

Seminary Education

By Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr.

Does the church need seminaries to train men for the ministry? This topic is important because while many take for granted the role of a seminary in training ministers, some suggest that the future of traditional, campus-based schools is up for grabs. So is a resident seminary the best way to train men for the ministry? The argument against resident seminary training is somewhat compelling. Results are not very impressive. In the past, the Presbyterian minister was normally one of the best educated men in town, but today we have arguably the worse trained generation of Presbyterian ministers in the history of American Presbyterianism. Just attend the typical Presbytery meeting or listen to the average preacher to see what I mean. Is it time to change strategies?

And what about expense? Is it worth the cost to maintain a campus when a student can study on-line? Moreover, what about the problem of doctrinal deviation? Do not seminaries eventually contribute to the decline of biblical denominations? Do they not eventually go bad and become a detrimental influence on churches?

The issue of how the church trains men for the ministry is of the utmost importance. I remain convinced that a confessionally grounded resident seminary is still the best system for the training of gospel ministers. I am involved in theological education at the seminary level because I believe that to a large degree the future of the Reformed seminary is the future of the Reformed church. But if we are to see blessings from God, there are certain things that we need to be doing.

I do not have space in this article to discuss the necessity of a well-trained ministry. The Bible clearly establishes the importance of ministerial training. For some examples, look at 1 Timothy 4:11–16 and 2 Timothy 2:1, 2, 15.¹

In order to understand where we are today in training

men for the ministry, we need to begin with the biblical and historical background for ministerial training. Why do we use seminaries? Is there a biblical basis for doing so? How did the whole idea of seminaries develop?

Let's begin to answer our questions with an overview of the history of the training of ministers. When did this training begin? Apparently theological training schools were begun under Samuel with those who were called the "sons of the prophets." We find the first mention of the group or the company of the prophets in 1 Samuel 10:5, 10 (see also 1 Samuel 19:19, 20; 1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1). The prophetic office developed in Israel under the tutelage of Samuel. Men studied in these schools as they prepared to serve as prophets. The fact that most prophets came from these schools is seen further in Amos' response to the rebuke by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, for prophesying at Bethel. Amos responded, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a

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1. See R.L. Dabney, *Discussions* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982) 2.651ff. and William Cunningham, *An Introduction to Theological Studies* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 1994).

grower of sycamore figs” (Amos 7:14).² Amos was saying that he was not a regular prophet nor had he been trained at the school of the prophets. The fact that he would emphasize his lack of formal training suggests that he was the exception and not the rule. God called Amos in an extraordinary way, but normally the prophets came out of the schools.

The prophetic schools continued through the period of the divided kingdom. These schools of prophets would have been similar to our theological schools. The men probably would have studied the law of God, since the primary role of the prophetic office was to teach the law and interpret it in the context of the covenant and theocratic life of their day. So they would have been trained in the Scriptures and the interpretation of the Scriptures. Their training would have included history and historical writing, since they were the historians of the Old Covenant church (2 Chron. 12:15; 20:34 cf. 19:2). The training probably included musical and poetical training, as they made use of musical instruments and songs in their ministry. They also employed elaborate literary structure, suggesting poetical training.

Now it is instructive to remember that when a prophet preached or wrote he enjoyed the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The prophets wrote many books of the Old Testament under inspiration: in addition to the books bearing their names, they wrote the history books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. The fact of inspiration raises an important question. Since they had the Holy Spirit, why did they need to go to school? The answer is that God used prepared men; men who studied for their task. We conclude, therefore, that the “school of the prophets” was basically an Old Covenant seminary.

Notice as well that within the “schools of the prophets” mentoring and discipleship played a very important role in the development of these men. God, in fact, used mentoring relationships throughout biblical history to train men for ministry; think of Moses and Joshua; or Elijah and Elisha. The concept of mentoring shows why those studying in the school of the prophets are called the “sons of the prophets.” The prophets-in-training were in a father-son relationship with their teachers. In the New Testament there is a continued emphasis on training. Christ chose the twelve that they might be with him (Mark 3:14). Although this encompassed the qualification of being eye witness of the ministry of Jesus Christ, it embraced instruction as well. The concept of discipleship is seen in Philip’s question, “Rabbi

... where are you staying?” They were seeking a discipleship relationship.

Paul, a product of Gamaliel’s school of theology, “educated under (at the feet of) Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers” (Acts 22:6), would have been well grounded in Old Testament as well as rabbinical studies. Nevertheless, he spent three years in the desert in further preparation being taught directly by Christ (Galatians 1:17, 18). Paul made it the pattern of his ministry to teach his young assistants and commanded Timothy to do the same (2 Timothy 2:1, 2).

Such relationships are essential to spiritual and ministerial formation and should be practiced in the church: pastors with elders, elders with other men in the church, women with other women in the church, parents with their children. One of our commitments at Greenville Seminary is to cap the enrollment of the student body at one hundred so that we will never lose the mentoring relationship. We recognize that we cannot accomplish our goals only in the classroom. Mentoring relationships must be developed and sustained.

Early on the post-apostolic church manifested a commitment to ministerial training. The most famous early school was in Alexandria where Clement of Alexandria began the Catechetical School. Initially the purpose of the school was to train new converts. Eventually the school began to train men for the ministry, and the Catechetical School of Alexandria became a theological center. Unfortunately, it was a theological center with a deviant foundation that led to theological problems because of its allegorical approach to the Scriptures and compromise with Greek philosophy. That school, to a great degree, shaped the direction of the church in the Middle Ages. Again we are reminded of the importance of theological education, and of the danger the seminary can be to the church. We must not forget that much of the error that arises in a denomination comes from the place where she gets her ministers. All of our seminaries and educational institutions need to be accountable to the church, otherwise they will eventually subvert the church. We will return to this problem later.

In the Middle Ages, the educational level of the parish priests was abysmal, but the monasteries kept learning alive. The monks, for the most part, were better educated than the priests. The monastic school tradition developed in Jerome’s Monastery School in Palestine and Cassiodorus’ Monastery School in Italy. Eventually, other schools developed around some of the great Cathedrals. In the twelfth century the monastic schools and the cathedral schools coalesced into Universities. The European universities gave rise to the development

2. All Scripture quotations are taken from the NASV.

of scholasticism and laid the foundation for the revival of learning called the Renaissance.

The Protestant reformers seized the institution of the University as an effective instrument to train men for the ministry. Almost to a man the reformers were university trained men and they recognized the usefulness of the university in propagating The Reformation.

During the Reformation a group of Protestant universities developed, following the pattern of the University of Wittenberg. Initially, Wittenberg was the most significant powerhouse of the Reformation as men came from all over Europe to study with Luther and Melancthon. In Geneva, one of Calvin's life-long goals was to establish the Academy. Finally in 1559, five years before he died, he was able to see the Academy established. Its primary purpose was to train men for the ministry.

Reformation and post-Reformation ministerial training emphasized the need to study the Scripture in the languages of Scripture, Greek and Hebrew. The commitment to study the Bible in the original languages is illustrated in Zwingli's preaching method in Zurich. When he began his ministry in Zurich he entered the pulpit with his Hebrew and Greek Bible and began to expound the Scriptures. Sadly, today many ministers and seminaries disparage the possibility of a man finishing seminary with a good working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Consequently, with respect to Greek and Hebrew, we have an illiterate ministry. Yet, it was the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew that, in great part, the Spirit used to give birth to the Reformation.

Let me give a very simple illustration. When Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate, he translated the word "metanoeo," which means "repentance," with a Latin idiom that meant "do penance." And thus for centuries the church based its doctrine of penance on this faulty translation. It was only as men began to read the New Testament in Greek did they properly understand the biblical concept was repentance and not penance. We are almost as bad off today when faulty English translations go unchallenged and Bible study notes are full of error.

Moreover, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* insists that "in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them [original languages of the Bible]" (WCF 1.8). The Reformation understood this and so they instructed men then in the languages as well as in Biblical and Systematic Theology.

The Reformation also brought a shift in the instruction of Homiletics (the study of preaching). Up to the time of the Reformation, Homiletics had been taught

as a subset of classical rhetoric and Aristotelian logic. This approach destroyed preaching. With the Reformation, men began to understand the importance of preaching and that it should be taught distinct from rhetoric and logic (this is not to say that these subjects are unimportant). The Reformers insisted that Homiletics be taught as a separate subject, according to its Biblically defined purposes and scriptural principles. On the Continent, Hyperius wrote a Homiletics textbook that revolutionized preaching. While in England, William Perkins wrote *The Art of Prophecy* to train English preachers how to preach.

As one studies history, one realizes that there is nothing new under the sun. Today we find ourselves with the pre-Reformation problem of teaching preaching as a subset not of rhetoric, but of communication theory. Today in some seminaries communication theory has usurped the role of classical homiletics. Though rhetoric and communication theory are helpful, we need to teach homiletics as a distinct discipline.

For the most part, the training of ministers was carried on through the universities through the eighteenth century. The Puritans made effective use of Cambridge and Oxford to train young ministers, but they also used the concept of mentoring. Prospective ministers went to live with seasoned pastors to develop their pastoral skills.

When the Puritans came to New England, they brought their commitment to theological education. John Harvard gave the funds to establish Harvard so that the colony would have a well trained ministry. Fifty-two percent of the seventeenth-century Harvard graduates became ministers. When Harvard began to slip, Yale was formed; when Yale began to slip, Princeton developed. In fact, all but one of the Ivy League schools started as Christian schools. All the major denominations, Congregational, Anglican, and Presbyterian, were committed to the concept of an educated ministry. American Presbyterianism continued this tradition in the nineteenth-century.

Having laid the biblical and historical foundation for the use of schools in ministerial training, I want to focus on the particular method that developed in America.³ As I mentioned we inherited the university system of training men for the ministry, but other systems had

3. For further study in the development of seminary education in America see James W. Fraser, *Schooling the Preachers: The Development of Protestant Theological Education in the United States 1740-1875* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1988) and Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: the Aims and Purposes of Antebellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, © 1990).

developed as well. In England the non-conformists developed divinity halls to train ministers, while in Scotland the parsonage system, in which a young man would attach himself to a mature minister to study and prepare, was utilized.

In America, in addition to the University system, some began to implement the parsonage system for ministerial education. A young man would attach himself to a pastor to read divinity (In the same way a man would attach himself to a medical doctor to read medicine or to a lawyer to read law). Often there would be a set curriculum and the candidate would read and discuss with his mentor. He also would be engaged in the practical aspects of ministry.

However, the parsonage system was very inefficient for a geographically large country that was experiencing rapid growth. A more efficient system was needed to produce a sufficient number of trained ministers to keep pace with the growth of our country. So out of the parsonage system the academy developed. In the academy (the most famous being the Log College)⁴ a group of students would live with and study under a minister. But the need remained to train a larger number of men; so in the late eighteenth-century, the forerunner of seminaries developed. Three schools began: the Dutch Reformed developed one in New York; a group of Associated Presbyterians developed one in Geneva, Pennsylvania; and the Associate Reformed Church developed one in New York. Although the idea was good, these schools labored under a number of impediments: each had only one faculty member, a small library, and little financial endowment.

Thus a growing number of people saw the need for a well-endowed school that had more than one faculty member and a good library. And so in 1808, the Congregationalists in New England developed Andover Theological Seminary in Connecticut. Before they started, they had amassed a large library and endowment and they began with three full-time faculty members. This school was the first seminary in the United States. Three years later, in 1811, the Presbyterians started Princeton Theological Seminary.⁵ And in 1812, the Reformed Church in America started New Brunswick Theological Seminary. The purpose behind the founding of Princeton is instructive:

4. Archibald Alexander, *The Log College* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968).

5. For an excellent study on Princeton see David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994).

Inasmuch as the obtaining of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, to the glory of the eternal God, is the chief object which claims the attention of man; and considering, that in the attainment of this object the dispensation of the Gospel is principally instrumental; it is manifestly of the highest importance, that the best means be used to ensure the faithful preaching of the Gospel, and the pure administration of all its ordinances. With this view, therefore, institutions for the education of youth intended for the holy ministry, have been established in all Christian countries, and have been found, by long experience, most eminently conducive to the prosperity of the church. Hence the founders of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America did, from its very origin, exert themselves with peculiar zeal to establish and endow colleges, academies, and schools, for the education of youth for the Gospel ministry. So rapid, however, has been the extension of this Church, and so disproportionate, of late, has been the number of ministers educated, to the call which has been made for ministerial service, that some additional and vigorous efforts to increase the supply are loudly and affectingly demanded. Circumstances also do imperiously dictate, not only that the labourers in the vineyard of the Lord should be multiplied, but that they should be more thoroughly furnished than they have ordinarily been for the arduous work to which they must be called. Influenced by the views and considerations now recited, the General Assembly, after mature deliberation, have resolved in reliance on the patronage and blessing of the Great Head of the Church, to establish a new Institution, consecrated solely to the education of men for the Gospel ministry, and to be denominated, – the theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Calhoun, 415).

Remarkably, in a five year span three seminaries sprung up in the Northeast and by the 1860's sixty seminaries had been started in America. These schools laid the foundation for the Protestant seminary education in America, which system continues to be the predominant way men prepare for the ministry.

Princeton was the power house for the training of men for the Presbyterian ministry and the nursery for the modern missionary movement. She stood in the breach for a hundred years as a staunch defender of historic Calvinism. Alongside her Presbyterians developed a number of regional seminaries: among which were Union in Richmond, VA, Columbia in Columbia, SC, and Austin, in Austin, TX. As Princeton became

increasingly latitudinarian, J. Gresham Machen left and began Westminster Seminary. Westminster basically was formed on the plan of old Princeton. Westminster has been an influential propagator of Princeton Theology responsible for the development of many other Reformed institutions; directly, Westminster Seminary in California, or indirectly Covenant Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Greenville Seminary. When Dr. Morton Smith started Reformed Seminary and later Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, he used the plan of old Princeton. In a sense Greenville Seminary is a grandchild of old Princeton.

Moreover, the exciting thing today is that we are able to combine the best of seminary tradition with mentoring. Not only do faculty members mentor students, but also most reformed seminaries require students to do field work under pastor/mentors.

Also, with the advent of distance education, we see the possibility of the rise of parsonage and presbytery-centered training. Men may now do part of their seminary education under the tutelage of a local church or presbytery, taking courses by audio and video discs and on the Internet. At Greenville Seminary we are attempting to work with both local sessions and presbyteries to train men for the ministry. We are using a blend of taped and digitally recorded courses, live courses mediated by computer, local teaching, and men attending classes on campus for a minimum of twenty-four semester hours.

With respect to distance education, we need to keep two cautions in mind. First, private, non-social learning is not the best way to train men for the ministry. The classroom environment remains important in the development of well-balanced ministers. Second, we need to use the Internet with great caution. I trust we have learned our lessons from the television that the medium does shape the message. Hence, we need to be cautious in our use of the Internet. Resident based training, however, is still the most effective way to train men for the Gospel ministry.

What about the results? Is the approach of our fathers sufficient for the age in which we live? To answer these questions, we must first answer the question of what we want to accomplish. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America answered the question of goals in its plan of union:

It is to form men for the Gospel ministry, who shall truly believe, and cordially love, and therefore endeavor to propagate and defend, in its genuineness, simplicity, and fullness, that system of religious belief

and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Plan of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church; and thus to perpetuate and extend the influence of true evangelical piety, and Gospel order.

It is to provide for the Church an adequate supply and succession of able and faithful ministers of the New Testament; *workmen that need not to be ashamed*, being qualified *rightly to divide the word of truth*.

It is to unite, in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning; believing that religion without learning or learning without religion, in the ministers of the gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the church.

It is to afford more advantages than have hitherto been usually possessed by the ministers of religion in our Church, to cultivate both piety and literature in their preparatory course; by placing it in circumstances favourable to its growth, and by cherishing and regulating its ardour; literature, by affording favourable opportunities for its attainment, and by making its possession indispensable.

It is to provide for the Church, men who shall be able to defend her faith against infidels, and her doctrines against heretics.

It is to furnish our congregations with enlightened, humble, zealous, laborious pastors, who shall truly watch for the good of souls, and consider it as their highest honour and happiness to win them to the Saviour, and to build up their several charges in holiness and peace.

It is to promote harmony and unity of sentiment among the ministers of our Church, by educating a large body of them under the same teachers, and in the same course of study.

It is to lay the foundation of early and lasting friendships, productive of confidence and mutual assistance in after life among the ministers of religion; which experience shows to be conducive not only to personal happiness, but to the perfecting of inquiries, researches, and publications advantageous to religion.

It is to preserve the unity of our Church, by educating her ministers in an enlightened attachment, not only to the same doctrines, but to the same plan of government.

It is to bring to the service of the Church genius and talent, when united with piety, however poor or obscure may be their possessor, by furnishing, as far as possible, the means of education and support, without expense to the student.

It is, finally, to endeavour to raise up a succession of men, at once *qualified for* and thoroughly *devoted* to the work of the Gospel ministry; who, with various endowments suiting them to different stations in the Church of Christ, may all possess a portion of the spirit of the primitive propagators of the Gospel, prepared to make every sacrifice, to endure every hardship, and to render every service which the promotion of the pure and undefiled religion may require (Calhoun, 416, 417).

Surely these goals are as pertinent today as when they were penned. The problem with results lies in abandoning the goals. In the last few decades some Reformed institutions have abandoned this classical approach because they were convinced that it was defective in the production of balanced pastors. So they have multiplied courses in Practical Theology and management principles at the expense of systematic theology, historical theology, and Greek and Hebrew. I think the jury is in and the results—that men experience the same pastoral problems as before, while often failing presbytery exams—have not served the church well. What Schools have failed to understand is that historically it was godliness and not a profusion of management courses that made men better pastors. When Reformed seminaries pursued Princeton's academic goals while neglecting her commitment to piety and experimental religion, they failed to equip men to be godly pastors.

The answer is not in jettisoning a strong academic emphasis, but in keeping the balance of piety expressed in Princeton's plan. Princeton based its curriculum on this plan:

Section 1. Every student, at the close of his course, must have made the following attainments, viz. He must be well skilled in the original languages of the Holy Scriptures. He must be able to explain the principal difficulties which arise in the perusal of the Scriptures, either from erroneous translations, apparent inconsistencies, real obscurities, or objections arising

from history, reason, or argument. He must be versed in Jewish and Christian antiquities, which serve to explain and illustrate Scripture. He must have an acquaintance with ancient geography, and with oriental customs, which throw light on the sacred records. – Thus he will have laid the foundation for becoming a sound biblical critic.

He must have read and digested the principal arguments and writings relative to what has been called the deistical controversy. – Thus will he be qualified to become a defender of the Christian faith.

He must be able to support the doctrines of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, by a ready, pertinent, and abundant quotation of Scripture texts for that purpose. He must have studied carefully and correctly Natural Theology, Didactic, Polemic, and Casuistic Divinity. He must have a considerable acquaintance with General History and Chronology, and a particular acquaintance with the history of the Christian Church. – Thus he will be preparing to become an able and sound divine and casuist.

He must have read a considerable number of the best practical writers on the subject of religion. He must have learned to compose with correctness and readiness in his own language, and to deliver what he has composed to others in a natural and acceptable manner. He must be well acquainted with the several parts, and the proper structure of popular lectures and sermons. He must have composed at least two lectures and four popular sermons, that shall have been approved by the professors. [The student also was required to give a fifteen minute address once a month.]

He must have carefully studied the duties of the pastoral care. – Thus he will be prepared to become a useful preacher, and a faithful pastor.

He must have studied attentively the form of Church Government authorized by the Scriptures, and the administration of it as it has taken place in Protestant Churches. – Thus he will be qualified to exercise discipline, and to take part in the government of the Church in all its judicatories.

Section 2. The period of continuance in the Theological Seminary shall, in no case be less than three years, previously to an examination for a certificate of approbations (Calhoun, 423,424).

Although today we would address issues like Post modernism, the New Perspective on Paul, Federal Vision, and Islam, and not the “deistical controversy,” we recognize that the sentiments behind the curriculum are sound. Moreover, in our day men need more training in preaching. In the nineteenth century, a liberally educated man was expected to be an accomplished speaker when he arrived at seminary.

Another question is the expense. Although distance education will benefit some students financially, the seminary still must assemble a faculty to produce the courses and then to interact with the student. A competent faculty needs to be paid a competent salary. Moreover, as the Church learned in the nineteenth century, a school needs a good library, and if resident education is preferable, an adequate campus. These things cost money. But schools need to make the decision whether they will raise these funds by high tuition costs or by trusting God to provide through churches and individuals. At Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary we have opted for low tuition (about three-fourths to one third less than most other seminaries).

Furthermore, Churches that see the need for well-trained ministers need to make a two-fold commitment. First, to support corporately and to encourage support by individuals of seminaries that are consistent with the church’s doctrinal standards. Secondly, to support financially the men they send to resident seminaries. If we commit to these two things, men will be able to study at a resident seminary and by God’s grace enter the ranks of well qualified and godly pastors.

The final issue to address is the seminary and doctrinal decline. Hardly a day passes that I do not think about the fact that no Christian institution of learning has ever remained faithful to God, few even as long as Princeton. This fact is sobering. A number of reasons may be offered, but the two most important are professors’ seeking academic acclaim and the failure to teach courses from an experimental point of view—with love for God—so that one twists the subject matter into theological abstractions and speculations. We must worship as we study, teach, and learn.

One of the necessary precautions is confessional integrity. We need to commit to Princeton’s goal of men who “truly believe, and cordially love, and therefore endeavour to propagate and defend, in its genuineness, simplicity, and fullness, that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, ...” (Calhoun, 416). Under the curriculum summary the Princeton plan added, “He must be able to support the doctrines of the Confession of

Faith and Catechisms, by a ready, pertinent, and abundant quotation of Scripture texts for that purpose” (Calhoun, 424).

Of course in order to meet this goal one must have a confessionally unified faculty. Princeton maintained this stance with a thorough going subscription to the Westminster Standards:

“In the presence of God and of the directors of this Seminary, I do solemnly, and *ex animo* adopt, receive, and subscribe the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as the confession of my faith; or, as a summary and just exhibition of that system of doctrine and religious belief which is contained in holy Scripture, and therein revealed by God to man for his salvation: ... And I do solemnly promise and engage, not to inculcate, teach, or insinuate any thing which shall appear to me to contradict or contravene, either directly or impliedly, any thing taught in the said Confession of Faith, Catechisms, or Form of Church Government, while I shall continue a professor in this Seminary” (Calhoun, 421).

Only such a thorough going commitment will keep a seminary confessionally orthodox. Interestingly, Princeton’s theological decline might be traced to its accommodation to claims of science, compromising on the Confession’s position on creation. When seminaries allow professors to hold to unconfessional views on creation, Sabbath, worship, justification, sanctification, and paedocommunion, confessional truth is in jeopardy.

Recognizing the importance of doctrinal integrity, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary states:

Doctrinal Integrity. The debate between the Old and New School Presbyterians of the past century centered on the question of all Church officers’ subscription to the Westminster Standards. In 1729, the Presbyterian Church adopted the Westminster Standards in all of its doctrinal teachings. In the beginning of the 19th century, an attempt was made to integrate New England Congregationalism with Presbyterianism. The congregational elements that entered the Presbyterian Church were not based upon full subscription to the Westminster Standards. The result was the development by New School Presbyterianism of the idea of loose or system subscription, thus opening the door for all kinds of exceptions to the Standards.

GPTS holds to the historic position of American Presbyterianism, namely, to strict or full subscription to the

Westminster Standards. All faculty and board members are required to hold to full subscription, and we seek to inculcate this position in our students by requiring them to memorize the entire Shorter Catechism or the Heidelberg Catechism. It is our conviction that the modern Church must preserve orthodoxy by returning to full subscription, and that ministers and elders must uphold their ordination vows of full subscription. It is with this in mind that GPTS teaches the Biblical faith as set forth in the Westminster Standards.

In light of this commitment, each member of the Board of Trustees and each man who teaches annually subscribes to the following statement:

To guarantee that Greenville Seminary will maintain its theological position, each member of the Board of Trustees, Faculty, and Teaching Staff is required initially and annually to subscribe to the following Statement of Belief and Covenant:

‘Believing that there is but one, the living and true God, and that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory, and with solemn awareness of the accountability to Him in all that we feel, think, say, and do, the undersigned engages in and subscribes to this declaration:

1. All Scripture is self-attesting, and being Truth, requires the human mind whole-heartedly to subject itself in all its activities to the authority of Scripture complete as the Word of God, standing written in the 66 books of the Holy Bible, all therein being verbally inspired by Almighty God, and therefore without error in the original autographs.

2. Reformed Theology as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith & the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as adopted by the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, is the system of doctrine taught in Scripture, and therefore is to be learned, taught, and proclaimed for the edification

6. I have prepared a reading guide to the Standards to facilitate an annual perusal. This guide is available upon request.

7. Samuel Miller, *Doctrinal Integrity: On the Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions and Adherence to Our Doctrinal Standards* (Dallas, Tex.: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1984) 61, 52 (emphasis mine). I believe this distinction harmonizes Hodge’s position in 1839 and that expressed in 1858. See Knight in *The Practice of Confessional Subscription* (Boston: University Press of America, Inc., 1995) 133–134.

and government of Christian people, for the propagation of the faith and for the evangelization of the world by the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. And I do solemnly promise and engage not to inculcate, sanction, teach or insinuate anything which shall appear to me to contradict or contravene, either directly or implicitly, any element in that system of doctrine.

4. Now, therefore, the undersigned, in the presence of God, states and signifies that he consents, agrees, and binds himself to all of the foregoing without any reservation whatsoever, and that he further obligates himself immediately to notify in writing the Board of Trustees should a change of any kind take place in his belief and feeling not in accord with this Statement. Amen.’

Furthermore, each Trustee and faculty is required to read through the Standards annually.⁶

How does this commitment work itself out in instruction? I answer this question by noting what we do at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. First, the Westminster Standards (along with the Three Forms of Unity) are the boundaries of our teaching. Since we believe the Standards are a faithful exposition of the Scriptures, we stay within the boundaries. We would allow minor scruples for example with respect to exclusive Psalmody or the closing doxology of the Lord’s Prayer, but no one may take exception to any doctrine of the Standards. In this regard, we find the council of Samuel Miller helpful:

Let the candidate for admission unfold to the Presbytery before which he presents himself, all his doubts and scruples, with perfect frankness; opening his whole heart, as if on oath; and neither softening nor concealing anything. Let him cause them distinctly to understand, that if he subscribe the Confession of Faith, he must be understood to do it in consistency with the exceptions and explanations which he specifies. If the Presbytery, after this fair understanding, should be of the opinion, that the excepted points *were of little or no importance, and interfered with no article of faith*, and should be willing to receive his subscription in the usual way, he may proceed.⁷

Second, the cornerstone of our curriculum is Dr. Smith’s course “Introduction to Reformed Theology.” This course is “a survey of the system of Christian thought using the Westminster Confession Faith and

Continued on Page 302.

John Calvin, the Nascent Sabbatarian, Continued from Page 14.

Sabbath almost disappears from recorded Christian practice after Christ's resurrection," and that furthermore, "the indirect evidence is very strong, and shows not merely that the Lord's Day was kept by Jewish Christians, but that it originated with them," for it is likely "that the church in Palestine *originally* observed both the Sabbath and the Lord's Day."⁴⁵

In short, Calvin's understanding of the biblical doctrine of the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath, while off slightly due largely to an exegetical error, and (understandably) not so well developed as that of his Puritan successors, is in sufficient agreement with them on the central issues that he is certainly not 'non-sabbatarian' as some have suggested. In fact, one may justly categorize Calvin together with later sabbatarians; the term 'nascent sabbatarian' would seem most appropriate. ■

Edwards' Freedom of the Will, Continued from Page 103.

The present author concludes this review and analysis of *Freedom of the Will* by turning to the advice that Martyn Lloyd-Jones once gave to a man seeking to learn more about the doctrines of the Christian faith. Said Lloyd-Jones: "My advice to you is: Read Jonathan Edwards.... Read this man. Decide to do so. Read his sermons; read his practical treatises, and then go on to the great discourses on theological subjects."⁴⁹ Better advice could hardly be given. If one wants to know about the Christian faith in its richest Calvinistic form, he could do no better than beginning by reading Jonathan Edwards.

Soli Deo Gloria. ■

45. Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in its Jewish and Early Church Setting* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott: 1978) 30–32.

49. From D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Jonathan Edwards and the Crucial Importance of Revival," as cited in Justin Taylor, "Reading Jonathan Edwards: Objections and Recommendations," *A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004) 269.

33. *Minutes of Session of the Zion Presbyterian Church, Glebe Street, August 15, 1869*, PHS. An announcement of the events of Sunday evening August 15, 1869 was published in the *Southern Presbyterian and Index*, nd., available on Microfilm #160, SCL.

34. Girardeau was elected Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Columbia Theological Seminary in 1875 and remained in that chair until 1893 when his failing health forced his retirement. He died a peaceful death in Columbia on June 23, 1898 and lies awaiting the resurrection of the body in Columbia's Elmwood Cemetery.

Presbyterians in the South and the Slave, Continued from Page 222.

Zion Session, the following Freedmen were nominated to serve in the office of Ruling Elder—Paul Trescot, William Price, Jacky Morrison, Samuel Robinson, William Spencer, and John Warren. On "Sabbath August 15, 1869, 8 ½ P.M." the congregation of Zion Presbyterian Church (Colored) met for worship and the ordination and installation of their Ruling Elders. Girardeau chose for his text on this occasion Acts 14:23—"And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting ... they commended them to the Lord." The records tell us, "Session did then with prayer and the imposition of their hands ordain the persons ... and install them in the same." Thus, Zion became the first Southern church governed by black elders.³³ Girardeau had done what Dabney and a host of other Southern churchmen would not consider doing. He had admitted that black men could be qualified to rule in the church. He had exhibited his approbation by participating in the holy service, even the laying on of hands. What Dabney and others doubted possible, Girardeau confirmed as real.

Sadly, Girardeau's experiment did not gain prominence in the Southern Church. In 1874, the Presbyterian Church US, under political and social pressures from within and without, voted to segregate their communion into black and white churches. Girardeau opposed the move, lost the vote, and lost his beloved Zion.³⁴ Within a few short years many black Presbyterians across the South affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA, leaving the Presbyterian Church US.

CONCLUSION

All human weaknesses aside, the heritage of Davies, Jones, Adger, Smyth, and Girardeau is a good one. Their sacrificial labors could and should serve as a model for many today. Our elders and deacons should adopt a paternalistic model toward the precious sheep entrusted to them by our heavenly Father. A great sensitivity and shepherd like service would follow. The men we have considered loved their black brothers and gave themselves to the good work even in the face of social, political, and ecclesiastical difficulties. No doubt there are many rejoicing in the presence of our LORD today because of the loving ministries of these men and countless others like them. ■

Seminary Education, Continued from Page 230.

Catechisms as the guide to the survey. Readings are required in Calvin's Institutes as well as catechism memorization" (Greenville Catalogue).

Third, we seek to teach all doctrine courses exegetically. But when the truth has been established from Scripture, we use the summary found in the Standards.

Fourth, the students are required to memorize the Shorter Catechism. Ideally they go through the catechism three times in the four year curriculum. (Students from Continental Reformed denominations may substitute the Heidelberg Catechism.)

Fifth, we encourage exegetical/doctrinal preaching. Our students are encouraged to relate the truth of the text they are preaching to the doctrines of the Westminster Standards.

We live in a day with amazing resources. We need to pray that God will raise up godly men and that our seminaries will labor to provide the churches with an academic, confessional, and practical program for ministerial training. Why should we settle for less? Why should the people in the pew settle for less when our forefathers who lived in a less educated age with fewer resources had a ministry so superior? But as long as the church settles for less, as long as the church settles for mediocre preaching, as long as the church settles for men that cannot carry on a logical conversation, she will have a poorly educated ministry. On the other hand, if the church is guilty of wanting her ears tickled and not wanting doctrine taught and sin exposed, she is going to get a ministry that will meet her expectations. ■

The Regulative Principle of Worship: Sixty Years in Reformed Literature Part Two (2000–2007), Continued from Page 215.

“singing of psalms” is found in the approval of the Assembly’s “Paraphrase of the Psalmes,” which had been purged of nothing else, seems to confirm the specific use of the term “psalm” rather than a more general use to mean any spiritual song. Verifying the plain sense of the Divines from within the context of their work and the documents they produced is a sufficiently reasonable and conclusive approach to confirm their meaning, and avoids bean-counting opinions from outside their work to guess at what they “might” have meant by “psalm” in Confession of Faith 21.5. ■

In Translation: John Brown of Wamphray Singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs in the Public Worship of God, Continued from Page 279.

each church would not be destitute of the ability to produce these songs, since in such public exercise the forerunning churches must take first place.²⁰ Christ surely has granted all necessary gifts to the church. This gift, however, is very rare, and not common either to the churches or its members.

(4) If Psalms and hymns so composed and written must be utilized, either the hymns must be examined or proved before they are actually introduced for public use, or not. If not, is it not likely that the church would end up with some erroneous, absurd songs and the like?²¹ If they were examined and approved beforehand, with regard to both substance and form, isn’t it also likely that sometimes the occasion would

be lost for which the song was especially prepared before it had a chance of being introduced for use? And so, too often in public gatherings, either there would be at times no sacred songs, or, composed ahead of time, or insufficient use would be made with regard to the current occasion.

(5) It is certain that the Psalms and hymns in Scripture were dictated by the infallible Spirit. No one will deny that those hymns are superior which were composed by the infallible Spirit than those composed by private individuals, regardless of how gifted they may be. Who is going to believe that it was God’s will to replace his divine songs left to us with purely human ones?

(6) If this sort of thing happens, it turns out as it did in the papal psalters, as Martyr witnesses concerning 1 Cor. 14: 26, “Indeed, let the church not be led by its own inspiration, nor let ignorant pastors in their own judgment and prudence substitute bronze for gold, in place of the Psalms and spiritual songs which they celebrate as praise to God. These traditions are most frequently absurd, mere fables, and ridiculous.” So also Nicephorus witnesses in Book 9, chapter 24, Athanasius and Photius in *The Epitome of Philostorgius’ History*, Book 2, section 2, that Arius and his followers changed certain among the received hymns, and composed new songs, including for sailors, millers, and travelers, so that he might furtively lead people to his own impiety.

(7) The ancients sang the Davidic Psalter, as Augustine witnesses, Book 10, chapter 33, *Confessions*; Theodoretus, *Histories*, Book 2, chapter 24,²² claims that Flavinus and Diodorus handed down the Davidic hymns to be sung. Augustine, Epistle 119, chapter 18, boasts that the divine songs of the prophets be sung solemnly in the church. He discusses the problem of the Donatists who abandoned the hymns of David and sang songs composed out of their own imagination. The Council of Laodicia, canon 59, forbid the speaking of private psalms in the church.

(8) How great an evil has arisen from this license in the Roman church has already been sufficiently noted.

(9) The apostle prescribes for us the substance of the songs in Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16, for *Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs* are themselves titles of the Psalms of David and others....

(TO BE CONTINUED)

TRANSLATED BY N. E. BARRY HOFSTETTER, Th.M. ■

20. This argument is a bit obscure, but Brown appears to be making a reference to the practice in the ancient church, implying that the practice would have not only been clearly instituted by Christ, but would date back to antiquity.

21. Brown here appears to have risen to the level of prophet, considering some of the musical proclivities of the contemporary worship genre.

22. [Ed. This appears to be chapter 19 in *Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (1892; Rpt. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, n.d.).]