

REFORMED THEOLOGY

LEADERSHIP
TRAINING

“If Reformed Theology has simply given us new words but no wonder, then we aren’t really reformed, we’re just informed.” Scotty Smith

INTRODUCTION

The Westminster Assembly convened in Westminster Abbey in London on July 1643. This body engaged in honest and thoughtful activity for five years, six months, and twenty-two days. Thoroughness is conspicuous in all of its work. Church historians agree that this was one of the most learned bodies ever assembled on this earth for the formulation and promulgation of Christian truth. The personnel of this body were composed of the intellectual cream of the British Isles. Every member was carefully selected on the basis of learning and intellectual gifts.

This group of divines was characterized also by deep and genuine spirituality. These men were spiritual giants. For the full period of their labors it was their custom to set aside one entire day of each month for prayer and fasting. The men who composed this assembly were, therefore, prepared intellectually and spiritually for their task.

In our day of renewed interest in Biblical theology it is well to remember that the primary rule these servants of Christ laid down for themselves, to guide in all their discussions, was: "What any man undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of Scripture." Every member was required to take the following vow, and it was read to all of the members every Monday morning: "I do seriously promise and vow in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what I believe to be most agreeable to the Word of God; nor in point of discipline, but what may make most for God's glory and the peace and good of His church."

Present in this body of men were some of the most brilliant of contemporary philosophers, but they permitted not one iota of human philosophy to influence their creedal statements. Their sole objective was to think Biblically and to express the mind of Scripture. The success of this undertaking is evidenced in the fact that although better than three centuries have passed since the publication of this work, the Confession of Faith has needed no significant change during all this time.

Richard Baxter, a contemporary of the Westminster divines, wrote in his autobiography an evaluation of this assembly. He affirmed: "The Divines there congregated were men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial abilities, and fidelity; and being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more speak the truth, even in the face of malice and envy, that, as far as I am able to judge by the information of all history of that time, and by any other evidence left us, the Christian world, since the days of the apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines (taking one thing with another), than this and the Synod of Dort." Dean Stanley of the Anglican Church declared that of all Protestant Confessions the Westminster Confession exhibits "far more depth of theological insight than any other."

Fair-minded scholars must concede that the goal that the Westminster Assembly kept before it of giving "to the accepted Bible system of truth a complete, impregnable statement, to serve as a bulwark against error, as a basis of ecclesiastical fellowship and cooperation, and as a safe and effectual instrument for the religious instruction of the people of God and their children," has been

attained in a marvelous way. Judged by any sensible standard the Westminster Assembly ranks among the greatest of the ecclesiastical assemblies or councils in the entire history of Christianity.

DR. JOHN RICHARDSON

CLASS READING ASSIGNMENT TABLE

WEEK 1 – LEADERS FOR CHRIST’S CHURCH

Additional reading assignments will be Essential Truths of the Christian Faith by R.C. Sproul and the Westminster Confession of Faith

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 1-9

WEEK 2 - THE TRINITY & THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 10-18
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 1 & 2

WEEK 3 – THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD & GOD THE CREATOR

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 19-20, 44-45
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 3-6

WEEK 4 – THE GOD OF GRACE

1. Read the Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul) sections 25-36; 56-64.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters 9-10.

WEEK 5 – THE ORDO SALUTIS

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), sections 65-71.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters 11-18.

WEEK 6 – COVENANT THEOLOGY & SACRAMENTS

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), sections 5; 21-24, and 75-83.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 7 & 8, and 27-29.

WEEK 7 – THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS CONDUCT & CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), sections 37-43 and 84-96.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 19-24 & 30 (chapter 24 - first one only).

WEEK 8 – THE FINAL THINGS

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), Sections 72-74; 97-102.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 32 & 33.

Reformed Theology – Class 1

LEADERS FOR CHRIST'S CHURCH

Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Schedule

Resource materials

Assignments and tests

Officer training aspects

Format

Rationale for the Course

Knowing God (and His purpose for us) is crucially important for the living of our lives. As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul. J.I. Packer, Knowing God

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WHY DOES CHRIST'S CHURCH NEED STRONG LEADERS?

The Church is called to disciple others to lead the Church for future generations.

The Church is the hope of the world.

“I’ve become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular aid workers, government projects, and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people’s hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good... The Christians were always different. Far from having cowed or confined its converts, their faith appears to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, and engagement with the world—a directness in their dealings with others—that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall. *As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God.*” - Matthew Parris

“Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations.” —J. Dudley Woodberry, professor Islamic studies and dean emeritus Fuller Theological Seminary.

Church Leadership matters

THE OFFICE OF THE ELDER

The task of the elder is to provide spiritual oversight and governance for the body of Christ (Acts 20:17, 28-31).

This office has its roots in the Old Testament with the division of work by Moses (Exodus 18:21, 22).

When the apostles planted new churches in the post-pentecost age they also appointed elders in every church (Titus 1:5, Acts 14:21-23).

The word for elder in the Greek is Presbuteros and refers to the character required of the office holder.

The New Testament Church was connectional. (1 Timothy 4:14, Acts 15:1-2).

The PCA distinguishes between *teaching elders* and *ruling elders*. (1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11).

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THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

The roots of this office are also in the Old Testament.

Deacons were present in the New Testament Church, which is made clear by their mention in Philippians 1:1, and the list of qualifications for the office found in 1 Timothy 3.

The term diakonia means to serve. (Acts 6)

The role of the deacon is to lead the church in ministries of mercy and to be administrative assistants to the elders.

All office holders are to be chosen by the people (Acts 6:3).

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH OFFICERS

The scriptures make it very clear that all church office holders are to be men. Galatians 3:28; 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

Q. Were Paul's views merely an expression of the customs and culture of the time?

1. Adam was formed first.
2. Eve was taken out of Adam (I Corinthians 11:8).
3. Eve was made for Adam's sake, not vice versa.
4. Eve was deceived by Satan.
5. Adam was cursed for being led by his wife.

Jesus' life and ministry: Not one of his apostles was female. Feminists are quick to point out that he was adapting to his culture. But now they are doing the same thing to Jesus that they did with Paul. What really is the standard, now, by which we judge Jesus? If women's ordination is a real justice issue, can we excuse our Lord on the basis of cultural pressure? Was he the type of person to succumb to popular opinion? Tim and Kathy Keller, *Women and Ministry*

Q. Doesn't this theological view show Christianity to have a low view or an oppressive view of women?

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Q. WHY? If Christianity has elevated women in every way, then why doesn't the bible allow them to be officers in the church? (And why a similar role in marriage?)

"But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." 1 Corinthians 11:3

- TRINITY
- THE FALL
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- PRACTICAL
- A VOTE AND VOICE

An officer must be a man of good character.

1. He must be above reproach, respectable, and have a good reputation, even with those outside the church (1 Timothy 3:2, 7).
2. He must be devout and prudent (Titus 1:8, 1 Timothy 3:2).

An officer must have his family life in order.

1. He is to be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2).
2. He must manage his household well, including controlling his children (1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12).
3. He must have a wife who is not a gossip (1 Timothy 3:11).

An officer must be self-controlled.

1. He must not be addicted to wine (1 Timothy 3:3, 8).
2. He must not be pugnacious or contentious, but gentle (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7).
3. He must not be a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:3, 8).
4. He must not be a "double-talker" (1 Timothy 3:8).
5. An officer must be useful.
 - He should be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2).
 - He should be able to teach, exhort, and refute (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9).
6. An officer must not be a new convert, lest he fall victim to his pride and be unable to resist the sure attacks of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6).
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Officers and leaders of SRPC are to lead in repentance.

The new community is a place where Jesus dwells—by His Spirit. If He is there, it is a place where people are made new—where spiritual life is formed in them. We are broken and we need fixing. Church is a place where God is at work and we move on the journey toward wholeness. Church is not just a place where we conform our thinking to right beliefs, not just a place where we learn to profess the right things—it is a place where we get the gospel deeply or better put—the gospel gets us. We don't just learn what justification by faith means—but we are reconciled to our Father by the work of Jesus for us and it transforms us. Once barren hearts begin to produce lovely fruit—love, joy, and peace. In fact, if there is no transformation, then there is no salvation—for if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.

Leadership will not simply be defined as those who are the best Bible scholars, or managers in our midst. Small group leaders, church officers and staff must be experiencing gospel transformation in their own hearts, minds, marriages and families to be truly leading. Leaders at SRPC are not simply those who sin the least but they are the ones who repent the most.

RECEPTIVE GRACE AND HANDLING THE DIFFERENCES

How do Christians interact and see others from different theological camps?

Receptive Grace

In Romans 14:1, Paul tells those who know the grace of God to *“receive the one who is weak with respect to faith, without passing judgment on disputable matters.”*

“The gospel of graces moves us to say: ‘I am loved because when I was believing all the wrong things, Jesus came and entered into my reality, took on the weakness of my human nature, radically re-adjusted His life for me, and died for me.’ A Christian’s self worth is based on the one who was excluded for us—Jesus was socially and spiritually cast out. Now we are free to disagree even sharply with people and yet do so without any ill will, without the need to withdraw or exercise power in the relationships with them. You have the power (the secure position) to disagree with love, respect, deference and humility, with no inner need to win the argument.” —Tim Keller

ASSIGNMENT

1. Additional reading assignments will be Essential Truths of the Christian Faith by R.C. Sproul and The Westminster Confession of Faith
2. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 1-9

Jesus Changed Everything for Women
MARCH 22, 2021 | REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN

Historian Tom Holland stopped believing in the Bible as a boy. He was far more attracted to Greek and Roman gods than to the crucified hero of the Christian faith. But after years of research, Holland has concluded in his book *Dominion* that even secular Westerners are deeply shaped by Christianity. In particular, he argues, people on all sides of today's debates about gender and sexuality depend on Christian ideas:

That every human being possessed an equal dignity was not remotely a self-evident truth. A Roman would have laughed at it. To campaign against discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality, however, was to depend on large numbers of people sharing in a common assumption: that everyone possessed an inherent worth. The origins of this principle . . . lay not in the French Revolution, nor in the Declaration of Independence, nor in the Enlightenment, but in the Bible.

In Greco-Roman thinking, men were superior to women and sex was a way to prove it. "As captured cities were to the swords of the legions, so the bodies of those used sexually were to the Roman man," Holland wrote. "To be penetrated, male or female, was to be branded as inferior."

In Rome, "men no more hesitated to use slaves and prostitutes to relieve themselves of their sexual needs than they did to use the side of a road as a toilet." The idea that every woman had the right to choose what happened to her body was laughable.

Christianity threw out this model. Rather than being seen as inferior to men, women were equally made in God's image. Rather than being free to use slaves and prostitutes (of either sex), men were expected to be faithful to one wife, or to live in celibate singleness.

The scenario described in *The Handmaid's Tale*—a man sleeping with an enslaved woman—is one of the exact things Christianity outlawed. The Christian husband was to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). The relative weakness of her body was not a license for domination, but a reason to show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7).

While Roman families often married off their prepubescent daughters, Christian women could marry later. A woman whose husband had died was affirmed in remaining single, but also free to marry any man she wished, so long as he belonged to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39–40).

No wonder Christianity was so attractive to women. Jesus had changed everything.

Jesus's Shocking Relationships with Women

If we could read the Gospels through first-century eyes, Jesus's treatment of women would knock us to our knees. His longest recorded conversation with any individual was with a Samaritan woman of ill repute (John 4:7–30), and this wasn't an isolated incident. Jesus repeatedly welcomed women his contemporaries despised.

One time, he was dining at a Pharisee's house when a "sinful woman" gatecrashed. She wept on

Jesus's feet, wiped them with her hair, and kissed them. The Pharisee was appalled: "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). But Jesus turned the tables on his host and affirmed this woman as an example of love (Luke 7:36–50). He welcomed women despised as sexual sinners. He also welcomed women deemed unclean.

One day, Jesus was on his way to heal a 12-year-old girl when a woman who had suffered 12 years of menstrual bleeding figured that if she could just touch the fringe of his clothes she'd be made well. She was right. But Jesus didn't just move on. He had her come forward from the crowd and commended her faith (Luke 8:43–48).

When Jesus finally reached the sick 12 year old, she was dead. But it wasn't too late. Speaking Aramaic, their shared mother tongue, Jesus said, "Little girl, I say to you, arise," and she got up (Mark 5:41). Whether little girls or prostitutes, whether despised foreigners or women made unclean by menstrual blood. Whether they were married or single, sick (Matt. 8:14–16) or disabled (Luke 13:10–16), Jesus made time for women and treated them with care and respect.

In Luke's Gospel, women are often compared with men, and where there is a contrast, the women come out looking better. In all four Gospels, women witness Jesus's resurrection first—although the testimony of women wouldn't have been seen as convincing at that time.

Jesus made time for women and treated them with care and respect.

We gain an intimate glimpse of Jesus's relationships with women in his friendship with two sisters. We first meet Mary and Martha in Luke, when Jesus is at their house. Martha is busy serving. Mary is sitting at Jesus's feet, learning with the disciples. Martha complains and asks Jesus to tell Mary she should be serving, too.

But Jesus responds: "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). In a culture in which women were expected to serve, not to learn, Jesus affirms Mary's learning from him. But far from dismissing Martha, John tells another story in which Jesus has a stunning conversation with her after her brother Lazarus has died.

In fact, it seems that Jesus let Lazarus die partly so that he could have this conversation with Martha—whom he loved (John 11:5)—in which he uttered world-changing words: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26).

Martha did. So have countless women since.

WHY THE PCA ONLY ORDAINS MEN TO ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICE

The Authority of the Word and the Wisdom of the Church

L. Roy Taylor

The question, "Why does the PCA ordain only men to serve as ministers, ruling elders, and deacons?" comes up often. Some see the question as a human rights issue. Their line of reasoning is: 1) society and the Church were wrong on issues such as racism, slavery, segregation, minority rights, and women's civil rights; 2) society and the Church came to a better understanding of those matters; 3) since society now grants women such rights as voting, holding public office, leadership positions in the business world, and so forth, the Church should grant women the right to be ordained to ecclesiastical leadership.

If human rights were the question, the PCA's position understandably could be regarded as anachronistic or chauvinistic. But ordination is a biblical and theological issue, not a human rights issue. The PCA limits ordination to ecclesiastical office to men because we believe that the Bible itself limits ordination to men in both the Old and New Testaments (Exodus 24:1,9-11; Numbers 11; Acts 6; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). And Scripture is "the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined" (Westminster Confession of Faith I.10).

What about the decisions of the Church, acting as a body? Do they carry weight? We do not believe that the Church is infallible (Westminster Confessions of Faith XXIV.5; XXXI.3) as some do, but at the same time we reject the polar-opposite perspective of others who regard as worthless the wisdom of the Church accumulated over the centuries. Certainly, we do believe that the Church is wise. The "decrees of councils, [and] opinions of ancient writers" (Westminster Confession of Faith I.10), however, must be sifted through the grid of Scripture. What is biblical, we accept; what is inconsistent with the Bible, we must reject.

We respect the three-fold standard of tradition, stated in the fifth century, as "that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all." In other words—universality, antiquity, and consent. The consensus of the Church, developed over centuries of grappling with Scripture, is to be seriously considered. The ordination of women as teaching elders has never been the majority opinion of the Church. In Presbyterian, Reformed circles the idea is of relatively recent origin (first in 1956 in the United Presbyterian Church, then in 1965 in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and in 1995 in the Christian Reformed Church). Therefore, unless convincing Scriptural proof requires such a major change, we are reluctant to abandon the restriction of ordination to men, because that is what the majority of the Church has believed, throughout the world, for millennia.

Different views stem from how one understands the Bible.

The purpose here is not to give a lengthy analysis of all positions on this issue or to exegete all relevant biblical texts. Many have penned books and articles on the subject in recent decades. It will be helpful, though, to recognize the broad range of positions on whether women should be

ordained. Some of the differences stem from how one understands the nature and authority of the Bible, and other differences arise from how one interprets Scripture.

For a theological liberal, who holds that the Bible is essentially the record of men's thoughts about God rather than God's authoritative revelation of Himself and His will through the prophets and apostles, no biblical or exegetical argument is necessary. The human-rights argument will suffice. For the neo-orthodox theologian, who listens for a word from God when reading the Scriptures, it is not a matter of what the biblical text objectively says; it is more a matter of what one experiences when encountering the biblical text. Biblical interpretation becomes subjective. In that paradigm, if one feels that ordaining women is the spirit of the biblical text, the rite is justified.

For the neo-evangelical, although the Bible is inspired and authoritative, it is a mixture of divine truth and human error. Paul King Jewett, in *Man: Male and Female*, argues that when Paul wrote on essential theological issues such as justification, he wrote as Paul, the Liberated Apostle. When he wrote on the role of women, however, he reverted to his old chauvinistic perspectives as Saul the Pharisaical Rabbi. Accordingly, when we read Paul's passage in Galatians 3:26-28, the Liberated Apostle sets forth an inspired Magna Carta of Christian liberty, but when we read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35, or 1 Timothy 2 and 3 on the role of women in the Church, he reverts to his Pharisaical chauvinism. According to Jewett, any understanding of a particular passage which does not agree with Paul's fundamental statement of Christian liberty (Galatians 3:26-28) is inconsistent with the Bible as a whole. The PCA believes "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice" (Book of Church Order 21 -5; 24-6). We therefore reject any justifications for the ordination of women that are based upon aberrant views of the nature of Scripture itself, such as those of the liberal, the neo—orthodox, and the neo-evangelical.

Reform must always bring belief and practice in line with Scripture. A basic principle of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation was *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* (the Church reformed is always reforming). Some use that slogan to buttress the argument that since society's views on the leadership role of women in business and government have changed, the Church should follow suit, change its views, and ordain women. In doing this they miss the point underscored by John Calvin in *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, essentially that reforms in the Church are to be according to the Word of God. All evangelicals who are consistent with that basic Protestant principle agree that the Church should constantly be reforming in order to bring its beliefs and practices more closely in line with Scripture. Ongoing reformation of the Church is to be based on the Bible, not the changing culture.

Some use the "Wesleyan quadrilateral"—a combination of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—to formulate the doctrines of the Church. We have mentioned the relation of Scripture and tradition already- that Scripture is supreme and tradition is helpful as tested by Scripture. Reason also plays a role in the formulation of theology. Paul frequently used logical explanations in his epistles. There is an obvious logical structure to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which itself advocates the use of "good and necessary consequence" (WCF 1.6), or logic, in developing doctrine. But any logical conclusion that is contrary to Scripture is simply erroneous. One might deduce that since Christians are graciously forgiven, they may live in perpetual sin, but Paul explicitly denounces such logic (Romans 6:1, 15). Likewise, if the Scriptures do not mandate the

ordination of women, no logical argument that arrives at a conclusion contrary to the Scriptures is valid. Reason is not superior to or even on par with Holy Scripture; biblical revelation is supreme.

What role does personal experience play in understanding an issue such as the ordination of women? Personal experiences (whether religious or general life experiences) may lead to deeper biblical insights and affect our theology. There is a problem, however, when subjective experience becomes the arbiter of objective biblical truth. All Protestants hold to: 1) the "perspicuity of Scripture" (that the message of salvation in the Bible is sufficiently clear that one does not need to be a formally trained theologian to understand it); 2) "the priesthood of believers" (that every Christian has direct access to God and needs no human priest or saint as an intercessor); and 3) "the liberty of conscience" (that the Church may not require Christians to believe or practice anything not taught in Scripture). One concept popularized in the early 20th century, "the soul competency of the believer," goes well beyond these three tenets. According to "soul competency," each Christian has both the ability and the liberty to interpret the Bible through a personal conversion experience with Christ, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the dictates of conscience. For those who accept this doctrine, objective, time-tested principles of biblical interpretation take a back seat to subjective individual experience, and an autonomous individualism begins to set itself apart from, and above, the collective, long-term wisdom of the Church. This perspective makes a subtle but dangerous shift from the principle that Christ is the central and unifying theme of all Scripture, to making one's personal Christian experience the determining factor in biblical understanding. Whether one "feels led" to a particular position on ordination is not the standard; what the Bible objectively teaches is.

Some Christians interpret the relevant passages differently. Let us be clear that we are not saying that anyone who disagrees with our position on ordination simply does not believe the Bible. Some who advocate women's ordination do reject the authority, plenary inspiration, and inerrancy of Scripture, and as churches' views of Scripture are eroded, they tend to reflect the culture of the day. The ordination of women is but one example. On the other hand, there are indeed other Christians who share the high view of Scripture held by the PCA, but who believe that women should be ordained to church leadership because they interpret the relevant passages of the Bible differently.

Some fellow evangelicals, who hold to an orthodox view of Scripture, advance biblical, exegetical arguments for the ordination of women by using one or more of three basic lines of argument: 1) The equality of men and women in Christ is not limited to their standing in the sight of God but also extends to leadership roles in the Church; 2) The controversial passages that appear to restrict the role of women in the Church are culturally conditioned and are to be interpreted in light of passages that set forth equality in Christ; and 3) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a sign of the coming of the kingdom of God, empowers women to exercise any spiritual gift men receive, including ordained leadership in the Church.

Gilbert Belezikan's argument in *Beyond Sex Roles* illustrates the view that the equality of men and women in Christ extends to their leadership roles in the Church. Adam and Eve were both created in the divine image (Genesis 1:26-27) and had dominion (Genesis 1:26, 28). The term "helpmate" connotes equality (Genesis 2:18), Belezikan says, although physical differences are necessary for procreation (Genesis 1:28). Becoming "one flesh" means developing interdependency, and has no

overtone of hierarchy. The fall into sin upset the balance of God's plan so that male leadership in marriage originated through satanic influence, antithetical to the original creation design (Genesis 3:16). The argument continues that "patriarchal oppression" subsequently became part of Mosaic Law relating to property rights, adultery tests, and divorce legislation. In spite of the patriarchal culture, there were occasional female spiritual and political leaders (Deborah the Judge, Judges 4-5) and prophetesses (Huldah, 2 Kings 22-23). Belezikan says that with the coming of Christ and the New Covenant, all former distinctions of race, social status, and gender roles are abolished (Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 5:28; Colossians 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:13), marriage is restored to its pre-Fall egalitarian relationship (Ephesians 5:21-33), and the husband as "head" of the wife means "source of" or "servant role," without any connotations of authority. Therefore, women are to be ordained.

Belezikan's argument presents several problems. First, Paul makes theological points of the creation sequence—first Adam, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:14-15; 2 Corinthians 11:8-12). Second, male leadership in marriage is not depicted in Genesis 3:16 as a concession to Satan, but as the divine arrangement from the Fall until the Second Advent. Third, to label parts of the Mosaic Law "patriarchal oppression" does not do justice to the divine inspiration of the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Fourth, there is indeed a radical newness in Christ and the New Covenant so that all types of people have an equal access to God, and equal standing in Christ, and all are incorporated into the Church. But to apply that to ordained office requires an extrapolation that Paul does not make in any of the passages cited. Finally, to exegete "head" in these passages as "source of" or "servant role" without any connotations of authority is innovative and strongly disputed.

Richard and Catherine Kroeger, in their book *I Suffer Not a Woman*, address one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Ephesus, where Timothy was ministering, was the center for the worship of Diana or Artemis (Acts 19:21-41), a mother goddess, and the Mother God of all pagan gods. The religion was led by priestesses, glorified Eve and the serpent, taught an extreme matriarchy, and involved a cultic ritual (and perhaps literal) murder of a male victim. The Kroegers argue that 1 Timothy 2 is a unique, culturally conditioned passage, just like Paul's requirement that women wear a head covering when praying or prophesying in the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Just as women were not required to keep absolute silence in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:33-35; 11:2-16), but were not to disturb worship by disruptive questioning, so 1 Timothy 2:12 does not require absolute silence either. Paul's prohibition regarding women (v. 12) does not mean that women are not allowed to teach men at all, but that women are not allowed to teach the Ephesian heresy of female superiority.

In response we answer, first, that most Reformed scholars recognize the uniqueness of the Gentile culture in Corinth and do not teach that it is a sin for a woman to participate in worship without a head scarf. Second, Paul's stated reasons for restricting the authoritative teaching (preaching) of women in public worship are the creation sequence (1 Timothy 2:13) and the Fall (2:14), not the worship of Diana. Third, admittedly the word "authentein," translated "to usurp authority over," was used in earlier instances to mean "to murder," but there is no indication in the context that ritual male sacrifice was Paul's reference.

A final argument used by some fellow evangelicals is that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon women authorizes their ordination to ecclesiastical office. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, first upon Christ (Isaiah 61:1 -3; Matthew 3:13-17) and then on the Church (Joel 2:23-28; Acts 2:1-41) is a sign of the inauguration of the "last days" and the expansion of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians by filling us, and equips us to serve by endowing us with spiritual gifts. The basic flaw in this argument is that there is a difference between a responsibility, a gift for service, and an ordained office. All believing parents, for example, have the responsibility to teach their children about God (Deuteronomy 6:7), though they may not have the spiritual gift of teaching. Some believers, not all, have the gift of teaching (Romans 12:7). Beyond the responsibility and gift of teaching, there is the office of teaching elder (1 Timothy 5:17). Having the gift of teaching does not necessarily mean that one is called to the office of teaching elder.

The PCA's position on ordination is based on biblical and theological principles and solid historical precedent. That said, a challenge faces the PCA: "Recognizing that we do not ordain women to ecclesiastical office, how best may women use their life experiences, providential talents, and spiritual gifts within the Church for the glory of God?"

L. Roy Taylor is the stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and an adjunct professor at Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Orlando. He was one of the founding ministers of the PCA in 1973, a pastor for 16 years, a professor and chairman of the Department of Practical Theology at RTS in Jackson, Miss. He is also a published author in the area of Presbyterian polity.

AUGUSTINE ON HANDLING DIFFERENCES

CLASS QUESTION AS ANSWERED BY REV. PAUL MANUEL

Q: “How do Christians interact and see others from different theological camps?”

A: I think a quote that has been attributed to Augustine is helpful in answering this question: *“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”*

Unity in essentials. There are things that all Christians have agreed upon throughout church history. They are essential to the Christian faith. Without assenting to these core doctrines, one cannot rightly call himself/herself a Christian. Essential doctrines are based upon Scripture and can be found in the ecumenical creeds of the church (e.g., the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed). These are doctrines like the Trinity; the authority of Scripture; the Incarnation; the divinity and humanity of Jesus; the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; the necessity of the new birth; justification by grace through faith; the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the return of Christ and the Last Judgment. In these foundational teachings, Christians throughout history and throughout the world stand united in Christ.

Liberty in non-essentials. Liberty of conscience has been an important part of Christian fellowship. A host of issues were hotly contested in the first century church much as they are today such as dietary laws, circumcision, feast days, food offered to idols, use of spiritual gifts, etc. In Romans 14, the apostle Paul gives guidelines for dealing with non-essential (though often important) beliefs and behaviors. “Do not quarrel over opinions” (14:1). If “God has welcomed” a brother or sister, don’t despise them (14:3). Don’t pass judgment on “someone else’s servant” (14:4). “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind” (14:6). We are the Lord’s. “Each of us will give an account of himself to God” (14:12). We should “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (14:19). “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (14:23). In other words, we should abide by our Scripture-informed and Spirit-directed conscience. The gospel gives us the freedom to love and obey God as we ought.

Charity in all things. Love is the visible witness of God’s grace in the world. Jesus said that the world would know that we are his followers if we love one another (John 13:35). This does not mean there will never be conflicts between believers or heated confrontation. Paul confronted Peter about his prejudicial cowardice (Galatians 2:11-14). Jesus cast out the money changers in the temple because of their greed and fraud and disregard for prayer (Matthew 21:12-13). But the truth must always be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15). Our positions on issues are important, but so is our posture. Holding Christian convictions about things like oppression, sexuality, the environment must always be coupled with Christ-like humility and love.