the legitimacy of civil government and of Christian submission to it (ch. 13); and to perhaps the clearest description we have of adiaphora in ethics (chs. 14–15). These are the kinds of things we go to Romans for and the things that most readily come to mind when we think of this letter, all of which are a wonderful provision to the church.

Yet tonight I want to ask if when you think of Romans you also typically think of another topic that I did not mention so far, which is the topic of missions. There is a good chance that you do not.

We are here tonight to install a new Regional Home Missionary, the Reverend Bruce Hollister, for the Presbytery of the Midwest. And as we do this, I want us to reflect together on how Romans, one of the most theologically robust books in all of Scripture, is itself indelibly and throughout its pages a missionary document as well, that is, a

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a lightly revised version of a sermon preached at the installation of Rev. Bruce H. Hollister to be Regional Home Missionary of the Presbytery of the Midwest on April 9, 2021.

document written in order to prepare for, make possible, and guide a new missionary endeavor to an unreached part of the ancient world, namely Spain. As we think about this, I hope we will be impressed by the biblical phenomenon of the letter to the Romans and appreciate how this rich, nuanced, profound, lengthy theological document is all of those things precisely for the express purpose of facilitating missions within the church of Jesus Christ. In this way, Romans joins two things that the church has typically had a difficult time holding together and has sometimes even regarded as in conflict with each other, namely, deep, nuanced theology and missionary outreach.

The passages we read this evening are, for the most part, not among the most well-known or well-used texts of Romans (apart from 1:16–17, which we included with the rest of the letter's introduction). Yet at the same time, these passages are also among the most important for interpreting Romans. We would all generally agree that knowing who wrote something, when, to whom, and why is crucial to rightly understanding what a person wrote and its significance. And yet perhaps nowhere in Scripture are such details more frequently and systemically eclipsed than with Romans, which people routinely take as something of an abstract, situationless theological treatise. But as the last five decades of scholarship on Romans have emphasized, viewing Romans as a generalized, situation-unspecific treatise is inadequate. While Romans is theologically very deep, it is also not generalized, abstract, or context-free. It is, instead, very pastorally guided all throughout, and as we want to reflect on tonight, specifically with an eye to missions.

The fact that Romans is a missionary document is indicated by many things in the letter, but especially by our passages in Romans 1 and 15. When we look closely at these sections, we should notice an extended set of verbal and thematic parallels between the passages. This includes references to:

- (1) The “gospel of God” (an unusual phrase for Paul, found in 1:1 and 15:16)
- (2) The distinct grace given to Paul to serve the Gentiles (1:5 and 15:15–16)
- (3) The specific purpose of this ministry to the Gentiles, to bring about their obedience (1:5; 15:18)
- (4) Paul's awareness of the strength of the Roman churches (1:8; 15:14)
- (5) Paul's desire to visit the Romans (1:11; 15:23)
- (6) Explanation of Paul's absence from Rome previously (1:13; 15:22)
- (7) Paul's desire to impart something to the Romans, but also clearly to receive something in return (notice a progressive heightening of terms in 1:11–12; 15:15, 23, 28, 32, which eventually come to clearly include a desire to receive financial help from Rome)
- (8) Concern for the hope of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles and for the defense of God's uprightness in giving salvation to both (1:16–17; 15:8–12)
- (9) Paul's commitment to minister to all kinds of peoples, including barbarians (1:14) and the Spanish (15:24, 28), whom people in Rome would have viewed as a chief example of barbarians

Taken together, all these parallels between Romans 1 and 15 comprise an elaborate, multi-faceted inclusio around the body of the entire letter, and in the ancient world such an inclusio functions as a kind of heading, saying, “Everything in between these references should be read in connection with what is mentioned in them.” In other words,

Paul's composition of Romans, which features both the longest introductory section in all his letters and the longest concluding section in all of his letters (including ch. 16), frames the entirety of the letter around numerous key themes, in relation to which we should read the letter's central content.

And when we notice these cues that Paul provides for reading the letter, what do we see? Not only that the content of Romans must be read in light of the situation described in this *inclusio*, but also more particularly that there is really one main purpose why Paul writes to Rome, along with three subordinate goals that help support this main purpose.

On the one hand, then, the main reason that Paul writes to the Romans is his desire to have them help him travel to Spain to extend the gospel to an unreached people group there. While many statements in Romans 1 and 15 (and elsewhere) communicate this purpose indirectly, Paul also states the matter directly in 15:23–24:

But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

Then, not to be unclear, he reiterates the same idea again in 15:28— “When therefore I have completed this [impending trip to Jerusalem] and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.”

On the other hand, though, as we read Romans, we also need to see that, in addition to this main purpose of beginning to gain support for a Spanish mission, there are at least three other significant obstacles to this, which Paul must surmount if he is truly to win the Romans' support for this cause and if that support is truly to prove helpful in the ways needed. These three obstacles, evident within the letter, create three additional, subordinate purposes that Paul also seeks to accomplish in Romans, which could be stated as follows.

First, the Romans lack clear, accurate knowledge about Paul's message. This is partly due to his never having visited them before (1:10–15; 15:22), but it is compounded by the existence of strong criticisms of Paul's preaching, which 3:7–8 show the Romans knew about. In response, Paul sets out to introduce crucial aspects of his teaching in a way that will also overcome misperceptions spread by others and so enable the Romans to want to support him. Among other things, Paul's effort to introduce his teaching to the Romans helps explain the broad number of topics Romans addresses, while his effort to defend himself helps explain the surprisingly negative, apologetic beginning of his theme statement for the letter in 1:16— “For I am not ashamed of the gospel . . .”

Second, the Romans lack internal unity. Chapters 14–15 especially show how the church in Rome was experiencing significant internal division, with so called “weak” Christians judging the “strong” and the “strong” despising the “weak.” Regardless of the specific source of the division in Rome, a significantly divided church is certainly not a very stable one for sending and supporting a missionary. In addition, the specific topic that divides the Romans concerns what foods to eat and days to observe or not. Most scholars conclude (rightly, in my view) that this division revolves around whether Christians should continue to follow certain distinctively Jewish practices, or not, and so connects closely to the question of Jew-Gentile relations—precisely the kind of

controversy that could undermine a future mission to Gentiles in Spain. In addition to introducing and defending his maligned gospel to the Romans in general, then, Paul also needs to help the Roman churches have greater internal unity by explaining a gospel that is for Jews first as well as Greeks, the nature of Israel's place within redemptive history, and the nature and limits of the continuing applicability of the Law.

Third, the Roman church was steeped in the externalism and competitive hierarchicalism of their culture. Here we must think not only about the Romans' relation to Paul or to each other but of their prospective relation to any future converts in Spain too. We can remember that Paul is not only concerned for the topic of Jew-Gentile relations in Romans but also with Gentile-Gentile relations, or particularly as he notes in 1:14 that he is under obligation to go not only to wise Gentiles, like the Greeks, but also to the comparatively foolish ones, which he calls barbarians. We can remember here that wisdom in the ancient world is always correlated with ability or power, and so the Romans, who were at the center of the ancient world in the first century, would naturally see themselves occupying a position of superiority compared to others, and especially to ignorant, unsophisticated peoples in the provinces Rome had conquered. If the Roman Christians cannot even accept each other without major divisions, how could they be in a position to reach out to, accept, and have fellowship in one body with converts from the unwashed masses to be found in an uneducated and uncouth backwater like Spain? For this to be done, they must give up external comparisons and hierarchically competitive ways of viewing other people, which would prevent them either from wanting to reach the Spanish or from being anything other than condescending and divisive with those Paul reached.

On close reflection, then, we ought to read Romans in relation to both the one overarching purpose of missions and these three subordinate purposes that connect to it. Moreover, as we read the letter, we can see again and again how each of these subordinate purposes is repeatedly being addressed.

For example, regarding introduction and self-defense, we not only see that Paul begins his letter on a remarkably defensive note in 1:16, but he also subsequently goes to great lengths to show how his theology does not implicate God in unfairness in 2:11; 3:6; and 21–26, how justification by faith alone does not in fact undermine the importance of Abraham (ch. 4) or of Christian obedience (ch. 6), and how Paul has not forsaken but continues to try to reach his kindred according to the flesh (ch. 9). Clearly, Romans is designed to defend Paul's gospel in a variety of ways.

Similarly, regarding internal unity, Paul not only claims that the gospel is God's power for the Jew first and also the Greek (1:16), but he also goes on to address the objections of a Jewish teacher proclaiming circumcision in 2:17–29, shows God's equal treatment of Jews and Gentiles in both sin and salvation in Romans 3, addresses the peculiar place of the Jewish people within redemptive history throughout Romans 9–11, enjoins unity of diverse parts within the one body of Christ in Romans 12, and directly addresses weak and strong in Romans 14–15.

Or again regarding externalism and hierarchicalism, Paul not only describes a mission to all kinds of Gentiles (1:14–15) but also addresses a variety of ways in which visible distinctions between different groups of people are not a basis for confidence. He shows how God's observable patience with some people's sins is only temporary in 2:1–11, how the Jew is properly defined by something hidden not something visible in 2:17–29, how



Abraham was justified before not after he was circumcised in Romans 4, how the hope of God's people is not presently visible and will only be revealed at the resurrection in Romans 8, how not all Israel according to the flesh was truly of Israel spiritually in Romans 9, and how it is neither the outward distinction of abstaining from foods nor the outward distinction of eating those same foods that accomplishes God's purposes in Romans 14. After all, the kingdom of God is not in fact of eating or drinking but of the invisible, spiritual realities of righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit (14:17). Throughout the letter, Paul, therefore, instills a theology of the cross that undermines externalism and all forms of this-worldly hierarchicalism.

In these and other ways, then, detail after detail of Romans makes clear that we understand Romans best when we read it as an effort to transform the Roman church's relations to Paul, to each other, and to the assumptions of the culture around them—all for the sake of missions.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, in order to become an effective part of supporting a mission to Spain, the Roman church would need to think rightly. In fact, it would need to be transformed by the renewing of its mind (12:2). In other words, it needed sound theology and ethics, or else the mission that Paul planned would either never start or would eventually be imperiled. Put differently, Romans demonstrates how the missionary endeavors of the church must be funded and supported by deep theological interest, nuance, and precision, of just the sort that the letter provides.

Why? Well, among other reasons, because missionary efforts are something we engage in actively, and everything we do and how we do it is always predicated on our view of ourselves, the Lord, and others. In other words, missions, as with the rest of life, is inescapably and deeply theological, whether we know it or not.

Our options, then, are to be acting out a theology that is insufficient, reductionistic, unnuanced, or just plain wrong and so not be able to have proper unity internally or proper engagement with unbelievers externally, or else to be more thoroughly and deeply biblical in our beliefs, seeking to have and make use of all the resources that Romans and the rest of Scripture provide us in order to know how to be the church and seek to reach a lost world. In other words, to serve the gospel of God properly, our theologizing should have clarity, precision, and depth for the sake of cordial unity in the inward functioning of the church and in proper outward expansion.

It is not mere coincidence, then, that the single greatest missionary of the apostolic church was clearly also one of its greatest—probably its very most influential—theologian.

Similarly, we can also be thankful, as we reflect on our own context, for the great theological resources and heritage we possess as Reformed believers and as members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ours is certainly a heritage steeped in theological care. And it is not despite this but because of it that we should be enabled in a particular way to do missions.

We can therefore be encouraged tonight to remember afresh the synergy—the necessary and inescapable synergy—between theology and missions. The missionary endeavor, whether overseas or here, is always among other things a conflict of worldviews, between the Christian faith in all its detail and unbelief in its varied forms. How will we navigate that conflict and address exactly what each alternative, non-

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<sup>2</sup> This general approach to reading the entirety of Romans as an integrated whole is helpfully articulated by Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

believing worldview offers if we do not have deep and carefully crafted theology ourselves? In fact, Reformed theology, more consistently than any other Christian tradition, has a detailed and all-embracing biblical worldview to offer, not least because of the long-standing impact that books like Romans, Hebrews, and many others have had on it.

In fact, this is part of what J. Gresham Machen and others understood when they first formed the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions and then later founded the OPC itself and its missions committees. Contrary to the pragmatism of the mainline church of that time, the missionary endeavor is not a place for compromise or for watering down the distinctives of Scripture so that unbelief is left partly intact or less than fully challenged, uprooted, and replaced by the all-embracing claims of Jesus Christ.

In addition, we must remember that missions always require great sacrifice from the church and a willingness to love others who are outsiders or foreigners to our own experience. How will we want to do that? How will we know how and how not to do that? How will we know what is essential and what is optional? Romans shows that this is no easy, shallow task; it is one that can easily be misunderstood. We need the depths of Romans's own theology, then, in order to be properly informed and equipped as a church for this task.

We, therefore, must see clearly that what the broader church often sees in competition, namely theology and missions, we should see as closely, cordially intertwined and interdependent. And we should be encouraged by the richness of the theological heritage that we have, drawn in no small measure from Romans. Yet we should also be challenged to ask ourselves afresh in every generation of the OPC whether we have indeed embraced the cordial relation between theology and missions as we should. Does a tension between theology and missions continue to exist in our midst in any measure? Is our cordial commitment to deep and nuanced theology at a high or a low ebb as individuals and as a presbytery? And what about regarding missions? It is fair to say, I think, that the Presbytery of the Midwest is known for effective outreach and expansion. Is it also equally known for its interest in theological depth? And similar questions can and should be asked by every other OPC presbytery about itself as well. Does beautifully detailed and deep theology fuel missions? And does a desire for missions sponsor extended effort to articulate and defend beautifully detailed and deep theology, just as in Romans?

No doubt there are many forces at work in the world around us that would seek to chip away at and undermine our commitment to theological depth and precision as well as to missions. We live in a day of unparalleled distraction, technologically and otherwise. It is easy to feel we do not have time for deep theological study or for engaging theological controversy. We live in a day where people outside the church are increasingly unfamiliar with even the basics of the Christian message, making outreach and discipleship even more energy intensive than it has been in recent memory. It is easy to feel weary or overwhelmed, is it not? We also live in a day of increasingly aggressive and high-profile opposition to Christian truths. Particularly in our Midwestern context, where disagreement and conflict are generally avoided, these features of life today could challenge our theological resolve. Or, looking in the opposite direction, they could challenge our resolve to engage in missions instead.

Yet in the face of these great challenges, may the magisterial letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans both encourage and challenge us afresh to remain committed to and even to relish in the synergy between profound, nuanced theology and God's mission to a lost and dying world. May we continue to value our rich theological heritage as we should and to pursue missions zealously, precisely on that theological basis and nothing less, as we should. And may we particularly be strengthened in the gospel itself, with all the detail that Romans and other parts of Scripture use to describe and defend it. For that gospel, regarding a Savior crucified and resurrected for us, who is received by faith alone, and who transforms lives with a heavenly hope, is indeed the sole power of God unto salvation, a power that can even bring hedonistic, profligate, willful Gentiles like ourselves to the submission of faith, the assurance of sonship, the transformation of ethics, and the ultimate glory that awaits in the future. May we be strengthened, unified, and directed by this letter then, brothers and sisters, as we engage the great missionary task both within the boundaries of our own presbytery and beyond, unto God's glory alone. Amen.

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# ServantLiving

## Christians, Churches, and Public Aid, Part 2

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by David VanDrunen

### Public Aid and Ecclesiastical Responsibilities

The previous subsection argued that the responsibility of individuals and families to care for themselves does not, in and of itself, prohibit Christians from accepting public aid. This new subsection considers a related question: does the *church's* responsibility to care for its needy members imply that it should provide all the assistance they require and should thus advise needy members to refuse public assistance?

The following discussion takes a couple of things for granted without argument. First, the church has a weighty yet wonderful responsibility to care for its needy members. Its generosity in doing so is profoundly Christlike (e.g., 2 Cor. 8:9). Second, the church's ministry is fundamentally independent of the legitimate work of civil government. Presbyterian and most other Reformed churches have quite rightly rejected Erastianism.<sup>1</sup>

These two important truths do not provide a neat and simple solution to the question, however. For one thing, corporate bodies other than the church have obligations toward their own needy members. This is obviously true with respect to families. It is also true for the political community. Even a government merely seeking to perform its bare-minimum function of providing justice for victims of violence must be specially attentive to the needy, who are generally the most vulnerable and easily overlooked members of society. And since many needy people are members of multiple corporate bodies, it is far from obvious that the responsibilities of one body (such as the church) eliminate the responsibilities of another (such as the government). For another thing, while church and state are properly independent, they still interact and have mutual interests in this world. If someone vandalizes a church building or threatens people with a gun in the church parking lot, both the church and the civil government have an interest in redressing the situation. The church calls the police and requests assistance. Of course, there are more difficult cases. The Covid-19 pandemic created situations of conflict between the government's jurisdiction over public health and safety and the church's jurisdiction over its worship. In a complicated world, cases of conflict or at least potential conflict arise. Jurisdictions potentially overlap.

What, then, about care for the needy? We might begin by considering whether the church's independence from the state requires the church to refuse all benefits from service-

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<sup>1</sup> People often use the term "Erastianism" loosely. I use it here to designate the denial of the church's spiritual authority, independent of the civil magistrate, to govern her own affairs and carry out her ministry. For an example of Reformed engagement with and rejection of Erastianism, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 3, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997), 274–81.



provision government functions. The answer is clearly negative. The church takes advantage of government-provided roads as its members drive to worship on Sundays, and it calls on government-funded firefighters if a blaze breaks out in its building. Such cases are relatively uncomplicated, since Christ does not call his church to build roads or fight fires. But Christ does call his church to provide diaconal aid for its needy, so we need to inquire further about issues regarding public aid.

Most Reformed churches (in the United States) already accept some government benefits that support its diaconal work, indirectly but substantially. They do so by embracing the legal status of being a charitable organization. Churches are exempt from property taxes, and its members can write off their donations from their income taxes. Churches also typically designate part of their pastors' remuneration as housing allowance, which is tax exempt. Such benefits stretch the resources of the church beyond what they would otherwise be. At the very least, churches that accept such favorable tax status should be mindful of potential inconsistency if they insist on the impropriety of their needy members accepting public aid.

But to focus the question before us: Does the church neglect its obligation to care for its needy members if it permits or even encourages them to accept public aid? 1 Timothy 5:3–16 indicates that this is not the case. This text provides the most detailed New Testament instructions about the church's care for its needy.

1 Timothy 5 focuses on care for widows. It is not surprising that the early church's greatest diaconal needs arose among this group (cf. Acts 6:1), given widows' special vulnerability in the socio-economic setting of that day, as in many other times. But widows then and now are not the only vulnerable group. We might think, for example, of how often the Old Testament classed widows alongside orphans and sojourners. The principles of 1 Timothy 5 are surely applicable for other needy members too.

One of the prime principles of 1 Timothy 5 is that the church is *not* to be provider of first resort for its members' needs.<sup>2</sup> Paul refers three times to those who are *truly* (*ontōs*, ὄντως) widows (5:3, 5, 16), those who are “left all alone” (5:5). These are the widows the church should support. Young widows should generally secure their own care by remarrying (5:14), and Christians who have widows in their family should provide their care (5:4, 8, 16). Paul's final statement in this discussion seems to capture the main point: “Let the church not be burdened (*bareisthō*, βαρείσθω), so that it may care for those who are truly widows” (5:16).<sup>3</sup> Paul's concern about not burdening the church also emerges in 2 Thessalonians 3. He says he worked hard and refused remuneration for his ministry so that “we might not be a burden (*epibarēsa*, ἐπιβαρῆσαι) to any of you.” He did this as “an example to imitate” (3:8–9). These texts clearly obligate individuals and families to strive not to strain the church's finances. But 1 Timothy 5 also obligates the church to enforce this, as it were, by withholding support from those who are not actually in desperate straights (5:9–16).

This is a weighty moral-ecclesiastical concern with bearing on our question. Some Christians may be inclined to refuse public aid because of objection to government

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<sup>2</sup> As Robert W. Yarbrough puts it, “Church relief . . . should be the last and not the first resort.” See *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 284.

<sup>3</sup> As noted, e.g., in George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 231; and Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 358.

overreach and to expect diaconal help from the church instead. They should be sure they are taking seriously the biblical command not to burden the church unnecessarily. Objection to government overreach is a debatable personal judgment, but not burdening the church is a divinely-mandated obligation. Is one's personal political opinion of such moment that it justifies taking resources from the church that the church could use to meet the needs of fellow believers who have no other source of help? Likewise, a church inclined to provide for a member who refuses lawful public aid ought to weigh whether it is being faithful to 1 Timothy 5, insofar as such help depletes funds available for more desperate members.

Of course, 1 Timothy 5 speaks of *families'* obligation to help their own, not civil government's. The Christian community should not lose this emphasis upon familial responsibility. Yet the fact that Paul so stresses families' obligation to help their own demonstrates that the church's diaconal calling does not nullify the legitimacy of Christians receiving aid from outside the church. To be put it more sharply, this obligation of families demonstrates that the church's diaconal calling does not nullify the legitimacy of Christians receiving aid *from creation-order, common-grace institutions*. This is the sort of institution the family is (Gen 1:28; 2:22–24; 9:1, 7). It is worth noting that in 1 Timothy 5 Paul speaks of family obligations not as some uniquely Christian duty but as a *natural* duty binding upon and understandable to all people. The duty involves making “some return to their parents,” or *paying back recompense* (*amoibas apodidonai*, ἀμοιβὰς ἀποδιδόναι) to them (5:4). Parents raise their children, and as a matter of simple justice children should care for their parents in their own time of need. A Christian who fails to do this is “worse than an unbeliever” (5:8), which is to say, even unbelievers understand this principle of natural justice and typically follow it.<sup>4</sup>

In short, 1 Timothy 5 contradicts the idea that the church's obligation to help its needy members prohibits Christians from accepting aid from other sources. Paul appealed to the family's obligations to help its own needy members, but not because the family is a special redemptive institution. Paul's point was that the church's obligation toward its needy members does not cancel out *natural* obligations rooted in the orders of creation and/or common grace. Civil government is grounded in this natural order. This means, at least, that the church's obligation toward needy members is not sufficient reason for Christians to reject public aid.

## Pastors and Public Aid

One question remains: May *pastors* accept public aid? Another way to ask it is whether churches, as they fulfill the responsibility to support their pastors, should encourage or discourage them from accepting government assistance.

On the one hand, we should not think of ministers as a different kind of Christian who stand in fundamentally different relationship to civil society from other Christians. Reformed churches have rejected traditional Roman Catholic claims that their clergy are exempt from civil jurisdiction.<sup>5</sup> Pastors have all the legal liabilities of other citizens and have a right to vote and hold political opinions, although they must avoid getting engrossed

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<sup>4</sup> See similar comments in Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 221; and Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 345.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., see the argument in Turretin, *Institutes*, 3.258–68.

in public affairs (see 2 Tim. 2:4). So, at the most general level, there is no reason to conclude that pastors should not receive public aid that other Christians may receive.

On the other hand, a church's obligation to support its pastor is not identical to the church's obligation to support its needy members. While the church should only provide for genuinely needy members without other recourse, as considered above, the church should be the *primary* provider for its pastor. The church does not help its pastor when he becomes needy but remunerates him so he does not become needy in the first place. This is a very important ecclesiastical responsibility. It is wonderful that the OPC is committed to remunerating the ministers it calls so that they might be free from worldly care, in distinction from many churches that call ministers but require them to raise their own support. Hence, it is worth considering what implications this responsibility might have with respect to public aid.

1 Corinthians 9 provides the most detailed explanation of the obligation to remunerate pastors. Paul's main concern here is his *apostolic* ministry. But it becomes clear that what he says applies to all ministers of the Word, as captured in 9:14: "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." The presenting issue in 1 Corinthians 9 is the fact that Paul had not accepted remuneration from the Corinthian church. He defends both his right to receive remuneration and his right to decline it for the sake of the gospel. But his entire argument hinges on the general right of ministers to be compensated for their labors. Moreover, this general right does not depend on some special status of the church as the kingdom of Christ but instead rests on an ordinary natural-law reality. Let us consider a few of the details.

The principle that launches Paul's discussion about ministerial remuneration is implicit in 9:6: Paul and Barnabas, *as all other preachers*, have a right (*exousian*, ἐξουσίαν)<sup>6</sup> not to work (*mē ergazesthai*, μὴ ἐργάζεσθαι), that is, not to work beyond their gospel labors (though Paul had done so: 2 Thess. 3:8). The rationale follows: "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk" (1 Cor. 9:7)? This is not complicated or profound but a reality of the natural order. Workers can not devote themselves to service if they do not get compensated for it, and those who labor at something rightly claim a share of the profit. These are not theological claims but a moral argument *kata anthrōpon* (9:8, κατὰ ἄνθρωπον)—literally, according to man. Paul confirms his conclusion by appealing to the general equity of the Mosaic law (9:8–10; cf. 9:13) and then returns to natural principles of justice: ministers sow Spiritual things, so they rightly reap material things (9:11). Other ministers have this right and so also do Paul and Barnabas (9:12). Elsewhere Paul also cited a natural principle of justice when commanding ministerial remuneration: "The laborer deserves his wages" (1 Tim. 5:18; cf. Luke 10:7).

For present purposes, it is important to note that Paul does *not* claim that ministers' support must come from the church and from no other source. That cannot be the case, since Paul is so adamant to defend his decision not to receive support from the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 9:15–18). What, then, is Paul's claim? It is that *ministers who devote themselves to gospel proclamation have no obligation to engage in other remunerative employment*. They have a *right not to work* (9:6). If ministers accept public aid, there is no

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<sup>6</sup> On the translation of *exousia* here as "right" or "authority," cf. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 444.

violation of this right or transgression of Paul's moral concern in 1 Corinthians 9. This suggests that if a minister falls into need in the exigencies of life, it is just as valid for him to accept public aid as for any other Christian.

But what if a ministerial need arises not from the exigencies of life but as part of the church's own plan? For example, a church calls a minister and promises to support him so that he will be free from worldly care. But the terms of the call leave the minister below a certain income line, which makes his family eligible for public aid benefits, and he will be free from worldly care only if he accepts this. Is such a call consistent with the moral and ecclesiological considerations addressed thus far?

If the church can afford to provide its pastor with whatever benefit the public aid might otherwise provide, such a call is difficult to justify. As considered above, Christians have an obligation to work hard and support themselves if possible. No Christian should desire to be dependent financially on others. Why then would the church *want* to make its pastor dependent on the civil government?

But the situation is different if the church cannot in fact provide full support to a pastor. The alternative to asking the pastor to accept public aid may be to have no pastor at all. This is hardly an enviable situation, but it happens. 1 Corinthians 9 again provides insight. Paul's overarching zeal in this text is not about finances but about "winning" people (9:19) and "saving some" (9:22): "I do it all for the sake of the gospel" (9:23). Financial decisions should serve this end. It seems odd that a church would refuse to call a gospel-preaching minister in order to avoid having a minister who receives public aid. That would abandon the most important concern for the sake of upholding a subordinate concern.

As a final thought, I simply note that the government does not give such public aid to ministers *as ministers*, but simply as citizens. Support for indigent ministers is not a line-item on any American state's budget. Most American Reformed pastors are happy to receive the benefit of a tax-exempt housing allowance, and most Reformed churches are happy to incorporate this into their calculations about ministerial remuneration, yet this *is* tied to pastors' status as ministers. If it is permissible to accept this benefit from the government, which is direct assistance to the church, it is difficult to see why a poor church is prohibited from taking advantage of lawful indirect assistance when the alternative is an empty pulpit.

## Conclusion

Scripture does not directly address whether governments should give public aid or whether Christians may accept it. This should make believers cautious about offering dogmatic conclusions about these issues. This article has argued that even Christians who are generally skeptical about the propriety of public aid have morally legitimate reasons, on at least some occasions, to accept public aid and to approve of other Christians doing so. Individuals and families must be industrious and financially responsible, and the church should generously support needy members and their pastors. But the exegetical rationales for these important moral principles, in and of themselves, do not provide sufficient reason for Christians to reject public aid in times of genuine need. They may, in fact, provide weighty considerations for accepting it.

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# Servant Word

## The Voice of the Good Shepherd: The Primacy of Preaching: A Church Historical Overview,<sup>1</sup> Chapter 4

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By Gregory Edward Reynolds

*I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches.*

—C. H. Spurgeon<sup>2</sup>

*Anybody who keeps in mind the goals which the Reformation once set for itself can only be appalled at what has happened in the church of Luther and Calvin to the very thing which its fathers regarded as the source and spring of Christian faith and life, namely, preaching.*

—Helmut Thielicke<sup>3</sup>

*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

—2 Timothy 4:2

A brief survey of the church's history, subsequent to the apostolic era, demonstrates the centrality of preaching, even by the negative example of periods when preaching reached a low ebb. Much like observing a sick person nurtured back to health by returning to a good diet, so the church, whenever it experienced reformation and revival, can be seen to have returned to the preaching of the message of the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on Gregory E. Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 323–33.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon: The Early Years, 1834–1859*, A revised edition of his autobiography, originally compiled by his wife and private secretary (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), v.

<sup>3</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *The Trouble with the Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 1.

<sup>4</sup> The preacher should avail himself of the seven volumes of Hughes Oliphant Old's definitive history of preaching noted in chapter 1. Volumes 2–7 cover post-biblical history. Volume 2: *The Patristic Age*; Volume 3: *The Medieval Church*; Volume 4: *The Age of the Reformation*; Volume 5: *Moderatism, Pietism, and*

## The Ancient Church

The Ancient Church, despite all its weaknesses, was a preaching church. It was the great classically trained orators like Ambrose and Augustine who usually made the best preachers. They understood the power of public speech and consecrated their training and gifts to the service of the Lord. Ambrose asserted: “Everything we believe, we believe either through sight or through hearing. . . . Sight is often deceived, hearing serves as guarantee.”<sup>5</sup> During the first three centuries after the apostles, the sermon developed from an informal homily into a structured discourse.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest extant example of what preaching was like in the late first or early second century is actually a sermon, *The Second Epistle of Clement*, written to the Corinthians.<sup>7</sup> It is ethical, rather than doctrinal.<sup>8</sup> The *Didache*, a church order, probably from the same period, provides much indirect information about early post-apostolic preaching. “The second-oldest Christian sermon which has come down to us is an Easter sermon preached by Melito of Sardis” (ca. 130–ca. 190).<sup>9</sup> His gospel message in the context of the history of salvation is an example of an early attempt at explaining Old Testament typology.<sup>10</sup> Justin Martyr (ca. 100–ca. 165) provides a clearer example of preaching, as he left a description of worship. Notable is the dominance of orality. The Scriptures were read seriatim because the average person did not own a Bible. Prior to his conversion Martyr was a rhetorician, a philosopher, and a lecturer.<sup>11</sup> With Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215), we begin to see the unfortunate influence of the Alexandrian allegorical hermeneutic as well as the important apologetic emphasis on Christianity’s superiority to Pagan philosophy, which began with Justin Martyr.<sup>12</sup>

Bringing allegorical preaching to new heights, Origen (180–253) also brought an extensive biblical knowledge from his Christian upbringing into the pulpit.<sup>13</sup> “Origen’s preaching marks the change from the hortatory homily to the expository sermon, but his exposition was clouded by the allegorical method in interpreting Scripture.”<sup>14</sup> Tertullian (ca. 150–ca. 225) and Cyprian (200–258) exemplified the use of rhetorical training in expository preaching, the latter being known for his superb eloquence.<sup>15</sup> Athanasius (297–373) continued the emphasis on expository preaching, but with a strong doctrinal clarity honed in the noble battle with the Christological heresy of Arianism. Excelling him in stylistic brilliance were his fellow defenders of the faith and classically trained rhetoricians

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*Awakening*; Volume 6: *The Modern Age*; Volume 7: *Our Own Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967. Reprint, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 52.

<sup>6</sup> Harwood T. Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), 48.

<sup>7</sup> Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, vol. 1, 278.

<sup>8</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, vol. 1, 251–352. Old gives a full account of this period.

<sup>10</sup> Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 285ff.

<sup>11</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 50.

<sup>12</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 51–52.

<sup>13</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 52f.

<sup>14</sup> Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1960), s.v. “Preach, Preaching,” by Carl G. Kromminga.

<sup>15</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 54ff.

Basil (330–379) and Gregory Nazianzen (330–390).<sup>16</sup> Ambrose of Milan (340–397) brought his significant skills as politician and pleader to his preaching. The mantle of Ambrose was passed on to his justly more famous disciple Augustine of Hippo (354–430). An adult convert from Paganism and a widely acclaimed orator, he subordinated all his considerable natural gifts and worldly attainments to the service of his Savior. Noted as the greatest of ancient theologians, he was also the most popular and powerful preacher of his day.<sup>17</sup> His only equal in pulpit eloquence was Chrysostom (347–407). “John of the Golden Mouth” wrote the first extant treatise on homiletics. Notable is the directness of his application of Scripture to his congregation.<sup>18</sup> As we shall see, he was also more critical of ancient rhetoric than Augustine.

The ancient world’s love of rhetoric and the popular orator, led to excesses in the pulpit. It “often degenerated there into artificial rhetoric, declamatory bombast, and theatrical acting.” Many came to church, not to worship, but to hear the celebrated orator. The sermon was often punctuated by applause.<sup>19</sup> If we think the temptation to cast worship in the entertainment mode is unique to the modern world, we are mistaken. We simply have superior tools with which to cultivate this diabolical tendency.

Augustine and Chrysostom have left us with a large volume of sermons, which have been an inspiration to every generation of preachers. The modern preacher would do well to mine these treasures of pre-Gutenberg orality. What they lacked in theology, from a Reformation perspective, they amply made up for in pulpit power. They used the potency of the tongue, made effective by the Holy Spirit, to persuade thousands to bow before their heavenly Master’s throne. Of the primacy of preaching in the ancient church there can be no doubt. Preaching was the staple of the Christian life, and it was at the center of the public worship of the church, in an age where texts were rare and precious, and the Word was mainly received through ear gate.

## The Medieval Church

With the passing of Augustine and Chrysostom, the sun seemed to set on faithful and effective preaching. While it is accurate to say that there was an eclipse of preaching in medieval times, we must never forget that our Lord’s promise that the church, built on the solid rock of apostolic confession, will not be prevailed against even by hell itself. Thus, although the light of the Word grew dim, it was never entirely extinguished.<sup>20</sup> The upheaval caused by the fall of Rome brought a darkness to the culture in which the church lived, which is almost inconceivable to the modern mind. What replaced Roman civilization had more to do with the enervation of the pulpit than the upheaval itself. The Constantinian compromise had imposed Christianity on the empire. The church *was* Western civilization, and priestcraft grew to have little sense of the urgency of preaching. Such is the legacy of confusing cultus and culture.

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<sup>16</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 57ff.

<sup>17</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 62f.

<sup>18</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 63ff.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, (1910, Reprint Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 473.

<sup>20</sup> Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, vol. 3. Here is a rich harvest covering the Medieval period, usually dismissed by Reformed students of preaching, by a Reformed scholar, who is appreciative without being uncritical.

In the wake of clerical ignorance, King Charlemagne, with the help of Alcuin, commissioned the preparation of a book of vernacular homilies to be read in the churches.<sup>21</sup> This *Homiliarium* (ca. 780) was used widely in France. Augustine of Canterbury and Bede compiled similar books for the British church.<sup>22</sup> Ulfilas (311–381), Patrick (372–465), Columba (521–597), the Venerable Bede (673–735), and others like them brought the Good News with great effect to their own pagan European tribes.

There are not lacking incidental evidences that preaching never lost its hold on the people. The rules for the art, drawn up by Gregory the Great (pope from 590–604) were in use two hundred years after his time at the court of Charlemagne, and a century later yet, . . . they were translated for the benefit of clergy, by Alfred of England. In the estimation of Charlemagne, indeed, preaching seems to have been an essential part of the priest's office.<sup>23</sup>

He promoted the study of Scripture. In 813 the Councils of Mayence and Arles insisted on the priestly duty of preaching in every parish.<sup>24</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1151), of noble birth and noble piety, confessed: “this is constantly my highest philosophy, to know Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Luther called him “the golden preacher,” and Schaff pronounces him the “most brilliant luminary of the pulpit after the days of Gregory the Great.”<sup>25</sup> “The sermons were not written out, but delivered from notes or improvised after meditation in the convent garden.” The flavor of eternity, combined with “a vivid apprehension of the grace of God,” a love for his hearers, an intimate knowledge of Scripture, and “a faculty of magnetic description,” placed him in the first rank of preachers in all ages.<sup>26</sup> Among four surviving homiletical treatises of the period, Guibert of Nogent's *What Order a Sermon Should Follow* gives familiar advice about the importance of study and prayer in sermon preparation. Alanus ab Insulis's *Art of Preaching* counsels the need for humility and useful instruction to the end that attention will be drawn to the message and not the messenger.<sup>27</sup>

The mendicant orders provided some of the best preaching of the Medieval period. Interestingly, some of the greatest Scholastic minds of this era were known for their preaching, among whom are Albertus Magnus (ca. 1193–1280), Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–74), and Bonaventura (ca. 1217–74). Among the most acclaimed mendicants was Anthony of Padua (1195–1231). Preaching in the fields and public squares, he preached to thousands of ordinary people.<sup>28</sup> His first sermon was on Philippians 2:8, Christ “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” He was noted for staying close to the text of Scripture and exposing and rebuking sin with great effect. He

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<sup>21</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, 77.

<sup>22</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, 401.

<sup>23</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 89. Gregory the Great had said that teaching was “the art of all arts,” 78.

<sup>24</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 78.

<sup>25</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, 855.

<sup>26</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, 855.

<sup>27</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, 853.

<sup>28</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, 856f. Dominic founded the Order of Preachers in the late twelfth century.



was a friend of the poor and a thunderer from on high.<sup>29</sup> Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) embodies the best of the mendicant friar tradition. His gentle, giving, and gracious ways gave wings to the words he preached. He founded a school of preachers and spent his life seeking to win the world to Christ.<sup>30</sup>

Then, near the end of a period of relative darkness, shone a morning star presaging the dawning of a new day, John Wycliffe (1324–1384). His passion was to preach the glorious gospel to everyman—and that he did with great effect. Along with translating the Bible into the vernacular, he schooled and sent an order of preachers throughout the land.<sup>31</sup> Following in his noble train were John Huss (1369–1415) and Jerome of Prague (1375–1415), who “loved not their lives unto death” for preaching the heavenly kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

Sadly, much homiletical energy was devoted to the Crusades of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. Schaff records that “probably one-half of the priests in Germany in the twelfth century did not preach.”<sup>33</sup> However, the preaching of the Word never ceased.

It is important to note that in the absence of widespread literacy, as learning retreated into the monastery, the tendency to use visual aids, in the place of preaching for communication in the church, led to prevalent idolatry. Preaching and the Book upon which it is founded go hand in hand. Whenever the knowledge of the Bible recedes, preaching will suffer, and vice versa. In the Providence of God, the advent of printing in the mid-fifteenth century laid the communications groundwork for the Reformation and set the stage for a renaissance of interest in both preaching and the Book, first to be printed by Gutenberg in the mid fifteenth century.

## The Reformation Church

The Reformation restored preaching to its primacy in the life and worship of the church. This great movement of the Spirit of Christ was both caused by and characterized by a revival of preaching. “Both Luther and Calvin were convinced that, when the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed, God himself is heard by the listeners.”<sup>34</sup> In his commentary on Galatians, Luther asserted the centrality of the Word in contrast to idolatry: “All the highest religions, the holiness and most fervent devotions of those which do reject Christ the Mediator, and worship God without his word and commandment, are nothing else but plain idolatry.”<sup>35</sup> In order to deal with the ignorance of the clergy in the early days of the Reformation in England, two *Book of Homilies* were prepared by King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth, which reflected the doctrines of the Reformation.<sup>36</sup> The printing press proved a great blessing in providing good sermons to those who would otherwise have gone hungry. Significantly, these sermons were not printed for individual reading, but to be *read aloud*, in the oral tradition, in the churches.

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<sup>29</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 107ff.

<sup>30</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 102ff.

<sup>31</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 114ff.

<sup>32</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 118f.

<sup>33</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, 852.

<sup>34</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), s.v. “Preaching, Theology of.”

<sup>35</sup> Martin Luther, *A Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Reprint. 1891. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 526.

<sup>36</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, 401.

From the fiery Florentine Savonarola (1452–1498) and one of his famous hearers John Colet (1466–1519), who “became the first and most eminent expounder of the Bible in the University of Oxford.”<sup>37</sup> He influenced the army of Puritan preachers in the first half of the seventeenth century, and exists as a mighty testimony to the centrality and power of the preached Word. Martin Luther (1483–1546) was, of course, one of the greatest Reformation preachers. Intense personal conviction combined with keenness of mind and a down-to-earth rhetorical instinct caused the common person to hear him gladly. “His choice of words was fresh and natural; he had at command fancy, imagination, irony, sarcasm. The anecdote was always ready, the allegory revealed its hidden meaning as he used it, and he was a master of the plain speech needed for popular exposition.”<sup>38</sup> His spiritual power came from an intense love of Scripture as the very Word of God.

Space does not afford more than a passing mention of the other master preachers of the Magisterial Reformation. Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) saw preaching as the central work of the pastor of souls in Zurich. John Calvin’s (1509–1554) own view of the centrality of preaching is reflected in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which were framed under his influence:

The first part of the office of the pastor, says the *Ordinances*, is “to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort and censure, both in public and in private.” . . . Calvin will very frequently use the most definite language to assert that the preaching of the gospel is the Word of God. It is as if the congregation “heard the very words pronounced by God himself.” A man “preaches so that God may speak to us by the mouth of a man.”<sup>39</sup>

All of this was, of course, bounded by Scripture and the calling of the minister as an ambassador of Christ. So seriously did Calvin take this task that he frequently preached every single day of the week. He preached without notes and probably directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts.<sup>40</sup> Despite having a naturally reserved personality, he exercised rare freedom in the pulpit. “His manner of delivery was lively, passionate, intimate, direct and clear.”<sup>41</sup> One could hardly ask for a better model of preaching. Like Luther, he spoke in the vivid vernacular of the Genevese.<sup>42</sup> For Calvin the sermon itself was an act of worship as it engaged the congregation in the reality of redemption.<sup>43</sup>

No preacher is better remembered for his power in the pulpit than John Knox (1505–1572). He was utterly fearless in proclaiming Christ and humbling the princes, *and* princesses, of the realm. He was a model for countless other Scottish preachers of his day. In the best of times he thanked God that “the gospel of Jesus Christ is simply and truly preached throughout Scotland.”<sup>44</sup> Near the end of his life, in a condition so weakened that he could barely climb into the pulpit of Saint Andrews, it is said by one observer that “before he was done with his sermon he was so active and vigorous that he was like to ding

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<sup>37</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 129.

<sup>38</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 134.

<sup>39</sup> T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (Tring/Batavia, IL/Sydney: Lion Publishing, 1987), 106.

<sup>40</sup> Parker, *John Calvin*, 108ff.

<sup>41</sup> Parker, *John Calvin*, 110.

<sup>42</sup> Parker, *John Calvin*, 111.

<sup>43</sup> Parker, *John Calvin*, 114.

<sup>44</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 147.

the pulpit in blads [pieces], and fly out of it.” When he made application of his text, “he made me so thrill and tremble that I could not hold a pen to write.”<sup>45</sup> Such was the primacy of preaching during the Reformation, that men like Knox saved their best, and often only energy, to preach. Hugh Latimer (1490–1555) was Knox’s fearless counterpart in England.

The Puritans brought the primacy of preaching to its apogee. Harwood Pattison calls the seventeenth century “The Golden Age of English Preaching.”<sup>46</sup> The ground for this noble generation was laid during the golden age of English literature under Queen Elizabeth. Among the illustrious names who adorned the church of Jesus Christ, among Puritans and Anglicans, were Thomas Hooker (1553–1600); the “silver tongued” Henry Smith (1550–1593); Lancelot Andrews (1555–1624); and the poet John Donne (1573–1631). Then there were Joseph Hall (1574–1656); Thomas Fuller (1608–1661); and the Puritan Thomas Adams (1585–1655), called the “Shakespeare of the Puritans.”<sup>47</sup>

Scotland produced some of the best preachers of this era. David Dickson (1583–1663) opened Scripture with great effect, as the comment of an English merchant shows: “That man showed me all my heart.”<sup>48</sup> Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) was “at the same time a son of thunder and consolation.”<sup>49</sup>

Then there were John Livingstone (1603–1661), “the sweetest and saintliest of the Puritans;”<sup>50</sup> Robert Leighton (1611–1684), whose “very look . . . was expressive of holy ardor and of tender piety;”<sup>51</sup> Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679); theologian preacher John Owen (1616–1683); pastor par excellence, Richard Baxter (1615–1691); the pilgrim preacher John Bunyan (1628–1688); Anglican Jeremy Taylor (1613–1679); and Puritans John Howe (1630–1705) and Isaac Barrow (1630–1677). Surrounding these who are known to history is an almost countless number of faithful heralds.

Nowhere is the primacy of preaching more clearly expressed than in the great confessions which grew out of the Reformation. The earliest Reformation creed, articulating Luther’s theology in the craftsmanship of Melancthon, *The Augsburg Confession* (1530), in Article V “Of the Ministry of the Church,” after stating the primacy of “the ministry of teaching the Gospel” for the “obtaining of faith,” asserts: “For the Word and Sacraments, as by instruments, the Holy Spirit is given: who worketh faith, where and when it pleaseth God, in those that hear the Gospel.” The power of the keys according to Article VII “is put in execution only by teaching or preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments.” It is stated almost offhandedly that people are saved by *hearing* the gospel. Of course, in the first part of the sixteenth century literacy was still the exception, despite the revolution caused by Gutenberg’s revolutionary invention.

In chapter 1 of the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli, summarized the position of the Reformers in one terse, and rightly famous statement: *Praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei*—“the preaching of the word of God *is* the word of God.” In the next sentence he interprets this statement as follows: “Wherefore when the word of God [Scripture] is now preached in the church

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<sup>45</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 147.

<sup>46</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 163.

<sup>47</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 184.

<sup>48</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 184.

<sup>49</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 186.

<sup>51</sup> Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 187.

by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful.”<sup>52</sup>

The last of the great Reformation Protestant creeds, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648, chapter I.10) declares:

The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture (Matt. 22:29, 31; Eph. 2:20; Acts 28:25).

The Scriptures are the inviolable foundation for what the church believes. But how is that Word communicated effectively to sinners? *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, question #89 (cf. *The Westminster Larger Catechism* #155), similarly asserts:

How is the word made effectual to salvation? A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the *preaching* of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation (Neh. 8:8; 1 Cor. 14:24–25; Acts 26:18; Ps. 19:8; Acts 20:32; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Rom. 10:17; Rom. 1:16, emphasis added).

Despite certain liabilities of printing,<sup>53</sup> we must never forget that it helped to restore a balance in the church’s life between the written Word of Scripture and the visible Word of the sacraments. Printing also clearly helped foster the revival of preaching as it fostered the literacy of clergy and people alike. Certainly, diminishment of the sacraments in many Protestant communions as well as the individualizing tendency of the printed word, should alert us to the need for balance among the three primary or natural media. There should, however, be no doubt that printing has been an extraordinary blessing to the church.

## The Modern Church

From the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the present, preaching has continued to be a central concern of the church. We see this in the great revivals in England and New England during the Enlightenment. Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), George Whitefield (1714–1770), and the Wesleys are a staple of the church’s recollection of its homiletical past. They were each, above all, preachers. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the great missionary effort of the English speaking church was characterized by sending preachers, like William Carey (1761–1834), to the most distant unreached people groups of every continent.

Perhaps the most influential and widely known pastor of that century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), was known primarily for his preaching. The fact that he wrote his sermons for publication on the Monday after he preached them is a testimony to the endurance of orality in the life of the church. While we must never over-estimate “famous”

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<sup>52</sup> *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Preaching, Theology of.”

<sup>53</sup> Cf. chapters 5 and 7 in Gregory E. Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001).

preachers, their presence in the historical memory is an indication of the importance of preaching in the popular mind. As we have noted in our survey, behind every notable preacher was usually a host of faithful men adorning the pulpits of the land in regular pastoral ministry. Thus, the paucity of notable preachers since Spurgeon should alert us to the fact there has been a decline in preaching since the advent of electronic communication.

The most well-known preachers of the twentieth century are connected with television, so I have chosen not to list them as notable, since their ministries have not been in the church or directly connected with it. This is not to say that we could not learn much about preaching from the best of them, like Billy Graham (1918–2018). My intention, however, is to encourage pastoral and evangelistic preaching in the local church. I have already mentioned the notable radio ministry of Joel Nederhood (1930–). His preaching is also among the best examples in our time. A long list of excellent preachers, well known more within narrower denominational contexts could be named. J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), Donald Gray Barnhouse (1895–1960), D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984), John Stott (1921–2011), Jay Adams (1929–2020), and Timothy Keller (1950–) might be exceptions to this rule. The fact that many of these and a host of others may be listened to electronically will be of help to the preacher in search of models.

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As we move now from the Gutenberg Galaxy to the Electronic Age, the preacher faces a new challenge. The reorganization of the human sensorium (all of our powers of perception), along with the reshaping of every institution in our culture through the influence of the new electronic environment created by the electronic media, demands awareness of the nature and place of the electronic media in culture and its effect on the church and the task of the preacher. No one “could be more effected than the preacher by the changes in the structure of the human psyche and the shift in the areas of sensitivity within modern man’s sensorium.”<sup>54</sup>

The new media do not tend to replace, but rather to envelop, the old media, so that we have secondary orality and secondary literacy. Most important to the preacher are his own, as well as the church’s and the culture’s, assessment of the value of his preaching task. At the close of the century of the electronic revolution and the beginning of another, there is no want of testimony to the depressed state of preaching, and the failure of nerve among preachers, in the churches. Witness a small sample of homiletical titles: *As One Without Authority*; *Crisis in the Pulpit: The Pulpit Faces Future Shock*; *The Empty Pulpit*; *The Gagging of God: The Failure of the Church to Communicate in the Television Age*; *The Sermon Under Attack*. Because man is a sinner, the reality of the crucified and risen Christ and the truth of his infallible Word have not changed, we must with renewed understanding and vigor preach the Christ of Scripture, and that unmediated by electronic media, face-to-face as pastors caring for the Lord’s flock.

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<sup>54</sup> Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 9.

# Servant Standards

## Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapter 4C

### C. Rules of Trial Proceedings

#### 1. First Meeting of the Trial

a. At the first meeting of the trial judicatory only the following actions shall be taken:

(1) The charges and specifications shall be read and formally presented to the accused together with the names of any witnesses and copies of any documents which may be presented against him.

(2) The trial judicatory shall fix the time, date, and place for the second meeting of the trial, which shall not be less than ten days later, and shall issue citations directing all persons to appear at that time whose presence it may deem necessary.

(3) The accused shall be granted citations in which he may insert the names of the witnesses whom he wishes the trial judicatory to summon.

b. No meeting of the trial judicatory held prior to the time at which it proceeds with the previously mentioned actions shall be considered the first meeting within the meaning of this chapter.

**Comment:** The First Meeting of the Trial, once it has been determined in terms of all the relevant sections of BD 3 to proceed to trial, is pro forma. This means that only certain limited things may happen and nothing else; additionally, what happens is not any part of the trial substantively, which begins in the Second Meeting of the Trial (see the next section of this chapter). All that may be done in the first meeting of the trial is prescribed here in BD 4.C.1: these things and nothing else. However, there can be no second meeting of the trial without a first meeting of the trial as properly delineated in this section of the BD. In other words, there must be a first meeting of the trial at which only certain things can occur (as noted herein) before there can be a second meeting of the trial, at which the trial itself properly begins.

BD 3.7.d., as part of a section detailing the circumstances in which a charge is brought by a private party or parties, and BD 3.8.c, as part of a section addressing the situation in which the judicatory having original jurisdiction brings a charge, both prescribe that the judicatory “shall fix the time, date, and place for the trial of the case and shall cite the accused to appear at that time.” What the accused is being cited to appear at is the first meeting of the trial. And, again, at that first meeting certain things must occur and nothing else.

Under BD 4.C.1.a., three things are listed as occurring at the first meeting of the trial. First, the charges and specifications shall be read aloud, ordinarily by the clerk, to those gathered for that meeting. The clerk shall at the same time formally present a written copy of the charges and specifications to the accused. These charges and specifications shall contain the names of any witnesses adduced in support of them, together with copies of any documents that may be presented against the accused during the prosecution of his case.

Secondly, the trial judicatory shall fix, or determine, the time, date, and place for the second meeting of the trial. Obviously, since this takes place in the presence of the accused and his counsel (if he has obtained such already), consultation with the accused about his availability is appropriate here. However, it is the judicatory alone who makes the decision with respect to time, date, and place of the second meeting of the trial. The accused may stonewall and seek undue delay; this should not be permitted to stymie the trial judicatory. In any case, the accused should be expected to make reasonable accommodations as the one being charged and as only one person, over against an entire judicatory trying to come up with an acceptable date for all the parties to meet. Reasonable measures may be taken to accommodate the accused, but the judicatory need not act contrary to the best interests of most of its members (e.g., where the trial will occur) to do so.

Thirdly, it is at this point, at the first meeting of the trial, that the judicatory is to grant to the accused forms for the citation of any witnesses that he may wish to call in his defense. This form (listed as Form III), together with other Suggested Forms for Use in Connection with the Book of Discipline, may be found in the BCO following *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*. The trial judicatory shall summon these witnesses in due course, as the accused wishes, to appear on behalf of the accused. Finally, BD 4.C.1.b. reiterates that no meeting of the trial judicatory held prior to the time at which it does all that is prescribed under BD 4.C.1., and only those actions, shall be considered in the meaning of this chapter to be and constitute the first meeting of the trial.

## 2. Second Meeting of the Trial

a. At the second meeting of the trial judicatory the accused may interpose objections concerning (1) the regularity of the proceedings up to this point and (2) the form of the charge, the form and relevancy of the specifications, the competency of the witnesses named in the specifications, and the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings submitted in support of the charge and specifications. The trial judicatory shall determine the validity of any such objections. If the accused at this point requests the trial judicatory to do so, it shall determine whether the proof of the charge and specifications would show the commission of an offense serious enough to warrant a trial. It may dismiss the case forthwith, or permit such amendments of the charge and specifications as do not alter their essential nature. If the trial judicatory decides that the trial should proceed, the accused shall be called on to plead "guilty" or "not guilty," and his plea shall be entered upon the record. If the accused pleads "guilty," the trial judicatory shall determine the censure. If the accused pleads "not guilty," or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed. The proceedings described in this section may extend over as many meetings as are necessary for their completion.

b. Absence from any session of the second or of a subsequent meeting of the trial judicatory shall disqualify a member from voting thereafter and from being counted in the computation of a quorum, but shall not deprive him of any other right as a member of the trial judicatory. Unless a quorum is present, a trial judicatory shall not continue in session, but it may recess or adjourn.

c. When all the evidence against the accused has been presented and he has had an opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses testifying against him, the accused shall have the right to move for the dismissal of the charges. If this motion is denied by the trial judicatory, the accused may then present the evidence in support of his defense.

**Comment:** The second meeting of the trial commences the trial proper. Some trial judicatories, as noted above, refer to all the rest of the trial as the second meeting of the trial and designate sessions, i.e., Second Meeting of the Trial, Session 1, Session 2, etc. Others may speak of Third and Fourth Meetings. It is my opinion that it is preferable to consider

all the trial proper as the Second Meeting and designate sessions thereof as in the first example of this paragraph.

At this second meeting of the trial, the first thing cited is the right of the accused to interpose objections to all that has transpired thus far. This is the meaning of the first point here as respects the regularity of the proceedings up to this point. In other words, the accused can ask the trial judicatory to revisit all that has been done in advance of the commencement of the trial proper, particularly all that was done involving the steps in the institution of the judicial process as detailed in BD 3. This might involve contentions that Matthew 18 has not been followed (BD 3.5), that the charge does not truly contain an offense (BD 3.3), that the statute of limitations has been exceeded (BD 3.2), and the like. These are matters to be addressed even before determining whether a preliminary investigation is in order (BD 3.7).

Further objections may be raised about the results of the preliminary investigation itself, which is the concern of item (2) in this paragraph. Thus, the accused may raise objections to the form of the charge, the form and relevancy of the specifications, the competency of the witnesses named in the specifications, and the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings submitted in support of the charge and specifications. In other words, the accused may require the trial judicatory to revisit and justify any of the actions taken in the preliminary investigation. The trial judicatory hears and determines the validity of all such objections.

Furthermore, the accused may ask the trial judicatory to visit this all-important matter established in the preliminary investigation: even if the prosecution can prove the charge or charges, are they such that would show the commission of an offense serious enough to warrant a trial? In considering all these matters, the trial judicatory may dismiss the case at that point, or at any point at which it comes to question the viability of the judicial case, and bring the whole matter to an end. The trial judicatory may also permit the charges to be amended at this point (due to some form improprieties, e.g.), as long as the essential charges are not changed or altered. If the trial judicatory determines that all is to go forward and the trial is to continue, it shall at this point require the accused to plead “guilty” or “not guilty.” Whichever plea the accused takes, it shall be at this point entered into the record.

If the accused pleads “not guilty” or fails or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed. If the accused pleads “guilty,” then there will be no trial and the judicatory may proceed to determine what the censure shall be in this case (BD 6). Some confusion exists here in the churches, but it should not. Both when a person comes as his own accuser (BD 5.1), and when a person pleads “guilty” at this point in his trial, there is no purpose for a trial. Recall that the purpose of a trial is to determine the facts of the case and to apply the law of the church to those facts. When someone comes as his own accuser or pleads guilty to charges, the facts of the case are not in dispute: they are stipulated and agreed upon, and thus, there is no need for a trial to establish the facts of the case.

When the facts of the case are agreed upon (as with a confession or a man pleading guilty), the judicatory is positioned to proceed from being a fact-determining body to being a body proposing censure (I say proposing censure because appeal of the degree of censure must be preserved). The censure may be any of those detailed in BD 6: admonition, rebuke, suspension (definite or indefinite), and excommunication; also, suspension or deposition from office for the special officer (more on this in BD 6, below). All this is to say that there is no need for a trial when the accused pleads “guilty” (or otherwise comes as his own



accuser), and the trial judicatory may proceed immediately to consider and propose what it regards as the due censure for such offense(s).

If the accused pleads “not guilty,” the trial ensues and may, as this last sentence under BD 4.C.2.a. notes, “extend over as many meetings are necessary for their completion.” At this point, a trial judicatory needs to be committed to the work of competently trying the accused as long as it takes. The trial judicatory, on the one hand, should proceed with dispatch, not unnecessarily extending the time between sessions. On the other hand, the trial judicatory should not needlessly rush matters, wanting simply to “get it over with” rather than being committed to “getting at the truth” and “providing proper due process and justice for all parties.”

It is quite important, beginning with the second meeting of the trial, that all the members of the judicatory be, as much as possible, in attendance at every session of the trial itself. Missing any part of any session of the trial disqualifies that particular judicatory member from voting thereafter and from being counted in the computation of a quorum. Said member of the judicatory is not thereby deprived of his regular rights as a member of the judicatory to ask questions, but he may not vote on any motions including the question of the guilt of the accused and, if he is determined to be guilty, his proposed censure. If at any time a quorum (of a session or a presbytery) fails to be present, the trial judicatory may not continue in session but must either recess or adjourn.

When the prosecution has completed the bringing of its case—all its evidence and witnesses have been presented (and cross-examined)—the accused may move for the dismissal of the case against him. In other words, the accused may ask the judicatory, once the bringer of the charge has made the case against him, to bring the trial to an end with a dismissal of the charges, the accuser not having made his case and thus there being no need for the accused to present a defense. If the judicatory believes that a case has been made by the prosecution and that the accused now needs properly to defend himself and make his case, then it shall deny the accused’s motion to dismiss, and the accused may then proceed to make his case, presenting any evidence and witnesses in his defense.

### 3. Conclusion of the Trial

a. After all the evidence has been presented, the accused may make his final argument with respect to the evidence and the law of the church. The trial judicatory, after deliberation, shall vote on each charge and each specification separately. If the trial judicatory decides that the accused is guilty, it shall proceed to determine the censure.

b. When the trial judicatory has concluded its deliberations, the moderator shall announce its decision on each charge and each specification. If the accused has been found guilty, the trial judicatory shall state what censure it proposes to pronounce against the accused. The censure shall not be pronounced before the expiration of the time in which the accused may file notice of appeal. If notice of appeal is filed and an appeal is taken within the time prescribed in this Book of Discipline, Chapter VII, the trial judicatory may not execute its judgment unless and until the judgment is affirmed by the judicatory to which final appeal is taken.

**Comment:** It is here presupposed that the accused, not prevailing in any attempts to persuade the judicatory to dismiss his case, had proceeded to fully present all the evidence he wished to adduce in his defense. Once all such evidence has been presented, the accused may make his final argument with respect to all the evidence presented and how that is to be viewed in light of the law of the church (God’s moral law and all its good and necessary consequences, especially as spelled out in the Westminster Standards). The defense is now

concluded once his final argument is made, and the deliberation regarding the verdict (guilty or not guilty) begins. Only the judicatory takes part in such deliberation.

After the conclusion of deliberation, the judicatory votes on each charge and specification separately. The way that this usually, and logically should, occur is as follows: say charge 1 has four specifications; the moderator puts the question on each specification— “shall specification 1 (2, 3, and 4) be sustained?” That is debated, after which the vote is taken. If none of the specifications are sustained, the moderator shall announce that and declare that the charge is not upheld, none of the specifications being sustained. If any single specification is sustained, then the moderator shall put the question to the charge— “guilty or not guilty?” The reason that there should be a vote additionally on the charge in the case of any of the specifications being sustained (rather than the charge being assumed automatically to yield a guilty verdict) is that a specification may be technically true but not sufficient (in some way) to maintain a verdict of “guilty” with respect to the charge that it supports.

If the accused is determined to be guilty of any charge(s), the judicatory shall then proceed to deliberate and propose censure in accordance with BD 6. I speak of it as “proposing censure” because the accused must be notified of such, in case he wishes to appeal verdict and/or censure. The accused will have ten days in which to file a notice of intention to appeal (BD 7). If he does so, the proposed censure is not to be executed unless and until he has exhausted all appeals, or not at all if he wins his case on appeal.

The concerns of the above paragraph introduced under section a. are more fully articulated under section b. When the trial judicatory has concluded all its deliberations, it will have, as a part of those deliberations, voted on all the specifications and charges. The moderator announces such, and if the accused is adjudged guilty of anything, the judicatory determines to proceed to deliberate about and propose proper censure in accordance with BD 6. The censure, as noted above, is only to be proposed and not pronounced, because the convicted party has ten days from the determination of the censure in which he may file a notice of intention to appeal, as provided for in BD 7. The actual execution of the censure shall not be enacted unless and until those ten days have expired (or all appeals are exhausted).

#### 4. Trial in Absentia

If the judicatory proceeds with the trial in the absence of the accused, a counsel shall be appointed at the first meeting of the trial to present a case to the trial judicatory in defense of the accused. Such counsel, although not acting directly in behalf of the accused, shall be entitled to present evidence, interview witnesses, interpose objections, and otherwise act in defense of the accused. The trial judicatory shall deliver copies of the charge, specifications, and names of witnesses either personally or by certified mail to the accused along with notification that the trial is proceeding without him and the time, date, and place of the second meeting of the trial judicatory. The second meeting of the trial judicatory shall proceed as though the accused had pleaded "not guilty" in the case. The trial shall then proceed according to the provisions of this chapter. When the trial judicatory has concluded its deliberations, the moderator shall announce its decisions according to this chapter, Section C.3.b and shall communicate such decisions to the accused in writing either personally or by certified mail.

[A suggested form for citing a witness is found on page 171.]

**Comment:** The OPC provides not only for someone accused of an offense to have full due process if they claim not to be guilty of such (or perhaps claim that what they are

charged with is not an offense), but it also empowers judicatories to try those accused in their absence, if they refuse or fail to appear when summoned for trial. Reasons for failing to appear for trial may be multiple. Some reasons are invalid and would allow the trial judicatory to proceed in the absence of the accused. Examples of this include someone that rejects the authority of the judicatory or otherwise stonewalls or raises unreasonable objections to all proposed meeting dates, times, and places; another category of invalid excuses for absence would be someone who is jailed awaiting trial or for crimes adjudged guilty. Examples of legitimate absences, which should not prompt a trial in absentia (at which the person would otherwise be present if they could), include legitimate illness of oneself or close loved ones requiring attention and aid.

In the proper circumstances in which the trial judicatory determines to proceed to trial in the absence of the accused, a counsel for the accused shall be appointed at the first meeting of the trial. This counsel is often a member of the judicatory (an elder on a session, for example), who presents to the judicatory a case on behalf of the accused. Since the accused is not present (and they have no say over any counsel appointed to serve in this capacity if they are not present), such counsel as is appointed does not act directly on behalf of the accused. Indeed, such counsel may “present evidence, interview witnesses, interpose objections, and otherwise act in defense of the accused.” He must ensure, in other words, that due process is followed and that the absent accused is in every way given a fair trial. He is not required to, and rarely does, advocate strongly on behalf of the accused but seeks to make sure that the accused’s case is treated with equity.

Even when the accused does not appear at the first meeting of the trial, and it appears that he does not intend to do so subsequently, the trial judicatory must provide “copies of the charge, specifications, and names of witnesses either personally or by certified mail to the accused along with notification that the trial is proceeding without him and the time, date, and place of the second meeting of the trial judicatory.” At the second meeting of the trial judicatory, which should proceed according to all the provisions of BD 4.C.2., at the pleading phase thereof, in the absence of the accused, his counsel should enter a plea of “not guilty,” and the trial should go forward on the basis of that plea. The trial of the accused in his absence should be conducted according to the provisions of this chapter, with the accused’s interests represented as much as possible by the counsel appointed by the judicatory to represent such.

At the conclusion of the trial in absentia, the judicatory shall act in accordance with BD 4.C.3.b., and the moderator shall announce its decisions accordingly. The accused shall then be notified of all the decisions of the judicatory either in person or by certified mail. The right of the accused to appeal shall not be abridged but is highly restricted. The accused may ask an appellate judicatory to redress some grievances that are manifest in the trial judicatory, but he may not essentially ask the appellate judicatory to give him the trial at its level that he refused to attend in the judicatory of original judicatory. In other words, an accused may not refuse or fail to attend his own trial and then ask an appellate judicatory to give him the trial that he refused at the level of his own trial judicatory.

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# Servant Work

## The Elder's Wife

### Letters to a Younger Ruling Elder, No. 5

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By an Older Elder

Dear James,

Your letter came this morning with the cookies from your dear wife. Blessings to her for thinking of me and give her my love. You have, as the Scriptures say, found “a good thing” (Prov. 18:22). No need for apologies about the delayed reply. You have a busy schedule and a bustling home; cherish this time. We are told of king Asa that “in his days the land had rest for 10 years” (2 Chron. 14:1). These are not your restful years! But the Lord is pleased with noisy homes and busy children. Love those dear little ones now and tell them often of God’s love for them too. Of such, as our Lord said, is the kingdom of heaven.

You asked specifically in your letter about whether I had any advice for you *as a husband* who is also an elder. You are concerned about balancing the responsibilities of your office and your domestic life. *It is good you are thinking about that!* Some men do not. And, sadly, far too little has been written about the importance of the husband-wife relationship of ruling elders. The pressures upon a pastor’s wife are real and well known. But the added stress upon the marriages of ruling elders can, sometimes, be even greater. Allow me to share a couple thoughts.

The first thing I would say, James, is this: next to the care of his own soul, the most important duty of a married elder *is to love his wife*. I cannot emphasize that enough. You must not think of the care that you give to your “rib” (as Luther called his precious Katie) as something separate from your elder-work. No. *It is your elder-work*. And far too many elders forget that. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25) is a word to all married men, but it is doubly important for the elder who, like Timothy, is commanded to be an example (1 Tim. 4:12).

It has been my sad experience to observe that when the devil wants to disable the work of a ruling elder, he will often attack him in his marriage. He did this in Eden and has been striving to do it ever since. I suspect this wicked scheme is driven by his desire to cripple the effectiveness of your prayers (1 Pet. 3:7). You must therefore guard that precious relationship with your dear wife with a great jealousy. Our God is a jealous God. And if you are to be effective in your eldership as a married man, you must be a jealous husband. Guard your relationship with your wife.

Not that you need this warning, but when a ruling elder treats his wife carelessly, he ruins his own ministry and does great dishonor to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the church. When a ruling elder is, as Bunyan said of Talkative, “a saint abroad and a devil at

home,”<sup>1</sup> he does greater harm as an officer in the church than he would do if he were not ordained. Domineering husbands make poor elders. They “lord it over their wives,” so no wonder they “lord it over the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3).

Another thing to think about with respect to your marriage and your work as an elder is this: You might err in sharing too much with your wife, *but you will never err in listening too much*. I know a good many ruling elders, and not a few pastors, who should have shared less and listened more to their wives. Your dear Jean will neither want nor ask the details of some of the things you discuss on the session. But she will often have wonderfully wise insights which, if heeded and prayed over, will serve you quite well. We men need our wives. When the Lord God saw man alone in the garden, it was not good. To meet that need our all-wise God brought to Adam a wife, not a session! Consider this.

Let me wrap up my little letter this way: Some of the best sermons ever preached in church *happen on the other side of the pulpit*. I am referring to the *living sermon* which your love for your wife proclaims. Do you want your people to know Christ’s love for them? Love your wife. Do you want them to know Christ cares for them? Care for your wife. Develop good habits of communication, support, trust, fidelity, and tenderness for her. When you love your wife, you love the church.

James, I trust the Lord will help you pick some sense out of my rambling advice.

Your soul’s well-wisher,  
An older elder.

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<sup>1</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, (a Project Gutenberg eBook.) (n.d.). <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39452/39452-h/39452-h.htm>, location 150.

# ServantReading

## Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church, *edited by Hannah Nation & Simon Lee*

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by Anonymous

*Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church*, edited by Hannah Nation & Simon Lee. Bellingham, WA: Kirkdale, 2022, xxiv + 161, \$16.99, paper.

For me to read this marvelous little book of sermons was a welcome experience during a time of transition. Not only was it fun to read a collection that included works written by people I have actually met, but the preaching of these heroic Chinese ministers also helped me regain perspective, as I was suddenly facing extraordinary additional challenges during a difficult, extended time of re-tooling for a new phase of ministry. God used this book to help me see that if I faced these difficulties with faithfulness, they could actually be something positive in my life, deepening my joy and love. Indeed, that was the common thread running through this sermon collection of well-educated, Reformation-theology-influenced, underground church pastors: The Lord is sovereign over all of life and is even working so that he can bring his people through the fires of opposition more pure, humble, joyful, obedient, Christlike, and mature than before. And you know what? God was true to his Word! I am not sure how well I did, but the Holy Spirit was not only faithful to sustain me but also to walk more closely with me as my Comforter, Savior, and Guide, welcoming others to come along for the ride. Hallelujah!

Living in North America for about half of my life and East Asia for the other half has encouraged and given me the opportunity to think deeply about things, and this book called for some critical thinking. First, there is a danger of oversimplification by the reader when reading such books and, second, a danger for our minds as we live out the Christian life in the real world, where the principle of anti-Christ will always be at work opposing the things of the Lord until the last day. As much as it is true that just because someone is suffering (or has suffered) does not automatically mean that God is punishing him or her for unfaithfulness, so too it does not mean they are automatically wiser or more spiritually advanced than someone else. So, we should read with discretion. Just as there are temptations living in countries where persecution is not so obvious—perhaps to be lazy in spiritual disciplines or to fall into sins of the flesh—so too there are temptations that more likely fall upon a person when they are threatened with persecution—perhaps to compromise so as to avoid the persecution, to be unnecessarily legalistic, or to be prideful after having been faithful and suffering for it (“Sin *and* Hell,” by Yang X., 47). And there are quite a variety of forms anti-Christian opposition can take, not only the dramatic forms they may tend to take in a Communist or Muslim

country. Persecution is not always from the government. It could be ridicule for saying or doing something culturally unacceptable; it could be a boss who makes you work on the Lord's Day (or requires your child to compete on Sunday if they want to be on the school debate club). It might not be intolerant of Christianity itself; it could be pressure to be tolerant of (not speaking out against) points of view, lifestyles, or behaviors which God forbids or clearly calls evil and requires us to oppose. So, stay alert and obedient!

But with such things in mind, *Faith in the Wilderness* is a good read. We have much to learn from our Chinese brothers. Yes, silence—when called by God to speak out—can be sinful (“Let Us Fall into *the Hand of the Lord*,” by Guo M., 20). While we are not called to jump into the lions’ den (33), we *are* called to worship God without (idolatrous) regard for our own lives, because for us there is no real death just a change of address (“A Deadly World,” by Simon L., 31, 34). No, a minister cannot lecture with integrity on spiritual warfare and then fight over some petty thing with his wife without confessing his sin (“Why We Must Pursue Christ,” by Brian L., 73–75). Sometimes it is easier to know what is right than it is to know what is best and choose it instead of choosing the second-best (“True Love,” by Victor G., 81). Though you may be afraid of those who oppose the Lord, do not give up your integrity as a Christian for the sake of lentil stew (“Our Hope,” by San S., 32). “All those who stand on the edge of the sea of glass have been carried through the chaos of the sea of darkness and been made to prevail through it.” It is Christ who makes them victorious (i.e., we are saved by God’s grace alone) (“On *the Other Side of the Sea*,” by Paul P., 151).

Brothers and sisters (wherever you are), persevere in your faith in good times and in the bad; and as you strive so hard to do so, remember the key hope that we have as the children of God: it is God in Christ by the Spirit who will preserve us!



# Teaching Your Children to Delight in the Lord's Day

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by Cynthia Rowland

*The Best Day of the Week: Why We Love the Lord's Day*, by William Boekestein, with illustrations by Brian Hartwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2022, 34 pages, \$15.00.

In this picture book for young audiences (ages 2–7), William Boekestein and Brian Hartwell present a dramatization of what a family serious about worshiping God rightly does on the Lord's Day. The language is fairly simple, and the typeface is fairly large, allowing seven-plus-year-olds to read alone, but the book seems primarily geared as a read-aloud book. While reading aloud, a parent could discuss how the worship depicted in the story mirrors the worship patterns of their own family, providing a springboard for training about the deeper meaning of their family's habits.

The theme of Christ's calling the little children to himself (Mark 10:14) is woven throughout the book, emphasizing that Sunday worship is for children as well as adults. So much of our corporate worship is geared toward an older audience: creeds and confessions contain words that are hard to understand, hymns contain poetic allusions unfamiliar to young children, and sermons often set forth concepts and principles at a level above the grasp of young minds. This book encourages parents to make worship applicable and accessible for even the very youngest and encourages children to participate in it rather than treat it as a bystander would treat it.

The narrative of each page describes a different aspect of the family habits of worship, beginning with family devotions Saturday evening and progressing through each element of the Sunday worship service. While reading aloud, a parent could elaborate on why we "sometimes use very old words to speak our faith aloud" by describing, at a level appropriate for the child, the rich history of the creeds and confessions. A parent could elaborate more on the obscure poetic allusions from a recently sung hymn. A parent could take the time to describe in easy-to-understand words the meaning of a recent sermon. A parent could explain more fully the symbols of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper and why only adults are being served, fanning the flame of the child's desire to one day participate with everyone. Has the child earned money for the offering? Explain the meaning behind the collection: God's love for a cheerful giver, God's building of the kingdom, God's providing for his ministers. The final words of the book are that Sunday is the "emblem of eternal rest." This is an opportunity for the explanation of God's heavenly promise of the joy that awaits his children.

The emphasis on *preparation* for worship by going to bed early on Saturday night, thinking ahead to be sure Sunday morning routines run smoothly, and ridding your mind of unnecessary distractions during worship offers opportunities to discuss the principle that worshiping God is serious business and should be entered into thoughtfully.

William Boekestein's book provides a framework for parents to train their children in the delights of the Lord's Day. Reading the book by itself, without filling in the gaps with

familial anecdotes and parental devotion for the Lord, may leave a flavor of duty without love, but joined with these two aspects of personalization and passion, the book could serve as an excellent guidebook for parents to instill a proper regard for God's worship and a delight for it.

Brian Hartwell's illustrations depict in simple ways a family with eager children and purposeful parents. The artwork style is reminiscent of the child's book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* and has a patchwork teddy bear on most pages.

**Cynthia Rowland** is member of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA), Concord, Massachusetts.

# ServantNews

## Position Available: Executive Director of Great Commission Publications

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Great Commission Publications (GCP) is seeking a candidate, preferably ordained or ordainable in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) or the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), to be its next Executive Director. A successful candidate should have experience in publishing and education and will possess a demonstrated ability in administration and personnel management. Compensation will be competitive based on the experience of the candidate. Further information about the role of Executive Director can be found in the attached job description.

Great Commission Publications is the joint publishing arm of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, overseen by The OPC's Committee on Christian Education and the PCA's Committee on Discipleship Ministries. GCP produces a graded, biblically faithful Sunday school curriculum, adult Bible studies, *Trinity Hymnal* (both original and revised), and other materials to further Christian education and worship.

For more information, please read the executive director "[Job Description 2023](#)" and the "[List of Professional and Personal Qualities](#)."

If you wish to apply for this position, please contact the secretary of the Board of Great Commission Publications, Archibald Allison, at [Allison.1@opc.org](mailto:Allison.1@opc.org).

The deadline for applications for this position is June 30, 2023.

# ServantPoetry

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## Virtue

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,  
The bridal of the earth and sky;  
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,  
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave  
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye;  
Thy root is ever in its grave,  
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,  
A box where sweets compacted lie;  
My music shows ye have your closes,  
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,  
Like season'd timber, never gives;  
But though the whole world turn to coal,  
Then chiefly lives.