

# A MANUAL FOR MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES

The Committee on Candidates and Credentials  
Presbytery of New York and New England  
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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## I. Introduction

### 1. The Purpose of this Manual

Jesus Christ, when he instituted his Church on earth, also provided the human agency by which his Church is to be built up and perfected. To this end, he ordained the office of minister of the Word, to rule and teach and shepherd the people of God.

Since the Church's well-being depends, under Christ, on a ministry that is godly, gifted, and sound in the faith, the church must seek out and test men who aspire to the ministry of the gospel, in order to assure herself of their qualifications for the sacred office.

This *Manual* is an attempt to set forth the guidelines that the Presbytery of New York and New England follows in receiving candidates for the gospel ministry and receiving transfers of candidates from other presbyteries or denominations. Its intent is to answer the practical questions relating to the various steps toward ordination.

### 2. The Role of the Candidate

Scripture teaches that a minister of the Word is called by God to the sacred office. A man may set his heart on such a calling (1 Timothy 3:1), but this is not to say that anyone may take this office upon himself. The exercise of the office is within the life and calling of the church.

A candidate for the gospel ministry must emerge from the fellowship of the church. He must come under the care of a presbytery. While under its care, he is to report regularly as to his growth in grace, his progress toward meeting the qualifications for ordination, and his involvement in the ministry and life of his local congregation.

As it is highly reproachful to religion and dangerous to the church to entrust the preaching of the gospel to weak and ignorant men, the candidate should seek a bachelor of arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from a college or university of reputable academic standing. He should also undertake a course of training consistent with the Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church including theological training in a seminary which will adequately prepare him for the ministry.

Every candidate must report changes in address, biographical information or church membership status to both the Stated Clerk and the Committee on Candidates and Credentials through its chairperson. Failure to promptly report such changes may be reported to the Presbytery during its consideration of licensure or ordination. Candidates who become members of churches outside the bounds of the Presbytery of New York and New England should carefully consider moving their candidacy to the new presbytery or provide substantial reasons for not doing so.

While the Committee is sincerely interested in your growth toward the gospel ministry, the primary responsibility for your progress toward ordination belongs to you, the candidate. Your session and the Committee on Candidates and Credentials are available to offer oversight, encouragement and support, but generally you should take the initiative and actively seek out the support, guidance and counsel you need to successfully complete these requirements. It is your responsibility to see that all the requirements are met and your preparations completed in a timely manner.

### 3. The Role of the Session

Ministerial candidates are under the pastoral oversight of their own sessions. It is primarily the responsibility of the session to oversee the general spiritual, physical, and material well-being of the candidate and his family. This general oversight continues during the time the candidate is under care of the presbytery. Sessions should notify the Stated Clerk and Committee chairperson of any changes or anticipated changes in the membership status of men under care or licentiates at their earliest convenience.

The local session quite properly will discern within the congregation young men gifted for the gospel ministry and lend confirmation to their sense of God's call. It is well that a session commend such

men to be taken under care of the presbytery since the session best knows the candidate and his potential for the ministry. A written recommendation, therefore, from the candidate's session is required to be taken under care of the presbytery (a list of questions designed to help sessions in the process of making a recommendation are available in Appendix 2 of this *Manual*, see section II.A.4).

On a very practical basis, sessions should provide a copy of The Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to men within their congregation who have been taken under care of the presbytery. These Standards include the specific requirements for licensing and ordination, as well as the Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation.

#### **4. The Role of Presbytery**

Ordination is the act of the presbytery. The presbytery, therefore, is responsible to supervise closely the candidates under its care. The Form of Government states:

The presbytery must show its continuing concern for the progress of all the candidates under its care, and shall continually guide, counsel, and help them as they further prepare themselves for the work of the ministry. FG XXI.2

It is primarily the responsibility of presbytery to examine the candidates understanding of God's Word and those disciplines related to the ministry of the Word; to guide and counsel him in pursuit of a course of theological education and practical training in preparing himself for the ministry; to encourage him toward licensure so that there may be ample time for the trial of his gifts; and to seek evaluations of his gifts for the ministry.

#### **5. The Role of the Committee**

The Bylaws of the Presbytery of New York and New England state:

The Committee on Candidates and Credentials shall arrange to take under care candidates for the gospel ministry, conferring with and advising them when necessary. (Bylaws III.D.2.a)

and,

The committee shall examine and report on the credentials and testimonials of each minister and licentiate applying for admission to the presbytery. (Bylaws III.D.2.c)

The primary task of the Committee on Candidates and Credentials (hereinafter the C&C Committee) is to make recommendations to the Presbytery, which alone has authority to take men under care, to license them for the gospel ministry, to ordain them to that gospel ministry or to receive their transfer from another presbytery or denomination. The Committee reviews requests for the taking of men under care of presbytery, licensing men for the gospel ministry, or ordination within the presbytery. The Committee reviews all requests for the transfer of credentials into the Presbytery of New York and New England, examining and reporting upon the credentials and testimonials of each minister and licentiate applying for admission to the presbytery. It coordinates the examinations required for each of these steps toward ministry and for transfer of credentials. It regularly reviews the status and progress of candidates toward the ministry and offers specific encouragement and advice to assist the candidate in his preparation for ministry and in seeking a call to ministry.

In its regular review of the status and progress of the candidates, the C&C Committee, through its designated contact person, shall communicate with the candidate at least twice a year and report its findings at the stated meetings of presbytery.

Since the areas of responsibility of both presbytery and the session tend to be intertwined, and since presbytery, through its Committee, may need advice and evaluation concerning the candidate from a session, and *vice versa*, the Committee may correspond with the candidates session as necessary.

Nevertheless, neither presbytery, nor its Committee, may normally serve as a substitute for the pastoral care provided by the session.

### Conclusion

Nothing in the life of the church is more critical than the piety, sound teaching, and competence of her ministers. The church must, therefore, examine and test the qualifications and service of her candidates. It is worth stressing that the biblical qualifications do not focus entirely, or even primarily, on academics or knowledge (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). The church must train men of God.

## II. Steps Toward Ordination

### A. Coming Under Care of Presbytery

**1. The call to ministry.** Potential candidates are encouraged to read and carefully consider the principles of *Called to the Ministry*, by Dr. Edmund P. Clowney.\* It is appropriate for the prospective candidate to approach his local session, express his interest in considering his qualifications and gifts for the ministry, and seek their counsel in these matters.

**2. Requirement of membership in the O.P.C.** A candidate must be a communicant member of a local congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (FG XXI.2). If the prospective candidate is not currently a communicate member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, he should undertake the steps required in seeking such membership. Ordinarily this membership would be in a church within the presbytery to which the candidate is applying to be taken under care. (FG XXI.2)

Men under care of presbytery are expected to maintain membership in good standing within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church throughout their candidacy. Generally this will be under the oversight of a local session within the Presbytery of New York and New England. If a candidate relocates his church membership, he must notify the Stated Clerk of Presbytery and the Committee through its chairperson. Candidates who move their church membership to a church outside of the bounds of this presbytery must provide compelling reason why their name should not be removed from the roll of men under care.

**3. The Manual and Standards.** Sessions should provide each candidate with a copy of the *Manual for Ministerial Candidates* prepared by the C&C Committee of the Presbytery of New York and New England. Additional copies are available through the stated clerk or through the chairman of the C&C Committee. The C&C Committee also recommends that sessions make available to candidates a copy of *the Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* including the Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

**4. Coming Under Care of Presbytery.** The first formal step toward licensure and ordination is that the candidate shall be taken under care of a presbytery (FG XXI.2).

**a. The Session's Recommendation.** A written recommendation from the session of the local congregation of which the candidate is a member should be submitted to the Presbytery through its stated clerk, with a copy forwarded to the Chairman of the C&C Committee. This recommendation should certify that in the judgment of the session his Christian faith and potential gifts qualify him to be taken under the care of the presbytery with a view to ordination to the gospel ministry (FG XXI.2). A list of questions designed to help sessions in their evaluation and recommendation of a potential candidate is provided in Appendix 2 of this *Manual*.

Each candidate is asked to provide a personal profile including the information described at the end of Appendix 2.

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\* Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964

The session is asked to notify the chairman of the C&C Committee of its intention to make such a recommendation to Presbytery at least three weeks prior to the stated meeting of Presbytery so that the appropriate examinations may be scheduled.

A candidate whose membership is in a presbytery of the O.P.C. other than the Presbytery of New York and New England, should arrange to have his presbytery forward the written recommendation of his session to the stated clerk with notification of the same made to the chairman of the C&C Committee. (see FG XXI.2) This notification should be made no later than three weeks prior to the date of the meeting of presbytery at which the candidate will be brought under care.

**b. Examinations on the floor of Presbytery.** The Form of Government reminds us: It is of particular importance, at this time, that the presbytery inquire as to the grace of God in him and whether he be of such holiness of life as is requisite in a minister of the gospel. It is therefore the duty of a presbytery, in taking a candidate under its care, to examine him respecting his Christian faith, life, service and the motives influencing him to desire the sacred office. (FG XXI.2)

The candidate's session should help him to prepare for these examinations. Candidates seeking to come under care of Presbytery should be particularly prepared to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do you know you are a Christian?
- 2) What is your interest in Reformed Theology?
- 3) What is your sense of call to ministry?
- 4) What steps have you taken to prepare yourself for future ministry?
- 5) Why do you desire to minister within the OPC?
- 6) In as far as you are aware of them, what are your motives for seeking to become a minister of the gospel?

Samples of other questions in Faith and Life may be found at the end of this *Manual*, appendix 3. Please read the note regarding sample examinations found on page 17.

**c. When should a candidate come under care of Presbytery?** A person may be taken under care of Presbytery at any time in their preparation for the ministry. Generally, the Committee encourages men preparing for the ministry to consider coming under care of Presbytery sometime prior to the mid-point of their seminary training.

**5. Relationship to the C&C Committee.** The candidates under care of Presbytery will be assigned a contact person who is a member of the C&C Committee. The candidate should expect to be contacted at least twice each year in order to provide a report to the stated meetings of Presbytery. Candidates may also be visited, ideally at least once a year, either by this contact person or by another member of Presbytery. Men under care of Presbytery are encouraged to attend meetings of Presbytery when possible at which time they will meet with the C&C Committee and may observe the work of Presbytery. Notifying the chairman of the Committee of the candidate's intention to attend a meeting of Presbytery will help in scheduling an interview with the Committee.

Men under care may contact the C&C Committee, through their contact person or through the chairman of the committee, at any time to seek guidance, counsel, or help as they prepare themselves for the work of the ministry. (FG XXI.2) Candidates under care should report to the committee annually using the Report Form in Appendix 1 of this *Manual*. These written (or e-mailed) reports should be submitted to your committee contact person or the chairperson by October 1st of each year. All candidates must report any change of mailing address, e-mail address, or phone number to the chairman of the committee as soon as is practical.

**6. Transferring credentials.** Should a candidate under care of the Presbytery of New York and New England desire to relocate his credentials to another presbytery of the O.P.C., he may request that the Presbytery of New York and New England, through its stated clerk, forward the written recommendation of his session to the presbytery under whose care he desires to place himself. The C&C Committee should be notified of this transfer through its chairman. The responsibility for oversight by the Presbytery of New

York and New England for this candidate will end when it receives notification that the candidate has been received under care of the presbytery to which he is transferring. (FG XXI.2)

**7. Removing names from the roll of candidates under care.** The roll of candidates under care is maintained jointly by the Stated Clerk and by the committee. Names are added or removed from the roll by vote of the Presbytery in accordance with FOG 21:2 and the Bylaws of the Presbytery. The committee may recommend removal of a name from the roll of candidates under care for any of the following reasons:

- a. a candidate who ceases to be a member in good standing of a church within the bounds of the Presbytery of New York and New England (see *Manual 2.A.2*);
- b. a candidate whose current address has become unknown for a period of 6 months or who fails to make his annual report to the Committee;
- c. a candidate who is no longer actively enrolled in a college, seminary or internship program in preparation for the ministry, and who has not made progress toward licensure in the previous year;
- d. a candidate who fails to demonstrate that character of life which is requisite to a minister of the gospel;
- e. at the recommendation of the sponsoring session or for other reasons which are submitted in writing to the candidate and to the candidate's sponsoring session.

The committee will make reasonable efforts to inform any candidate regarding its intention to recommend his removal at least 30 days prior to this recommendation. The candidate will be offered an opportunity to meet with the Committee, or to offer in writing reasons why his candidacy should be maintained. The recommendation to remove a candidate, along with the reasons for this recommendation shall be communicated to the candidate, his sponsoring session, and the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. A candidate, dissatisfied with the Committee's recommendation, may appeal that decision to the presbytery at its next stated meeting.

If a candidate for licensure interrupts his examination for a period of three years, and fails to give the Committee satisfactory reasons for such interruption, his name shall be removed from the roll of candidates for licensure. (Bylaws, Pres. of N.Y. & N.E., O.P.C., III.D.2.d)

### **Presbytery Resolution**

3. Men under care be strongly urged, and the churches of which they are a member be strongly urged, that they seek licensure by the end of the middle of the second year of their seminary training.

## **B. Licensure**

**1. Undergraduate education.** The Candidate must receive a Bachelor of Arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from a college or university or reputable academic standing, and then complete an adequate course of study lasting at least one year and a half in a theological seminary before he may be licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery. (FG XXI.3) The Candidate shall submit a copy of his academic transcript, both from the college and the seminary which he has attended (or is attending).

**2. Ordination without the full requirements.** The Form of Government (FG XXI.6; XXIII.3) does provide a procedure for candidates to be ordained without the full requirements. Candidates who are considering the seeking of such an exception, either from Presbytery (with regard to Hebrew or Greek languages) or from General Assembly, should inform the C&C Committee through his contact person or through the chairman of the Committee at his earliest convenience.

### **3. Licensure.**

**a. Notification of the C&C Committee.** Generally, men under care who intend to seek licensure should notify the committee through their contact person or through the chairman of the committee at least

two (2) months prior to the date of the meeting of presbytery at which they hope to be licensed, and six (6) months is preferred, so as to schedule the necessary examinations.

Generally, candidates are licensed to preach the gospel only at a regular stated meeting of the Presbytery of New York and New England (April or October). Any request for an exception to this practice should be accompanied by substantial reasons for a departure from this general practice.

**b. Examinations for Licensure.** The candidate must sustain examinations by the Presbytery in the following areas:

English Bible  
 Ecclesiastical History  
 Original languages of the Scriptures: Greek and Hebrew  
 Faith and Life (on the floor of Presbytery)  
 Theology (on the floor of Presbytery)

Sample examinations are available in Appendix 3 of this *Manual*. Please read the note on sample examinations found on page 17

Examinations should be scheduled through the chairman of the C&C Committee. Please allow sufficient time for these examinations prior to the meeting of Presbytery at which you hope to be licensed. A minimum of two months is required for this process. Candidates who delay their request beyond this minimum may be asked to reschedule their anticipated licensure to the following meeting of Presbytery.

Every candidate or minister shall study the nature of subscription. Candidates will be encouraged by the committee to study the paper entitled, *The Nature, Limits and Place of Exceptions and Scruples in Subscription to the Doctrinal Standards of the Presbyterian Church*, which is available in Appendix 1 at the end of this manual.

1. On the basis of this study, every candidate for licensure or ordination shall determine whether or not he has exceptions/scruples; and formulate them in writing for presentation to the committee prior to being examined for licensure or ordination on the floor of presbytery.
2. The committee shall caution the candidate, licentiate, or minister that they may not teach their exceptions/scruples as the doctrine of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
3. The Presbytery, and if necessary, the General Assembly, shall decide which exceptions/scruples are allowed as not being out of accord with the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.
4. Any candidate or minister who cannot subscribe to all the articles and doctrines essential to the system of doctrine taught in the Confession and Catechisms, without exception or reservation, will not be allowed to take the second ordination vow, and therefore will not be ordained within this Presbytery.
5. Each candidate or minister will be instructed by the committee to inform the Presbytery should he change his views subsequent to taking his vows.

Prior to the examination in theology on the floor of presbytery, the candidate shall be examined by the committee. If the committee deems the candidate's preparation to be inadequate, it may recommend to the candidate that further action be postponed to a later date. Under these circumstances, a candidate may ask the presbytery to hear his examination, against the advice of the Committee.

**c. Testimonials** The Presbytery shall receive testimonials of piety, exemplary life and personal zeal for and experience in presenting the gospel to others (FG XXI.4). It is the responsibility of the candidate to solicit such testimonials as may meet this requirement of the Form of Government. These testimonials should be sent to the Presbytery through its stated clerk, with copies forwarded to the chairman of the C&C committee. It should be understood that these testimonials may be read publicly on the floor of presbytery.

**d. Papers submitted for Licensure.** The candidate shall prepare and submit the following papers:

a trial sermon  
 an essay on a theological theme  
 an exegesis of a Hebrew or Greek text of Scripture. (FG XXI.5)

Candidates must submit their proposed texts/topics to the chairman of the C&C committee for advanced approval. Five (5) copies of all papers, typed and double-spaced, should be submitted to the Committee.

**Trial Sermon.** The trial sermon should be typed in full and submitted along with the papers described in this section. The committee encourages candidates to remember that *they are to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in every sermon*, including this one! Candidates should be prepared to preach a shortened form of this sermon (approximately 20 minutes) at the meeting of Presbytery at which they hope to be licensed.

**Exegesis Paper.** The exegesis paper should focus on a single text from the Old or New Testament which is of sufficient length to demonstrate the candidate's competence in exegeting a Hebrew or Greek Text. The paper should include the following:

1. A careful translation of the text from the original language including notes on major textual variants and, where appropriate, comparison with various English translations.

2. A thorough exposition of the text in a style similar to a modern commentary, including explanation of the grammatical structure and style of the text, a discussion of the context of the text (historical, cultural, social, religious, etc.), a discussion of the key words and themes of the text from a biblical-theological perspective, interaction with other exegetical treatments of the passage, both from the Reformed and non-Reformed perspectives.

3. A clear statement of the central teaching of the text and a discussion of this central theme and its implications for theology, ministry, faith and life, and/or ethics.

4. A homiletical outline and discussion of any issues which might be important in preaching this text of scripture is also appropriate.

5. A bibliography including a complete range of exegetical tools (e.g. edition of the Hebrew or Greek text with critical apparatus, textual commentary, lexicon and/or other lexical aids, Dictionary(ies) of Old or New Testament Theology, Biblical Dictionaries or Encyclopedias, Old or New Testament Histories, Biblical Introductions, commentaries (include interaction with at least one commentary which focuses upon the Hebrew or Greek text), Systematic Theologies or other theological writings, etc.).

**Theological Essay.** The theological essay should develop a theological theme with sufficient length and clarity to demonstrate the competence of the candidate in dealing with such a theme. This paper should include the following:

1. A clear statement of the theological theme to be discussed (it is often helpful for the candidate to explain the relevance of the theme or the reason for their interest in that theme).



2. A thorough treatment of that theme from a biblical-theological perspective with careful reflection upon the biblical texts which have bearing upon this theme.
3. Thorough interaction with other writers, both writers within the Reformed Faith, and other theological writers, who have written on this theological subject.
4. A discussion of the implications of the findings for our understanding of Scripture, theology, ministry, faith and life, ethics, or other areas of concern.
5. A clear statement of the candidate's conclusions.
6. A complete bibliography.

The written sermon, the theological essay and the exegesis paper should be delivered to each member of the Committee (5 copies), at least one month prior to the meeting of presbytery at which the candidate hopes to be licensed. Current addresses for Committee members are available through the Committee chairperson.

**e. Formal licensure at a meeting of presbytery.** Having successfully completed this process, the candidate may be licensed in accordance with Form of Government (FG XXI.7).

Candidates are encouraged to consider seriously the questions posed in this section of the Form of Government (FG XXI.7) as part of their preparation for licensure.

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- (2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
- (3) Do you promise to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?
- (4) Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this presbytery, or any other presbytery under the jurisdiction of which you may come?

**4. Transfer of licensure.** Men who are seeking to transfer their licensure from another presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church should make their intentions known to the Committee chairperson at his earliest convenience. Any request for transfer should be accompanied by a complete resume or personal profile, a copy of the candidate's academic transcripts, and copies of appropriate testimonials and a letter from his presbytery attesting the details of his licensure.

Men who are seeking to transfer their licensure from another presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, or from another NAPARC church, may request that specific examinations, already sustained by another presbytery, be accepted by the Presbytery of New York and New England. This will not exempt the candidate from examinations in Faith and Life and Theology on the floor of presbytery.

Men who are seeking to transfer specific examinations (e.g. English Bible, Ecclesiastical History, Greek or Hebrew) undertaken for licensure within another presbytery of the O.P.C. or from another NAPARC church, but not yet sustained by the presbytery involved, may request that these examinations be accepted. A written report of the exam results from the body which undertook the examination(s) should be forwarded to the Committee chairperson.

Generally, men seeking to transfer their licensure from a denomination other than those within NAPARC shall be expected to undergo all the examinations listed in 3b above. Copies of a prepared sermon, exegetical paper and an essay on a theological theme (see section 3d above) should be sent to the chairman of the C&C Committee with sufficient copies for each member of the committee (5 copies).

Candidates who need to take examinations in English Bible, Ecclesiastical History, or the original languages of the Scriptures should allow at least two months for the scheduling of these exams. Candidates who delay their request for transfer beyond these minimums may be asked to postpone their anticipated transfer of licensure to the next meeting of presbytery.

Generally, candidates are licensed to preach the gospel only at a regular stated meeting of the Presbytery of New York and New England (April or October). Any request for an exception to this practice should be accompanied by substantial reasons for a departure from this general practice.

**5. Annual Reports.** All licentiates are expected to report to presbytery through the C&C committee annually using the Report form found in Appendix 1. Copies of this annual report should be forwarded to both the Chairman of the C&C Committee and to the Committee contact person no later than October 1st of the current year. When possible, licentiates are encouraged to attend meetings of presbytery and to report personally to the C&C committee in addition to the annual written report. From time to time, the committee may request additional information from the candidates under care of presbytery.

**6. Relocating to areas outside the limits of Presbytery.** Licentiates who desire to move outside the geographic boundaries of the regional church of New York and New England shall seek permission of the presbytery through its C&C Committee. In such a case, the stated clerk of Presbytery shall submit an extract of the record of his licensure and a statement of his service as a licentiate to the presbytery under whose jurisdiction he shall come. When a licentiate shall undertake regular duties within the bounds of a regional church he shall place himself under the jurisdiction of its presbytery. (FG XXI.10)

**7. Recall of license.** When, over a considerable period of time, ordinarily not to exceed two years, either a licentiate's services do not appear to be edifying to the church, or he is not actively seeking a call to ministerial service except for reasons of furthering his preparation for the ministry, the presbytery may, if it think proper, recall his license (FG XXI.11).

The Committee may also recommend to Presbytery the recall of a license if a candidate fails to maintain his membership in good standing within a local church, generally within the bounds of Presbytery, if he fails to demonstrate that character of life which is requisite of a minister of the gospel, if he leaves the bounds of Presbytery without notifying the Presbytery through its committee, or if he fails to make the required annual reports to the committee.

8. Qualification for the OPC Hospitalization plan. Licentiates of the Presbytery are eligible for the OPC hospitalization plan, please contact the Stated Clerk or the committee chairperson for further information regarding these opportunities.

### **Presbytery Resolution**

2. Presbytery encourage licentiates to undertake an internship under an established minister, ideally within the church of which he is a member, prior to being ordained, and that the Presbytery commit itself to supporting this licentiate in regular prayer and personal encouragement, and that the Presbytery encourage and support local congregations in providing internship opportunities focusing upon the practical work of the ministry (with or without financial support).

### **C. Ordination**

**1. Trial of qualifications.** The Candidate shall make trial of his qualifications and service for the edification of the church and actively seek a call to a specific ministerial task (FG XXI.1,11). This probationary period is to be of sufficient duration to make trial of his qualifications and service (FG XXI.1). Generally, a six month period is considered by the Committee as a minimum probationary period.

Licentiates are encouraged to seek actively opportunities to preach and teach the Word of God and to undertake other appropriate ministries within the church. Licentiates are encouraged to prepare and submit to the Committee the resume or personal profile which may be circulated to churches and presbyteries of the O.P.C.

**2. Acting upon a call to ministerial service.** The Candidate receives a call to ministerial service by a congregation, a presbytery, or the general assembly (FG XXII.1). This call, in a form consistent with Form Of Government (FG XXII. 9), shall be communicated to the presbytery through its stated clerk. Presbytery may find the call in order, approve its terms and determine to place it in the hands of the person called, or it may refer the call back to the congregation with recommendations either to amend or desist from the call, or it may decline to place it in the persons hands (FG XXII.10).

**3. Approving and accepting the call.** The Candidate may request presbytery to approve the call and grant permission for him to accept it (FG XXII.12.d). Presbytery shall then proceed to determine that the candidate has completed his probation for the gospel ministry in preparation for ordination. When so approved and granted, the candidate shall express his desire to accept the call, ordinarily within three weeks (FG XXII.14). The acceptance of a call shall be regarded as a request for ordination and installation by the candidate (FG XXII.15; XXIII.1).

#### **4. Ordination.**

**a. Academic requirements** The candidate shall have satisfactorily completed the academic requirements for ordination, including an adequate course of study in a theological seminary equivalent to that required for a regular three-year theological degree (FG XXIII.3). A copy of the candidate's academic transcript from the seminary indicating the courses taken and the grades received should be provided to the C&C committee through the chairman of the Committee.

Candidates seeking ordination without the full academic requirements set forth above shall declare their intentions to the C&C committee at their earliest convenience so that the appropriate process may be undertaken as outlined in the Form of Government (FG XXI.6; XXIII.3).

**b. Testimonials** Written and oral testimonials as to the candidate's satisfactory exercise of the gifts for the gospel ministry shall be received and evaluated (FG XXIII.6.1). It is the responsibility of the candidate for ordination to solicit appropriate testimonials which may meet the requirement of the Form of Government. Written testimonials should be submitted to the presbytery through its stated clerk. An additional copy should also be delivered to the C&C committee through its chairman.

**c. Examinations** The candidate shall be examined by the Presbytery in the following areas, these examinations in addition to those already sustained for licensure:

- Apologetics
- The Standards of the OPC: Form of Government, Book of Discipline and Directory for Worship & Practical Theology
- Faith and Life (generally on the floor of Presbytery)
- Theology (on the floor of Presbytery).

Examples of these examinations are available in Appendix 3 of this *Manual*. Please read the note regarding sample examinations on page 17.

Generally, candidates are examined in Faith and Life, and Theology during the course of a stated meeting of Presbytery (April or October). Any request for an exception to this practice should be accompanied by substantial reasons for a departure from this general practice.

**d. Committee on arrangements** After sustaining the examinations mentioned above, and a motion to proceed with the ordination of a candidate, a committee on arrangements will be appointed and a date and place will be set for a service of ordination and installation to be conducted by the presbytery (FG XXIII.7-10). Candidates should be prepared to provide recommendations of the names of persons who might serve on this committee on arrangements and for the date and place for such a service. Candidates are encouraged to seriously consider the questions set forth in the Form of Government (FG XXIII.8) prior to the time of ordination.

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- (2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
- (3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?
- (4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
- (5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?
- (6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
- (7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?
- (8) Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation, in agreement with your declaration when you accepted their call? And do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them as God shall give you strength?

**e. The motions generally considered by the special meeting of presbytery at the time of an ordination:**

- 1) CALL FOR MEETING. It was noted that presbytery, at its stated meeting held \_\_\_\_\_, called this meeting for the purpose of ordaining Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and installing him as pastor of \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. Minutes, \_\_\_\_\_).
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ ENROLLED. On motion it was determined to enroll Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ as a ministerial member of presbytery as of the close of the meeting, subject to his affirmative answers to the constitutional questions.
- 3) On motion it was determined that this special meeting of the Presbytery be adjourned with the pronouncement of the benediction by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ at the close of the service.

A sample order of worship for an ordination and installation service.

Welcome and Apostolic Greeting  
 Call to Worship  
 Invocation  
 Hymn  
 Scripture Reading  
 Sermon  
 Hymn  
 Warrant and Nature of the Office of a Pastor/Teacher/Evangelist  
 Reading of the Candidate's Call  
 Questions to the Candidate  
 Laying on of the Hands of Presbytery and Prayer  
 Questions to the Congregation

Declaration of Ordination and Installation  
 Extension of the Right Hand of Fellowship by Presbytery  
 Charge to the Pastor/Teacher/Evangelist  
 Charge to the Congregation  
 Hymn  
 Benediction (by the newly ordained pastor/teacher/evangelist)

### **5. Ordained ministers seeking to transfer credentials into the Presbytery of New York and New England.**

*While the entire Form of Government is important to ministers from other denominations seeking to transfer their credentials into the Presbytery, of particular concern are FOG XXII.13; XXIII.2,3,6,12,17,18,20.*

- a. Request. The minister shall submit a request for transfer of credentials to the Stated Clerk with a copy sent to the chairperson of the committee. Ministers coming from a denomination other than the OPC shall also include a copy of his ministerial profile or resume, a copy of a valid certificate of ordination, and a letter of standing from the ecclesiastical body in which he currently holds his credentials.
- b. Testimonials. The minister shall submit a minimum of two written testimonials regarding his personal piety, faith and satisfactory exercise of the requisite gifts for the ministry of the word. (At least one of these shall be from another minister or elder who has observed your ministry for several years and is qualified to evaluate your ministry, and at least one of these from someone who has personally benefited from your ministry for several years. Ministers coming from a denomination other than those with which the OPC enjoys fraternal relations shall also submit no less than three references with the anticipation that the committee may contact these persons and inquire as to your qualifications for ministry.)
- c. Subscription. All ministers shall be required to consider the issue of subscription to the Westminster Standards using the article entitled, “The Nature, Limits and Place of Exceptions and Scruples in Subscription to the Doctrinal Standards of the Presbyterian Church” by Gregory E. Reynolds (Appendix 1) and submit in writing any exceptions that he would take to those standards prior to his examinations on the Floor of Presbytery.
- d. Trial Sermon. Often ministers are afforded the opportunity of a trial sermon in order to better introduce themselves to the Presbytery.
- e. Competency in the original languages. Ministers coming from outside the OPC shall submit evidence of competency in Biblical Hebrew and Greek, either through examination or through the submission of exegetical material that adequately demonstrates these competencies. Ministers may request a waiver regarding this requirement under the provisions of FOG XXIII.3. In this case, the committee, in consultation with the minister, will make recommendation to Presbytery regarding a reasonable program of study to assist the minister in developing these competencies. Ministers already in such a program may have that program continued or modified in the Presbytery of New York and New England.
- f. Academic requirements. Ministers coming from outside the OPC will be expected to submit copies (not necessarily notarized) of their academic record, showing the attainment of an undergraduate degree and a Master of Divinity degree (or its equivalent). Ministers who anticipate the necessity of a waiver regarding academic requirements should speak with the chairperson of the committee regarding this matter at their earliest convenience.
- g. Examinations and Submissions. All ministers shall be required to undergo an examination in Theology on the floor of Presbytery, generally at a regularly stated meeting. Ministers of the OPC are exempt from any additional requirements. Ministers from other denominations shall undergo a brief examination in the history of the OPC, in the

subordinate standards of the OPC (the Book of Church Order) and a brief examination in theology before the committee. They shall also submit evidence of having sustained equivalent examinations and submissions to those required of candidates in this manual (see FOG 22.13.c.). The committee shall consider this matter on a case-by-case basis and reserves the right to require a minister to undergo any of the examinations or submissions required of candidates in the OPC.

- h. Additional Information. Ministers from churches or denominations which do not enjoy fraternal relations with the OPC may be required to submit copies of the Book of Church Order (or its equivalent) which clearly defines the terms under which his ordination originally took place and the terms under which their current ministry is conducted. (For ministers who have transferred credentials previously this may require two different documents.) The minister is free to submit additional information or documentation, which may assist the committee or the presbytery in the consideration of his request. The committee may also request further information or documentation regarding his ordination or ministry.
- i. Transfer without call. The FOG XXIII.18 provides for a minister from another denomination, who does not have a call to service in the OPC, but who desires to transfer his credentials into this denomination. We would urge ministers considering this option to visit a stated meeting of the presbytery in advance to their request. Ministers interested in this option should contact the committee chairperson for dates, times and location for the next stated meeting and to arrange a meeting with the committee at that time. It should be noted that such a minister may not be received as a minister of the OPC until he has received a call to specific service. He should carefully and prayerfully consider the eight constitutional questions included in that section. Under these circumstances, the minister may continue his membership in his present denomination, or he may request to be enrolled as a member of the regional church. In the latter case, the minister's credentials are held in suspense until he receives a call to service. "If after a period not to exceed two years gifts for the ministry are not confirmed by receipt of a call to service the presbytery shall consider divesting him from office in accordance with Chapter XXVI, 3 of the Form of Government. If the presbytery divests him of office, presbytery shall require him to seek membership in a particular congregation."

Ministers may appeal any ruling of or action by this committee to the Presbytery through the committee itself, or through any session of the Presbytery. The Presbytery will determine whether or not to hear this appeal.

### **Presbytery Resolution**

1. Presbytery urge newly ordained men to enter into and maintain a mentoring relationship for a minimum of 3 years with an established minister or elder in the presbytery including regular meetings and ongoing contact, and that this established minister provide an annual report regarding the continuing meetings to the Presbytery (or to the appropriate committee of the Presbytery, e.g. the Home Missions Committee in a Home Missions situation).

### **III. Suggested Curriculum**

A Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was approved by the Fifty-fourth General Assembly and is included as an appendix to the Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We encourage candidates to study this curriculum with a thought toward supplementing their seminary course work in areas where the requirements of this curriculum are not fully met.

Here we will only note the introduction to this curriculum:

This Recommended Curriculum was approved by the Fifty-fourth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to serve as a guideline to ministerial candidates, presbyteries, and seminaries (FG, XXIII, 3). The elements in the Curriculum are not to be understood as additions to the constitutional requirements stated in the Form of Government (FG XXI, 3, 4; XXIII, 3, 6) regarding the preparation and evaluation of qualifications of candidates for the ministry of the Word. Seminary course work by itself may not ensure fulfillment of the Recommended Curriculum for candidates whose presbyteries use the Curriculum as a guideline; therefore presbyteries may expect supplementation of a candidate's seminary course work through individual guided study, supervised ministry experience, or other means.

### Suggested Bibliography

(Volumes marked with an asterisk (\*) were thought particularly important by at least 3 of the 5 members of the committee.)

#### I. The Ministry

##### A. Introduction

- \*Clowney, Edmund P., *Called to the Ministry*
- Warfield, *The Religious Life of Theological Students*
- Bridges, Charles, *The Christian Ministry*
- Dabney, Robert L., *Discussions*
- "What is a Call to the Ministry?" Vol. I (pp 26-46)
- "Ministerial Support" Vol. I (pp. 184-190)
- "A Thoroughly Educated Ministry" Vol. I (pp. 651-677)
- "Memorial on Theological Education" Vol. II (pp. 47-55)
- "The Standard of Ordination" Vol. III (pp. 551-568)

##### B. Homiletics

- \*Clowney, Edmund P., *Preaching and Biblical Theology*
- \*Lloyd-Jones, D. Martin, *Preaching and Preachers*
- \*Logan, Samuel, *The Preacher and Preaching*
- \*Spurgeon, Charles H., *Lecture to My Students*
- \*Piper, *Supremacy of God in Preaching*
- Alexander, J. W., *Thoughts on Preaching*
- Broadus, John A., *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*
- Chapell, Bryand, *Christ-Centered Preaching*
- Dabney, Robert L., "The Gospel Idea of Preaching" *Discussions*, Vol. II (pp. 595-601)
- Dabney, Robert L., *Sacred Rhetoric*
- Fish, Henry C., *Power in the Pulpit*
- Greidanus, Sidney, *Sola Scriptura*
- Martin, Albert, *What's Wrong with Preaching Today?*
- Miller, Samuel, *Thoughts on Public Prayer*
- Spring, Gardiner, *The Power of the Pulpit*
- Stalker, James, *The Preacher and His Models*
- Stott, John, *Between Two Worlds*

##### C. Pastoral

- \*Baxter, Richard, *The Reformed Pastor*
- \*Adams, Jay, *Competent to Counsel*
- Adams, Jay, *The Christian Family*
- Adams, Jay, *Shepherding God's Flock* (3 volumes)

## D. Evangelism and Missions

- \*Bavinck, J. H., *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*
- \*Metzger, Will, *Tell the Truth*
- \*Packer, James I., *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*
- \*Green, Michael, *Evangelism in the Early Church*
- \*Kuiper, R. B., *God-Centered Evangelism*
- Boston, Thomas, *The Art of Man-Fishing*
- Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*
- OPC Committee on Christian Education, *Biblical Evangelism Today*
- Smith, Morton H., *Reformed Evangelism*

## II. Biblical Studies

## A. Old Testament

- \*Dillard & Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*
- \*Harrison, R.K., *Introduction to the Old Testament*
- \*Wood, Leon, *A Survey of Israel's History*
- \*Young, E.J., *An Introduction to the Old Testament*
- Oehler, Gustav F., *The Theology of the Old Testament*

## B. New Testament

- \*Machen, J. Gresham, *The New Testament*
- \*Ridderbos, H., *Coming of the Kingdom*
- \*Ridderbos, H., *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*
- \*Guthrie, Donald, *Introduction of the New Testament*
- Bruce, F.F., *New Testament History*
- Gundry, Robert, *A Survey of the New Testament*
- Ladd, George E., *A Theology of the New Testament*

## C. Textual Criticism

- \*Metzger, Bruce M., *The Text of the New Testament*
- \*Bruce, F.F., *The Canon of Scripture*
- Bruce, F.F., *The Books and the Parchments*
- Pickering, Wilber N., *The Identity of the New Testament Text*
- Van Bruggen, Jacob, *The Future of the Bible*

## D. Biblical Theology

- \*Murray, John, *The Covenant of Grace*
- \*Vos, Geerhardus, *Biblical Theology*
- \*Vos, Geerhardus, *The Pauline Eschatology*
- \*Robertson, O. Palmer, *The Christ of the Covenants*
- DeGraaf, S.G., *Promise and Deliverance*, 4 vols.
- Neilands, David L., *Studies in the Covenant of Grace*

## E. Hermeneutics

- \*Carson, D.A. and John D. Woodbridge, *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*
- Conn, H., *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic*
- Keiser & Silva, *Biblical Hermeneutics*
- McCartney, Dan, *Let the Reader Understand*
- Berkhof, Louis, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Cf. Mickelson, A. Berkeley, *Interpreting the Bible*)
- Fairbairn, Patrick, *The Typology of Scripture*
- Poythress, V., *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*
- Terry, Milton S., *Biblical Hermeneutics*



## III. Theological Studies

## A. Confessional (Symbolics)

- \*Schaff, Philip, *The Creeds of Christendom*
- \*Warfield, B.B., *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*
- \*Williamson, G.I., *The Westminster Confession of Faith or The Shorter Catechism (2 vol)*
- Dabney, Robert L., *The Westminster Confession and Creed*
- DeJong, P.Y., *The Church's Witness to the World (Belgic Confession)* (cf. Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*)
- Hoeksema, Herman, *The Triple Knowledge* (Heidelberg Catechism)
- Skilton, John H., *Scripture and Confession*  
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## B. Systematic (General Works)

- \*Calvin, John, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- \*Murray, John, *Collected Writings*
- \*Hodge, Charles, *Systematic Theology*
- Bavinck, Herman, *Our Reasonable Faith*
- Berkhof, Louis, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*
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- Edwards, Jonathan, *Treatise on Religious Affections*
- Dabney, Robert L., *Lectures in Systematic Theology*
- Heppe, Heinrich, *Reformed Dogmatics Set Out from the Sources*
- Hodge, A.A., *Outlines of Theology*
- Hoeksema, Herman, *Reformed Dogmatics*
- Muller, R., *A Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*
- Shedd, W.G.T., *Dogmatic Theology*

## C. Doctrine of Scripture

- \*Westminster Theological Seminary, Symposium by Faculty, Paul Woolley, ed.: *The Infallible Word*
- \*Warfield, B.B., *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*
- \*Young, E.J., *Thy Word is Truth*
- Bavinck, Herman, *The Philosophy of Revelation*
- Henry, Carl F.H., *Revelation and the Bible*
- Montgomery, John W., ed., *God's Inerrant Word*
- Packer, James I., *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*
- Turretin, Francis, *The Doctrine of Scripture*

## D. Doctrine of God (Theology)

- \*Packer, J.I., *Knowing God*
- \*Young, Davis, *Creation and the Flood*
- \*Young, E.J., *Studies in Genesis One*
- Boettner, Loraine, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*
- Bavinck, Herman, *In the Beginning*
- Bavinck, Herman, *The Doctrine of God*
- Charnock, Stephen, *The Existence and Attributes of God*
- Clark, Gordon H., *The Trinity*
- Flavel, John, *The Mystery of Providence*
- Pink, A.W., *The Sovereignty of God*
- Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*

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E. Doctrine of Man (Anthropology)

\*Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*  
 \*Murray, John, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*  
 Bostone, Thomas, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*  
 Clark, Gordon H., *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*  
 Hughes, *The True Image*  
 Laidlaw, John, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*  
 Machen, J. Gresham, *The Christian View of Man*

F. Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

\*Murray, John, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*  
 \*Morris, Leon, *The Cross in the New Testament*  
 Charnock, Stephen, *Christ Our Passover*  
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 Liddon, Henry P., *The Divinity of Our Lord*  
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G. Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology and Pneumatology)

\*Murray, John, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*  
 \*Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*  
 \*Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct* (ethics)  
 Buchanan, James, *The Doctrine of Justification*  
 Flavel, John, "The Method of Grace" in *Works*, Vol. 2  
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H. Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

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 Sietsma, K., *The Idea of Office*  
 Witherow, Thomas, *The Apostolic Church*  
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2. Sacraments

\*Berkouwer, G.C., *The Sacraments*  
 \*Kevan, Ernest, *The Lord's Supper*  
 \*Murray, John, *Christian Baptism*  
 \*Marcel, Pierre H., *Baptism*

Bruce, Robert, *Sermons on the Lord's Prayer*  
 Douma, J., *Infant Baptism and Conversion*  
 Hanko, Herman, *We and Our Children*  
 MacKay, W.A., *Immersion and Immersionists*  
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### 3. Worship

\*Martin, Ralph P., *Worship in the Early Church*  
 \*Rayburn, Robert, *O Come Let Us Worship*  
 \*Webber, Robert E., *Worship Is a Verb*  
 Carson, Herbert M., *Hallelujah: Christian Worship*  
 Oliphant, *Leading In Prayer: a workbook*  
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 VanDooren, G., *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy*

### I. Doctrine of Last Things (Eschatology)

\*Hughes, Philip E., *Interpreting Prophecy*  
 \*Clouse, Robert G., ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*  
 \*Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*  
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 Davis, Jefferson J., *Postmillennialism Reconsidered*  
 Murray, Iain, *The Puritan Hope*

### IV. Philosophy and Apologetics

#### A. History of Philosophy

Clark, Gordon H., *Thales to Dewey*

#### B. Apologetics

\*Van Til, Cornelius, *The Defense of the Faith*, Vol I (cf. vols II-VI also)  
 \*Schaeffer, Francis, *Escape from Reason; The God Who Is There*  
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\*Anderson, J.N.D., *The World's Religions*  
 \*Carson, Herbert, *Dawn or Twilight* (critique of Roman Catholicism)  
 \*Martin, Walter, *Kingdom of the Cults* (cf. Van Balen, *The Chaos of the Cults*)

Hoekema, A. *The Four Major Cults*  
 Morris, C. R., *American Catholics*

## V. Church Historical Studies

### A. General History

\*Ahlstrom, Sydney, *A Religious History of the American People*  
 \*Kuiper, B.K., *The Church in History*  
 \*Loetscher, L.A., *The Broadening Church*  
 \*Marsden, George, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience*  
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### B. Historical Theology

\*Pelikan, J. *The Christian Tradition*  
 \*Kelly, J.N.D., *Early Christian Doctrines*  
 Berkhof, Louis, *History of Christian Doctrine* (cf. Seeburg, Reinhold, *The History of Christian Theology*, and Tillich, Paul, *A Complete History of Christian Thought*)  
 Cunningham, William, *Historical Theology* (2 vols)  
 MacLeod, John, *Scottish Theology* (cf. Walker, James, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, 1560-1750* and MacPherson, John, *The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology*)  
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## A Note Regarding Sample Examinations

Appendix 3 includes sample examinations in each of the areas which are covered in the examinations for ministerial candidates. These examples are intended to provide some guide as to the type of questions which have been asked in previous examinations and to help the candidate in his study in preparation for taking a particular examination. Your actual examination will be written and administered by a member of presbytery who may or may not use specific questions drawn from these examples. The examiner is not limited by these examples and may ask any question which he deems appropriate to the field of the examination. Our experience is that most examiners will ask a number of questions in forms other than the specific questions contained in these examples. Further, examinations on the floor of presbytery will be opened to any member of presbytery present at the meeting, who may ask any question relating to these examinations. Therefore, while these sample questions provide some guidelines for your preparation, they do not exhaust the areas which may actually be covered in your particular set of examinations.

## Appendix 1

**The Nature, Limits and Place of Exceptions and Scruples in Subscription to the Doctrinal Standards of the Presbyterian Church**

by

Gregory Edward Reynolds © 1999

**State of the Question (statis questionis)**

Second ordination question (FOG XIII.9): “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the **Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?**” To what extent does the system of doctrine bind the ordinand to the *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*? Do we subscribe to the *ipsissima verba* of the *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*? Or do we subscribe to the “system of doctrine” only? Is there a difference between a “scruple” and an “exception”. If so what is it? How do we determine which scruples and/or exceptions, if any, are acceptable?

**An Overview of the History of Subscription in the Presbyterian Church**

The question before us is one that has been hotly debated throughout the history of Presbyterianism in America. The subject of subscription was not, however, new in America. Protestant subscription to creeds can be traced as far back as Calvin’s Geneva (1536).<sup>1</sup> Subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles by English Presbyterians can be found as early as 1571.<sup>2</sup> From this period through to the beginning of the eighteenth century in the English context, according to David Hall: “obviously subscription meant submission to the stated doctrine and a whole-hearted embracing of the *credenda*, without equivocation or mental reservation—...”<sup>3</sup> The Scottish context reveals a clear-cut statement on subscription in the vow of subscription used at the 1693 General Assembly: “I do sincerely own and declare the above Confession of Faith, ... to be the Confession of my faith, and that I own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine, which I will constantly adhere to.”<sup>4</sup> Confessional historian Ian Hamilton notes the shift from the earlier Scottish subscription in which the minister “owned ... the whole doctrine contained”, to an adoption of the “general sense” of the Confession, which led to doctrinal decline by the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> There is clear evidence that the Scottish as well as the English contexts of subscription during the time of American Presbyterian debate which led to the 1729 Adopting Act favored a very strict view of subscription.<sup>6</sup>

The American adoption of the Confession and Catechisms in 1729, however, is fraught with ambiguities which have led Presbyterian scholars to widely differing interpretations of the intent and consequences of that act. James Payton maintains that the outcome of that action was a *via media* on the matter of subscription which laid the foundation for the subsequent differences between Old and New Schools. He also argues that the unique precision of the *Westminster Standards* made it difficult to require the same unqualified subscription which the church had demanded of previous creeds such as the *Three Forms of Unity*.<sup>7</sup> The ambiguity of the Adopting Act was also noted in the nineteenth century by strict subscriptionists Charles Hodge and A. A. Hodge.<sup>8</sup> Thus the 1729 Adopting Act represents a compromise

<sup>1</sup> David W. Hall, “On the Hermeneutics of Subscription,” David W. Hall, ed. *The Practice of Confessional Subscription* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1995) 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Cf. the full and strict vow taken by licentiates on p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 14.

<sup>7</sup> James Payton, Jr. “Background and Significance of the Adopting Act of 1729.” *Pressing toward the Mark* (Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986) 131, 134, 135. Cf. Luder G. Whitlock, Jr., “The Context of the Adopting Act,” ed. by David W. Hall *The Practice of Confessional Subscription* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1995) 99. For the entire text of the Adopting Act see Appendix A, p.

<sup>8</sup> Luder G. Whitlock, Jr., “The Context of the Adopting Act,” in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 99, 100.

between opponents of subscription, like Jonathan Dickinson, and “strict” subscriptionists, like John Thompson and George Gillespie, within the Synod of Philadelphia.<sup>9</sup> Those who held a mediating position in the presbytery were represented by Thomas Craighead.<sup>10</sup> Others, like Charles Hodge, who believe that a “strict” view was intended by the adopters, point to the 1736 interpretation stating the “jot and tittle” intentions of the original act. Even so Hodge understood the Act to be a “compromise ... to avoid schism.”<sup>11</sup>

The cause of the ambiguity is that two separate actions were taken on September 19, 1729. In the morning the text of the act was passed. This bound ministers to “declare their agreement in, and approbation of, the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being in all essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine, and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith.” Ministers or candidates who had “scruples” must “declare them to the Presbytery or Synod” and these bodies would “judge” as to whether these scruples were “only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government ... not necessary points of doctrine” or not. In the afternoon session certain scruples were considered, having to do with the articles regarding the civil magistrate (Chapters 20 and 23). The form of subscription, in the second vow of ordination, adopted as constitutional law by the Synod of 1788, though it does not directly quote the Adopting Act of 1729, embodies its intention.<sup>12</sup> This 1788 vow is precisely the vow used by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church today (*FOG* XIII.9, see above). It should be carefully noted that the general statement of the morning action was “preliminary” to the actual Adopting Act passed in the afternoon session. The latter alone bore Synodical authority.<sup>13</sup>

Charles Hodge argued that the strict view of subscription was the intention of the adopters, while admitting “...that the language of the act leaves the intention of its authors a matter of doubt.”<sup>14</sup> Hodge doubts the integrity of those who would interpret the language of the Adopting Act to committing them to “only so much of the Confession as is essential to the gospel.”<sup>15</sup> He insists that “all the essential and necessary articles of the said Confession” refers to the whole fabric of the document. To abstract those articles essential to the gospel from the confession obviates the need of a confession.<sup>16</sup> The “whole concatenated statement of doctrines”, while not requiring agreement with every “proposition” or “expression” used in stating a particular doctrine in the Confession, is what ministers subscribe to.

Hodge goes on to observe that the matter of scruples is more ambiguous, but none-the-less was intended to set forth a strict view of subscription. The system of “doctrine, worship and government” cannot be separated from all of its constituent elements of what is Presbyterian. Hodge accounts for the dissatisfaction of many and the subsequent latitudinarian interpretations of the Act by the fact that the text of what was passed in the afternoon session, which contained the explanation of scruples as only referring to “some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters” was not printed and distributed with the Act itself.<sup>17</sup> The Synod of 1730 thus had to explain that the “declaration” of the afternoon session was interpretive of the meaning of the Adopting Act passed in the morning session.

Since confusion and dissatisfaction continued in the church the Synod of 1736 declared that “the Synod have adopted and still do adhere to the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory, without the least variation or alteration...” It reiterated that the only scruples admitted were “some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters”.<sup>18</sup> This was passed without objection (*nemine contradicente*). Payton’s reference to this act as “abortive” is mysterious in light of this unanimity. He seems to disregard

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 97ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 98, 99.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1851) in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 109

<sup>12</sup> James Payton, Jr. “Background and Significance of the Adopting Act of 1729.” *Pressing toward the Mark* (Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986) 138.

<sup>13</sup> George W. Knight, III, “Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms,” in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 121.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History*, in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 107.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 111, 112.

the relationship of the two parts of the act in order to make the case that the Adopting Act was intended to be a looser departure from the British and Continental tradition of strict subscription.<sup>19</sup> Several presbyteries at this time passed their own versions of subscription including the very strict Presbytery of New Castle which referred to the Confession and Catechisms “taking them in the true, genuine, and obvious sense of the words.”<sup>20</sup>

As noted above the specific wording of the second vow which we presently use was adopted by the Synod of 1788. The words “adopt” and “receive” were used in the 1729 Adopting Act and clarified by the Synod of 1730: “to receive and adopt the Confession and Catechisms ... in the same Manner and as fully as the Members of Synod did.” Knight makes a convincing historical argument to prove that the phrase “System of Doctrine” refers to *each* and *every* article and doctrine of the Confession.<sup>21</sup> In affirming it the candidate is subscribing to the entire body of teaching in the confession as a summary of what Scripture teaches. That is, we are not saying that we believe the articles of the confession “in as much as” they teach what is Scriptural, but rather we believe that all that they teach *is* Scriptural. If we do not believe this then we cannot in good conscience take the vow, i.e. “sincerely”.

Closer now to our own immediate context was the attempt by conservatives in the early part of this century to preserve the essence of historic Christianity by asserting the minimal necessity of affirming the “five fundamentals”. As George Knight points out this had the unintended effect of reducing the “essential and necessary articles” of the Adopting Act to just five, even though the 1910 action of the General Assembly referred to the “five fundamentals” as “certain essential and necessary Articles of Faith.” “When the Assembly of 1927 gave to the individual presbytery the right to determine which articles or doctrines the presbytery would consider as part of the system of doctrine of the confessional standards the Assembly abandoned the past history of American Presbyterianism.”<sup>22</sup>

In reviewing this history one thing is clear: the idea of the “system of doctrine” has been used by those holding doctrines seriously deviating from our Confession and Catechisms. The danger is in viewing the “system” as a kind of supra-confessional body of truth which transcends the text of the confession itself. This view obviates the whole idea of having a confession in the first place. This becomes especially problematic in the modern context of Neo-orthodox and Deconstructionist hermeneutics. As a carefully worded summary of the perspicuous and essential teachings of Scripture a creed must be affirmed in its entirety as a system or not at all. A cogent warning appears in the 1834 “Act and Testimony” framed by Dr. R. J. Breckenridge as a protest of the Old School against the “loose” view of subscription held by the New School: “2. We testify against the unchristian subterfuge to which some have recourse, when they avow a general adherence to our standards *as a system*, while they deny doctrines essential to the system, or hold doctrines at complete variance with the system.”<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, in seeking to preserve the full subscriptionist view we must not require more than our strictest forefathers have. The kind of doctrinal errors that the Old School opposed in the view of subscription to which they objected in the 1834 “Act and Testimony” were Socinian, “Arminian and Pelagian heresies”,<sup>24</sup> matters of central importance to the system. Not every word, phrase or even teaching must be either adhered to or even understood in order to hold to this orthodox view of subscription to our Confessional Standards.

An overture from the Presbytery of Northern California in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was presented to the Sixtieth General Assembly in 1993 which proposed changes in the second ordination vow.<sup>25</sup> The Assembly sent it back because it lacked the required “grounds” and it has never reappeared.<sup>26</sup> It defines “system of doctrine” as “the whole body of truth which the Holy Scriptures teach. The

<sup>19</sup> Payton “Background and Significance” in *Pressing toward the Mark*, 137ff.

<sup>20</sup> Hodge, *The Constitutional History*, in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 114.

<sup>21</sup> Knight, “Subscription to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms,” in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 127ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 140ff.

<sup>23</sup> Morton H. Smith, *Subscription to the Westminster Standards in the Presbyterian Church in America*. n.d., 51.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. the sixteen “Specifications of error in the Memorial,” 52-54.

<sup>25</sup> *Minutes of the Sixtieth General Assembly*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>26</sup> John R. Muether, “Confidence in Our Brethren: Creedal Subscription in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,” in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 307.

Confession of Faith and Catechisms are to be received by the licentiate and officer as a most satisfactory exposition of this truth in an integral and indivisible whole. By receiving and adopting the standards, he thereby affirms and agrees with nothing less than the complete set of assertions contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms.” This is similar to, but not exactly, what Charles Hodge maintained was the original intention of the Adopting Act of 1729. Hodge emphasized the integrity of the system, not the “complete set of assertions”.

At this point I will summarize Charles Hodge’s treatment of this issue in *Church Polity*, “Adoption of the Confession of Faith” (pp. 317-335; this was formerly an article in the *Princeton Review* 1858, p. 669). Hodge distinguishes among three views of what the subscription vow commits a minister to when he declares that the Confession and Catechisms contain “the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures”. He subscribes to: 1) the substance of doctrine 2) every proposition 3) the system of doctrine. A fourth distinction may be drawn from number 3).<sup>27</sup> By the “system of doctrine” Hodge understood *essential* doctrines, not every doctrine. The overture noted above would seem to indicate a fourth view: 4) every doctrine.

Hodge explores the implications of the criteria for vows and oaths: 1) the historical meaning of the words 2) the *animus imponentis* (“the intention of the party imposing the oath”).<sup>28</sup> He concludes: “The Confession must be adopted in the sense of the Church, into the service of which the minister, in virtue of that adoption, is received.” Thus the intention of the church in its adoption of the confession, along with the history of its deliberations on exceptions must be taken into account.

Thus, Hodge concludes regarding view 1): “From the beginning, therefore, the mind of our Church has been that the ‘system of doctrine’ in its integrity, not the substance of those doctrines, was the term of ministerial communion. ... the phrase ‘substance of doctrine’ has no definite assignable meaning.”<sup>29</sup> On the other end of the spectrum view 2) “is contrary to the *animus imponentis*, or the mind of the Church.”<sup>30</sup> The “words ‘system of doctrine,’ have a definite meaning, and serve to define and limit the extent to which the Confession is adopted.”<sup>31</sup> To require the adoption of every proposition or teaching is to invite hypocrisy and foster disunity. “We are not sure that we personally know a dozen ministers besides ourselves, who could stand the test.”<sup>32</sup> “Whenever a man is induced either to do what he does not approve, or to profess what he does not believe, his conscience is defiled. ... It [the requirement of adopting every proposition] fosters a spirit of evasion and subterfuge.”<sup>33</sup>

Hodge’s own position, view 3), varies from position 4) in that he does not believe that the “system of doctrine” requires subscription to every single doctrine taught in the confession. Hodge takes his cue from the original Adopting Act of 1729, which refers to the “essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine” and defines “scruples” as “only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government.”<sup>34</sup> Thus the “system” excludes articles not part of the “whole system in its integrity.”<sup>35</sup> Hodge is careful to distance himself from the view that *essential* refers only to the “doctrines of the gospel.”<sup>36</sup> *Essential* refers, rather, to the entire “system of doctrines common to the Reformed Churches.”<sup>37</sup> This includes all teachings on doctrine, worship and government, which are *essential* to that system. There are three categories of such teachings: 1) those common to all Christians, expressed in the early councils of the ancient church; 2) those common to all Protestants, as distinct from Romanism; 3) those peculiar to Reformed Churches, as distinct from Lutheran and Arminian.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand Hodge gives examples of doctrines not essential to the system which are consistent with the kind of exceptions noted by the Adopting assembly. These are doctrines “relating to civil magistrates, the power

<sup>27</sup> I owe this distinction to Dr. T. David Gordon.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1878) 319.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.



of the state, conditions of Church membership, marriage, divorce, and other matters lying outside of the ‘system of doctrine’ in its theological sense...”<sup>39</sup> As important as the Confession’s teaching on these doctrines is, Hodge maintains, the Church has been wise not to make them conditions of ministerial communion.

### **Definition of Terms**

***Loose or “system subscription”***<sup>40</sup> - Affirms the essential doctrines of the “system of theology”. Not every doctrine taught in the Confession is included in this view.

***Strict or “full subscription”***<sup>41</sup> - Affirms every doctrine in the Confession and Catechisms; not every word or phrase, but every doctrine.

***Scruple*** - lit. L. *scrupulus*, small sharp stone, especially in a shoe, causing uneasiness, therefore, doubt based on conscientious reasons (qualms). The Assembly which produced the Adopting Act of 1729 defined “scruples” and how they should be dealt with: “In case any minister of this Synod, or any candidate for the ministry shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall, at the time of his making the said declaration, declare his sentiments to the said Presbytery or Synod; who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be *only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government...*”<sup>42</sup> While it can be demonstrated that the original intention regarding scruples was limited to certain teachings about the civil magistrate in his relationship to the church in chapters 20 and 23, it is also clear that from the beginning scruples have been understood to refer to a wider range of exceptions, due to the ambiguity of the original definition of scruples.<sup>43</sup> Debate over the extent to which exceptions are acceptable has continued ever since.

George Knight calls our attention, however, to the definition of scruple, in light of the afternoon declaration (which is the Adopting Act), which defined the scruples to which that Synod took exception, as well as the official clarifications of 1730 and 1736. “Essential and necessary articles and doctrines”, according to Knight, includes *every* article and doctrine in the Confession. Scruples were defined as “extra-essential and non-necessary points.” The only scruples allowed in 1729 were “some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters”. These non-essentials as well as “expressions” or modes of articulating articles or doctrines were the only categories of scruples accepted by the Synod as permissible in subscription.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, this definition limited the matters on which Presbyteries and Synods could judge. According to Knight, they are not at liberty to decide which doctrines and articles are essential, since they are *all* essential as part of the system.

Hodge differed on this point in allowing other doctrines to be considered nonessential and unnecessary to the system. Whereas Knight would appear to consider “extra-essential and non-necessary points” to be limited to modes of expression of the doctrines of the Confession, Hodge took the example of clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters concerning the civil magistrate as precedents for doctrinal exceptions not essential to the system as articulated in the other Reformed confessions. Clearly the clauses regarding the civil magistrate to which many in the adopting assembly took exception were more than mere modes of expression, but rather concerned specific doctrines about the role of the civil magistrate which the American church could not affirm. Our own John Murray took exception to the Confessional doctrine of divorce and remarriage on the matter of remarriage in the case of abandonment.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Subscription to the Westminster Standards*, 3, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, from *Minutes of Synod*, p. 104. Emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Knight, “Subscription to the Westminster Confession,” in Hall, *Confessional Subscription*, 126.

**Exception** - As far as I can ascertain “exception” is synonymous with “scruple”.<sup>45</sup> Although in our Presbytery “exception” has been used as if it were more serious than a “scruple”,<sup>46</sup> there is no support for this distinction in the history of our churches. One deviation from this is found in the above mentioned overture to the sixtieth General Assembly.<sup>47</sup> The overture defined an “exception” as

a dissent from, an objection to, or a mental reservation about *any assertion* contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms and is to be distinguished from an inconsequential objection to a proposition or from a quibble or from a reservation about terminology. However, such a distinction is to be made only by the judicatory, never by the individual. No officer or licentiate shall presume to have the right of making self-evaluation regarding this distinction.

An exception to the confessional standards may be granted by a judicatory, for the sake of conscience, only if 1) it affects a peripheral and minor assertion in the standards, not a central and fundamental one, 2) it does not vacate the central teaching of any chapter in the Confession or overturn a complete answer to any question in the Catechisms, and 3) it does not undermine the system of truth in the Confession and Catechisms as a whole.

Here the distinction is made among scruples in which an “exception” is a non-essential assertion, whereas “inconsequential objection” or “quibble” is an “expression” with which one disagrees. However confusing the terminology may be, the substance of an historical understanding of the intentions of the Adopting Act of 1729 are present in the overture. These are three: 1) no exceptions or scruples may be admitted if they undermine the complete set of assertions contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, 2) there are two categories of exceptions or scruples: peripheral or minor assertions, and quibbles over terminology, 3) only the Presbytery may decide what is or is not a proper or admissible exception or scruple.

In light of the confusion over the terms scruple and exception I will use “exception/scruple.”

### **A Case in Point: Creation in Six Days**

**WCF 4.1 It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.**

The phrase “in the space of six days” has raised the question of subscription in our presbytery. In subscribing to this paragraph of the Confession we must first ask: “What is required by the words of this paragraph?” The affirmation that: the Triune God, as the sole Creator, has freely created all things, visible and invisible, out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), by a series of eight divine commands (*fiats*),<sup>48</sup> to display His own glory; the events of Genesis 1 and 2 were historical, in which Adam and Eve were uniquely created in God’s image, at a specific point in time in a particular place (space-time history),<sup>49</sup> all was created good, and under the Lordship of the Trinity.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, *Subscription to the Westminster Standards*, Smith simply uses the terms “scruple” and “exception” interchangeably throughout his paper.

<sup>46</sup> Email from The Rev. William Shishko (Sept. 1998) “An ‘exception’, as I would understand it, is something you believe is either wrong or stated wrongly in the confession, i.e. it is something you disagree with. (Personally, I don’t believe a man should be able to teach his exception, e.g. I believe that proponents of the framework hypothesis need to declare an exception to the confession...and should not be able to teach that view). A ‘scruple’ is something that you have a conscience problem with, e.g. you have a scruple against being bound to teach a six day creation if - in fact - it is determined that is the actual meaning of the confession. Yes, you’re probably right about that [that there is no distinction between “scruple” and “exception” in the history of this discussion]. More to the point is the question of whether a man is permitted to TEACH what he holds as scruple/exception.”

<sup>47</sup> *Minutes of the Sixtieth General Assembly*, pp. 82. Emphasis added.

<sup>48</sup> Dr. Joseph Pipa has suggested the following language in affirming creation *ex nihilo*: “eight fiat acts of ontological origination.”

<sup>49</sup> Dr. Joseph Pipa has suggested that macro-evolution be repudiated both within each of the days and in the creation of man.

The precise duration of the “six days” has never been agreed upon by orthodox Christians. It would seem unwise to focus on what is unclear, when so much else is at stake, and *is* clear. It would also seem unwise for anyone to be dogmatic, therefore about precisely what that duration is, whether from Kline’s “Framework Hypothesis” perspective; the “Day-age Theory”; or from a literal twenty-four hour day or “Ordinary Day” perspective, provided the ordinand or minister can affirm what is summarized above. As far as I can determine all of those who have been ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, who have held to the “Framework Hypothesis” or the “Day-age Theory”, have affirmed the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2 and the special creation of Adam and Eve.

That no measure of such solar day existed until day four was observed by Augustine. Our own Dr. J. Gresham Machen observed:

The Book of Genesis seems to divide the work of creation into six successive steps or stages. It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in the first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty-four hours each. We may think of them rather as very long periods of time. But do they not at least mark six distinct acts or stages of creation, rather than merely six periods in which God molded by works of providence an already created world?<sup>50</sup>

Machen goes on to assert: “The real question at issue here is the question whether at the origin of the race of mankind there was or was not a supernatural act of God.”<sup>51</sup> It should be remembered that these quotations come from what was originally a series of radio lectures in which Machen sought to communicate clearly the most salient points of Reformed teaching to a popular audience. Someone might respond that Machen was not confronted by the onslaught of evolutionary unbelief which we face. I think that it can be shown historically that Machen was quite well aware of both evolutionary views and the threat that they posed to the church, as the larger context of the above quotes demonstrates.

In assessing the relative importance of the phrase “in the space of six days,” it should be noted that in all of the Creeds of Christendom, including all of the Magisterial Reformation up until *The Irish Articles of Religion* in 1615, there is no mention of the *six days* or the duration of creation.<sup>52</sup> The emphasis is on the fact that the triune God created all things out of nothing. *The Irish Articles* appears to have been the precursor of the language “in the space of six days” in our Confession. In appreciating the relative weight of the doctrines of the Confession, as opposed to every proposition by which those doctrines are expressed, Professor John Murray observed: “It seems to the present writer that to demand acceptance of every proposition in so extensive a series of documents [as the *Westminster Confession* and *Catechisms*] would be incompatible with the avowal made in answer to the first question to the formula of subscription and comes dangerously close to the error of placing human documents on a par with holy Scripture.”<sup>53</sup>

Strict or full subscriptionists have always allowed minor exceptions, which are as Samuel Miller explained “of little or no importance, and interfered with no article of faith.”<sup>54</sup> Morton Smith, another strict subscriptionist, opines, “The ordinand, who takes exception to a particular teaching of the Confession or Catechisms, may be ordained by the Presbytery, if it feels that the exception does not impinge upon the basic system of doctrine contained in the Standards. If one is not able thus to subject himself to the brethren, he should seek some other communion, where he has greater liberty.”<sup>55</sup> The various understandings of the duration of the days of creation has never been understood to impinge on the essential doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. One may fully affirm the statement that God “created all things of nothing, in the space of six days, and all very good” without committing oneself to a particular interpretation of the length of those days. That there was a definite beginning and ending to God’s creative acts, and that those acts were by divine command (*fiat*) and not by providential development, as Machen points out, is required by the statement. That each day was of a particular length is not.

<sup>50</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (1937. Reprint. London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965) 115.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>52</sup> This includes: *The French Confession of Faith* (1559); *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566); *The Heidelberg Catechism* (1563); *The Belgic Confession* (1561); *The First Scotch Confession* (1560); and *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (1563, 1571).

<sup>53</sup> Murray in Smith, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, 34.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

While I believe that the intention of those who adhere to the twenty-four hour day, or “Ordinary Day” view (among whom I count myself) is to preserve the integrity of the doctrine of creation, I think it unwise to make this interpretation of the duration of the six days a Confessional requirement. It is not in the best interests of the preservation of orthodoxy to speak dogmatically where the meaning of Scripture is not crystal clear. Nor do we need to explain everything in order to affirm the essential doctrines of our Confession, e.g. the Trinity.

On the other hand, I believe that if we affirm the duration of the “six days” to be open to a variety of legitimate reformed interpretations, we should insist that those views may be presented but not taught as the final word on this subject in the church. Dr. Joseph Pipa, who cogently defends the “Ordinary Day” view of Genesis 1 and 2, and who has significant exegetical concerns with the “Framework Hypothesis”, has suggested the “Framework Hypothesis” be allowed as an exception as long as those who take the exception can affirm that in Genesis 1 and 2 there are eight fiat acts of ontological origination; and deny macro-evolution within the days and in the creation of Adam and Eve. The writer of Hebrews (11:3) gives a terse summary of our faith at this point: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

### **Conclusions**

1. The original “preliminary” act along with the Adopting Act of 1729, in light of its subsequent elucidation in 1730 and 1736, intends a full subscription to the entire system of doctrine articulated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*.
2. While misunderstandings and later perversions of this intention may have led to a loose or “substance” view of subscription, the “system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures” refers to the whole body of articles and doctrines in its integrity as a system, expressed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*. Candidates and ministers must affirm that all the articles of the system taught in the Confession are essential and necessary.
3. Exceptions/scruples are only admissible if they concern non-essential doctrines, “propositions,” phrases or words. Non-essential refers to articles, “propositions,” phrases or words which do not alter our understanding of the articles and doctrines essential to the system expressed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*.
4. Presbyteries have authority to decide the admissibility of exceptions/scruples only within the limits of non-essential articles, “propositions,” phrases or words in accordance with the historical decisions of the courts of the Church.

### **Appendix A - The Adopting Act of 1729** **Approved at the morning session, September 19, 1729**

Although the Synod do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith upon other men’s consciences, but do profess our just dissatisfaction with, and abhorrence of such impositions, and do utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority in the Church, being willing to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God, and admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances, all such as have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven, yet we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to our posterity; and do therefore agree that all ministers of this Synod, or that hereafter shall be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their agreement in, and approbation of, the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being in all essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine, and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith. And we do also agree, that all the Presbyteries within our bounds shall always take care not to admit any candidate of the ministry into the exercise of the sacred function but what declares his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession, either by subscribing the said Confession of Faith and Catechisms, or by a verbal declaration of their assent thereto, as such minister or candidate shall think best. And in case any minister of this Synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall at the time of making said declaration declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our

bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government. But if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge such ministers or candidates erroneous in essential and necessary articles of faith, the Synod or Presbytery shall declare them incapable of communion with them. And the Synod do solemnly agree, that none of us will traduce or use any opprobrious terms of those who differ from us in these extra-essential and not necessary points of doctrine, but treat them with the same friendship, kindness, and brotherly love, as if they had not differed from us in such sentiments.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> James Payton, Jr. "Background and Significance of the Adopting Act of 1729." *Pressing toward the Mark* (Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986) 136, 137.

## Appendix 2

## Report to Presbytery by a Licentiate or Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery of New York and New England

## 1. Academic

- A. What courses are you taking currently?
- B. What is your grade point average for the most recent academic term?
- C. What papers or projects of special interest to yourself have you undertaken since your last report to Presbytery?

## 2. Church

- A. Describe your involvement in a local congregation (teaching, preaching, etc.).
- B. Have you been involved in special endeavors to projects such as attendance at seminars or institutes, participation in evangelism endeavors, etc.?
- C. What exercise of your gifts for the ministry are you planning to undertake during this/the coming summer? - or- What is your evaluation of your work in exercising your gifts this past summer?

## 3. Personal

- A. Do you have financial or spiritual needs with which presbytery may assist you or may remember in prayerful concern? Have you communicated these needs to your Session?
- B. Are you finding increasing confirmation or more specific direction regarding your call to the ministry?

## 4. Miscellaneous

- A. Are there items regarding which you may desire the advice or counsel of presbytery?
- B. Is there any other matter you wish to bring to the attention of presbytery?

This report must be filed with the committee through its chairperson or your committee contact person on or before October 1 of each year. It may be filed by e-mail. Failure to submit this report may be grounds for removal of your name from the role of candidates under care or the removal of your license.

## APPENDIX 3

**Questions for Sessions to Consider in Recommending a Candidate  
to the Care of the Presbytery of New York and New England**

1. What has prompted you to recommend this man as a Candidate to be taken under care of the presbytery?
2. What gifts for the ministry have you observed in this person?
3. What opportunities has he had to demonstrate these gifts and how has his work been received by others?
4. Does he express a sense of calling to the ministry? How is this sense of calling expressed?
5. How long has he been a Christian? How long has he been a member of your congregation? Describe the spiritual growth which you have observed in him while he has been under your pastoral care.
6. What evidence is there that he is well respected in the church and community?
7. What evidence is there that he meets the criteria of godly character set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3? Please be as specific as possible.
8. Is this man a man of prayer? How has the session assured itself of this fact?
9. Is there anything in this person's life that might cast doubts upon his suitability to be an office-bearer in the O.P.C.?
  - Has this man ever been subject to formal ecclesiastical discipline either within the O.P.C. or within another Christian Church?
  - Has this man ever been divorced?
  - Has this man ever been convicted of a criminal offense?
  - If so, please provide a complete report of the circumstances and the Session's evaluation of this matter.
10. What steps has the session undertaken in order to certify, in its judgment, that this candidate possesses a Christian faith and potential gifts which should qualify him to be taken under the care of the presbytery of New York and New England?
11. Is the session unanimous in its recommendation of this person to be taken under care of presbytery?
12. Is there any other information which the session feels would be helpful to presbytery, either in considering this recommendation that this man be taken under care, or in providing care for this man as he continues to prepare himself for the ministry?

Please include with your recommendation a complete personal profile of the candidate including:

- Name, address, telephone, date of birth
- Current family status
- Academic record
- Employment record
- Ecclesiastical record (list churches and religious organizations with which he has been affiliated)
- List of specific roles or functions which he has undertaken within the church (e.g. other church office, Sunday School teacher, youth leader, etc.)

## Appendix 4

**SAMPLE EXAMINATION IN APOLOGETICS**

## PART I GUIDELINES for examination in apologetics.

The candidate should:

1. Demonstrate a general understanding of those types of philosophy which have been most influential in Western thought, particularly those of the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, the pre-Kantian rationalists and empiricists, Kant, modern analytic philosophy, and modern existentialism.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the impact made by these philosophies upon general culture, particularly in the modern period: how are philosophical developments related to developments in theology, art, literature, music, science, and popular life-styles?
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the historic interactions between Christianity and the various philosophical approaches, particularly as Christians have attempted to defend the Gospel against philosophical objections.
4. Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate these philosophical movements from a Christian point of view.
5. Demonstrate an analytical and critical understanding of the most significant developments in Christian philosophy down to the modern period, including particularly such figures as Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Van Til.
6. Demonstrate an ability to formulate (against the background of 1-5) a Scriptural, Christian philosophy of life.
7. Demonstrate the ability to formulate a sound method of apologetics in the light of Biblical principles.

## PART II SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What is apologetics?
2. What is a presupposition?
3. Discuss presuppositional apologetics.
4. Outline your understanding of classic apologetics.
5. Name several Reformed men of both the 19th and 20th centuries who follow classic apologetics.
6. What is the basic point of compromise in classic apologetics? Explain.
7. What presupposition do you begin with regarding the Christian Faith? Why do you begin where you do?
8. Discuss how the following scripture texts would be used by you in making a defense of the faith:
  - a. Romans 1:20
  - b. Romans 2:14-15
  - c. I Corinthians 2:14
  - d. Hebrews 9:27
9. Define the following and describe how you would defend your system of belief with them.
 

A Mormon	A Modernist
An Arminian	A Jehovah's Witness
A Hyper-Calvinist	An Existentialist
A Jew	A Barthian
An Agnostic	A Marxist
A Deist	
10. Set forth Aristotle's concept of reality in contrast to that of Plato. What is meant by the distinction between "form" and "matter" in Plato and Aristotle? Criticize these concepts from a Christian point of view.



11. Set forth the concept of analogical knowledge as held by Thomas Aquinas. What is the ontological background of the concept? What critique may be made of Aquinas at this point? Describe the relation between faith and reason as Aquinas formulated it. How is this teaching important for an understanding of contemporary Roman Catholic thinking?
12. Describe Kant's theory of knowledge, and show how he believed that the inadequacies of rationalism and irrationalism had been overcome. Describe the relation between Kant's philosophy and neo-orthodox views of revelation, and evaluate that relationship in the light of Scripture.
13. How does the irrationalism show itself (or fail to show itself) in modern art, music, or literature (choose only one to discuss)? What is the Christian remedy for this situation?
14. Present a critical analysis of the implications of the "Amsterdam Philosophy" for one of the following: (a) doctrine of Scripture, (b) role of the visible church, (c) the relation of the cultural mandate to the great commission, (d) the relation of philosophy to theology, (e) the question of ethics.
15. Describe briefly the significance of each of the following in the history of philosophy.
- |           |           |        |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Plato     | Aquinas   | Kant   |
| Aristotle | Descartes | Hegel  |
| Anselm    | Hume      | Sartre |
16. What is common ground? Do you believe we have such with anyone?
17. How would you counsel a young person who was dating seriously a Lutheran? a Roman Catholic? Why?
18. How would you counsel people (who seek your advice) who are in a church which supports the World Council of Churches? Why?
19. Is there any value or necessity for apologetics today? What, if any?
20. Are there any dangers with an undue emphasis on apologetics? What, if any?
21. What are the philosophical presuppositions of "situational ethics?" Present a Christian response.
22. At what period in the history of philosophy are these motives prominent?
- |                |
|----------------|
| Nature/Grace   |
| Form/Matter    |
| Nature/Science |
| Freedom/Nature |
23. Name a philosopher from each of the following schools of thought and give a basic teaching of each school:
- |               |             |                    |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Hedonism      | Rationalism | Pragmatism         |
| Stoicism      | Empiricism  | Logical Positivism |
| Scholasticism | Idealism    | Existentialism     |
24. Critique the classical arguments for the existence of God.
25. With which persons would you associate the following?
- |  |
|--|
| "Cogito ergo sum."                       |
| This is the best of all possible worlds. |
| "To be is to be perceived."              |
| The mind is a blank tablet.              |
| Creature/Creator distinction.            |
| Categorical Imperative.                  |
| "God is dead."                           |
| "True truth."                            |
26. How do you believe the Word of God is related to philosophy?

*(Examiners in Faith & Life for candidates for ordination are encouraged to include questions from the Sample Examination in Practical Theology (page 45), particularly those questions designated as Theology questions.)*

1. Why do you consider yourself a Christian?
2. How do you understand the call to the ministry of the Word?
3. What is your motive for seeking the ministry of the Word?
4. Why do you believe that you have gifts for the ministry?
5. Could you serve in a church other than the OPC? Why do you want to serve in the OPC?
6. What is the pattern of your individual and family devotional life?
7. How do you rate yourself in regard to self-discipline?
8. What is the place of prayer: in your life, in the life of your family, in the life of the congregation?
9. What are God's priorities for a minister in his roles as a pastor, a father, and a husband?
10. How does your wife view your desire to seek ordination to the gospel ministry?
11. How well do you delegate responsibility?
12. How do you manifest the various qualities required of an elder in 1 Timothy and Titus?
- 13.
14. What should be uppermost in a pastor's mind as he prepares and preaches sermons, and as he does pastoral work?
15. What authors, apart from the writers of Scripture, have most influenced your thinking? What books have you read in the last six months? What magazine subscriptions do you receive?
16. What are you expected to do if you should entertain doubts regarding your call to the ministry? What are you expected to do should you develop scruples concerning any teaching of Scripture or the subordinate Standards of the OPC?

### **SAMPLE EXAMINATION IN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY**

1. Where does church history begin?
2. What is the value of church history?
3. Identify the first four ecumenical councils and discuss the areas of doctrine defined by each council.
4. Defend the canon of the New Testament.
5. What was Gnosticism? Manicheanism? Pietism (17th century)
6. Identify the following: Aquinas, Auburn Affirmation, Canons of Dort, Cromwell, The Great Awakening, The Half-Way Covenant, Henry VIII, The Huguenots, Pelagianism, Old Side - New Side, Cambridge Platform, Adopting Act, Plan of Union, Old School - New School, Montanism, Arians, Donatists Controversy, The Log College, Harvard, Westminster Theological Seminary.
7. Briefly explain the contributions of the following people: Marcion, Darby, Luther, Calvin, Francis Makemie, Frelinghuysen, Erasmus, A. Kuyper, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome, Origen, Constantine, Ambrose, Arius, Zwingli, Knox, Hodge, Wesley, Whitfield.
8. Identify some precursors (forerunners) of the Reformation.
9. What was the Counter Reformation?
10. Distinguish the Separatists from the Non-Separatists.
11. Give a brief history of each: NCC, WCC, NAE, WEF, RES, NAPARC, PCA, OPC, PCUSA
12. Evaluate the influence of Vatican II.
13. What is the current debate on inerrancy all about?
14. Trace the development of the office of Bishop from Ignatius to Gregory the Great and its effects on the formation of the papacy.
15. What were the historical and theological issues involved in the rise of monasticism?
16. What issues led to the production of the Chalcedonian creed?
17. What were the original purposes of the crusades? How successful were they? In light of your own theology of culture, were they appropriate for the church?
18. Differentiate the views of Luther, Zwingli, the Roman Catholics and Calvin on 1) the sacraments 2) salvation 3) the church.

19. What were the main results of the Council of Trent?
20. Who were the Anabaptists?
21. What were the theological issues in the Elizabethan settlement?
22. Discuss the development of Puritanism in England through Cromwell.
23. When was the Westminster Assembly called and was their work used as it was intended.
24. What was the Great Awakening and its significance?
25. What was the Edict of Nantes?
26. Trace the development of higher criticism in German theology.
27. What is the significance of Schliermacher? Ritschl? Barth? Bultmann?

### **SAMPLE EXAMINATION IN HEBREW OR GREEK**

#### **A. Part I (Spend 45 minutes only, completing before doing the next part)**

Without the use of any lexical or grammatical or any other aide, translate ..... beginning with verse ..... After translating each verse, parse all verbal forms before translating the next verse, writing out the form that appears in the text, and give the root, stem, and all other significant details thereof.

#### **Part II**

Starting at ....., translate as much as you can in 45 minutes, using a lexicon as needed.

#### **B. Part I**

Prepare thoroughly ..... verses ..... Aides are permitted. You will be asked by the examiner questions in all areas of grammar, including phonology and semantics.

#### **Part II**

You will be asked to sight read a Psalm (or portion thereof) chosen by the examiner, including translation and some questions about verb form.

#### **C. Part I (Do entire exam at one sitting)**

Without lexical help, translate a passage of eight verses of your own choosing. Parse the verbs in the even numbered verses, i.e. specify whether the form is a participle, an infinitive, a finite verb, etc., giving such information as the stem of the verb, tense, person, number, gender, root of the verb, etc.

#### **Part II**

With the help of a lexicon, translate ....., parsing the verbs including participles and infinitives) in the even numbered verses as described in I above.

#### **Part III**

Without lexical help, translate ....., parsing the verbs, etc. in the even numbered verses, as described in I above.

### **SAMPLE EXAMINATION IN THE STANDARDS OF THE O.P.C.**

*(Examiners in the Standards for candidates for ordination are encouraged to include questions from the Sample Examination in Practical Theology (page 45), particularly those questions designated as Standards questions.)*

1. What is the church?
2. What are the functions of the church? What is the role of church government in realizing the fulfillment of these functions?
5. What is the Constitution of the OPC? How important is the OPC Black Book? Is it presumptuous to maintain that the OPC Form of Government is founded upon and is agreeable to the Word of God?

9. What are the marks of the church?
10. What is meant by the unity, holiness, and catholicity of the church?
12. What is the work of the church? How much of this may Christians perform as organized apart from the church?
13. What are the three primary types of church government that have existed in church history and name a group which uses each type.
14. Describe the principles which you are able to derive from the Scriptures that are essential to church government.
15. What are the three kinds of judicatories which govern the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and over what do they govern?
16. What are the offices of the church? Special? Ordinary?  
What are the perpetual offices? Describe their function.
17. Discuss the nature and implications of the second ordination vows:  
"...sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith...as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures."
18. What is ordination? Who ordains ministers? Ruling elders? Deacons? On what basis is a man ordained? Why do you believe women may not be ordained to church office?
20. Describe the responsibilities of the church session. What is the minimum number which may be on a church session? What constitutes a quorum for a session meeting? Who may call a meeting of the session? Who is to be moderator? Are its meetings closed?
25. Of what does a presbytery consist? What is the function of the presbytery? . What is a quorum for a meeting of presbytery?
27. How is the headship of Christ maintained in the Presbyterian system of government?
28. Under what circumstances and conditions may an OP minister labor in a non-OPC?
29. Of what does the general assembly consist? Are deliverances of the general assembly part of the Constitution? What is their force? What is the nature of church authority?
32. What is the purpose of church discipline? What is meant by judicial and administrative discipline? What are the degrees of censure in judicial discipline? What is a case without full process?
35. Give evidence from the Scripture that the church has the authority to discipline. How does this authority differ from that of the civil court? Under what circumstances may a person's name be removed from the roll of church membership?
38. What is the regulative principle of worship? What is the goal of worship?
40. Are pictures of Christ or biblical symbols profitable for worship?
41. List the usual parts of public worship. What is involved in pronouncing the benediction? Is there biblical warrant for this?
43. Describe the requirements for church membership. Precisely when does a person become a communicant member? At what age, at the lower scale, may a person be permitted to make a public profession of faith? May a baptized member partake of the Lord's Supper?
46. What should the congregational prayer include?
47. What bearing does Ephesians 5:19 have on your selection of songs to be sung at worship? ("Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,....")
49. Who may administer the sacraments? What is the Biblical warrant for your answer? Are the sacraments something we do for God, or something God does for us? When it is said that the sacraments are means of grace, how do we guard this view from a sacerdotal view of the sacraments?
52. What is baptism, and who may receive baptism? Under what circumstances may the sacrament of baptism be administered more than once to any person?
55. What is the Lord's Supper, and who may receive the Lord's Supper?

*(Currently, questions from this sample examination in Practical Theology are included within the examinations in Faith & Life, the Standards of the O.P.C. and Theology given to candidates for ordination.)*

1. What is a minister or teaching elder? an evangelist? a pastor? a teacher?
2. What measures do you anticipate undertaking to promote your own personal growth in your relationship with God? How do you expect this to change as you assume the responsibilities of a minister or teaching elder in the O.P.C.?
3. What is your present practice of prayer and scripture reading? How do you expect this practice to change as you assume the responsibilities of a minister?
4. What are the responsibilities of a minister of the gospel? What priorities will you have as you begin your ministry? How does your personal devotional life fit into this undertaking? Your family life? Recreations? Continuing education?
5. What is God's calling to the ministry? To what are you called? Who calls you to the ministry? How do you know your call to be genuine?
6. What, if anything, is unique about a pastor's relationship with his wife? children? extended family? How does your wife and family respond to your intention to become a minister?
7. Is it appropriate for a pastor to form friendships with individuals within the congregation of which he is the pastor? What, if anything, is unique about providing pastoral care for a personal friend?
8. Describe your usual response to problems in your relationships with others. How do you express anger within a close relationship? What are the strengths and weaknesses to the style of response which you have described? (It may be helpful to offer a specific example.)
9. What roles are appropriate for a pastor within the community? Is it appropriate for a pastor to run for or hold public office? Is it appropriate for a pastor to sit on public boards, commissions, committees, etc.? In what types of civic or non-ecclesiastical organizations might you consider active involvement? How would you anticipate this would impact your ministry?
10. What is a sermon? How is a sermon different from other types of speeches?
11. What does it mean to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in every sermon? When preaching on the fourth commandment from Exodus 20:8-11, how might you preach the gospel?
12. What is the authority of preaching? How did you receive that authority?
13. Within the regulative principle, what flexibility is afforded the elders of a congregation in planning a service of worship? Would it ever be appropriate to use a short video or slide presentation (e.g. documenting the work of missions on a particular field) as a kind of extended sermon illustration in a worship service? Should the regulative principle be applied to a Wednesday Evening Fellowship meeting? How should it be applied?
14. You have been invited by a local group of pastors with which you have regular personal fellowship to join in a combined worship service as "a celebration of a worldwide day of prayer". One of the pastors suggests that the Lord's Supper be included in this service. How would you respond?
15. A young couple, new members of the congregation, have approached you regarding the baptism of their newborn child. However, upon reading the questions posed in the Directory for Worship, they respond sharply to the "negative tone" which they perceive in the first question. They ask if it is possible to reword that question to exclude "the negativity". How would you respond?
16. How do you understand the expression "fencing the Lord's Table"? What measures would you consider necessary in order to adequately fence the Lord's table? How would you respond to your session if they disagreed with your opinion on this matter?
17. What is evangelism? What is the good news which we bring to others?
18. Compare your usual style of evangelism with other styles of evangelism. What are their relative strengths and weaknesses? How do each relate to the principles and models of evangelism set forth in the word of God?
19. How important is evangelism in the life of a pastor? in the life of the church?
20. What would be essential elements in a broad strategy of mission outreach within an urban area or local community? How might such outreach differ between an urban environment and a rural environment? What resources would be available to you in formulating such a strategy of outreach?

21. Describe the complexities of communicating the gospel in a cross-cultural situation? Describe the roles of linguistics, cultural anthropology, modern technology and missiology effectively communicating the gospel in a cross-cultural situation.
22. Define indigenization, contextualization, enculturation, nationalism, accommodation, syncretism.
23. What is the theology of liberation? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
24. Briefly describe your understanding of the relationship of Christianity with a) Judaism, b) Islam, c) Buddhism, d) Hinduism, and e) Native American religions.
25. What is pastoral care?
26. When you visit a person or family as a pastor or when you counsel persons in the church or community, you will enter some of the most private parts of people's lives. What gives you the right to enter into their lives in such an intimate way?
26. How would you respond to the following situations? What would be your goals of ministry in each situation?
  - a) You have been called to the visit of a member of your congregation for whom death is imminent.
  - b) A family in the congregation has just learned from their physician that their 9 year old child has leukemia.
  - c) A pregnant teenage girl comes to you because she is afraid of how her parents will respond to the news of her pregnancy.
  - d) A woman during a counseling session or pastoral visit expresses a romantic interest in you.  
etc.
27. What is a wedding? Why should a minister officiate at a wedding?
28. Briefly describe the program of premarital counseling which you will be using with couples seeking marriage.
29. What is a funeral? a memorial service? a committal?
30. What is the purpose of a funeral service? What should be included in such a service?
  - j) You agree to officiate at a funeral. Later you learn that the person was a member of the Masonic Orders (or Eastern Star) and that this Order has also been invited to participate in the funeral service.
32. How would you respond to a situation where a separation was forming in the congregation between those whose children attend public school and those who practice home schooling? Both "sides" are appealing to you for support.
33. What biblical principles are essential to our understanding and practice of Christian education? Explain briefly the historical background of modern Christian education and its role within the O.P.C.
34. What biblical principles are essential to our understanding and practice of church administration.
35. Describe a program which would seek to fully integrate the gifts of all the members of a local congregation into the life of the church. What role(s) is appropriate to the pastor in such a setting?
36. Assess your own ability to delegate authority/responsibility to others. How is this ability important to a minister?

### **SAMPLE EXAMINATION IN THEOLOGY**

*(Examiners in Theology for candidates for ordination are encouraged to include questions from the Sample Examination in Practical Theology (page 45), particularly those questions designated as Theology questions.)*

1. Have you read the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms? At what points do you disagree with these subordinate standards? What does it mean to subscribe to these standards?
2. Define: a. natural revelation b. special revelation.
3. How does the Scripture derive its authority? What is meant by the sufficiency of Scripture? Is the canon closed? What is the difference between the infallibility and the inerrancy of Scripture?
4. Define inspiration. How does this affect our understanding of Scripture.

5. Relate sufficiency of Scripture to prophecy and tongue speaking. What is the "private use of tongues?"
6. Who is God? Describe God. Is any one of his attributes more basic or important than the others?
7. How would you explain the doctrine of the Trinity to one who did not understand it? What Scriptures would you cite?
8. What is your understanding of theodicy? Relate God's providence and sin.
9. What are God's decrees? Does the Bible teach double predestination?
10. What is the image of God in man?
11. Does man have free will?
12. What is sin?
13. What is common grace? Special grace?
14. What is the covenant of Grace? How are the old and new covenants related?
15. Who is Satan? Is there demon possession today? Can a Christian ever be demon possessed?
16. How does the atonement of Christ work? Define the atonement using the Scripture's words for the atonement.
17. Define justification. Relate justification and sanctification. What is the ground of justification? Is it objective or subjective? Are your views in agreement with James 2:21-25?
18. Relate and differentiate saving faith to the assurance of faith. Can one be a true believer without assurance?
19. What is the heart of saving faith?
20. Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? What is the work of the Holy Spirit?
21. What is Christian liberty?
22. May we speak of the Christian Sabbath? How should the Sabbath be observed? Westminster or Heidelberg?
23. What is the Church? When did the Church begin? Where do para-church organizations fit into the Church? What should be a Christian's relationship with para-church organizations?
24. What are the marks of the church? Are there two churches, the visible and the invisible? What about para-church organizations?
25. Can you justify the Reformation? The existence of the OPC? Is there tension between the teaching of the unity of the Church and of the purity of the Church?
26. Can you justify the existence of the OPC? Are Christians to be part only of a pure church? Is the OPC a pure church?
27. Should the church receive into membership those who are not convinced Calvinists? Those who are not persuaded that their children ought to be baptized?
28. What are the means of grace?
29. In the sacraments is the focus on God's action or man's? Explain.
30. What is a. transubstantiation b. consubstantiation c. your view of Christ's presence in the sacrament?
31. Who is eligible for baptism? For partaking of the Lord's supper?
32. What warrant is there for infant baptism? What makes baptism efficacious? Would you "rebaptize" an adult who was baptized in infancy though neither parent was a believer? if the adult was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church? if the adult was baptized in the Protestant Episcopal Church? Why or why not?
33. How is the Lord's table to be fenced?
34. What is the regulative principle of worship?
35. What happens to a person after he dies?
36. Did man evolve from lower forms of creation? What about theistic evolution? What is your view of creation? Was it in six days?
37. Name and explain some of the terms or categories used in reference to Christ's work on the cross?
38. What is important about the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ?
39. What is the ordo salutis? How important is the order?
40. What is the gospel?
41. Can those who have never heard the gospel be saved?
42. What does the Scripture mean by repentance? by faith?
43. What are the uses of the Law for people today?
44. What is Christian liberty?

45. What is evangelism? How is evangelism to be conducted? Can you make a distinction between evangelism and missions?
46. What is the millennial viewpoint of the Westminster Confession of Faith? What is your own viewpoint? What differences exist between Dispensationalism and historic pre-millennialism?
47. Expound the relation between the deity and the humanity of Christ. Where is Christ now?
48. Explain Christ's two natures. Prove from Scripture that Christ is fully God and fully man.
49. Does our Calvinistic world and life view require us to be part of movements such as Moral Majority?
50. What is the imputation of Adam's sin?
51. Explain Christ's offices. How does this have an impact on your ministry?

### **SAMPLE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH BIBLE**

1. How many books are there in the Bible? In the Old Testament? In the New Testament? Name the books of the Bible in order.
4. Summarize briefly, in very broad but clear terms, the course of history as recorded in the Pentateuch, noting the material in the different books.
6. What is the general themes set forth in the book of \_\_\_\_\_?  
Briefly summarize each chapter in the book of \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Describe the political and social conditions in Palestine in the time of the Judges/Monarchy/divided Monarchy. Name the judges/kings of Judah/ kings of Israel.
9. Give the circumstances under which the kingdom was divided. Which tribes were in the south, and which in the north?
11. Identify three prophets of the Lord who did not write books, and tell something of their ministry.
12. Indicate the time and circumstances of the ministry of each of the "writing" prophets.
17. When and by whom were the people of the northern kingdom carried into captivity? What eventually happened to them?
18. What and by whom were the people of the southern kingdom carried into captivity? What eventually happened to them?  
Name the 12 apostles.
23. Which Gospels record the virgin birth? the feeding of the 5,000? the walk to Emmaus? the story of the prodigal son? Where do you find the Lord's prayer? the story of the good Samaritan? the story of the rich man and Lazarus? the Beatitudes? the Sermon on the Mount? the high priestly prayer? the account of the raising of Lazarus?
25. List the resurrection appearances of Christ. Where, outside the Gospels, do we find information about the resurrection of Christ?
27. Trace the missionary journeys of Paul.
30. Compare the old and new covenants on the basis of Hebrews.
32. Cite and locate at least three Scripture passages which teach or support each of these doctrines:
 

The creation of the world	The nature of God as Triune
The "total depravity" of man	The true deity of Christ
The true humanity of Christ	The nature of Christ's death as a substitutionary sacrifice
The nature and reality of regeneration	Justification through faith in Christ
The future judgment	The personal and visible return of Christ
The state of believers between death and the resurrection	
33. Summarize, with Scripture support, the Bible doctrine of the nature and authority of Scripture.
34. Identify the following persons:
 

Adah	Eleazar
Anna	Obed, etc.
35. What happened at:
 

Zoar	Laish
Uz	etc.
36. Locate the following (or other) phrases, by book and chapter; by verse if you can.  
And I will put enmity between thee and the woman



Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually  
This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven  
etc.

40. Briefly describe what each of the following pairs of individuals have to do with each other:

Abraham and Isaac  
Saul and David

etc.

Appendix 5      Written Examination focusing on OPC Distinctives (Required for Licensure)

### Written Examination focusing on OPC distinctives

*The following examination covers areas outlined by the General Assembly of the OPC as necessary for all candidates for the Gospel Ministry. Generally we administer this examination to men seeking licensure. It must be sustained prior to the Theology examination on the floor of Presbytery for ordination or for transfer of ministerial credentials from any church or denomination other than the OPC. This is an open book exam. We urge candidates to keep their answers as short and concise as possible. We anticipate that your response will not exceed 25 pages. Never the less, we expect that in each question you will be interacting with the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards. Exams which fail to adequately interact with pertinent Scriptures for each question will not be sustained.*

#### CREATION

1. Defend the doctrine of “creation *ex nihilo*”?
2. How shall we relate the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 with each other and with history?
3. Discuss the role of evolution in our being created as human beings. Interact with the ‘scientific evidence’ often put forward to defend the theory of evolution.
4. What is your view of the length of the days of creation in Genesis 1? How does this impact your view of the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2? Compare your view with the other major views on this subject.
5. What does the Bible teach us concerning the creation of Adam? What unique relationship does the historical Adam hold to his offspring and to the rest of creation?
6. What is general revelation and how does it relate to God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures?

#### JUSTIFICATION

1. What is justification?
2. Define the term righteousness as it applies to our justification.
3. How does merit relate to our justification?
4. Compare your view of justification with that of Roman Catholicism.
5. What is faith? How does faith relate to terms like grace and assurance?
6. How does your understanding of faith relate to repentance, good works, and faithfulness?

7. What makes a good work done by a sinner truly good (cf. *WCF* 16.7)? What, if any, role do these good works play in our justification? (*Please discuss James 2:24 in your response.*)
8. Distinguish between *justification* and *sanctification*.
9. What is imputation in relation to sin and righteousness?
10. How is the passive obedience of Christ distinguished from his active obedience? How do these relate to our justification?
11. What is your understanding of the *New Perspective on Paul's* teaching on the Biblical doctrine of justification, as represented by such scholars as Sanders, Dunn and N.T. Wright? Briefly respond to each one.
12. Explain the relationship between the *covenant of works* and the *covenant of grace* including both similarities and differences. Be sure to interact with Romans 5:12ff.
13. Define Biblically the expressions 'the visible church' and 'the invisible church'. How do these relate to each other?
14. What is meant when we say that the sacraments are a means of grace? How is this grace conveyed to us in or through the sacrament?
15. How does our perseverance relate to our continuing faith, our repentance and apostasy?
16. What do you understand of the view referred to as 'Federal Vision'? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

#### **OTHER OPC DISTINCTIVES**

1. Explain and defend your view regarding our liberty in Christ to drink alcoholic beverages. Include a response to the the problems that many have with alcoholism today.
2. Briefly explain and defend your millennial view.
3. Provide a brief overview and Biblical critique of dispensationalism.
4. How would you respond to an elderly member of your congregation who is wearing a Masonic ring on his finger or Shriner sticker on his car?
5. How does the regulative principle of worship relate to the exclusive use of Psalms in public worship?
6. What is meant by the expression, 'the free offer of the gospel'? Support or critique this concept from the Scriptures.
7. Briefly define each of the 'five points of Calvinism' and explain how each relates to our understanding of evangelism.
8. Briefly explain the concept of 'guidance from the Holy Spirit' set forth in the doctrines and practices of the Peniel Bible Conferences. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these views.

9. Briefly define the proper role(s) of the deacons in the life of the church.
10. Under what, if any, circumstances might an abortion be permissible? Defend your answer from Scripture.
11. What is a Biblical view of the relationship between the races? Is there any Biblical basis for a separation of the races?
12. What is essential for our proper observance of the Sabbath? What types of activities are inappropriate on the Sabbath?
13. How do you understand the modern use of speaking in tongues? Would it ever be appropriate for an individual to practice a 'private exercise' of this charismatic gift today?
14. What are appropriate roles for women in the leadership of the church? What are inappropriate roles and why?
15. Briefly explain your view of Christian Schools, home schooling, and the use of public schools for the education of our children.
16. Briefly explain the Biblical view of homosexuality. Is homosexual practice 'more heinous in the sight of God' than other violations of the seventh commandment? How would you respond to a person who was not actively engaged in homosexual practice, but who confided to you that he or she had homosexual tendencies?