

**04** THE NEED FOR  
THEOLOGICAL TRAINING  
STEVEN J. LAWSON

**18** THEOLOGICAL TRAINING  
THAT TRANSFORMS  
R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.

**18** PASTORS &  
MENTORS  
MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN

# EXPOSITOR

A PUBLICATION OF  
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SUMMER 2018

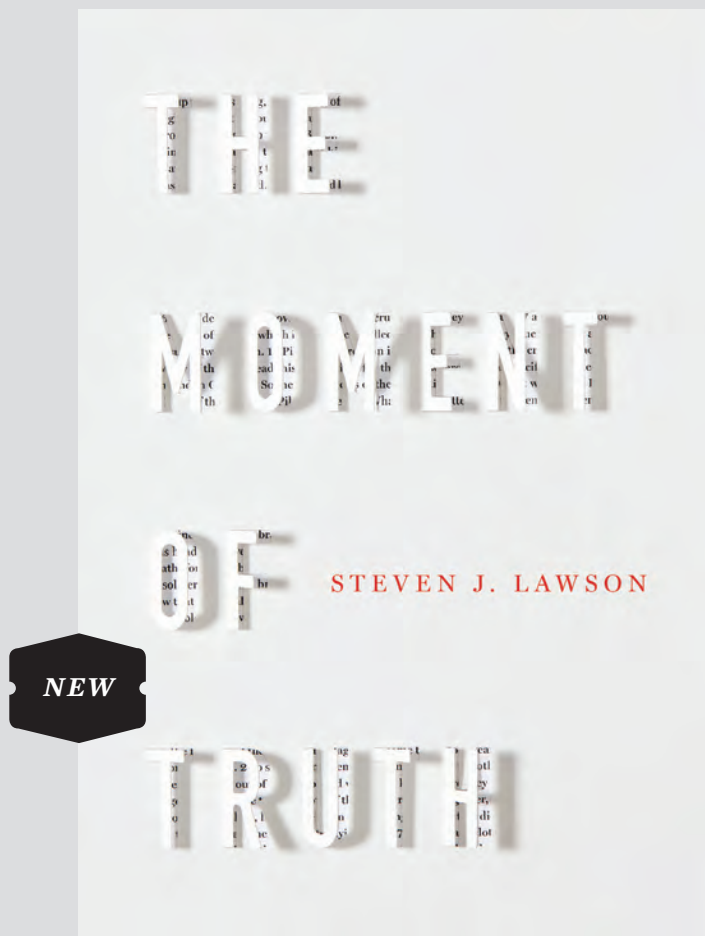
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## WHAT IS TRUTH?

“What is truth?” Pilate turned to Jesus and asked a profound question. It is a question that continues to be debated in our day. But it is one that God has definitively answered in His written Word and ultimately revealed in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. It has been the duty and privilege of each successive generation of Christians to proclaim the truth of the gospel to a world that desperately needs to hear it. In this collection of sermons, Dr. Steven J. Lawson speaks into our cultural moment, helping Christians and skeptics alike to answer Pilate’s age-old question.

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# THE VALUE OF THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

DR. STEVEN J. LAWSON, PRESIDENT, ONEPASSION MINISTRIES

I grew up in a home that placed a significantly high value on education. My father was a PhD and a professor who taught in medical school. My brother has been a cardiologist and taught in a medical school for most of his adult life. My mother was valedictorian of almost every class she was in. And my sister was an excellent public school teacher for many years.

As you can imagine, my father stressed the value of education throughout my entire childhood. However, as a child and young adult I had no interest in the classroom. My entire life growing up was devoted to sports. Whatever the season was, I played football, basketball, baseball, ran track, and played golf in my spare time. I am embarrassed to say that I did not want to have anything to do with books or learning.

That is, until the day God called me into the ministry. At that moment, it was as if a switch was turned on inside of me, and I suddenly had a voracious appetite to know the truth of the word of God. I knew it that I would have to study for the first time in my life. And more than that, I wanted to. I found myself drawn to buying books about the Bible and began poring over them.

But I soon realized that I could not teach myself everything that I needed to know. I concluded that I needed a structured, formal education in the Scripture and theology that would prepare me for a lifetime of ministry. I then understood that everything my father had stressed concerning excellence in education was greatly needed if I was to pursue the call if God upon my life to preach.

I enrolled in seminary, not in order to receive the credentials that would impress people, but to receive a thorough training that would equip me to exegete and expound the Bible. This required many years of diligent study under scholarly professors who excelled in their area of academic specialty.

By this training, I am deeply grateful that God gave me



the tools that I would use in the ministry to which he called me. Perhaps you recognize this same need in your life. Perhaps you have already received the education that you need. Or perhaps having already graduated from seminary, and you see the need for further education.

Wherever you are in this pursuit, this issue of *Expositor* magazine is designed to help you think through the value of the theological training to equip you to become a Bible preacher who rightly handles the word of God. May He lead you to become a lifetime learner in this highest of all callings upon your life. ♦



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# CONTENTS

- 04** THE NEED FOR THEOLOGICAL TRAINING STEVEN J. LAWSON
- 18** THEOLOGICAL TRAINING THAT TRANSFORMS R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.
- 26** ADVICE TO YOUNG PREACHERS R. SCOTT CLARK
- 32** PULPIT WITH JOHN MACARTHUR
- 36** PASTORS AND MENTORS MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN
- 40** THE CHURCH AS CLASSROOM NATHAN BUSENITZ
- 44** Why the Church Still Needs the Seminary KEVIN DEYOUNG

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# THE NEED *for* THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

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STEVEN J. LAWSON

Down through the centuries, the need for the theological training of those who preach the Word has been absolutely essential. The pulpit is not a place to enter into lightly. It is not for novices who are untaught and untrained. Neither is it for those who are ill-prepared to “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Standing before an open Bible and addressing the congregation is a sacred task that must be reserved for those who are well prepared to fulfill it. From the time of the prophets to this present hour, the need for properly equipped preachers has always been one of the greatest and most crucial needs of the church.

In an address delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary, the renowned theologian Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield stressed what he called “the importance of the intellectual preparation of the student for the ministry.” Warfield asserted, “The ministry is a ‘learned profession’; and the man without learning, no matter with what other gifts he may be endowed, is unfit for its duties....The minister must be ‘apt to *teach*’....Not apt merely to exhort, to beseech, to appeal, to entreat...but apt to *teach*. And teaching requires knowledge; he who teaches must know.” Rightly did Warfield affirm the critical nature of theological education for those in ministry.

Would you allow yourself to be operated upon by a surgeon who had no previous training in the medical field? Would you allow yourself to be represented in a court of

law by a lawyer who had never been properly trained in law? Both cases are unimaginable. Then it stands to reason that neither should the Word be preached by one who has never been rightly equipped to handle the Word of God. Admittedly, God has greatly used many men who never had any formal theological education. But they are the exception, not the rule. Further, who is to say but that they would have been even better preachers with solid training?

Any survey of redemptive history reveals the primary place of preachers being trained for the ministry. In the Old Testament, we see the training of the prophets to prophesy. In the New Testament, we note how Jesus Christ trained His disciples to preach. In turn, the apostles trained others to minister the Word. This pattern continued down through the centuries. From the early church fathers to this present day, we observe the same emphasis upon equipping preachers for the pulpit. The biblical and theological preparation needed to herald the Word with precision and power has been widely recognized and largely required. In this article, we will trace this historical development as well as addressing the component parts of what is necessary for the proper training of an expositor.

## THE TRAINING OF THE PROPHETS

We begin our survey in Old Testament times with the equipping of prophets. In ancient Israel, there arose “a

# DURING THEIR THREE-YEAR TRAINING PERIOD, THE TWELVE DISCIPLES WERE PERSONALLY TAUGHT AND DIRECTLY TRAINED BY JESUS HIMSELF.

group of prophets” (1 Sam 10:5, 10), also known as “the company of prophets” (1 Sam 19:20). These gatherings of preachers existed as early as the inauguration of the United Kingdom of Israel. They are first mentioned in connection with Samuel’s anointing of Saul to be king (1 Sam 10:1–13), when the prophet presided over a gathering of other prophets as its leader. There were other similar schools of prophets in Gibeah (1 Sam 10:5), Ramah (1 Sam 19:18–24), Bethel (2 Kings 2:3), Jericho (2 Kings 2:15), and Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38). Later, Elijah and Elisha were associated with “the sons of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 15; 4:1, 38) at Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal. Elisha was personally trained by Elijah, who passed his prophetic mantle on to his younger associate. Both of these men served as a head master over the company of the prophets in instructing them in prophetic ministry.

Each group of the prophets had a primary spiritual leader known as their “father” (1 Sam 10:2; 2 Kings 12) or “master” (2 Kings 2:3,5; 6:1–7). These highly capable instructor-mentors would teach the younger men. These instructor-mentors were highly capable teachers who taught the younger men. As these titles suggest, they possessed the authority of a “master,” yet with the affection of a “father.” They younger preachers were like sons to them, much like Paul described Timothy and Titus to be to him (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4). The younger prophets assumed a teachable posture under the older prophets, as “servants” (2 Kings 4:12; 5:20; 6:3,15; 9:11) and “sons” (1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3,5,7,15; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1). They were young preachers under the tutelage of older preachers (2 Kings 5:22; 6:17; 9:1–4), being equipped for this sacred task.

Some of these gatherings of prophets were sizeable. Obadiah rescued 100 prophets from Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 8:4). At least 50 prophets were at Jericho (2 Kings 2:57) and 100 prophets were at Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38–43). In these schools,

young prophets were discipled to become the next generation of proclaimers of the Word of God. This is the first occurrence in Scripture of men being prepared to preach. The next occurrence appears at the beginning of the New Testament.

## THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE

When Jesus Christ launched His public ministry, He first called twelve men to be His disciples. In Scripture, we see that these men were personally trained by Him for the task that lay before them. The Lord called each man to be His “disciple” (*mathētēs*), a word that means “a learner, pupil, or student.” A disciple was one who sat under the instruction of a master teacher. During their three-year training period, the twelve disciples were personally taught and directly trained by Jesus Himself. This prepared them to then be sent out to preach the gospel and fulfill the great commission.

These twelve men were required to leave their vocational work in order to be prepared for a lifetime of ministry. When Jesus summoned Peter, Andrew, James, and John, He said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). This was His call for them to be personally trained for the task of serving in His kingdom. Jesus said that they must be “*made*” (*poiēō*) into fishers of men. That is, they must be equipped for the labor they could not yet presently perform. If they were to rescue the souls of men without God, they must be trained by Him to minister the Word. These disciples had already been called to salvation (John 1:35–41). This was a second call, a divine summons to be prepared to preach the gospel in order to save the lost. In leaving their secular employment, they had to submit to Jesus’s intensive training and instruction.

These hardworking men left their vocations to enter into Jesus’s school of discipleship. In this mobile classroom, He



would teach them by both precept and example how to be effective in ministering the Word. This necessary preparation was so comprehensive that it would require three full years of concentrated instruction. This extensive education included teaching in sound doctrine and practical application of these truths. So thoroughly did Jesus teach them that they often called Him “Rabbi,” which means “Teacher” (John 1:38, 49; 6:25; 11:8).

Given the disciples’ limited theological knowledge, Jesus knew that He must be diligent in teaching them what they needed to be effective in their future ministry. The task before them would be too demanding without this in-depth teaching. Their own teaching would be shallow, ineffective, and even in error without this specific preparation. They would not be able to meet the demands of ministry without this firm doctrinal and practical foundation being laid. A crash course in the truth would simply not suffice. Jesus knew their need for theological training, and He devoted Himself to it.

#### THE TRAINING OF OTHER PREACHERS

Before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He charged His disciples to make disciples (Matt 28:19). They were to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47). Moreover, they were to teach those who believed to obey all that Jesus had taught them (Matt 28:20). Jesus would continue the work He began through these disciples (Acts 1:1). This would include training other preachers, even as the Lord had done with them. But without their prior training over three years, they would have been ill prepared to equip other preachers. The apostles succeeded in this matter as other men were trained to join them in preaching the Word.

Stephen is an example of one who was under the ministry of the apostles (Acts 6:5) and was equipped to preach with extraordinary wisdom and power (v. 10). This is self-apparent in the dynamic sermon he gave to the Sanhedrin, culminating in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts 7:2–53). His command of Scripture was masterful, something that could not have occurred without his exposure to the apostles’ teaching. The same could be said of Philip, who also preached the gospel with great power in Samaria (Acts 8:5–12). Much like Stephen, he also preached to the Ethiopian official and his entourage with a skilled handling of Scripture (Acts 8:25–40). These are but two examples of well-taught preachers who had been prepared to proclaim the gospel.

#### THE TRAINING OF PAUL

Consider the preparation of Saul of Tarsus for ministry. After being dramatically converted on the Damascus road

(Acts 9:1–7), he immediately began to preach Jesus in the synagogues (v 20). However, Saul subsequently chose not to go to Jerusalem to consult with the other apostles (Gal 1:16). Instead, he went into the Arabian Desert, where he received much-needed instruction from a revelation of Jesus Christ (v 12b). This intensive training from the Lord took place over three years (Gal 1:17–18). He spent this time not only in personal study and meditation, but being taught by the Lord Himself.

During this period, the Lord was preparing him for the ministry that lay ahead. Christ took Paul under His tutoring and gave him the basic training he needed to succeed in gospel ministry. Though Paul had previously been taught in the Law (Phil 3:5), he needed to be retaught in the purity of the gospel of grace. There were no shortcuts taken in his ministerial training. The critical calling upon his life was far too important for him to be untaught and untrained.

#### THE TRAINING OF TIMOTHY

Having been trained by Jesus, Paul, in turn, prepared a young man named Timothy for the gospel ministry. When the apostle came to Lystra on his first missionary journey, it is believed he led Timothy to faith in Christ (Acts 14:6–23). Paul subsequently revisited Lystra on his second missionary tour and chose Timothy to accompany him (Acts 16:1–3). Timothy became his protégé—his minister-in-training, if you will—as a young man probably in his late teens or early twenties. He would travel with Paul as his co-laborer, ministering side-by-side with him in Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Jerusalem (Acts 17–20). Further, he was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28).

Paul prepared Timothy for effective gospel ministry over a period lasting fifteen years. The aging apostle grounded his young son in the faith through his many expositions of Scripture and by the example of his own life. Paul trained Timothy both privately and publicly, both informally and formally. This equipping was designed so that one day Timothy would be ready to assume the apostle’s work in the early churches. But in order to perform the work that lay ahead, he must first be well trained. This required an excellent theological education by Paul for his “true child in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2).

#### THE TRAINING OF FAITHFUL MEN

In turn, Timothy was then charged to train other spiritual leaders who would be under this tutelage. Paul commanded him, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). There

are four spiritual generations of ministers represented in this verse. The lineage proceeded from Paul, to Timothy, to faithful men, to those whom they teach. This preparation for gospel ministry was not to stop there, but to be passed down to each successive generation throughout the centuries of church history.

The three qualifiers given in 2 Timothy 2:2 regarding who should be admitted into this training school for ministry are as follows: First, they must be “faithful.” To be “faithful” (*pistos*) means “trustworthy, reliable, one worthy of trust.” This indicates that they will be responsible stewards to retain the truth that is entrusted to them and then preach it as it was given to them. Second, they are to be “men,” because the office of preaching is restricted to the male gender (1 Tim 2:12–14). Third, they must be “able to teach,” that is, be divinely gifted to teach the Word with both accuracy and clarity (1 Tim 3:2). These are the ones to be trained for ministry. Those who are “faithful,” “men,” and “able to teach.”

#### THE TRAINING OF TITUS

At the same time, Paul trained Titus for gospel ministry. The apostle probably brought Titus along with him on his second missionary tour, though there is no mention of this in the book of Acts. There is no record of his conversion, or when or where he became associated with Paul. The apostle simply calls him “my true child in a common faith” (Titus 1:4). This is exactly how he identifies Timothy, which supports the idea that Paul led him to faith in Christ and nurtured his spiritual growth. After Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28), he took Titus with him to Crete as a co-laborer in the ministry. When Paul left the island, Titus remained to appoint elders and to continue the work (Titus 1:5).

In this close association, Titus traveled with Paul and served alongside him. He was shoulder-to-shoulder with him in Corinth for at least a year (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 14; 13:15; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). The apostle twice put Titus in charge of collecting an offering from the church in Corinth for the believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:6, 22–24). He even hand-delivered the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:16–19). Titus also accompanied Paul to the Council of Jerusalem, where the gospel of grace alone was defended (Gal 2:3–5). This privileged exposure to the apostle’s preaching and theological insight laid the foundation for preparing Titus for the ministry.

All of these experiences played a significant role in training Titus for gospel ministry. Though he did not receive a formal classroom education by modern standards, his training nevertheless had the depth necessary for the

work entrusted to him. Titus could not have succeeded in preaching or pastoring without this equipping that he received at the hands of the apostle Paul. In reality, his theological training took place in a classroom on wheels during Paul’s ministry travels.

#### THE TRAINING IN CHURCH HISTORY

The pattern of training pastor-teachers that was prevalent in the first decades would continue developing over the centuries that followed. Based upon the early precedent as recorded in Scripture, it is clear that thorough training for the ministry is not optional. Equipping men to preach is a critical matter for the work of God to succeed. In the following centuries, the frequent failure to prepare men theologically was contrary to the pattern set forth in both the Old and New Testaments. Training to teach and preach is absolutely necessary. Ministry centers on the exposition of the Word. Therefore, the preacher’s preparation must be thoroughly sound.

A brief survey of church history reveals the ongoing progression of theological training for men called to the ministry. The limited confines of this article will not allow us to trace out the many different places that this has occurred around the globe. I will simply highlight some of the high points of preparing preachers to rightly handle the Word of God.

#### THE TRAINING IN ALEXANDRIA

One school that was established early on to train ministers was in Alexandria, a port city in north Africa. As the second largest city in the ancient Roman Empire, Alexandria was a highly acclaimed intellectual and cultural center. The churches there created and hosted what is now known as the Catechetical School, or a place where students could learn basic and advanced Christian teachings. In some ways Christian scholarship was virtually born in Alexandria, as the Catechetical School would become the prototype of the later European university system. In it, Christian theologians taught both the Scriptures and philosophy to many dedicated students. The earliest known dean was Pantaenus (c.180) followed by Clement of Alexandria (c.190) and Origen from around 215 to 231. This institution proved to be influential in maintaining orthodoxy during many of the early theological controversies.

Among these many students may have been the theological titan, Athanasius, who became the principal defender of orthodoxy in his generation. In this school, he received the necessary tools to become the “Father of Orthodoxy.” This school gave instruction in the grammatical and rhetorical arts, as well as in Scripture, theology, and

philosophy. The school trained its students to start with truths demonstrated from philosophy and then to proceed to Scripture. Thus, the pattern was already being continued in training men theologically for ministry.

#### THE TRAINING IN ANTIOCH

Also in the second century, another school was established in Antioch of Syria. As the third-largest city in the Roman Empire, this thriving metropolis became another major center for the study of biblical exegesis and Christian theology. It has been argued that the scholars in Alexandria emphasized the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, while those in Antioch pursued a more literal exegesis of the biblical text. Historians of this period now argue that the differences between the two schools are not as sharp as once believed.

The school in Antioch was known to be devoted to training pastor-scholars. It produced perhaps the most gifted preacher of the early church fathers, John Chrysostom, a man known for his careful exposition of Scripture and well-crafted homilies. The influence of this school upon equipping church leaders with a solid commitment to Scripture cannot be overstated.

#### THE TRAINING IN MONASTERIES

Beginning in the fourth century and continuing in subsequent centuries, the training of spiritual leaders was also carried on within the confines of monasteries, like those founded by Basil of Caesarea in what is now modern Turkey. In insular communities, monks gave themselves to the disciplines of the Christian life, agreeing in common to follow a certain “rule” or way of living in order to orient their lives around the pursuit and worship of God. Many monasteries housed a scriptorium, where monks copied the Scriptures and the writings of Church Fathers, preserving them for future generations. In time, some monasteries also developed extensive libraries that contained books for the study

of theology. Monks also participated each day in various worship services, which included preaching in chapel. Though not every monastic order encouraged literacy and the study of Scripture, the monasteries were an integral part of theological education until the evolution of the cathedral schools and universities in later centuries.

Throughout the Medieval period, monks often were the leading teachers within Christendom. One such figure was Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), whom John Calvin called the major witness to the truth between the sixth and sixteenth centuries. Despite the increasing corruption of the gospel by the Roman Catholic Church, a number of monasteries remained isolated and upheld the truth of Scripture. This, in turn, allowed them to extend an expanding influence. In a period of intellectual darkness, these theologically trained men upheld the light of truth, advancing the Scripture and its basic doctrines.

#### THE TRAINING IN CATHEDRALS

As the Medieval European church developed, a new center of learning called the cathedral school emerged. The history of cathedrals began in 313, when the emperor Constantine adopted Christianity and promoted it throughout the empire. Originally, a cathedral was a church that housed a bishop. The word “cathedral” refers to an elevated chair that became the distinctive mark of the teaching bishop, as men sat under him for instruction. Eventually, cathedral education expanded as schools were formed that met within the walls of the church. Young men preparing for ministry lived in the rooms of the cathedral in order to study theology there. During the early Middle Ages, a body of ministers would gather at a growing number of cathedrals to pursue specialized learning.

Later in the Middle Ages, the cathedral clergy of the tenth and eleventh centuries was divided into two classes. The first was comprised of a recognized order of monks who took strict vows. The other class was a college of clergy,



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usually without these rigorous vows. Both studied at cathedral schools. Prior to the Reformation, all cathedrals were associated with the Roman Catholic Church. But during the English Reformation, much of the cathedral system was changed.

### THE TRAINING IN UNIVERSITIES

A more formal theological training started in the tenth century through what became known as the university. These learning centers were the product of a period that emphasized its *ad fontes* commitment in education, meaning “back to the sources.” This set of values produced a new desire to return to the study of the original sources from ancient history, including the ancient Greek philosophers and Roman thinkers. But it also led to the reexamination of the Scriptures. This gave rise to the university, from the Latin *universitas*, meaning “the whole,” or the whole of knowledge. This form of education emerged for the pursuit of knowledge in all major areas of study in the arts, law, medicine, and theology.

Between 1200 and 1500, some eighty universities sprang up across Europe. The first arose in Italy, at Salerno (tenth century) and Bologna (1088). There followed the University of Paris (ca. 1160) and other French universities at Orleans (1306) and Bordeaux (1441). English universities were established at Oxford (1167) and Cambridge (1209). Oxford became known for its exceptional theological faculty, which included John Duns Scotus (1265–1308), William of Ockham (1285–1349), and John Wycliffe (c.1330–1384).

In Germany, universities appeared in Vienna (1365), Erfurt (1379), Heidelberg (1385), and eventually Wittenberg (1502), which was the last medieval university to open its doors. In addition, three major universities were founded in Scotland in the fifteenth century: St. Andrews (1413), Glasgow (1451), and Aberdeen (1495). These centers for higher learning were dedicated to preserving and teaching the *summa*, that is, the sum total of human knowledge. These universities trained the leading Pre-Reformers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the leading Reformers in the sixteenth century, contributing to the Protestant Reformation.

### THE TRAINING IN EUROPE

Across Europe, the fires of reformation were first ignited in university halls, libraries, and neighboring pubs. The Pre-Reformer John Wycliffe taught at the University of Oxford and spread his strong Augustinian doctrine to his students. John Hus (ca. 1372–1415), the Bohemian Pre-Reformer, studied at the University of Prague, where he first encountered Reformation truths in the library’s holdings of

the writings of Wycliffe. Once converted, Hus then taught at the University of Prague and almost split the university over these truths. The German Reformation was then fueled by Martin Luther (1483–1546), professor of Bible at the newly founded University of Wittenberg. It would be in this university that Luther would teach for the rest of his adult life. This faculty also boasted Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), a skilled linguist who knew the Greek New Testament well. Future Reformers such as Patrick Hamilton of Scotland (1504–1528) and William Tyndale of England (1494–1536) would travel to the University of Wittenberg to sit under their teaching ministries.

The Swiss Reformation also owes the training of its leading figures to the university system. Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) received his learning at the Universities of Vienna and Basel. John Calvin (1509–1564) was educated at the Universities of Paris, Orleans, and Bourges. There, this Genevan Reformer was given the tools to become the leading theologian, author, commentator, and expositor of the Reformation. Calvin himself taught many pastors-in-training in the Auditorium, located across the street from where he preached in Saint Pierre’s Cathedral. In this lecture hall, Calvin taught Scripture three times a week to men who were French Huguenots, Marian exiles, or from other backgrounds and who had escaped persecution by fleeing to Geneva. But these men were soon convicted that they must return to their homelands with the theological truths they were learning. The school became nicknamed “Calvin’s School of Death,” because those who attended there often soon faced death upon returning to their home communities. From this school of preachers would arise both the Geneva Academy and the University of Geneva (1559).

### THE TRAINING IN ENGLAND

In like manner, the theological training of preachers for the English Reformation took place in their two leading universities, Oxford and Cambridge. William Tyndale was educated at Oxford (1506–1516) and given the tools needed to translate the Bible into English from the original languages. In 1520, a small group of Cambridge scholars began meeting regularly in a pub on the campus of King’s College called the White Horse Inn. The purpose was to discuss Luther’s writings on *sole fide* that were coming across the English channel onto campus. This small gathering included many future leaders in the English Reformed movement, including two archbishops, seven bishops, and nine Marian martyrs.

In the seventeenth century, the Westminster Assembly met in London and drafted the *Confession of Faith* (1646), *Longer Catechism* (1648), and *Shorter Catechism* (1649).

But first, these delegates drafted the *Directory for Public Worship*, which contained detailed sections on how preaching was to be conducted. The *Directory* set a high standard for the pulpit, requiring a man be properly trained. During this time, Oxford remained a place for educating future preachers. John Owen (1616–1683), arguably the greatest Puritan theologian, after graduating from Oxford (1635), served as vice chancellor at Oxford (1652–1657) and dean of Christ Church, Oxford (1657–1660). In the eighteenth century, John Wesley (1703–1791), Charles Wesley (1707–1788), and George Whitefield (1714–1770) were educated at this same institution. The Methodist Movement was also born at Oxford University through the Holy Club, which Whitefield and the Wesleys led (1729).

#### THE TRAINING IN THE COLONIES

As the New England colonies grew, church leaders recognized the importance of training the newly established churches. Harvard arose as the first institution of higher learning in America (1636) and was founded for the express purpose of training ministers for these new pulpits. Patterned after Cambridge University in England, Harvard existed to prevent “illiterate ministers” from standing in the pulpits of the New World. This institution taught strong Puritan theology in the classrooms and produced the leading Boston divine Increase Mather, who served as its president from 1685 to 1701.

As inevitably happens, Harvard began to drift from its Reformed convictions. Consequently, Yale was then founded to be an institution to train ministers according to Puritan orthodoxy (1701). To start the school’s initial library, ten pastors pooled their ministerial books together. Early students studied the Scriptures, Calvin’s *Institutes*, and many of the great Puritan works. Yale carried on the orthodox tradition well into the nineteenth century before it, too, succumbed to liberalism. Among its most noted graduates was Jonathan Edwards.

#### THE TRAINING IN PRINCETON

When Yale drifted from its biblical moorings, Princeton was raised up to give ministers the theological training they needed. Originally founded as the College of New Jersey, it later became Princeton College, which gradually became a liberal arts school. In the wake of the Second Awakening, there was a great need for a minister’s college specifically dedicated to the training of preachers. So,

## IN THE WAKE OF THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING, THERE WAS A GREAT NEED FOR A MINISTER'S COLLEGE.

Princeton Seminary was founded for training men in Scripture and in Reformed theology (1812). The Princeton faculty was an imposing collection of biblical scholars, armed to train preachers in biblical truth, including men such as Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, and J. Gresham Machen. Until its fall to liberalism in 1929, no theological school had a greater influence for training preachers in sound doctrine than did Princeton.

#### THE TRAINING OF MODERN SEMINARIES

Over the twenty centuries of the church, the theological training of preachers has advanced in the sophistication of its education. The further removed in time we become from the ancient languages, culture, and mindset, the greater is the need for preachers to be taught these subjects in order to rightly interpret the Bible. There are many gaps that must be bridged linguistically, historically, culturally, and geographically. Any academic institution designed to provide theological training for men called into the ministry must address these essential areas as it teaches its students the Bible.

Various seminaries today offer an excellent theological education. Among these Bible-based institutions are The Master’s Seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Reformed Theological Seminary. Training in these contexts often includes multiple fields of study that equip a man to teach and preach the Scripture with both precision and power. These areas are as follows:

#### THE TRAINING IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Excellent theological training involves classes in the Hebrew and Greek languages. The Old Testament was

# ANY PROPER THEOLOGICAL TRAINING FOR AN EXPOSITOR MUST INCLUDE TEACHING ITS STUDENTS THE VARIOUS DISCIPLINES OF THEOLOGY.

originally written in Hebrew, with a few chapters in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek. The man of God must be able to interact with the Bible as it was originally written by the prophets and apostles. Understanding the meaning of a word or phrase in the original language can be the key to correctly interpreting a passage of Scripture. Being taught to access this information provides the necessary accuracy to capture the exact meaning of the Scripture. Operating in the original languages is essential in parsing verbs, performing word studies, and understanding grammar and syntax.

## THE TRAINING IN HERMENEUTICS

In order to know what the biblical words and phrases mean, men must be taught the laws of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. These rules enable the preacher to discover the God-intended meaning of a passage. In so doing, the expositor must be taught to take into account what a text means in its own unique setting. He must be trained to see a passage of Scripture in its context historically, culturally, and theologically. The perceived meaning of a verse must be in agreement with the rest of Scripture, because the Bible never contradicts itself. These principles of sound interpretation must be clearly taught and well received. The training a preacher receives must also include the skillful use of the right tools to be used in ascertaining the true meaning.

Additionally, this education in hermeneutics must include teaching the preacher to distinguish between the literal and the figurative meaning in a passage. He must be trained to understand the different types of literary genre used in Scripture, including narrative, legal, poetry, proverb, prophecy, discourse, parable, and epistle. Each genre has unique features that must be taken into account when interpreting the biblical text.

## THE TRAINING IN EXEGESIS

Further, a proper theological training must include an introduction to grammar and syntax. Grammar is the relationship of words and phrases to each other. This orientation helps determine what the biblical author intended his original readers to understand. Syntax deals with the arrangement of words and phrases to create sentences. This, likewise, must be taught to men who would preach the biblical text with accuracy. Every preacher should be proficient in the elements of grammar and syntax. In addition to this, theological training should include an orientation to the figures of speech used in the Bible. The Old and New Testaments were written with a broad spectrum of figurative language. Any theological education must include teaching its students what these literary devices are.

## THE TRAINING IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Moreover, any proper theological training for an expositor must include teaching its students the various disciplines of theology. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones has said, "What is preaching? It is theology on fire." The study of theology can be usefully divided into ten major areas: Bibliology, Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. These doctrinal divisions may be taught according to biblical theology, which is the organization of theology in terms of where it occurs in the Bible. For example, there is Old Testament theology and New Testament theology. Likewise, there is theology that is distinctively Mosaic, Davidic, Matthean, Markan, Lukan, Johannine, Petrine, Pauline, and so on for each of the rest of the biblical authors.

Further, systematic theology organizes and arranges what the entire Bible teaches concerning any particular area of theology. This is the disciplined study that collects

and collates the many verses throughout the whole of Scripture on a particular biblical doctrine and presents it in a coherent fashion. Here, the question is raised, “What does the whole Bible teach on a given doctrine or topic?” In addition, the study of historical theology traces the chronological development of theology throughout church history to the present day. This kind of study focuses on the doctrinal views of leading theologians, pivotal eras, and major movements within their respective theological contexts. In other words, it examines how the church in its different eras of history has understood various theological subjects.

#### THE TRAINING IN BIBLE EXPOSITION

Any sound theological training should also include an introduction to the entire Bible in one’s own language. A proper education should involve being taught the unfolding storyline of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. A preacher-in-training should be instructed in the major divisions of the Scripture, along with its historical background. He should have substantial knowledge of each book of the Bible, including its central theme, author, recipient, purpose, outline, and interpretative challenges. The goal is that every preacher be a Bible expositor, one who knows and preaches individual books in the Bible.

#### THE TRAINING IN CHURCH HISTORY

The theological training of a preacher must likewise give instruction in the key periods and movements of church

history. A preacher should know the mighty acts of Christ in building His church over the last two thousand years. Men should be taught the general flow of redemptive history from the first century to the present hour. The great eras of church history should be surveyed and analyzed. The major issues surrounding each period should be grasped. The leading figures, strategic events, and pivotal controversies should be taught. The preacher cannot effectively minister inside a contemporary bubble that is disconnected from the larger picture of what God has done in the church.

#### THE TRAINING IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

Moreover, theological training must prepare men for the specific requirements of daily pastoral ministry. This involves instruction in the practical side of a preacher’s education, that is, in how the Word of God relates to the lives of the people they serve. This includes knowing how to call unbelievers to saving faith in Jesus Christ and how believers are to live out their Christian faith. The truth that is preached must be connected to the ongoing lives of ordinary people with the many challenges they face. The goal of this education is to equip a man to effectively minister the Word in a life-changing way.

This particular aspect of the training includes homiletics, which is the science and art of sermon preparation and delivery. A man must be trained to preach a biblical text or topic to those who hear him with all the aspects of a dynamic presentation of the truth in a sermon. Here, men



must be instructed in what are the essential components of a sermon that seeks to win the lost to Christ and transform saints into Christ-likeness.

This teaching in pastoral ministries must also include instruction in counseling, leadership, discipleship, elder training, and more. There must also be teaching in performing other pastoral functions such as the Lord's Supper, baptism, weddings, and funerals. While many of these aspects of ministry are learned on the job, so to speak, there should be initial instruction given previous to that time.

### THE TRAINING FOR YOUR LIFE

If God has called you into His ministry, you need a theological education that prepares you at every one of these levels just discussed. In order to become proficient in your handling of the Written word of God, you must become well taught in these various disciplines of study. The glory of God is too weighty to be compromised with trivial views of His being. The Word of God is too profound to be minimized with a superficial handling of its truths. The riches of the gospel are too magnificent to be diminished with a shallow presentation of its doctrines.

Is it mandatory that you go to school in order to be theologically trained? Can you be self-taught and be adequately prepared? Can you be discipled by a mentor and be equipped for pastoral ministry?

Admittedly, people who have not received a formal education can still be capable of significant ministry. Such was the case with the greatest preachers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively, Charles Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd-Jones. However, if you choose not to pursue theological training, you would need to have the intellectual genius of these two towering individuals. You would also need to be widely self-read, possessing remarkable powers of analysis. You would need to have had significant influences in your life that would prepare you for the task ahead. All this is possible, perhaps, though highly improbable.

At the same time, merely attending a school that provides a theological education does not automatically guarantee that you will be adequately trained. Some seminaries are not worth attending. Some are even hazardous to your spiritual health. In certain cases, you would be better off not attending than to attend one that is not beneficial. At the same time, you could attend a good seminary, yet not apply yourself to your studies. You could be in the best seminary and become distracted with other pursuits. Simply enrolling in a solid seminary does not ensure that you invested a maximum effort and are adequately equipped.

To receive the desired benefit from theological training necessitates that you dedicate yourself to your studies. It

requires that you have a teachable mind and a disciplined spirit. It demands that you walk closely with the Lord and pursue personal holiness. This mandates that the Holy Spirit be your primary Teacher, who illumines your mind in the midst of your education.

If this is God's direction for your life, what Bible institution of higher learning would He have you pursue? This is an important decision that will leave its impact on you for the rest of your days. Choose wisely as you prepare for a lifetime of ministry.

### THE TRAINING IN THE BIBLE

The choice any man makes for theological training should be an institution that focuses upon the Word of God. Its goal should be to produce specialists in the Bible. This is what J. Gresham Machen laid out at the inauguration of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. The date was October 10, 1929, and Machen announced the mission of this fledgling school:

Let it never be forgotten that a theological seminary is a school for specialists.... Our specialty is in the word of God. Specialists in the Bible—that is what [we] will endeavor to produce . . . . If you want specialists in social science or in hygiene or even in “religion” (in the vague modern sense), then you must go elsewhere for what you want. But if you want men who know the Bible, and know it in something more than a layman's sort of way, then call on us.

This should be what every man seeks in a theological education. He must pursue structured training that will prepare him to teach and preach the Word of God. This equipping should be comprehensive in each of the areas of study previously mentioned. In short, he must be well instructed in the Scripture. He must become well taught to become what Machen called a specialist in the Bible.

What about you? Has God called you into full-time gospel ministry? If so, then you need a thorough theological training for the work to which God has called you to for the rest of your life. Based upon what has been laid out in this article, I challenge you to pursue the education that will equip you for a life of ministry. With such training, you will be far better prepared for the ministry that God has foreordained for you to fulfill. ♦





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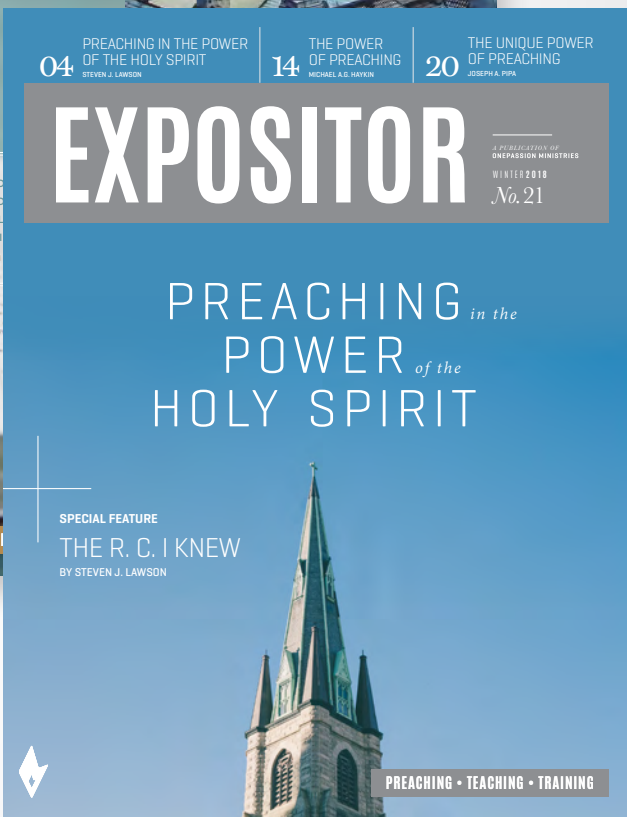
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# THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

*that* **TRANSFORMS**

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**R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.**

Theological education has become an exotic and mysterious enterprise, at least to the general public. Most Americans think seldom of theological seminaries, if at all, and most conceive of them as something like graduate schools for religious professionals—teaching religious people to do whatever it is that religious people do.

Even inside the church, some confusion about theological education clouds the picture. Laypersons often assume that the seminary exists as a factory to turn out preachers—freshly minted and prepared for immediate call—ready to be wound up and set in motion. The view from the pew is of interest, for it reveals the widespread impression that seminaries can do everything necessary for the preparation of ministers, even if the churches have given little attention to their own responsibility.

The most malignant confusion about theological education exists within the seminaries and is writ large across the accrediting agencies and coalitions of seminaries. This is not a recent development. Writing in 1954, H. Richard Niebuhr found little clarity as he presented a survey of theological education in America:


Great confusion prevails in some quarters about theological education. What, it is asked, is the meaning of this ministry? For what purpose are we educating? The situation in some circles of theologi-

cal educators seems to be similar to the one found among certain foreign missionaries and sponsors of foreign missions. They know what they are doing is important, but an understanding of the strategy of their work, a relatively precise and definite understanding of its meaning, is lacking.

Richard Niebuhr, like his brother Reinhold, was one of the paladins of American Protestantism at mid-century. The confusion he found among theological educators was, he noted, the same as that found among missionaries. They were not at all certain of their mission, their task, or their message.

Liberal Protestantism had lost confidence in the Bible, in the gospel, and in the unique mission of the church. Progressively, its theological schools grew less and less theological; its missionaries grew less and less evangelistic; its bureaucracies grew larger and more powerful; and theological education became the engine for doctrinal dissipation, moral relativism, cultural revolution, and the death of once-great denominations.

Evangelicals had better pay close attention to this pattern. This kind of alarm is often met with bemusement and dismissed as hyperbole, but the nagging reality of what theological seminaries can become and can destroy is affirmed by history and seen in the ruins of churches once



# THE BIBLE'S CONSISTENT TESTIMONY IS TO GOD'S GREATER GLORY. AND BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT THE AGES HAVE TESTIFIED OF GOD'S GREAT GLORY MANIFEST IN HIS OMNISCIENCE, HIS WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE, AND THE INFINITY OF THE DIVINE MIND.

faithful, now empty.

In reality, the very pattern so easily traced within liberal Protestantism is increasingly evident among evangelicals as well. The same compromises are demanded; the subtle concessions are rewarded. We dare not deny the obvious. Some evangelicals now present the arguments once made by liberals—only a half-century delayed.

At the end of his glorious exposition of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in Romans 1–11, the Apostle Paul writes a song of praise to God:

Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

This doxology—this climactic declaration of praise and wonder and glory—is precisely directed at God's glory evident in His wisdom and knowledge. These are immeasurably rich, infinite, and inexhaustible. In Him, wisdom and knowledge are combined so that we cannot know the

one from the other. We have no right to question God's wisdom, or His economy of salvation. We have no ground from which to launch an investigation into the strategies of the Most High God. His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways are unfathomable.

Modern theology can be seen as one vast exercise in second-guessing the mind of God. The clear declarations of the Bible are seen as hypotheses to be considered, thought experiments to be debated—anything but eternal truths to be received with gratitude, defended with honor, handled with respect, passed down faithfully from generation to generation, and directed always to God's glory.

Paul did not argue that God's ways are hard to decipher, but that they are impossible to trace. He did not argue that God's wisdom is superior, but that His wisdom is infinitely rich and deep. Modern theology is a massive demonstration of what the Greeks called *hubris*. It is overreaching of the most egregious sort. As the African American tradition reminds us, our arms are too short to box with God. Look at the current literature in theology. Review the latest so-called biblical scholarship from the academic guilds and societies. Visit the divinity schools and seminaries of liberal Protestantism and confused evangelicalism, and you will find boxing matches aplenty, with cheering in the stands, one-sided energy in the ring, and judgment waiting in the

wings. Be not deceived, for God is not mocked.

The contemporary debate over the so-called “openness of God” amounts to nothing more (or less) than such an exercise in second-guessing God, and thereby reducing Him to a more manageable and user-friendly deity. With breathtaking arrogance, these theologians claim that God is so glorious that He does not have to be omniscient, which is akin to arguing that the *Titanic* was so glorious that it didn’t have to float. The God of the Bible is not standing by ready with “Plan B” when “Plan A” fails. He knows all things, even foreknows all things. Theologians may debate how the divine foreknowledge is linked to the divine will, but never has any orthodox Christian theologian affirmed that God’s omniscience is partial, limited, or blind. As Professor Bruce Ware rightly notes, such a theology is an argument for God’s *lesser* glory.

But the Bible’s consistent testimony is to God’s *greater* glory. And believers throughout the ages have testified of God’s great glory manifest in His omniscience, His wisdom and knowledge, and the infinity of the divine Mind.

The Apostle Paul then turns to the Old Testament for two important questions. “Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?” Earthly kings, presidents, and emperors are surrounded by a coterie of aides, advisors, strategists, media experts, pollsters, and the like. The heavenly throne is surrounded by the *bene Elohim* who continually praise God and testify of His glory. They offer no advice. None is needed.

“Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him?” God is the sovereign creator of the universe, the source of all that is, and the sustainer of all things. No one can give anything to God in any genuine sense, for all things are His, and come from Him. Most clearly, God is never in debt to His creature for any reason.

Finally, Paul expresses the consummate summary of the divine glory expressed in all creation—and manifest supremely in the gospel of Jesus Christ. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” This is the great unbroken circle of God’s praise and glory. All things were created by Him. All things are sustained even now by Him. All things will find their destiny by His judgment to His greater glory. To Him—and to Him alone—be the glory forever. Amen.

This brings us to the starting point, and the ending point, of all true theological reflection. The biblical worldview is framed on all sides by the great reality of God’s glory. In this frame we find our identity as sinners seeking to rob God of His glory. In this frame we find salvation through the glorious redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the

Father, and in whose cross we glory. In this frame we find our purpose in this life and in the life to come—to glorify God and praise His name forever.

All of life is to be lived in this frame. All theology is to be defined by this frame. All our teaching and preaching and study and writing and learning and striving and witnessing and living are to be done to the greater glory of God.

This frame defines the Christian worldview and thus the task of theological education. Most problems and controversies in theology could quickly be solved by asking this question: How can we most purely, most truthfully, most biblically, and most eagerly define and describe the glory of God and His ways toward us? Asking that question and answering it truthfully would amount to a revolution in theological education.

Then in Romans 12:1, he immediately turns to address the people of God: “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

“*Therefore.*” What a significant word. With this, Paul turns to press his case. If all this be true—if God is truly as glorious as Paul says—then an entire structure of discipleship follows. All this—from the gospel defined to God’s glory manifested—now points us to our proper response and mode of life. On this “therefore” hangs the great question of faithfulness or unfaithfulness, obedience or disobedience, discipleship or disaster.

Paul is making more than a request, and he offers more than an imperative. By the mercies of God, he urges us to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. Theologically and biblically speaking, this appears to be an oxymoron. Logic defies the combination of “living” and “sacrifice.” The sacrificial system was a graphic picture of our need for atonement and God’s provision, and it pointed to the atonement accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ on that cruciform altar at Calvary.

As the book of Hebrews explains, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (9:11–12)

What can this text mean, but that we are the dead made alive in Christ? As those who are dead to ourselves, we devote ourselves as living sacrifices of God. As those who are alive in Christ, we present ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.

Paul turns to define in greater detail how a living sacrifice would live in the light of the cross to God's glory, "We are not to be conformed to this world, but rather we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds." The language here is graphic and accessible. We understand immediately what is being demanded. Living sacrifices cannot be worldly in form of life, in disposition, or in intellectual framework. The living sacrifice is not to be conformed to the present evil age, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

This is, to say the least, a very inconvenient text for those who want to blend in with the larger culture. In fact, Paul's word here is a manifesto for cultural, behavioral, and intellectual confrontation. We are not to be indistinguishable from the world in our thinking, our worldview, our lifestyle, or our worship. Instead, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Theological education stands at a crossroads. There are inescapable choices to be made, and these choices will determine whether evangelical institutions will remain recognizably Christian or fall into the same pattern of intellectual, theological, and moral collapse seen in so many colleges, universities, and divinity schools.

Historians have traced the progressive accommodation and intellectual surrender of Christian institutions in the

face of a secular culture, and one of the most astonishing facts is how quickly the decline took place. Colleges, universities, and seminaries established for the training of faithful ministers and resoundingly committed to biblical truth forfeited those commitments in a breathtakingly brief period of time. Within just a few generations, the worldview of Christianity had been supplanted by the secular worldview of modernity.


Of course, champions of the secularized academic culture celebrate the very pattern we lament. These advocates of established secularism present their victory as the liberation of institutions and individuals from the intellectual shackles of revealed religion. This intellectual Prometheanism is the dominant fact of life in the American academic culture, and it tempts both the Christian scholar and the Christian academy.

Swimming against the tide is tiresome and intellectually demanding. Going with the flow of the dominant culture is the easiest option. But this is not an option for the living sacrifice, who must stand on biblical truth, reason through the complexities of thought, and out-think the opposition.

Paul says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." This kind of talk can get you into







DISCIPLES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST  
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WITH THAT CULTURE.

a great deal of trouble in the secular academy—and in the circles of compromised Christianity.

There are three urgent realities embedded in this great text, and all three demand the attention and the discipleship of every true believer—especially those who would serve the church as ministers of the Word and of the gospel.

*First, Paul clearly affirms the importance of the life of the mind, and calls upon Christians to submit to the renewing of our minds in the frame of God's glory.* There is no room for anti-intellectualism in the Christian life, nor for intellectual egotism and pride. The frame of God's glory reminds us that all we know of God and His ways is given us by grace. We are absolutely dependent upon revelation, for God's ways are unfathomable and His judgments are unsearchable.

Theological education exists, at least in part, to equip

ministers with the ability to think, to reason, to analyze, to learn, and to synthesize biblical truth, so that this truth may be imparted to others through preaching and teaching and ministry. We dare not lose sight of this great purpose.

The frame of God's glory demands our best devotion to this task, even as the Christian ought to grow increasingly to love the things of God and to seek understanding in all things. We are to have the mind of Christ, and this certainly requires that we think. The anti-intellectualism of contemporary evangelicalism has led to nothing less than unconditional surrender. We have left generations of young Christians unequipped for the battle of the mind, and the losses are staggering.

At the same time, we can give no quarter to intellectual pride. There is no place for an arid, intellectual sterility. What we know, we know by grace.

*Second, Paul warns against the scandal of secular*

**conformity.** The living sacrifice must resist the intellectual conformity so arrogantly demanded by the secular culture and its secular academy.

The current proletariat of the academic culture demands naturalism and excludes supernaturalism. All views are tolerated except any view that will not tolerate all things and call all things true. Postmodernism has degenerated into a circus of moral relativism, sexuality majors, gender feminism, semiotics, and fictionalized history.

Against this tide, the Christian scholar must engage the academy without compromising Christian truth, and without conforming to the prevailing worldview. This is no easy task, but it is a necessary one.

**Third, Paul calls us to the power of intellectual transformation as the antidote to intellectual conformity.** This, too, is all of grace and all for God's glory. We cannot renew our own minds any more than we can save our own souls.

We are saved by grace, and we are transformed by grace. The one cannot be severed from the other.

Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ must be thinkers whose minds are captive to the Word of God, and whose entire intellectual structure is shaped and determined by biblical truth. Our captivity to the Word of God is a scandal in the secular culture, and among the Christians enamored with that culture. The secular intellectuals are blind to their own captivity to the spirit of the age. We, on the other hand, must wear our captivity to the Word of God as a badge of intellectual honor and integrity.

This intellectual transformation is a spiritual reality meant to demonstrate the power and the wisdom of God even in the midst of a fallen world. This is our spiritual service of worship. ♦



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# ADVICE *to* YOUNG PREACHERS

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R. SCOTT CLARK

Time was that church historians also taught church polity and what is sometimes called pastoral theology. This was, I suppose, because we used to recognize that the study of the history of the practice of the church gives a certain insight into how ministry should be conducted.

I mention this to apologize (i.e., defend) for the propriety of historian-pastors (or pastor-historians) giving advice to young preachers. By “young” I mean seminary students or those just out of seminary. This is a talk I’ve given informally to many students individually, and it seems like a good idea to write it down—before I forget it.

## A SERMON IS NOT A TERM PAPER

Seminary students spend proportionally more time writing term papers than sermons. As a result, sermons can easily begin to sound like term papers, especially if one is writing a sermon manuscript (see below). It is difficult to shift between audiences and modes of communication. The audience for a term paper is professors and perhaps other students. Academic writing can be dense and full of technical code in order to save time and space. Good preaching is neither of those.


There are similarities between a sermon and a term paper, however. Like a term paper, a sermon involves learning new things. Like a term paper, a sermon has a central, organizing thesis. Like a term paper, a sermon is making

a case for something. Students (and recent grads) *should* transfer those skills to the sermon, but they need to take an additional step or two.

First, they need to recognize that writing a term paper, as it were, is the first step of writing a sermon. The research behind this “term paper,” however, might result in multiple sermons (see below). Further, the audience for a sermon is much more diverse than the audience for a term paper. A congregation is composed of 8-year-olds and 80-year-olds, and the preacher has to announce God’s good news to all of them, at the same time, in the same sermon. Thus, a sermon is a much more complex act of communication than a term paper. Where a term paper might use code to save time, a sermon must explain almost everything.

A sermon is a divinely authorized announcement of God’s truth. It is a proclamation of the great history of redemption as much as it is the transmission of data. A term paper doesn’t necessarily have to distinguish law and gospel, but if a sermon doesn’t, then it is a failure. A sermon must capture the attention, inform, illustrate, persuade, and exhort. The preacher has a much bigger job before him than the student. If a term paper fails to meet its goals, it might result in a poor grade or a request to re-write. If a sermon fails to do its job (to announce the bad news and the good news), there is much more at stake.

For those creating sermons, good research is necessary—



**A PREACHER WHO HAS DONE HIS WORK KNOWS WHAT THE HEARTBEAT OF THE TEXT IS AND BUILDS HIS SERMON AROUND THAT. HE HAS A THESIS THAT HAS EMERGED FROM THE TEXT, AND HIS SUPPORTING POINTS HAVE ALSO EMERGED FROM THE TEXT AS A WAY OF ELABORATING ON THAT CENTRAL POINT. HE INTRODUCES THE TEXT, THE CENTRAL THESIS AROUND WHICH THE ONE SERMON (NOT THREE) IS ORGANIZED, ILLUSTRATES IT APPROPRIATELY, AND GETS ON WITH IT.**

any preacher who isn't doing good research into God's Word isn't fulfilling his vocation— but it is only half of the work. The next step is to figure out how to communicate effectively what he has learned, what's appropriate to the sermon and to the pulpit, what's beneficial for the congregation, and what's edifying. After all, the sermon isn't about the preacher. It's about Christ, and it's about the congregation in Christ. In a good sermon the minister, like a good umpire, disappears. If he's doing his job, the congregation will leave talking about the text, about God in Christ for them, and not how clever or entertaining the minister is.

#### **PREACH ONE SERMON AT A TIME**

It is not unusual for young preachers in term-paper mode to write complex sermons, that is, sermons that are not one sermon with (for example) three points but three sermons in one. The temptation of the young preacher is to try to tell everyone everything he learned all at once. Again, that temptation is partly due to the circumstances of the sermon. Student preachers doing pulpit supply aren't going to be back week after week for years. This helps to create a certain unspoken pressure to say it all now, because the young preacher might not ever get another chance. Still, it's

a good habit (i.e., disposition and practice) to force oneself to preach just one sermon at a time. One way to achieve this goal is to recognize the limits inherent to the preaching event.

The Westminster Assembly adopted the *Director for the Public Worship of God* in 1644. The Directory has a section on preaching that deserves more attention than it receives. The Assembly was aware of the temptation to try to do more in one sermon than should be attempted:

And, as he needeth not always to prosecute every doctrine which lies in his text, so is he wisely to make choice of such uses, as, by his residence and conversing with his flock, he findeth most needful and seasonable; and, amongst these, such as may most draw their souls to Christ, the fountain of light, holiness, and comfort.

Notice that the divines (most all of whom were active, preaching ministers) limited what the preacher should attempt in a single sermon. Not *every* doctrine taught by Scripture should be explained. The medium (a sermon) imposes limits. The minister must “make choices” and focus on what is of most use to his congregation at the time. The preacher will ordinarily have other opportunities to preach the same text and to point out other features or implications. The preacher shouldn’t try to do everything in every sermon. The goal of the sermon is to “draw their souls to Christ....”

#### LIVE WITH IT

Long sermons have been a problem in the Reformed tradition since the beginning. Historically, for the most part, Reformed congregations have been models of patience. That is no excuse, however, to try their patience.

There are some realities that a preacher simply cannot change or challenge. Before the age of modern communication, before the age of constant stimulation and entertainment, people were accustomed to listening to long discourses. In most cases, that age has passed. In most cases, in North America, thirty minutes is probably the limit for a sermon. It’s probably true that congregations can learn to endure and perhaps even appreciate longer sermons, but

that’s a subject for another article. Most of the time, young preacher, you have thirty minutes to get in, get it, and get out.

A preacher who has done his work knows what the heartbeat of the text is and builds his sermon around that. He has a thesis that has emerged from the text, and his supporting points have also emerged from the text as a way of elaborating on that central point. He introduces the text, the central thesis around which the one sermon (not three) is organized, illustrates it appropriately, and gets on with it.

Most sermons, most of the time, have three supporting points. This means that in a thirty-minute sermon, a preacher has about three minutes for the introduction, three minutes of transition material from introduction to body, within the body, and to the conclusion, and three minutes for the conclusion itself. Twenty-one minutes, or about seven minutes per point, remain for the body of the sermon. If what you have to say cannot be said within seven minutes, you are trying to do too much.

I started by distinguishing between a term paper and a sermon. That distinction has practical implications. It means the preacher should leave his manuscript in the study. A minister must communicate, and the Holy Spirit uses ordinary means. The Westminster Divines recognized that reality.

The illustrations, of whatsoever kind, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth into the hearer’s heart with spiritual delight.

A sermon manuscript is a good discipline, but its use in the pulpit usually hinders communication. I encourage preachers to write your manuscript, read your manuscript, and learn it, but leave it in the study. Make an outline and take the outline into the pulpit. A manuscript is fine, but it is preparation for, not the culmination of, a sermon.

If your sermon is so complex that you can’t remember what needs to be said (introduction thesis, points, illustrations, conclusion), if the outline isn’t a sufficient cue to your memory, then you’re preaching a term paper, not a sermon.

Well, young preacher, there it is. Follow the text. Preach the text. Be bold, but be wise. Trust the Spirit to do His work. Pray. Don’t fret too much, but don’t be lazy. Preach Christ. ♦





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*the*  
**PULPIT**

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**JOHN MACARTHUR**

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Not content with savagely beating Jesus, Pilate's soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head. This further indignity, a mock crown in imitation of the wreaths worn on occasion by Caesar, added to the Lord's suffering. The sharp spikes would have cut deeply into His head, increasing His pain and bleeding.

They also put a purple robe on Him (probably one of the soldiers' cloaks) in mocking imitation of the royal robes worn by kings. Matthew records that the soldiers also put a reed in His right hand, mimicking the scepter carried by sovereigns. Having thus outfitted Jesus in the caricature of a king, they continued their sadistic game by "[kneeling] down before Him and [mocking] Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" In an ugly mockery of and disdain for Him, they also began to come up to Him . . . and to slap Him in the face. Matthew records that they also spat on Him, seized the reed from His hand, and beat Him over the head with it.

Meanwhile, Pilate came out of the Praetorium again, implying that he had looked on approvingly as his soldiers abused Jesus, and said to the crowd, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." Once again, Pilate affirmed Jesus' innocence (cf. 18:38), the pronouncement of which heightens the injustice that he had just allowed to be inflicted on the Lord. At that point Jesus came out, still wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe the soldiers had dressed Him in.

Theatrically, sarcastically, Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!" Jesus, bleeding from His scourging and the crown of thorns, His face bruised and swollen from be-

ing beaten by Pilate's soldiers, looked like anything but a king. Pilate hoped this beaten and pathetic figure would satiate their bloodlust and elicit sympathy from the multitude. His designation of Jesus as "the Man" instead of "your King" as in verse 14 stressed to the Jews his view that Jesus posed no danger either to them or to Rome.

Once again, Pilate misjudged the depth of the Jewish leaders' contempt for Jesus. The sight of the Lord's bruised and bleeding body merely whetted their appetite. Like sharks sensing blood in the water, when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify, crucify!"

That was enough for Pilate. Disgusted with the Jews' callous attitude and wanting simply to be rid of Jesus, Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

Pilate may have been through with the Jews, but they were not through with him. The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die." They knew that Pilate was still trying to evade the issue and pass the buck back to them, and they would have none of it. They reminded Pilate that they had already judged Jesus according to Jewish law and found Him guilty and deserving of death. Part of the genius of the Roman form of occupation throughout the empire was to grant autonomy in civil matters to the conquered nations. Roman provincial governors were expected to maintain control while upholding local laws insofar as they did not conflict with Rome's priorities. The Jews demanded again that Pilate acknowledge their legal rights and order Jesus to be executed.

# THE SPECIFIC CHARGE THAT THE JEWS BROUGHT AGAINST JESUS, THAT HE MADE HIMSELF OUT TO BE THE SON OF GOD, AT LAST REVEALED THEIR TRUE MOTIVES.

The specific charge that the Jews brought against Jesus, that He made Himself out to be the Son of God, at last revealed their true motives. Having tried unsuccessfully to get Jesus condemned on political grounds as an insurrectionist, they now wanted Pilate to sentence Him based on Jewish religious law. Evidently they had in mind Leviticus 24:16, which prohibits blasphemy of God's name.

This was an especially sensitive issue for Pilate, who had himself offended Jewish sensibilities regarding idolatry. To offend Jewish sensibilities might provoke the Jews to riot, or to complain to his superiors. Either would be fatal to his future as governor.

As the situation deteriorated, Pilate's fear increased. But when he heard the Jewish leaders' statement that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he was even more afraid. Pilate may have been cynical, but he was also, like many Romans, superstitious. The thought that Jesus might be a man with divine powers, or perhaps a god or son of a god in human form, filled him with fear. If that were the case, he had just scourged and beaten someone who might use his supernatural powers to take vengeance on him. Fueling Pilate's superstitious fear that he might have incurred the wrath of the gods was his wife's dream about Jesus and subsequent warning to him.

Taking Him with him, Pilate entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" His question had nothing to do with Jesus' earthly residence; Pilate already knew that He was a Galilean. The governor's question concerned Jesus' nature: was He from earth, or the realm of the gods? But Jesus gave him no answer. There

are several possible reasons for the Lord's silence. It fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy concerning Him in Isaiah 53:7. Further, Jesus had already told Pilate that He was a king from another realm. Certainly, Jesus' silence was judgmental, in the sense that Pilate had heard the truth and rejected it, and now would receive no further answer from Him. The Bible teaches that when men persist in rejecting God, He will reject them.

Irritated by Jesus' silence, Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me?" He was insulted at the Lord's apparent lack of respect for his dignity and power. "Do You not know," he boasted, "that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" He may have had the right, but he did not have the courage to do either one. But as Leon Morris notes,

The question is illuminating. In the last resort it was Pilate alone who could say "Crucify" or "Release," and this frank recognition of it makes nonsense of all the shifts to which he resorted in the attempt to avoid making a decision. Ultimately he could not avoid responsibility, and these words show that deep down he must have realized this.

Pilate's arrogant boast was not true. Breaking His silence, Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (i.e., from God). Although he was a responsible moral agent and accountable for his actions, Pilate did not have ultimate control over events related to the Son of God. Nothing that

happens—even the death of Jesus Christ—is outside of the sovereignty of God. Faced with opposition and evil, Jesus took comfort in the Father’s sovereign control of events.

Although Pilate was culpable for his actions, there was one who bore even greater guilt—the one who delivered Him to Pilate, Jesus declared, has the greater sin. The Lord was not referring to Judas, who did not deliver Him to Pilate, but to the Jews, who did. The reference is particularly to Caiaphas, who more than anyone else was responsible for handing Jesus over to the Roman governor. He was more guilty than Pilate for at least two reasons. First, he had seen the overwhelming evidence that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God; Pilate had not. Further, it was Caiaphas who, humanly speaking, had put Pilate in the position he was in.

Despite the additional charge of blasphemy, the governor remained unconvinced that Jesus was guilty of anything worthy of death. Therefore, Pilate made efforts to release Him, either by further attempts at reasoning with the crowd, or by preparing to pronounce Him innocent. But his attempts were brought to an abrupt halt. Realizing that they had failed to convince Pilate of Jesus’ guilt

and afraid that the governor was going to set Him free, the Jews cried out, saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.” Here is yet another corrupt, hypocritical irony, since the Jews’ hatred of all Roman rule certainly indicated that they themselves were anything but friends of Caesar.

This was the last straw for Pilate; the Jews’ implied threat finally overwhelmed him. He could not risk having them report to the emperor that he had released a revolutionary, especially one who made himself out to be a king in opposition to Caesar. Several of Pilate’s foolish acts had already infuriated the Jews and caused turmoil in Palestine. Rome’s eye was on him, and he dared not risk another upheaval. The emperor at that time, Tiberius, was noted for his suspicious nature and willingness to exact ruthless punishment on his subordinates. Pilate feared for his position, his possessions, even for his life. He felt that he had no choice now but to give in to the Jews’ wishes and pronounce the sentence they demanded.



# L I S T E N



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# PASTORS *need* MENTORS

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MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN

In the final letter that we have from the apostle Paul, written in a lonely prison cell in Rome while he was expecting death for the sake of the gospel, he reminded his closest friend Timothy of the utter necessity of passing on the faith to “faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2). It bears noting that what Paul envisaged in these words was not simply doctrinal instruction in the essentials of Christianity. Of course, Paul expected the training of future leaders to involve the handing on of doctrine. But, as is clear from a later statement by Paul in this letter, such transmission of the faith also involved the development of lifelong convictions and goals and the nurture of character—making the leader a person of love, patience, and steadfastness (3:10). Timothy knew exactly what Paul was talking about, for this was the very way the apostle had mentored Timothy.

Timothy had joined Paul’s apostolic band early on in what is termed Paul’s second missionary journey, that is, around 48 or 49 AD (Acts 16:1–3). As he traveled with Paul, he saw firsthand what Paul later called his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, and afflictions (2 Tim 3:10–11). Timothy grew to know and embrace Paul’s theology and doctrinal convictions. He learned that at the heart of all genuinely Christian theology is God: the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. He came to be grounded in the fact that the gospel is centered on the death and resurrection of Christ,

# TIMOTHY'S SOUL BEGAN TO MIRROR THAT OF PAUL, AND HIS MIND BECAME INCREASINGLY ATTUNED TO THE WAVELENGTHS OF THE APOSTLE'S THINKING

the only way that men and women can come into a true and eternally beneficent relationship with this God, the creator of all that exists.

But Timothy also came to follow the way Paul lived, how he made decisions and determined the best use of his time. He learned Paul's purpose for living, namely, the glorification of God and of His Son, Christ Jesus. Timothy absorbed Paul's love for the church and compassion for those who were held in the darkness of sin. And he saw the way that Paul responded with patience and perseverance to difficulties and the fact that the apostle did not waver in his commitment to Christ despite persecution and affliction. In short, as Paul and Timothy spent this large amount of time together, Timothy's soul began to mirror that of Paul, and his mind became increasingly attuned to the wavelengths of the apostle's thinking (Phil 2:19–22). This is mentoring.

## PASTORAL TRAINING DEMANDS MENTORING

Here is a pattern of pastoral training that must again shape the way that teaching takes place in our seminaries. The necessity of training the mind naturally requires academic excellence. But as seminary professors, our task is not finished when we walk out of the classroom. We need to get to know our students—their joys and heartaches, their hopes, aspirations, and concerns. They need to get to know us—our goals in life, our passions, and even our weaknesses. And this can only be done, if we, like Paul with Timothy, walk with them and they with us. This sort of theological education demands a transparency of soul and a knitting together of hearts, as well as the kindling of flame in the mind. In a very real sense, this sort of theological education and mentoring is patterned on the incarnation.

The great challenge, of course, in this way of incarnational mentoring is that it takes time. For many professors, time seems to be such a scarce commodity. I vividly recall

some thirty years ago, when I was doing doctoral studies at the University of Toronto, being told by Dr. Richard Longenecker, then my New Testament professor and in some ways a mentor to me, that if I thought I was busy in the doctoral program, just wait until I was teaching. I didn't believe him, but he was right. Most seminary professors are busy men: teaching in seminary and in the church, as well as seeking to maintain an academic career and be fathers and husbands, sons, and friends. Where will we ever find the time to mentor as Paul did?

## A FOUNDING VISION

Three years before Basil Manly Jr., one of the four founding faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, committed himself to the task of being a seminary professor in 1859, he stated that the "cause of theological education is one dearer to me than almost any other, and I esteem no sacrifice too great for its promotion." The sacrifices that especially he, James Petigru Boyce, and John Broadus were called upon to make for the aforementioned seminary are well known. Most seminary professors today are not called to walk such a road of sacrifice as those men were, but I am convinced that something of the spirit that animated Manly's words must grip us.

Today, more than in the past, we are aware of the very real danger of our ministries crowding out other areas of vital importance—our devotion to wife and children, for example. Thus, while we cannot echo Manly's sentiments without some qualification, we can nevertheless affirm the key point he was seeking to make. Leadership in the church is so important that we should be prepared to go to great lengths to see future leaders of the church trained. And that training, if it is to be biblical, must involve mentoring à la Paul! This will, of necessity, take time. But, from the point of view of eternity, it will be time well spent. ♦





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LAB 2



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# THE CHURCH *as* CLASSROOM

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NATHAN BUSENITZ

Churches need seminaries, and seminaries need churches.

That's what James Montgomery Boice said in a 1979 *Christianity Today* article entitled "Church and Seminary: A Reciprocal Relationship." He wrote, "Seminaries need the church to provide models. Churches need the scholarship of the seminary."

Boice contended that seminaries need churches for three reasons: Churches can provide future pastors with godly examples to emulate. Churches can offer students a real-life context in which to practice what they learn in the classroom. And, churches often provide financial and emotional support to those training for vocational ministry.

On the flip side, he said that churches need seminaries for three reasons: Seminaries can educate ministers at the highest levels of academic excellence. Seminaries can give future pastors a strong theological grid with which to counter errant fads and trends. And, seminaries can produce academic publications through which students can be helped long after they graduate. In the end, Boice concludes, "The church and seminary complement each other. The seminary would not exist without the church, and the church would be weakened without the seminary."

Dr. Boice's sentiments were expressed a year earlier (February 10, 1978) in another *Christianity Today* article entitled "Seminary Goes to Church." It was a news article on the

seminary extension campus that had just been launched by John MacArthur and the leadership of Grace Community Church. Sam Ericsson, one of Grace's pastors, was quoted as saying, "We want to integrate seminary students into the life of the church. It's one thing to get head knowledge at seminary, but we feel that it is critical to get practical pastoral experience."

The article continued with this description:

The Grace program, taught mostly by members of its own staff of twenty pastors, tries to involve students in as many facets of church life as possible. Instead of taking young people out of the church for three or four years of seminary, Grace has moved the seminary campus in-house to give its young people on-the-job training.

Such describes what John MacArthur and the elders at Grace had been prayerfully envisioning for several years—a place where future pastors could be trained in the context of a local church.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MASTER'S SEMINARY

By God's grace, the ministry of Grace Community Church was exploding in the 1970s. Several thousand people attended weekly services, and many more listened to John MacArthur's preaching through a rapidly expanding cassette tape (and eventually radio) ministry.

Leadership training and discipleship were a key part of everything happening, as godly men were identified both to fulfill key positions at Grace and to be sent out as pastors and missionaries. In many cases, their training necessitated a seminary education, which meant a lengthy commute to Talbot Seminary over an hour away several times a week. To help with carpooling, Grace Church purchased a bus and later several vans, enabling dozens of men to make the trip.

The staff at Grace soon recognized the need for seminary-level training closer to home. So, an extension campus was started in the fall of 1977. There were only two full-time professors on site, and the teaching load was shared by the pastoral staff at Grace. Nine years later, in 1986, the extension became independent, and The Master's Seminary (TMS) was officially born (as a sister school to The Master's College). At that time, the seminary had an enrollment of 95 students and a full-time faculty of four. Today, the seminary has nearly 20 full-time faculty, with an enrollment approaching four hundred.

Since its inception in 1977, the seminary at Grace Church has made the relationship between academic

training and church life a foremost priority. One of the seminary's founding faculty members, Irv Busenitz, wrote the following in the mid-1980s:

The presence of a seminary on the campus of Grace enhances the training and intensifies the modeling. Not only are students daily exposed visually to the inner workings of the Body of Christ, but they are taught in the classroom by professors who are pastors and elders, men who are intimately involved in the ministry of Grace. Schools everywhere are recognizing the need to hire professors who can teach out of their own experience, bringing real life situations into the classroom to assist students in putting academic training into practical terms. [Here], that philosophy has been the focal point of our existence and practice since our inception.

Such remains true today, two decades later.


#### THE BENEFITS OF A CHURCH-BASED SEMINARY

TMS enjoys a number of benefits because of its close-knit relationship with Grace Community Church. For starters, the church serves as a "living lab" in which students can observe how expository preaching works itself out in everyday practice. Moreover, students are immediately presented with a variety of ministry and service opportunities—avenues through which they can directly apply what they are learning in the classroom. Because a number of classes are taught by Grace Church pastors, students have continual access to professors with real-world experience. In a sense, it's like a medical school that is based at a hospital; the students are constantly being exposed to the very thing they are training to do.

On the flip side, there are numerous benefits for Grace Church as well. Most of the pastoral staff have been trained through TMS. The congregation is deeply blessed to have a plethora of seminary students who are eager to serve. And the extent of Grace's ministry throughout the world has greatly expanded as men trained at TMS go to churches and mission fields around the globe. With nearly a thousand alumni serving in 46 states and 40 countries, TMS is more committed than ever to its stated mission: "To advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ by equipping men to be pastors and/or trainers of pastors for excellence in service to Christ in strategic fields of Christian ministry."

#### A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PASTORS AND PROFESSORS

Not every church can or should start a seminary. There



## SEMINARY AND BIBLE COLLEGE PROFESSORS MUST NOT FORGET THAT THEY ARE PART OF A PARACHURCH MINISTRY—THE PRIMARY GOAL OF WHICH IS TO STRENGTHEN AND ASSIST THE CHURCH. THEIR EFFORTS IN THE CLASSROOM SHOULD POINT STUDENTS BACK TO THE LOCAL CHURCH, NOT AWAY FROM IT.

is a sense in which Grace Church's experience with The Master's Seminary is unique and unrepeatable. But there is also a sense in which many pastors and professors could do more to bridge the gap between church and seminary. Pastors need to remember that they have a biblical responsibility to entrust the truths that they have learned to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2). This may be as simple as a weekly men's discipleship group or an informal lay-training center. But pastors who are indifferent about raising up the next generation of godly men neglect a primary biblical responsibility.

At the same time, seminary and Bible college professors must not forget that they are part of a parachurch ministry—the primary goal of which is to strengthen and assist the church. Their efforts in the classroom should point students back to the local church, not away from it. Students who excel should not be discouraged from the pulpit min-

istry (for something more academically “prestigious”), but rather encouraged to embrace it as the highest calling on earth. The only institution Christ promised to build was the church, and His body deserves the best and the brightest.

The philosophy that undergirds The Master's Seminary is one of import to the future of evangelicalism—namely, that pastoral leadership training and local church ministry should go hand in hand. Whether this takes place on the same campus or through some other means, pastors and professors must each resolve to bridge the gaps between church and classroom. As Dr. Boice put it, “The church and seminary complement each other. . . . Neither can function effectively without the other. The seminary needs the church. The church needs the seminary.” ♦



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# WHY *the* CHURCH STILL NEEDS *the* SEMINARY

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KEVIN DEYOUNG

All else being equal, I believe most pastors will have deeper, broader, and longer-lasting ministry if they invest in a good seminary education as a key component of their pastoral training.

I know the model that says pastors should have a three-year academic degree from an accredited seminary is not found in Scripture. I know it is of relatively recent historical vintage. I know that a full-blown seminary education is impossible for many pastors around the world and even for some would-be pastors in the West. I know there are scores of faithful, fruitful men who have pastored and are presently pastoring without a seminary education. I think of some of my pastor friends without a seminary degree and how gladly I would sit under their ministries.

And yet, all else being equal, I believe most pastors will have deeper, broader, and longer-lasting ministry if they invest in a good seminary education as a key component of their pastoral training.

Yes, there are more theological resources in this country than anywhere else in the world at any time in history. There are more ways to learn than ever before: through conferences, online sermons and lectures, by blogs and interviews and apps and videos. But I believe the church still needs the seminary. There are things the seminary can do that the even the biggest, best, and brightest church won't

be able to accomplish.

Our present model is far from perfect. Church, seminary, and denominational/ordaining institutions need to work together more effectively. It's too easy for each entity to assume the other is doing the hard work of vetting potential candidates for ministry. I've overheard many conversations where the church assumes the seminary will train their ill-suited member for ministry, where the seminary assumes they are only handing out academic grades, and where the denomination assumes that if a man has been put forward by his church and has an M.Div., then he is ready to be ordained. There are bad seminaries that undermine the fundamentals of the faith. There are dry-as-dust seminaries that mint scholars more than pastors. And there are overeager seminaries that try to do everything under the sun, all the while neglecting the bread and butter of pastoral ministry: a competency to rightly handle the Word of God and to teach it to others.

Nevertheless, I urge every man preparing for pastoral ministry to make every effort to go to seminary. Yes, actually go there, take classes in a building with other students, and get a degree. Again, I recognize there are exceptions to this rule. But I hope those pursuing pastoral ministry will diligently and sacrificially pursue a seminary education unless providentially hindered.

Why?

1. Even a decent seminary will be better equipped to teach the original languages, systematic theology, church history, and biblical exegesis than the best church. This does not mean the church is negligible in the process, for our seminary professors should all be dedicated churchmen and our sending churches and denominations have a vital role in preparing pastors in other aspects of ministry that are just as important.
2. Without a seminary education, even the smartest pastors will have big gaps in their understanding of the Bible, history, and theology. Our learning will be more provincial, more derivative, and less likely to be drawn from primary sources and older texts.
3. Those without a seminary education are often at a disadvantage when it comes to using all the exegetical and theological resources a pastor needs to stay fresh, energized, and well grounded over a lifetime of ministry.
4. Those without a seminary education may have a more difficult time entering into important discussions and controversies. There is more *terra incognita* on the doctrinal landscape.
5. Learning in a flesh-and-blood community—with pro-

fessors you can know personally and with students you can disagree with and learn from—cannot be duplicated by online cohorts or virtual education. Not even close.

6. A good seminary education gives the pastor confidence in what he should know and enough humility to know what he doesn't know.
7. By studying in person at a seminary, you will develop lifelong friendships and important pastoral and professional connections.

None of this is to suggest a seminary education is all you need to be a good pastor. In fact, I think seminaries often try to do too much and are expected to do too much. Many aspects of ministry cannot be learned in the classroom. That's why we need more rigorous internship programs and why the church needs to take more responsibility to evaluate, support, and prepare men for ministry. All I'm saying is that in most cases, I believe it is a mistake with long-term ramifications for aspiring pastors to voluntarily forgo the seminary education they could have had with a good dose of discipline, creativity, sacrifice, prayer, and hard work. ♦



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