
PASTOR / PREACHER

PASTORING AND PREACHING

JOHNDYCK¹

The call to the ministry is a very high calling, one which no man should dare to take upon himself. The work is more than what is humanly possible, but the Lord promises to provide for those whom he has called to that work. In this supply he also abundantly blesses the gospel labourer. It is a work which continually places a man upon his knees and makes him to know the need of wisdom, strength and power from the Lord.

PREPARATION

In pursuing a godly ministry, solid instruction in God's Word is absolutely necessary to meet the difficulties of the ministry. When the Lord calls a man into the ministry (Rom 10:15), he also prepares that man with a good understanding of all the truth God has declared (2 Tim 2:15; Titus 2:1) so that he may defend the faith (Titus 1:9). I am grateful for the good foundation I received in my years at Western Reformed Seminary. The emphasis there on the authority of God's Word and the absolute sovereignty of the Lord who does all things according to his own will has been valuable in meeting the demands and difficulties of the ministry.

PROVIDENCE

I was called to the ministry and taken under care of the Northwest Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Church; and, while waiting for the Lord's direction and for open doors to attend Western Re-

formed Seminary, I served in the Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church for a couple of years. I taught Sunday school classes, attended session meetings, preached occasionally, and served wherever I could. The Lord gave my wife and me our first two sons and then allowed us to make our way west to Vancouver, B.C., and eventually to Tacoma, Washington. During this time the Lord provided for us in many remarkable ways, including food and clothing, vehicles and gas to make them go, as well as housing. It was a time of trial and of waiting upon the Lord, a time when the Lord showed us in many special ways that he was caring for us. We also made many special friends as new relationships were established at church and among students and faculty at the seminary. It has been an honour to be co-labourers with many of these men as we have served the same Lord, though often separated by great

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distances. These friendships have been the source of trusted comfort and counsel throughout the years of ministry.

PASTORING

The Lord's providence was no less evident as I entered into the work of the ministry after I was ordained. There were doctrinal controversies brewing when I first started in the work, many of which also involved personality conflicts. One of the first tasks assigned to me by the presbytery was to write a paper to address questions that had arisen regarding biblical worship and the regulative principle. Even though this specific controversy had not been addressed in my seminary classes, the exegetical and theological training I had just completed were valuable in being able to answer objections in a way which emphasized the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

There were also financial difficulties for the church and for our family, and the Lord showed Himself to be no less faith-

ful then than he had been during the years of my classroom training.

PLANNING

What does a typical week in the ministry of the gospel look like? It is hard to think that I have ever had a typical week, but I do have plans for one! Preaching has pre-eminence in the work of the gospel, so most of my weekly activities center on preparation for the services of the Lord's Day and our Bible study on Wednesday night. I am expositional in my preaching, going through a particular book of the Bible in an ongoing series. More recently I have been preaching through the historic creeds of the church on Sunday evenings, beginning with the ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene, Athanasian, etc.) and continuing through some of the Reformed creeds. I am presently going through the instruction of the Council of Dort. This has been a challenge, as it is more topical in nature and requires a different approach in preparation.

An ideal week begins with a reflection of the previous Lord's Day and preparation for the one to come. Unless some special occasion or circumstance intervenes, my text will follow in series from the previous week. On Tuesday I begin work on the bulletin, choosing hymns and Scripture texts that will develop the themes of the coming Lord's Day. I also begin preparation on the Bible study for Wednesday night, and finish that on Wednesday. On Thursday I work on the messages for the Lord's Day. Friday is the day that seems to work best for a day off in our family schedule. On Saturday I finish the bulletins and print them, making final preparations for the

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sermons and Sunday school lessons of the following day.

Interspersed with those activities are the phone calls, counseling, and visiting which give variety to every week. Many aspects of pastoral life are not as orderly and ordered as seminary classes. The firm deadlines of Wednesday night Bible studies and Sabbath day preaching continue, but the Lord also undertakes for

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PREACHING

Most of this weekly work is preparation for the first day of the following week, in the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day. It is a great privilege, as well as a solemn duty, to be able to minister to the Lord's people in this way and to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus through faith alone. This message

of hope to sinners can only be proclaimed when there is confidence in the Scriptures as the very word of God, a confidence which was emphasized in my classroom days at WRS. "Preach with authority directly to the hearer" was the feedback I received after delivering my first sermon in homiletics class. The opinions of men are irrelevant if we do not start and end with what God's Word plainly says.

PERSEVERANCE

One of the practical lessons I have learned from the professors at WRS is that the Lord will see his servants through every test and trial. We are called to be faithful ambassadors of his message and he will grant daily strength and meet every need. In the early years of the seminary's existence, I saw men who had a godly burden to see it prosper for the sake of the ministry. They would take second jobs in order to provide for their families when the income from the seminary was not adequate to pay them fully. And they always taught with a love of the truth, the joy of the Lord being their strength. They had an earnest desire for the progress and growth of the students, and did not do their work as a trial or a hardship, even when there may have been only a few students in the class.

May the Lord continue to use Western Reformed Seminary to faithfully train men for the ministry and to give growth to our Bible Presbyterian churches. 

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SOME OF A PASTOR'S MOST USEFUL BOOKS

STEVEN BRINEGAR¹

During my second year of seminary, I took a class called Public Speaking in the Church. One of the assignments for this class was to give a five minute speech on a book which impacted my life. In preparation for this assignment, I spent a few minutes looking at my small library and thinking, "How much do I use this book?" and "How many times do I think about this book?" The assignment did not allow, as I recall, for us to pick the Bible. After only a few minutes of thinking, I decided on the book which I would speak about: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. When Dr. Battle saw my outline to present this book, he started laughing. While not the typical book to present, I was very serious about the impact on this book on my life.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Western Reformed Seminary, I have been asked to speak about the relationship of my seminary training and my current role as a pastor. As a pastor, the only authority I have is to declare the truth of God's Word. I am to declare the whole counsel of God. The goal of my preaching is that I and those in the congregation will apply God's truth to our lives. We cannot arrive at a correct application if we do not first have the correct meaning.

This is why I chose this book and why even today I still use it weekly (if I'm teaching from the New Testament). The *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and En-*

glish Lexicon is the Old Testament resource that I utilize. Depending on the text and the week, I reference the lexicon for the important words in a text and on occasion I translate most of the passage from the original Greek or Hebrew. If I need the definition of a word, I will always turn to the lexicon as my source for that definition.

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For example, in Ps 37:5 we read "commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." What does it mean to "commit" your way to the LORD? In my New King James Bible, a footnote appears that says this word means "to roll away." I was at a complete loss as to the real meaning of the phrase, "roll your way to the Lord." So, I turned to the *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* and found the Hebrew word on page 165. Reading the entry that is found there, I noticed that this word is also used in Josh 5:9 in a figurative sense.

Joshua 5:9a says, “Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’” The Lord makes this statement on the occasion of entering the Promised Land. After 400 years, the time of being away was over. The idea is that the burden which has been upon the people, the Lord rolled off of them. This insight then helps to explain why the English translation of Ps 37:5 uses the word “commit.” We roll the burden of our way unto the Lord—we give it up wholly to him. You could pick a hiker with a heavy backpack full of equipment, finally find a resting point, and then roll off the backpack onto the ground. The imagery is lost in the translation. Too often, we commit in a half hearted way. Rather than truly “rolling our way” from us to the Lord, we hold on to it and spend a lot of time worrying. Instead, we should roll it completely from us to the Lord. This beautiful imagery is lost in the English translation.

In preparation for the Sunday sermon, I generally spend several hours reading commentaries on the text. Following this, I put together some sort of short and rough outline of the text. Then, I turn my attention to the original languages. I focus in on key words. Next, I spend some time refining the outline. After studying the text in the original, I normally change the outline considerably as new insight is gleaned from the text. I have found that having several points to a sermon helps the congregation follow along. I never attempt to have a set number of points, but instead I allow the text to tell me how many points. Furthermore, I try to develop the one overarching theme of the message. On a recent Sunday, I spoke from 2 Cor 5:9-15. I had two points answering the overall question, “Is Living for Christ

really worth it?” One of the best pieces of advice I received concerning preaching is to have only one point. Have one overarching point that the congregation will leave thinking about.

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In sermon preparation, the original needs to play an important part in understanding the text. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, in 1:7 teaches:

“The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old,) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic;

so in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

The Confession teaches that God inspired the originals and that the text in the original is what ought to be appealed to, not an English translation. I have found it most important to appeal to the original and see the full meaning of the text in order to understand various passages. I have been at times surprised by what I see in the original. While there are many translations which do an excellent job of communicating the meaning of the original to us today and are truly the Word of God, the pastor gains much insight and understanding from studying the original languages.

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In my time in seminary, there were many classes which have greatly helped my preaching and pastoring. The classes in English Bible provided a framework and introduction to each of the books of the Bible. The theology courses provided the underpinnings of doctrine and showed how interconnected each area of theology is to one another. However, the

classes which I found the most helpful were the language classes.

When speaking with young men, I have often found that they dismiss the importance of the language classes. For anyone serious about being a Bible teacher, I highly recommend learning the original languages. My time in seminary was both a trial and a blessing. The real blessing came in the midst of the trial as the LORD gave strength, endurance, and understanding. Looking back, I consider my three and half years at seminary as invaluable preparation for my ministry. 

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WRS: A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR PASTORING AND PREACHING

LEONARD W. PINE¹

When the Lord first called me to the preaching ministry in 1980, I knew that I was going to need more than just an undergraduate education. A lot of the guys around me in college were eager to get into the ministry right after graduating with their B.A. in Bible, but I had the idea of seminary rather ingrained from my upbringing in the Bible Presbyterian Church under the pastorate of John Janbaz in San Bernardino, California, as well as the mentorship of my pastor in Southern Oregon, Harold Anderson. Though not pastoring a BP church or ministry, Rev. Anderson had talked long of his seminary days at Biola in the distant past, and had convinced me of the value of further training.

Then, I had the opportunity to travel on a couple of ministry teams for Bob Jones University and saw first-hand what happens when young, enthusiastic men with minimal training get into the pastorate. Many of the churches that we visited were pastored by such men. Though they were often well-loved by their people, they had little respect given to them simply because they hadn't lived through most of the life experiences common to the older people in their congregation. Their preaching also often reflected a lack of life experience and wisdom, though technically they were usually quite respectable. They made a lot of mistakes in administration, and often faced counseling situations that were simply beyond them. More than one of these

young men confided in me, some with tears, that they wished they had stayed in school for more education, training, and experience. Seeing the reality of minimally trained men trying to struggle through ministry further cemented in my mind the conviction that I needed more training.

I had been accepted in the graduate School of Religion at Bob Jones already when Rev. Janbaz called and talked to me at length about the benefits of a real seminary, not just a graduate school, for a minister of the gospel. I also began to see that a breadth of education would be helpful, in terms of being taught from more than one perspective in different schools. And, as I moved toward the ministry of a Bible Presbyterian pulpit, I came to believe that I needed to attend our Bible Presbyterian seminary, WRS. It was a choice I have not regretted. At the time, WRS was not accredited, but that did not concern me, since I had no desire to become an academic—I was interested in the pastoral ministry of the BPC. When I finished my other graduate work in speech at Bob Jones, my wife and I moved to Tacoma and I began the work.

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Clearly, Western Reformed Seminary had designed the Master of Divinity program with the aim of producing men who could handle the Word of God well. The program was heavy in original languages, theology, biblical introduction and interpretation, and church history. Keeping the studies vital was accomplished by constant and lively (read, *spirited, intense, and sometimes loud*) class discussion, times of fellowship and recreation with students and staff, and practical application in local church and presbytery ministry. My favorite classes were the Oxford-style classes in theology I had with Dr. Hascup, which stretched my mind and challenged my heart to really *know* what I believed, and moreover, to be able to defend it. My other favorite classes were all the exegetical courses in which we translated and wrestled with various books from the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Battle and Rev. Lensch had the ability to lead us through the studies with a very practical and thorough approach that challenged our often presumptuous perceptions of the texts with which we were dealing. We learned to be more than commentary preachers, and that training has stood me well in all the years of ministry since.

It took me five years to finish my three-year Master of Divinity degree, during which time I was able to work in the local churches of the Northwest Presbytery and at Heritage Christian School. The seminary's classes were thorough and helpful, and the willingness of the administration to work with a working husband's schedule was a genuine blessing. I had ample opportunity for ministry in all aspects of church life, and the coursework gave me the tools I needed to do that ministry, especially the theo-

logical tools. Since I already had degrees in Bible and speech, and an advanced degree in public speaking, the seminary worked with me to help me pay my school bills by allowing me to redesign the homiletics training the school was doing and then teach those and other classes in the practical theology department, which was expanded while I was there. While I hope that my students learned a great deal and profited from those classes, I know that I did, as the teaching opportunity helped to hone my thinking and practice in order to stay current and useful to my students.

In the trenches of church life, as a church planter and pastor, I knew how to search the Scriptures and present the whole counsel of God; knew how to find answers to previously unanswered (or unthought-of!) questions; knew how to address the needs of the people in my congregation; knew how to work within the context of a connectional church in Presbytery and Synod.

When I had the opportunity to pursue my doctoral studies in preaching a few years after graduation, the seminary further demonstrated its commitment to its students by assisting me financially to undertake the studies so that I could be a more valuable professor to the students; and along the way my own

ministry was blessed as well. I will always be grateful for the heart of the seminary administration to improve what it offers to its students—and for its support of its faculty. I have been thankful to be able to continue my teaching to the present, and look forward to it for many more years to come.

It is not possible, even in a three-year degree like the M.Div., for a school to cover everything that a man may want or need to know. But WRS gave me tools that stood me well, even when I went on for doctoral studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. There, the classes and examinations and procedures were nothing new to me. Papers, oral examinations, extensive reading, discipline to accomplish much in a little time, evaluations, lectures—all played their part. The training that I had received at Bob Jones and Western Reformed had prepared me very well for the advanced studies. And in the trenches of church life, as a church planter and pastor, I knew how to search the Scriptures and present the whole counsel of God; knew how to find answers to previously unanswered (or unthought-of!) questions; knew how to address the needs of the people in my congregation; knew how to work within the context of a connectional church in Presbytery and Synod; and knew, also, how to tap into the fellowship of the men with whom and under whom I had studied when I ran into a problem beyond my ability to immediately grasp or surmount (the greatest blessing of a dedicated seminary education, in my opinion). Of course, I have since found out that as much as I knew, it was not enough. I had to keep growing in my walk and wisdom. I think that one of the greatest blessings of my seminary work must be that it forced me

to realize that there was so much more that I did not know, and therefore I had to face all the duties and opportunities that faced me with humility and dependence upon the Lord.

The wealth of course material, practical wisdom, and the bonds of Christian fellowship and fraternity I obtained through the course of my training have stood me well through my ministry, due to excellently planned and executed training programs at these wonderful schools. But it has been the seminary education provided by WRS that has been the bedrock of my ministry. I am grateful for the dedication of the faculty of WRS to training ministers and laborers for the church, especially the Bible Presbyterian Church to which the Lord has called me. May God grant that WRS flourishes and grows as she serves the BPC for many years to come, supporting not only this denomination, but all the church of our Lord as he ordains. 📖

¹ Leonard Pine (M.Div. 1993) is a Minister of the Bible Presbyterian Church and is now the Field Representative of the Presbyterian Missionary Union. He also is an adjunct faculty member of WRS.

COUNSELING

SEMINARY AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING

ERIC LASCH¹

Since childhood I have loved and studied God's Word, but as I got older I began to realize that my understanding of Scripture was more eclectic than systematic. Not until my late thirties did I find a theological focus in Reformed theology. By my early forties, my family and I were attending the Grand Island (NY) Bible Presbyterian Church. We soon heard announcements at church about a biblical counseling course offered locally, taught by our pastor, an adjunct professor at Western Reformed Seminary. As I sat in that first introductory course, our pastor/professor Dr. Kevin Backus said one evening to the class that if you really want to be an effective counselor, you'll need to be well grounded theologically and biblically. While I doubted whether God would ever use me to counsel others, I had for several years hoped one day to receive a Reformed seminary education. In addition, I had been recently ordained as a ruling elder and I knew that to fulfill an elder's duties of caring for the flock, a seminary education would help in many ways. A few months later, I met the president of Western Reformed Seminary, Dr. John Battle, and soon thereafter decided to enroll in their distance learning, pastoral mentorship masters program for biblical counseling.

The coursework at WRS I found to be well designed to give a person interested in biblical counseling a systematic

understanding of Scripture. There were many courses: five biblically rich counseling courses, five theology courses, four Old Testament survey courses, four New Testament survey courses, four church history courses, as well as evangelism, discipleship, and hermeneutic courses. It took me four years to complete the course work, which included reading texts and classroom notes, writing papers, taking exams proctored by my mentor, and attending concentrated classes once a year. I continued to work full time and studied in the morning, evenings, and Saturdays. It was a challenge at times, but the Lord gave me strength and time to finish. By God's grace and with the full support of my pastor, wife, and daughters, in May 2005, I was awarded the degree of Master of Christian Ministry.

It took me four years to complete the course work, which included reading texts and classroom notes, writing papers, taking exams proctored by my mentor, and attending concentrated classes once a year.

In God's providence, I did become a biblical counselor, certified by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors in October 2004. In the cases that I

have encountered, it is very clear to me that Dr. Backus was absolutely right about the necessity of being well educated in theology and Scripture. So many types of issues come up every single counseling session. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the point. First, it is not uncommon for counselees to misunderstand what a certain passage means. Using what I learned in seminary, I am often able to explain a difficult passage because of understanding the context of the book, the historical setting, the purpose of the author, or even the genre of the literature. Second, believers who seek counseling are struggling with various problems, pain and turmoil, whether it be in the home, work or church. But the real issue is always buried in their heart. It may involve any number of sins, sinful thoughts, or sinful reactions; but it also includes misconceptions and misunderstandings about God, about themselves, about sin, about priorities, about marriage, about children, about emotions, or about circumstances. In order to help believers, I need to have a broad and comprehensive understanding of all of Scripture, including a good foundation in theology, in the law of God, in wisdom literature, in the gospel, in the writings of Paul, even in church history at times. The heart issues we struggle with in the 21st century are no different than any prior period of time. Scripture is timeless with excellent examples from real life, didactic instruction, common sin patterns, and hope. If we are going to effectively counsel, we must be skilled in using the best tool of all—God’s Word.

During my four years of study at WRS, I was humbled in two significant ways. First, the in-depth study of theology proper, the attributes and works of

God, of his dealings with mankind, served to deepen my view and appreciation of the one true God—and decrease my high view of me! My view of God had been too low for decades, which caused all sorts of problems in my thinking, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, the people God has placed before me to work with in the counseling center also have too low a view of God.

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One of the things that I often find necessary to emphasize is for the counselee to gain a more lofty view of his Maker. The horizontal (human/human) problems and conflicts that we wrestle with are often rooted in the vertical (God/human)—a faulty view of God and his ways, reflecting a weak personal relationship with him. The second way I was humbled was the more I studied and learned, the more I realized how little my mind was, how little I knew, and what little capacity I had to learn. What great theologians and pastors God has raised up in the past to benefit his church to this day! My own faltering pilgrimage helps me to work gently and humbly (as opposed to

highhandedly or arrogantly) with others struggling on their path of sanctification. I often muse as I am preparing for the next session that the reason God has given me this particular counselee is because God is reminding me of my weakness in this area and granting me the gift of sanctification in the same or similar area. How can I counsel an angry husband without being reminded of my weakness in this area? How can I counsel someone depressed without remembering that I too react sinfully to circumstances I don't like? The education I was blessed to receive from WRS has paid and is paying big dividends for me spiritually and to those I counsel.

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Since graduation from Western Reformed Seminary three years ago, I continue to read widely both theological and practical counseling books. I have especially enjoyed reading Puritan literature (e.g., *A Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson, *Mortification of Sin* by John Owens, and *The Anatomy of Secret Sins* by Obadiah Sedgwick). These godly Puritan pastors clearly understood the machinations of human nature. All have a high view of God, Scripture and the

church and an equally low view of man due to his sinfulness. In addition, I have gained much insight over the years from the solid Reformed preaching in my local congregation. Such constant biblical instruction has given me a deeper understanding of myself, of God and his Word; this helps me to counsel others more effectively.

Are you interested in growing as a student of God's Word, being changed by that Word, and helping others to grow spiritually? Then consider getting advanced education at Western Reformed Seminary. Young men are usually able to go to Tacoma and study directly under the professors. Working family men should consider the distance learning program. For both groups, a seminary education will increase your ability to be used by God in the service of others. I am so thankful to my Father for the strength, time and opportunity he provided to do the seminary work, as well as the privilege of counseling other believers. 📖

¹ Eric Lasch (M.C.M. 2005) is an active elder in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Grand Island, New York. As a Certified Member of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, Eric assists his church counseling ministry. He also serves as the treasurer of the Presbyterian Missionary Union.

HOME MISSIONS

SEMINARY AND A HOME MISSIONARY

RICHARD PERALEZ¹

I am currently a missionary pastor serving in northeast Nebraska in a city called South Sioux City. It is hard to believe that the United States has become a mission field. Unfortunately, the “Christian” church as a whole is like the church in Sardis, which had the reputation of being alive, but in reality was dead. I graduated from Bible College in 1995 and have been in ministry since that time. Because of the challenging times in which we live, the Lord pressed upon my heart the need to be sharper in the ministry and to obtain more learning. I currently pastor a small Bible church. I am Reformed in my soteriology, premillennial, and very conservative theologically. Finding a school that was affordable, that would allow me to stay in my current ministry, and that would be like-minded was a challenge. I came across Western Reformed Seminary, which seemed to fit the bill. I enrolled at WRS two years ago in the distance learning program (the Pastoral Mentorship Program, PMP). I am currently pursuing a Masters in Theological Studies with a double minor in historical theology and biblical counseling. Most schools have strayed theologically from the historic orthodox faith and are not nouthetic in counseling (the biblical method promoted by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, NANC). This school is teaching sound doctrine and believes in the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures for counseling. Hav-

ing a NANC executive board member, Dr. Backus, in charge of the counseling program was a pleasant surprise. The seminary may not have the “bling” of most seminaries, but that was not the reason I chose to study with them. What I find here are very small classes, but the upside is that you are able to build relationships with other students and the professors better, which is a blessing. A small class also guarantees that enough time will be given for any personal questions that you may have. I find the professors to be academically stimulating, balanced, relevant, and caring for their students. Even though I am not Presbyterian, we have a common Reformed faith and a passion to serve our Lord and Savior.

The seminary has already enhanced my ministry greatly. Working in the trenches I find that the more I learn of our great Lord and Savior, the more I love him and desire to serve him. WRS has only helped to cultivate a passion for Christ.

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For example, this past year at the PMP module during a class I took called “The Life and Epistles of Paul,” I was challenged in many ways. One way was unexpected, for it happened during a side note in the class. Dr. Battle talked about how Paul taught that God rewards the “labor” in glory. It was the proper labor unto the Lord, not “the results” of the labor, that was important. I went back home encouraged in ways not expected. Being a church planter and not using worldly or pragmatic means is hard because you don’t visibly see lots of “results.” I came back even more eager to labor for the Lord.

WRS has helped in so many ways. The most important way is that it has made me sharper and more balanced in ministry. Many of the assignments can be directly incorporated into ministry and are a great blessing first to me personally and secondly to the body in the church. They allow you to go at your own pace. What I enjoy most are professors that are very smart, yet are not interested in pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge. They pursue knowledge for the sake of ultimately pursuing Christ and walking upright with him. The goal is equipping men to succeed with Christ in the ministry. My respect and admiration for the professors has grown. They are men of God and in many ways are missionaries like me. They are very accomplished men who have chosen to use their skills in this small but effective seminary for God’s glory, depending on him to raise up churches and people to provide for the seminary and their livelihood.

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the Lord and holding to the historic orthodox faith. May the Lord direct many of them to WRS. A seminary like WRS is much needed, and I am grateful to the Lord for it! May the Lord bless the labor of WRS for the next twenty-five years!



¹ Richard Peralez currently is a student in the Pastoral Mentorship Program at WRS, and is serving as the pastor of the Siouxland Community Bible Church in South Sioux City, Nebraska, as a home missionary under the American Mission for Opening Churches.

LAY LEADERSHIP

SEMINARY TRAINING – A FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY

ROLAND L. PORTER¹

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1).

In preparing to write this article I prayed for help and then recalled reading a list of principles from which the following are drawn. There are certain principles involved in ministry, a unifying center around which we are called to build our preaching and ministry.²

- First, there must be Christian character, which is the personal foundation for ministry.
- Next comes an “attitude adjustment.” The pastor needs the attitude of a servant, a servant’s heart and mind to serve Christ and his Church.
- Next needed is love for God and God’s Church, and we also need love for a lost world. To properly minister we also need knowledge, but as Paul insisted, “The greatest of these is love.”
- Somewhere in these precepts there is sacrifice. “How much can I give?” we ask. This allows us to receive the very best God has for us.
- Submission to authority is the best way to learn how to exercise authority.

- We must always remember that our ministry is to glorify God, just as salvation is to glorify God.

I came to seminary to learn how to minister, and the dear, faithful teachers at seminary taught me that the tools of ministry are the Word of God and prayer.

The power of ministry is the Holy Spirit, and the model is Jesus the Christ. The list of principles above is not intended to be exhaustive, but to represent the more salient principles. I have found that their purpose is to ever remind us to be conscious of and guided by certain moral and ethical mores, and I hasten to add, these were graciously exemplified in character and behavior by all the members of the faculty at WRS.

Theology training is very practical in that it provides the firm foundation for ministry. Coupled with biblical interpretation, these have provided me with the ability to comprehend and share Scripture both in Bible teaching and in preaching.

In theology classes I learned that there is a necessary balance between biblical theology and systematic theology. Biblical theology goes to God’s Word in

the text and raises the question, “what did this mean to the original writer and what does it mean to the church today? Systematic theology is the study of God and is basic to true exegesis in God’s Word. Theology training is very practical in that it provides the firm foundation for ministry. Coupled with biblical interpretation, these have provided me with the ability to comprehend and share Scripture both in Bible teaching and in preaching.

In church ministry classes I learned much about visitation, the necessity of keeping in touch with those dear souls who are not physically able to attend worship services. Because of these classes I have found visitations not only helpful to those I have visited, but also they in turn have caused me to grow in compassion.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones in his book *Preaching and Preachers* states, “Preachers are born not made. This is an absolute. You will never teach a man to be a preacher if he is not already one.”³ While I believe this is true, I also believe it takes training and practice to hone the skills needed to be an effective preacher. Thanks to the patience, diligence, and perseverance of the WRS professors, I have been able to compose and deliver a sermon with a modicum of effectiveness. Learning that preaching is a science and

an art was the turning point for me in my seminary training.

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Having “stayed the course” for such an extended time (fourteen years), I see the need to do the same, because a congregation needs a pastor to “stay the course.” Paul’s words echo for me, “But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; a wide door has opened to me for effective work” (1 Cor 16:8-9).

In seminary I experienced a process of Christian maturing. This maturing became evident while visiting Remann Hall (an institution for juvenile offenders). I discovered, quite to my surprise, that I could draw on my knowledge of Scripture. This was joined with the spiritual stability, spiritual independence and confidence gained from the instruction received in class. Of special use was the knowledge of God’s attributes. Also, the verse, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5), came to mind, frequently reminding me of who I was. This highlighted for me the value of my theology courses.

Also I found strength from Heb 5:14, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” My professors brought this verse to the forefront

of my thinking, and gave me much “solid food” in the theology classes.

The course on American church history magnified how prevalent it was, and still is, to be tempted to stray from the truth into false doctrine. Hence, the necessity to cling to the truth found in God’s Word, and not try to make it say what we want it to say. This was one of the chief reasons I chose to study at WRS. At WRS the inerrant Word of God is taught, preached, and adhered to faithfully. From this I have developed a sense of confident security in following doctrines of truth I learned at seminary, and I believe this brings the power of the Holy Spirit to bear in my ministry.

Growth does not end with seminary graduation. The continuance of doctrinal study since graduation holds delightful surprises in that God’s grace, divine love, and truth become emblazoned signposts to lead me into deeper understanding of who God is. 📖

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² Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe, *Making Sense of the Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 31-46.

³ *Making Sense of the Ministry*, 107.

Study the Westminster Shorter Catechism on the web!

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SEMINARY TRAINING FOR THE POLICE BEAT?

JOHN GALLE¹

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand; and it shines unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
– Matthew 5:14-16

Much has happened since I graduated from seminary in 1990—far different from my expectations at that time, but which I believe God was preparing me for even before I knew. I entered the police world late in life by most standards, eleven years ago at the age of 42, and after what I believe were 19 years in Christian education. I remember well some of the struggles as the “senior” member of my academy class and the quizzical looks of “are you out of your mind?” Even my family, while supportive, had some trepidation and concern, both for my sanity and my safety.

The realities of police work are overwhelming when you stop to consider them. The demands are 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They work when others are sleeping and sleep when others work. They miss social gatherings and events, Christmas mornings with their families; and their weekends never seem to match the normal world. The work is often crisis driven, much like an emergency room where every decision is important and may have unpredictable and serious consequences. The risks are injury, lawsuits, or even death. It is an

occupation which is constantly open to public scrutiny: police are expected to be where they are needed, unafraid in the face of danger, instantly solve any problem, and always be in control. It is emotional work—but they are not permitted to demonstrate emotion. Few other professions accept injury and death as do police, and they are reminded of it daily by the equipment they wear. They deliberately put themselves in harm’s way daily, whether it be on a traffic stop or stepping between an abuser and his victim; and THEY become targets for hate groups,

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anarchists, or gangs. August Vollmer, the father of modern policing, once stated in frustration that police are expected to “have the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of David, the strength of Samson, the

patience of Job, the diplomacy of Lincoln, the tolerance of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and finally, an intimate knowledge of every branch of the natural, biological, and social sciences.” In reality, it would be hard to find a job more written about and less understood than that of a police officer. Their world has been scrutinized by writers, playwrights, Hollywood producers, politicians, and the press; yet the world knows little of the world they occupy. Men and women enter the field filled with idealism and a desire to solve crime and make this a better world. After five years they often feel like the best they can do is to maintain order and try to hold the line. They are filled with negativity: the judicial system doesn’t work, criminals have the advantage, and victims are re-victimized. They see themselves unappreciated by the community they try to serve, hounded by the local politicians, and scrutinized by the media which is more interested in scandal than in the thousands of everyday acts of courage. And then they are expected to take off the uniform, open the door and say “Hi, honey, I’m home.” Job satisfaction is often low, divorce rates high; suicide and self destructive behaviors are not uncommon.

While daunting, the need to demonstrate a biblical lifestyle is enormous. We see people and the consequences of sin at its worst. We deal constantly with the results of poor choices and the hopelessness of temporal things. We are often cast into the position of counselor, confessor, advisor, surrogate parent, or mentor. In some senses, the job is a mission field in itself. A pastor friend and I were recently talking about our similar backgrounds yet divergent careers, when we came to the conclusion that we often deal with the

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same people and circumstances, but from differing perspectives. I remember an occasion several years ago transporting a prisoner in the early morning hours. I had my radio on a Christian music station and he began to share with me how he had recently come to Christ through the witness of a jail chaplain and asked me to pray for him as he struggled with numerous “demons” in his life. As officers, we certainly have opportunities to demonstrate compassion, integrity, and Christian character to those we come in contact with. But beyond this, Christians understand that their hope and trust is not in this world’s systems, but only in the work of Christ. One evening I was returning from booking someone into jail, knowing that he would probably be back out on the street before I finished my report, when I was reminded of the psalmist bemoaning the seeming prosperity of the evildoer. I’ve also felt the frustration of seeing someone escape justice in court

because of a legal technicality. At times like this we are reminded that the psalmist always concluded with trust in the justice and righteousness of God.

As a Christian, I find myself daily challenged in ways that I have never faced before, working in a largely non-Christian environment, but serving a community in ways that others could not. I also find myself learning to apply lessons with difficulty—lessons I had often taught so glibly to others. As a “person of faith,” I have often been viewed with suspicion by coworkers, and frequently challenged to compromise principle. Even as a Christian, it is easy to fall into the trap of self reliance and not realize our crucial and

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God-given role. On one occasion early in my career I had to take a very difficult stand on an issue that put me in opposition to fellow officers, but it was a stand that established the importance of integrity and value of Christian principle in my life, a position for which I later earned respect, if not agreement. During this time I often thought of Christians we had stud-

ied in church history classes, who had stood on principle and died for their faith, and how little the opposition I faced compared. But I am also reminded of the lesson of the beatitudes, that we are salt and light—not that we become salt and light—that we are already salt and light to the world by our calling. And since we are salt and light, we can’t be hidden, even if we want to be. In this, I am thankful for the grounding in God’s Word I received at seminary and believe it provided the foundation for my work today. I am also thankful for the lessons of my teachers and their mentorship in my life to give me perspective and encouragement. Luther wrote that “every man in his office must be useful and beneficial to the rest, that so many kinds of work may all be united into one community, just as the members of the body serve one another.” Whether as pastor, teacher or police officer, God has called us to serve him. In each new challenge, I have valued the preparation I have received. 

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS FOR WESTERN REFORMED SEMINARY

TITOLYRO¹

It is hard to believe that it has already been twelve years since I graduated from Western Reformed Seminary. It seems like it was just yesterday that Allister Stone, Joshua Musyoka, Mark Baldwin, and I roamed the hallowed halls at Western Reformed. The countless hours of ping pong with professor Chris Lensch teaching all of us lessons in humility, Dr. Battle's jokes after which he would almost die of laughing at himself, Dr. Backus's counseling classes at the speed of light, and having top ramen every single day for lunch and dinner are still so fresh in my mind. But so are the invaluable lessons that I learned in seminary that have been so helpful to my ministry.

Since graduating from WRS, my ministry has been focused on two fields: pastoring a local church and leading a Christian school. The training I received at Western Reformed equipped me to be faithful to the Lord in both of these fields. For the remainder of this article I am going to focus on the impact that the years at WRS have had on my pastoring a local church because that is my present vocation.

I serve the Lord as the pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Olympia, Washington. My week revolves around seven activities: teaching Sunday

school, preaching morning and afternoon sermons on the Lord's Day, leading a college-age group, counseling, leading a teenage boys book study, teaching the Wednesday evening Bible study, and being involved in one of three aspects of denominational life (the presbytery or synod, the Presbyterian Missionary Union, and WRS). Besides these scheduled activities, there are always unexpected needs that pop up each week.

I realized that the professors were doorkeepers, as it were, opening up the wonders of theological knowledge. I was introduced to Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Schaff, Bruce, Metzger, Berkhof, Adams—all men that I fell in love with and continue to study to this day.

As I look at these areas of ministry, I find it hard to isolate which class helps in which area because each discipline I studied at WRS goes hand in hand with the next as an integrated whole. For example, the counseling classes I took obviously help when I am sitting across the table from a family of the church, but so do the theology classes because there is no good counseling unless we are able to present God in his fullness. Or, one may think of the impact that

church history can have on one's preaching. Yet, it doesn't stop there. It also helps me sift through all the aberrant teaching that is currently infesting the church because, somewhere, somebody has already dealt with it. Thus, I am able to stand on the shoulders of greater men than I am in serving Christ's church.

One area on which I can easily see the impact of my seminary education is my love for studying. During the three years it took for me to finish seminary, I was barely able to scratch the surface of learning, and that was frustrating at times. I eventually came to terms with that as I realized that the professors were doorkeepers, as it were, opening up the wonders of theological knowledge. I was introduced to Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Schaff, Bruce, Metzger, Berkhof, Adams—all men that I fell in love with and continue to study to this day. I don't think I would have developed this passion for theological knowledge, nor would I know where to go to get it, if it wasn't for the faculty of WRS.

Another area that had a great impact on me and thusly on my ministry was the seminary's faculty's passion for biblical languages. While I was at WRS, several seminaries on the West Coast dropped biblical languages as a requirement for the Master of Divinity program. Not at WRS, and I am thankful for that. I use the biblical language skills I learned in seminary almost on a daily basis (though Hebrew is still very painful for me, sorry Mr. Lensch) and I think my preaching and counseling are better because of it. Thanks to this emphasis at WRS, I don't have to succumb to the tyranny of commercial translations, as

Tom Lyon, my Advanced Greek instructor, used to say.

The last area of impact I would like to mention is my homiletics training. Despite having to read Virgil Anderson's book (which cured me of any insomnia problems I might have had), these classes were the most beneficial for me because they stretched me the farthest. Professor Len Pine mandated that we conform to very particular styles as we progressed through the different levels of homiletics. At the time his requirements angered me because I could not see the importance of doing things in ways that seemed so artificial to me. Now when I think back on those classes, I realize that Dr. Pine's requirements actually brought together all the elements of my seminary education, synthesizing thereby the pastor I have become and continue to become.

I truly can say that I would not be able to do what I do on a weekly basis if it wasn't for the training I received at Western Reformed Seminary. May the Lord grant this great institution another 25 years of faithful service in the Bible Presbyterian Church. 📖

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INTERNET MINISTRY

THE TREASURES OF SEMINARY

LAURIE COPELAND¹

Receiving a Reformed seminary education is an indescribable privilege. If a military academy exists for Christians, perhaps seminary is that setting. Years of rigorous studying, preparing for exams, reading weighty textbooks, writing long papers, and attending lectures are a costly sacrifice; but it is not labor done in vain. Acquiring knowledge renders a reward. “For the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Prov 3:14-15). To obtain knowledge is more valuable than precious jewels and will place a garland upon your head.

Seminary’s central role is to prepare godly men for the ministry of the Word and sacraments, but also serves another purpose. According to Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, “Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow men.”² A theological institution remaining faithful to orthodox Protestantism equips the student for every good work. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). In my seminary studies, I learned the importance of proper teaching. “Buy truth, and do

not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (Prov 23:23). There are many Scriptures describing the need for the study of the Scriptures. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Seeking knowledge is a noble charge.

According to Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, “Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow men.”² A theological institution remaining faithful to orthodox Protestantism equips the student for every good work.

In my studies of biblical interpretation, I learned the value of becoming acquainted with a variety of subjects in the application of Scripture. Seminary teaches the necessity of understanding the orthodox doctrines, the study of the ancient creeds, and church history. Discovering

the importance of doctrine, I learned its purpose in the proclamation of the gospel and for giving a defense of the truth. Christianity is not merely a way of life, but as Machen describes, Christianity is “a life founded on a doctrine.”³ Learning these doctrines has taught me the difference between the law and the gospel. A variety of subjects constitutes a seminary education. Through the studies of the orthodox creeds, I learned the teaching of Scripture. Machen defines creeds as, “Summaries of what the Bible tells us about the facts and promises upon which Christian experience is based.”⁴ Creeds also serve the purpose of refuting heresy. The term creed comes from the Latin term *credo*, meaning simply “I believe.” We observe several creeds employed throughout Scripture: “Simon Peter replied ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt 16:16). “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28). Learning the creeds allows me to witness to others with an accurate understanding of what the Bible says. In my testimony of Christ, I am able to recall particular subjects from the creeds and questions from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, which aid me in declaring the gospel.

A Seminary education includes reading the writings of authors from nearly every era, beginning from the first century through the present. Reading various books for each class, I found most of the authors to be enjoyable. Of those, John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* continues to be a resource that I employ in my witness to others. Finishing the first edition when he was just twenty-six, Calvin furnished a magnificent theological masterpiece. Beginning with the notable prefatory to the King of

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France, Francis I, Calvin presented an earnest request for the Protestant faith. Calvin wrote the *Institutes* with the outline of the Apostle’s Creed; the work consists of four books, and in its several editions reflects Calvin’s lifetime work. Commonly known for its remarkable logical structure, Calvin’s message is clear and brief, a benefit to any reader. Learning that nearly all knowledge is comprised of two elements, knowledge of God and of self, Calvin demonstrated that arriving at the knowledge of God largely comes through a sight of one’s own sin in light of God’s holy majesty. Reading some of the works of the church fathers such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, John Murray, and Cornelius Van Til, I am supplied with answers to refute the misinformation of modern Christianity. Becoming acquainted with notable authors and classic books is the result of a quality education and is further useful in my witness and presentation of the gospel.

With the ability to reach over fifty English-speaking countries, my edu-

cation permits me to minister to people from various countries via the internet, through websites and email. Receiving email from all sorts of groups around the world, people are able to utilize my web links as a resource. Although the creation of a new website is in progress, my education has contributed to one of my older sites, which continues to witness the truth of Jesus Christ. With the ability to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, the internet is serving to reach countries where the dominant religion is Muslim and to places where the name of Christ is unknown.

Answering questions and providing encouragement to those I meet has become more effective because of my theological studies. In my witness to Christ, I am better equipped to proclaim the gospel and defend the faith. I am more suited to interact with other religions and even cults in my preparation to make a defense to anyone who asks me for a reason for the hope that is in me (1 Pet 3:15).

Christian scholarship through a seminary education provides a reward greater than any earthly treasures. The study of Scriptures and pursuance of knowledge renders an imperishable crown. My experience in seminary was one of the most joyful experiences in my life and is now being fruitful and effective in my life and ministry. God's Word is faithful to all generations (Ps 119:90). 

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² J. Gresham Machen, "Christian Scholarship and Evangelism," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (P & R Publishing, 2004), 137-138.

³ J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity in Conflict," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 564.

⁴ J. Gresham Machen, "What is the Gospel," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 132.

***Thoughts or Comments
on this issue of the WRS
Journal?***

By all means feel free to submit letters to our editor! Letters should be limited to 300 words, and either type-written or sent electronically. See our contact information on the inside front cover.

Thank you!

ENCOURAGEMENT

THE PRINCETON SEMINARY CURRICULUM¹

BENJAMIN BRECKINRIDGE
WARFIELD²

Editor's note: This famous essay by B. B. Warfield not only explains the philosophy of the Old Princeton curriculum, but it also is an apology for classical theological education for the ministry. It is the same high view of the gospel ministry that motivates Western Reformed Seminary and its students and supporters. Although written nearly a hundred years ago, this essay's defense of thorough ministerial training in the academic disciplines related to Scripture study is more timely than ever. -JAB

Much of the confusion into which opinion as to the proper curriculum of a theological seminary is apparently drifting, seems to arise from altering, or perhaps we would better say varying, conceptions of the functions of the ministry for which the theological seminary is intended to provide a training. A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training necessary for it. A rationalistic view of the functions of the ministry entails a corresponding conception of the training which fits for it. An evangelical view of the functions of the ministry demands a consonant training for that ministry. And a high view of the functions of the ministry on evangelical lines inevitably produces a high conception of

the training which is needed to prepare men for the exercise of these high functions. Our Episcopalian brethren are complaining bitterly of the difficulties they are experiencing in obtaining candidates for orders with anything like adequate equipment. They may enact canons galore requiring real and precise tests to be applied. What they find impossible is to convince either examiners or examined that these tests should be seriously applied. They do not see the use of it, when all that is required of the clergy is *Ut pueris placeant et declamationes fiant*. Pretty nearly anybody seems to them "to know enough to get along in a parish." Similar difficulties are not unknown to Presbyterians. All the requirements which can be stuffed into a Form of Government will not secure that a high standard of training will be maintained, if a suspicion forms itself in the minds of

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the administrators of this Form of Government that a minister does not need such learning. And this suspicion will inevitably form itself—and harden into a conviction—if the functions of the minister come to be conceived lowly: if the minister comes to be thought of, for example, fundamentally as merely the head of a social organization from whom may be demanded pleasant manners and executive ability; or as little more than a zealous “promoter” who knows how to seek out and attach to his enterprise a multitude of men; or as merely an entertaining lecturer who can be counted upon to charm away an hour or two of dull Sabbaths; or even—for here we have, of course, an infinitely higher conception—as merely an enthusiastic Christian eager to do work for Christ. If a minister’s whole function is summed up in these or such things—we might as well close our theological seminaries, withdraw our candidates from the colleges and schools, and seek recruits for the ministry among the capable young fellows about town. The “three R’s” will constitute all the literary equipment they require; their English Bible their whole theological outfit; and zeal their highest spiritual attainment.

It has not been characteristic of the rationalistic bodies to think meanly of the functions of the minister or of the equipment requisite to fit him to perform them. Their tendency has been to treat the minister rather as an intellectual than as a religious guide; and they have rather secularized than vulgarized his training. For a hundred years, now, our Unitarian friends have been urging upon us this secularized conception of the ministerial functions and of the minister’s training. Ex-president Charles W. Eliot, of Harvard, for example, winningly commended it to

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us a quarter of a century ago in a much-talked of article in the *Princeton Review*, but was happily set right by Dr. F. L. Patton in the next number. What now attracts attention is that this secularized conception has begun to wander away from home in these last days, and to invade evangelical circles. It is a highly honored Presbyterian elder whose voice carries far over the land, who has lately told us that the proper function of the ministry is to mediate modern advances in knowledge to the people, through the churches. Were that true, the ministry would no longer be a spiritual office, but only an educational agency; and training for it should be sought not in theological seminaries, but in the universities.

He would be the best-equipped minister who had obtained the most thorough knowledge, not of the ways of God with men and the purposes of God’s grace for men, but of the most recent currents of thought and fancy which flow up and down in the restless hearts of men.

Extremes meet. Pietist and Rationalist have ever hunted in couples and dragged

down their quarry together. They may differ as to why they deem theology mere lumber, and would not have the prospective minister waste his time in acquiring it. The one loves God so much, the other loves him so little, that he does not care to know him. But they agree that it is not worth while to learn to know him. The simple English Bible seems to the one sufficient equipment for the minister, because, in the fervor of his religious enthusiasm, it seems to him enough for the renovating of the world, just to lisp its precious words to man. It seems to the other all the theological equipment a minister needs, because in his view the less theology a minister has the better. He considers him ill employed in poring over Hebrew and Greek pages, endeavoring to extract their real meaning—for what does it matter what their real meaning is? The prospective minister would, in his opinion, be better occupied in expanding his mind by contemplation of the great attainments of the human spirit, and in learning to know that social animal Man, by tracing out the workings of his social aptitudes and probing the secrets of his social movements. If the minister is simply an advance agent of modern culture, a kind of University-Extension lecturer, whose whole function it is to “elevate the masses” and “improve the social organism”—why, of course, art and literature should take the place of Greek and Hebrew, and “sociology” the place of Theology in our seminary curriculum. If the whole function of the minister is “inspirational” rather than “instructional,” and his work is finished when the religious nature of man is roused to action, and the religious emotions are set surging, with only a very vague notion of the objects to which the awakened religious affections should turn, or the ends to which

the religious activities, once set in motion, should be directed—why, then, no doubt we may dispense with all serious study of Scripture, and content ourselves with the employment of its grand music merely to excite religious susceptibilities.

Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.

But, if the minister is the mouth-piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what his will for his people—then, the whole aspect of things is changed. Then, it is the prime duty of the minister to know his message; to

know the instructions which have been committed to him for the people, and to know them thoroughly; to be prepared to declare them with confidence and with exactness, to commend them with wisdom, and to urge them with force and defend them with skill, and to build men up by means of them into a true knowledge of God and of his will, which will be unassailable in the face of the fiercest assault. No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs—to all their needs, from the moment that they are called into participation in the grace of God, until the moment when they stand perfect in God's sight, built up by his Spirit into new men. For such a ministry as this the most complete knowledge of the wisdom of the world supplies no equipment; the most fervid enthusiasm of service leaves without furnishing. Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.

How worthily our fathers thought of the ministry! And what wise provision they made for training men for it, when they set out the curriculum of their first theological seminary! This curriculum was framed with the express design that

those who pursued it should come forth from it these five things: "a sound Biblical critic"; "a defender of the Christian faith"; "an able and sound divine"; "a useful preacher and faithful pastor"; and a man "qualified to exercise discipline and to take part in the government of the Church in all its judicatories." A well-rounded minister this, one equal to the functions which belong to a minister of the New Testament order. But that we may have such ministers, we must provide such a training for the ministry as will produce such ministers. And that means nothing less than that our theological curriculum should provide for the serious mastery of the several branches of theological science. A comprehensive and thorough theological training is the condition of a really qualified ministry. When we satisfy ourselves with a less comprehensive and thorough theological training, we are only condemning ourselves to a less qualified ministry. 📖

¹ B. B. Warfield originally wrote this article as "Our Seminary Curriculum" in the *Presbyterian* (Sept 15, 1909), 7-8. It is reprinted in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. by John E. Meeter (Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), Vol. 1, 369-373. Western Reformed Seminary considers the old Princeton Seminary as part of its spiritual heritage; see the *WRS Journal* 4:2 (August, 1997): *Hodge and Princeton: A Bicentennial Reminder of Our Roots*.

² Benjamin B. Warfield was Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1887-1921.

NOTES

NOTES

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PASTOR / PREACHER

PASTORING AND PREACHING

JOHNDYCK¹

The call to the ministry is a very high calling, one which no man should dare to take upon himself. The work is more than what is humanly possible, but the Lord promises to provide for those whom he has called to that work. In this supply he also abundantly blesses the gospel labourer. It is a work which continually places a man upon his knees and makes him to know the need of wisdom, strength and power from the Lord.

PREPARATION

In pursuing a godly ministry, solid instruction in God's Word is absolutely necessary to meet the difficulties of the ministry. When the Lord calls a man into the ministry (Rom 10:15), he also prepares that man with a good understanding of all the truth God has declared (2 Tim 2:15; Titus 2:1) so that he may defend the faith (Titus 1:9). I am grateful for the good foundation I received in my years at Western Reformed Seminary. The emphasis there on the authority of God's Word and the absolute sovereignty of the Lord who does all things according to his own will has been valuable in meeting the demands and difficulties of the ministry.

PROVIDENCE

I was called to the ministry and taken under care of the Northwest Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Church; and, while waiting for the Lord's direction and for open doors to attend Western Re-

formed Seminary, I served in the Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church for a couple of years. I taught Sunday school classes, attended session meetings, preached occasionally, and served wherever I could. The Lord gave my wife and me our first two sons and then allowed us to make our way west to Vancouver, B.C., and eventually to Tacoma, Washington. During this time the Lord provided for us in many remarkable ways, including food and clothing, vehicles and gas to make them go, as well as housing. It was a time of trial and of waiting upon the Lord, a time when the Lord showed us in many special ways that he was caring for us. We also made many special friends as new relationships were established at church and among students and faculty at the seminary. It has been an honour to be co-labourers with many of these men as we have served the same Lord, though often separated by great

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distances. These friendships have been the source of trusted comfort and counsel throughout the years of ministry.

PASTORING

The Lord's providence was no less evident as I entered into the work of the ministry after I was ordained. There were doctrinal controversies brewing when I first started in the work, many of which also involved personality conflicts. One of the first tasks assigned to me by the presbytery was to write a paper to address questions that had arisen regarding biblical worship and the regulative principle. Even though this specific controversy had not been addressed in my seminary classes, the exegetical and theological training I had just completed were valuable in being able to answer objections in a way which emphasized the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

There were also financial difficulties for the church and for our family, and the Lord showed Himself to be no less faith-

ful then than he had been during the years of my classroom training.

PLANNING

What does a typical week in the ministry of the gospel look like? It is hard to think that I have ever had a typical week, but I do have plans for one! Preaching has pre-eminence in the work of the gospel, so most of my weekly activities center on preparation for the services of the Lord's Day and our Bible study on Wednesday night. I am expositional in my preaching, going through a particular book of the Bible in an ongoing series. More recently I have been preaching through the historic creeds of the church on Sunday evenings, beginning with the ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene, Athanasian, etc.) and continuing through some of the Reformed creeds. I am presently going through the instruction of the Council of Dort. This has been a challenge, as it is more topical in nature and requires a different approach in preparation.

An ideal week begins with a reflection of the previous Lord's Day and preparation for the one to come. Unless some special occasion or circumstance intervenes, my text will follow in series from the previous week. On Tuesday I begin work on the bulletin, choosing hymns and Scripture texts that will develop the themes of the coming Lord's Day. I also begin preparation on the Bible study for Wednesday night, and finish that on Wednesday. On Thursday I work on the messages for the Lord's Day. Friday is the day that seems to work best for a day off in our family schedule. On Saturday I finish the bulletins and print them, making final preparations for the

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sermons and Sunday school lessons of the following day.

Interspersed with those activities are the phone calls, counseling, and visiting which give variety to every week. Many aspects of pastoral life are not as orderly and ordered as seminary classes. The firm deadlines of Wednesday night Bible studies and Sabbath day preaching continue, but the Lord also undertakes for

In the early years of the seminary's existence, I saw men who had a godly burden to see it prosper for the sake of the ministry. They would take second jobs in order to provide for their families when the income from the seminary was not adequate to pay them fully. And they always taught with a love of the truth, the joy of the Lord being their strength.

the unexpected emergencies and questions that arise from time to time.

PREACHING

Most of this weekly work is preparation for the first day of the following week, in the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day. It is a great privilege, as well as a solemn duty, to be able to minister to the Lord's people in this way and to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus through faith alone. This message

of hope to sinners can only be proclaimed when there is confidence in the Scriptures as the very word of God, a confidence which was emphasized in my classroom days at WRS. "Preach with authority directly to the hearer" was the feedback I received after delivering my first sermon in homiletics class. The opinions of men are irrelevant if we do not start and end with what God's Word plainly says.

PERSEVERANCE

One of the practical lessons I have learned from the professors at WRS is that the Lord will see his servants through every test and trial. We are called to be faithful ambassadors of his message and he will grant daily strength and meet every need. In the early years of the seminary's existence, I saw men who had a godly burden to see it prosper for the sake of the ministry. They would take second jobs in order to provide for their families when the income from the seminary was not adequate to pay them fully. And they always taught with a love of the truth, the joy of the Lord being their strength. They had an earnest desire for the progress and growth of the students, and did not do their work as a trial or a hardship, even when there may have been only a few students in the class.

May the Lord continue to use Western Reformed Seminary to faithfully train men for the ministry and to give growth to our Bible Presbyterian churches. 

¹ John Dyck (M.Div. 1990) is pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Edmonton, Alberta. In addition, he is the stated clerk of the Bible Presbyterian Church, General Synod.

SOME OF A PASTOR'S MOST USEFUL BOOKS

STEVEN BRINEGAR¹

During my second year of seminary, I took a class called Public Speaking in the Church. One of the assignments for this class was to give a five minute speech on a book which impacted my life. In preparation for this assignment, I spent a few minutes looking at my small library and thinking, "How much do I use this book?" and "How many times do I think about this book?" The assignment did not allow, as I recall, for us to pick the Bible. After only a few minutes of thinking, I decided on the book which I would speak about: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. When Dr. Battle saw my outline to present this book, he started laughing. While not the typical book to present, I was very serious about the impact on this book on my life.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Western Reformed Seminary, I have been asked to speak about the relationship of my seminary training and my current role as a pastor. As a pastor, the only authority I have is to declare the truth of God's Word. I am to declare the whole counsel of God. The goal of my preaching is that I and those in the congregation will apply God's truth to our lives. We cannot arrive at a correct application if we do not first have the correct meaning.

This is why I chose this book and why even today I still use it weekly (if I'm teaching from the New Testament). The *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and En-*

glish Lexicon is the Old Testament resource that I utilize. Depending on the text and the week, I reference the lexicon for the important words in a text and on occasion I translate most of the passage from the original Greek or Hebrew. If I need the definition of a word, I will always turn to the lexicon as my source for that definition.

As a pastor, the only authority I have is to declare the truth of God's Word. I am to declare the whole counsel of God. The goal of my preaching is that I and those in the congregation will apply God's truth to our lives. We cannot arrive at a correct application if we do not first have the correct meaning.

For example, in Ps 37:5 we read "commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." What does it mean to "commit" your way to the LORD? In my New King James Bible, a footnote appears that says this word means "to roll away." I was at a complete loss as to the real meaning of the phrase, "roll your way to the Lord." So, I turned to the *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* and found the Hebrew word on page 165. Reading the entry that is found there, I noticed that this word is also used in Josh 5:9 in a figurative sense.

Joshua 5:9a says, “Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’” The Lord makes this statement on the occasion of entering the Promised Land. After 400 years, the time of being away was over. The idea is that the burden which has been upon the people, the Lord rolled off of them. This insight then helps to explain why the English translation of Ps 37:5 uses the word “commit.” We roll the burden of our way unto the Lord—we give it up wholly to him. You could pick a hiker with a heavy backpack full of equipment, finally find a resting point, and then roll off the backpack onto the ground. The imagery is lost in the translation. Too often, we commit in a half hearted way. Rather than truly “rolling our way” from us to the Lord, we hold on to it and spend a lot of time worrying. Instead, we should roll it completely from us to the Lord. This beautiful imagery is lost in the English translation.

In preparation for the Sunday sermon, I generally spend several hours reading commentaries on the text. Following this, I put together some sort of short and rough outline of the text. Then, I turn my attention to the original languages. I focus in on key words. Next, I spend some time refining the outline. After studying the text in the original, I normally change the outline considerably as new insight is gleaned from the text. I have found that having several points to a sermon helps the congregation follow along. I never attempt to have a set number of points, but instead I allow the text to tell me how many points. Furthermore, I try to develop the one overarching theme of the message. On a recent Sunday, I spoke from 2 Cor 5:9-15. I had two points answering the overall question, “Is Living for Christ

really worth it?” One of the best pieces of advice I received concerning preaching is to have only one point. Have one overarching point that the congregation will leave thinking about.

This insight then helps to explain why the English translation of Ps 37:5 uses the word “commit.” We roll the burden of our way unto the Lord—we give it up wholly to him. You could pick a hiker with a heavy backpack full of equipment, finally find a resting point, and then roll off the backpack onto the ground. The imagery is lost in the translation.... This beautiful imagery is lost in the English translation.

In sermon preparation, the original needs to play an important part in understanding the text. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, in 1:7 teaches:

“The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old,) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic;

so in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

The Confession teaches that God inspired the originals and that the text in the original is what ought to be appealed to, not an English translation. I have found it most important to appeal to the original and see the full meaning of the text in order to understand various passages. I have been at times surprised by what I see in the original. While there are many translations which do an excellent job of communicating the meaning of the original to us today and are truly the Word of God, the pastor gains much insight and understanding from studying the original languages.

While there are many translations which do an excellent job of communicating the meaning of the original to us today and are truly the Word of God, the pastor gains much insight and understanding from studying the original languages.

In my time in seminary, there were many classes which have greatly helped my preaching and pastoring. The classes in English Bible provided a framework and introduction to each of the books of the Bible. The theology courses provided the underpinnings of doctrine and showed how interconnected each area of theology is to one another. However, the

classes which I found the most helpful were the language classes.

When speaking with young men, I have often found that they dismiss the importance of the language classes. For anyone serious about being a Bible teacher, I highly recommend learning the original languages. My time in seminary was both a trial and a blessing. The real blessing came in the midst of the trial as the LORD gave strength, endurance, and understanding. Looking back, I consider my three and half years at seminary as invaluable preparation for my ministry.



¹ Steven Brinegar (M.Div. 2006) is pastor of the Columbia Bible Presbyterian Church, Scappoose, Oregon. He also is the assistant stated clerk of the Bible Presbyterian Church, General Synod.

WRS: A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR PASTORING AND PREACHING

LEONARD W. PINE¹

When the Lord first called me to the preaching ministry in 1980, I knew that I was going to need more than just an undergraduate education. A lot of the guys around me in college were eager to get into the ministry right after graduating with their B.A. in Bible, but I had the idea of seminary rather ingrained from my upbringing in the Bible Presbyterian Church under the pastorate of John Janbaz in San Bernardino, California, as well as the mentorship of my pastor in Southern Oregon, Harold Anderson. Though not pastoring a BP church or ministry, Rev. Anderson had talked long of his seminary days at Biola in the distant past, and had convinced me of the value of further training.

Then, I had the opportunity to travel on a couple of ministry teams for Bob Jones University and saw first-hand what happens when young, enthusiastic men with minimal training get into the pastorate. Many of the churches that we visited were pastored by such men. Though they were often well-loved by their people, they had little respect given to them simply because they hadn't lived through most of the life experiences common to the older people in their congregation. Their preaching also often reflected a lack of life experience and wisdom, though technically they were usually quite respectable. They made a lot of mistakes in administration, and often faced counseling situations that were simply beyond them. More than one of these

young men confided in me, some with tears, that they wished they had stayed in school for more education, training, and experience. Seeing the reality of minimally trained men trying to struggle through ministry further cemented in my mind the conviction that I needed more training.

I had been accepted in the graduate School of Religion at Bob Jones already when Rev. Janbaz called and talked to me at length about the benefits of a real seminary, not just a graduate school, for a minister of the gospel. I also began to see that a breadth of education would be helpful, in terms of being taught from more than one perspective in different schools. And, as I moved toward the ministry of a Bible Presbyterian pulpit, I came to believe that I needed to attend our Bible Presbyterian seminary, WRS. It was a choice I have not regretted. At the time, WRS was not accredited, but that did not concern me, since I had no desire to become an academic—I was interested in the pastoral ministry of the BPC. When I finished my other graduate work in speech at Bob Jones, my wife and I moved to Tacoma and I began the work.

I had the opportunity to travel on a couple of ministry teams for Bob Jones University and saw first-hand what happens when young, enthusiastic men with minimal training get into the pastorate.

Clearly, Western Reformed Seminary had designed the Master of Divinity program with the aim of producing men who could handle the Word of God well. The program was heavy in original languages, theology, biblical introduction and interpretation, and church history. Keeping the studies vital was accomplished by constant and lively (read, *spirited, intense, and sometimes loud*) class discussion, times of fellowship and recreation with students and staff, and practical application in local church and presbytery ministry. My favorite classes were the Oxford-style classes in theology I had with Dr. Hascup, which stretched my mind and challenged my heart to really *know* what I believed, and moreover, to be able to defend it. My other favorite classes were all the exegetical courses in which we translated and wrestled with various books from the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Battle and Rev. Lensch had the ability to lead us through the studies with a very practical and thorough approach that challenged our often presumptuous perceptions of the texts with which we were dealing. We learned to be more than commentary preachers, and that training has stood me well in all the years of ministry since.

It took me five years to finish my three-year Master of Divinity degree, during which time I was able to work in the local churches of the Northwest Presbytery and at Heritage Christian School. The seminary's classes were thorough and helpful, and the willingness of the administration to work with a working husband's schedule was a genuine blessing. I had ample opportunity for ministry in all aspects of church life, and the coursework gave me the tools I needed to do that ministry, especially the theo-

logical tools. Since I already had degrees in Bible and speech, and an advanced degree in public speaking, the seminary worked with me to help me pay my school bills by allowing me to redesign the homiletics training the school was doing and then teach those and other classes in the practical theology department, which was expanded while I was there. While I hope that my students learned a great deal and profited from those classes, I know that I did, as the teaching opportunity helped to hone my thinking and practice in order to stay current and useful to my students.

In the trenches of church life, as a church planter and pastor, I knew how to search the Scriptures and present the whole counsel of God; knew how to find answers to previously unanswered (or unthought-of!) questions; knew how to address the needs of the people in my congregation; knew how to work within the context of a connectional church in Presbytery and Synod.

When I had the opportunity to pursue my doctoral studies in preaching a few years after graduation, the seminary further demonstrated its commitment to its students by assisting me financially to undertake the studies so that I could be a more valuable professor to the students; and along the way my own

ministry was blessed as well. I will always be grateful for the heart of the seminary administration to improve what it offers to its students—and for its support of its faculty. I have been thankful to be able to continue my teaching to the present, and look forward to it for many more years to come.

It is not possible, even in a three-year degree like the M.Div., for a school to cover everything that a man may want or need to know. But WRS gave me tools that stood me well, even when I went on for doctoral studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. There, the classes and examinations and procedures were nothing new to me. Papers, oral examinations, extensive reading, discipline to accomplish much in a little time, evaluations, lectures—all played their part. The training that I had received at Bob Jones and Western Reformed had prepared me very well for the advanced studies. And in the trenches of church life, as a church planter and pastor, I knew how to search the Scriptures and present the whole counsel of God; knew how to find answers to previously unanswered (or unthought-of!) questions; knew how to address the needs of the people in my congregation; knew how to work within the context of a connectional church in Presbytery and Synod; and knew, also, how to tap into the fellowship of the men with whom and under whom I had studied when I ran into a problem beyond my ability to immediately grasp or surmount (the greatest blessing of a dedicated seminary education, in my opinion). Of course, I have since found out that as much as I knew, it was not enough. I had to keep growing in my walk and wisdom. I think that one of the greatest blessings of my seminary work must be that it forced me

to realize that there was so much more that I did not know, and therefore I had to face all the duties and opportunities that faced me with humility and dependence upon the Lord.

The wealth of course material, practical wisdom, and the bonds of Christian fellowship and fraternity I obtained through the course of my training have stood me well through my ministry, due to excellently planned and executed training programs at these wonderful schools. But it has been the seminary education provided by WRS that has been the bedrock of my ministry. I am grateful for the dedication of the faculty of WRS to training ministers and laborers for the church, especially the Bible Presbyterian Church to which the Lord has called me. May God grant that WRS flourishes and grows as she serves the BPC for many years to come, supporting not only this denomination, but all the church of our Lord as he ordains. 📖

¹ Leonard Pine (M.Div. 1993) is a Minister of the Bible Presbyterian Church and is now the Field Representative of the Presbyterian Missionary Union. He also is an adjunct faculty member of WRS.

COUNSELING

SEMINARY AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING

ERIC LASCH¹

Since childhood I have loved and studied God's Word, but as I got older I began to realize that my understanding of Scripture was more eclectic than systematic. Not until my late thirties did I find a theological focus in Reformed theology. By my early forties, my family and I were attending the Grand Island (NY) Bible Presbyterian Church. We soon heard announcements at church about a biblical counseling course offered locally, taught by our pastor, an adjunct professor at Western Reformed Seminary. As I sat in that first introductory course, our pastor/professor Dr. Kevin Backus said one evening to the class that if you really want to be an effective counselor, you'll need to be well grounded theologically and biblically. While I doubted whether God would ever use me to counsel others, I had for several years hoped one day to receive a Reformed seminary education. In addition, I had been recently ordained as a ruling elder and I knew that to fulfill an elder's duties of caring for the flock, a seminary education would help in many ways. A few months later, I met the president of Western Reformed Seminary, Dr. John Battle, and soon thereafter decided to enroll in their distance learning, pastoral mentorship masters program for biblical counseling.

The coursework at WRS I found to be well designed to give a person interested in biblical counseling a systematic

understanding of Scripture. There were many courses: five biblically rich counseling courses, five theology courses, four Old Testament survey courses, four New Testament survey courses, four church history courses, as well as evangelism, discipleship, and hermeneutic courses. It took me four years to complete the course work, which included reading texts and classroom notes, writing papers, taking exams proctored by my mentor, and attending concentrated classes once a year. I continued to work full time and studied in the morning, evenings, and Saturdays. It was a challenge at times, but the Lord gave me strength and time to finish. By God's grace and with the full support of my pastor, wife, and daughters, in May 2005, I was awarded the degree of Master of Christian Ministry.

It took me four years to complete the course work, which included reading texts and classroom notes, writing papers, taking exams proctored by my mentor, and attending concentrated classes once a year.

In God's providence, I did become a biblical counselor, certified by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors in October 2004. In the cases that I

have encountered, it is very clear to me that Dr. Backus was absolutely right about the necessity of being well educated in theology and Scripture. So many types of issues come up every single counseling session. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the point. First, it is not uncommon for counselees to misunderstand what a certain passage means. Using what I learned in seminary, I am often able to explain a difficult passage because of understanding the context of the book, the historical setting, the purpose of the author, or even the genre of the literature. Second, believers who seek counseling are struggling with various problems, pain and turmoil, whether it be in the home, work or church. But the real issue is always buried in their heart. It may involve any number of sins, sinful thoughts, or sinful reactions; but it also includes misconceptions and misunderstandings about God, about themselves, about sin, about priorities, about marriage, about children, about emotions, or about circumstances. In order to help believers, I need to have a broad and comprehensive understanding of all of Scripture, including a good foundation in theology, in the law of God, in wisdom literature, in the gospel, in the writings of Paul, even in church history at times. The heart issues we struggle with in the 21st century are no different than any prior period of time. Scripture is timeless with excellent examples from real life, didactic instruction, common sin patterns, and hope. If we are going to effectively counsel, we must be skilled in using the best tool of all—God’s Word.

During my four years of study at WRS, I was humbled in two significant ways. First, the in-depth study of theology proper, the attributes and works of

God, of his dealings with mankind, served to deepen my view and appreciation of the one true God—and decrease my high view of me! My view of God had been too low for decades, which caused all sorts of problems in my thinking, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, the people God has placed before me to work with in the counseling center also have too low a view of God.

In order to help believers, I need to have a broad and comprehensive understanding of all of Scripture, including a good foundation in theology, in the law of God, in wisdom literature, in the gospel, in the writings of Paul, even in church history at times.

One of the things that I often find necessary to emphasize is for the counselee to gain a more lofty view of his Maker. The horizontal (human/human) problems and conflicts that we wrestle with are often rooted in the vertical (God/human)—a faulty view of God and his ways, reflecting a weak personal relationship with him. The second way I was humbled was the more I studied and learned, the more I realized how little my mind was, how little I knew, and what little capacity I had to learn. What great theologians and pastors God has raised up in the past to benefit his church to this day! My own faltering pilgrimage helps me to work gently and humbly (as opposed to

highhandedly or arrogantly) with others struggling on their path of sanctification. I often muse as I am preparing for the next session that the reason God has given me this particular counselee is because God is reminding me of my weakness in this area and granting me the gift of sanctification in the same or similar area. How can I counsel an angry husband without being reminded of my weakness in this area? How can I counsel someone depressed without remembering that I too react sinfully to circumstances I don't like? The education I was blessed to receive from WRS has paid and is paying big dividends for me spiritually and to those I counsel.

Scripture is timeless with excellent examples from real life, didactic instruction, common sin patterns, and hope. If we are going to effectively counsel, we must be skilled in using the best tool of all—God's Word.

Since graduation from Western Reformed Seminary three years ago, I continue to read widely both theological and practical counseling books. I have especially enjoyed reading Puritan literature (e.g., *A Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson, *Mortification of Sin* by John Owens, and *The Anatomy of Secret Sins* by Obadiah Sedgwick). These godly Puritan pastors clearly understood the machinations of human nature. All have a high view of God, Scripture and the

church and an equally low view of man due to his sinfulness. In addition, I have gained much insight over the years from the solid Reformed preaching in my local congregation. Such constant biblical instruction has given me a deeper understanding of myself, of God and his Word; this helps me to counsel others more effectively.

Are you interested in growing as a student of God's Word, being changed by that Word, and helping others to grow spiritually? Then consider getting advanced education at Western Reformed Seminary. Young men are usually able to go to Tacoma and study directly under the professors. Working family men should consider the distance learning program. For both groups, a seminary education will increase your ability to be used by God in the service of others. I am so thankful to my Father for the strength, time and opportunity he provided to do the seminary work, as well as the privilege of counseling other believers. 📖

¹ Eric Lasch (M.C.M. 2005) is an active elder in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Grand Island, New York. As a Certified Member of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, Eric assists his church counseling ministry. He also serves as the treasurer of the Presbyterian Missionary Union.

HOME MISSIONS

SEMINARY AND A HOME MISSIONARY

RICHARD PERALEZ¹

I am currently a missionary pastor serving in northeast Nebraska in a city called South Sioux City. It is hard to believe that the United States has become a mission field. Unfortunately, the “Christian” church as a whole is like the church in Sardis, which had the reputation of being alive, but in reality was dead. I graduated from Bible College in 1995 and have been in ministry since that time. Because of the challenging times in which we live, the Lord pressed upon my heart the need to be sharper in the ministry and to obtain more learning. I currently pastor a small Bible church. I am Reformed in my soteriology, premillennial, and very conservative theologically. Finding a school that was affordable, that would allow me to stay in my current ministry, and that would be like-minded was a challenge. I came across Western Reformed Seminary, which seemed to fit the bill. I enrolled at WRS two years ago in the distance learning program (the Pastoral Mentorship Program, PMP). I am currently pursuing a Masters in Theological Studies with a double minor in historical theology and biblical counseling. Most schools have strayed theologically from the historic orthodox faith and are not nouthetic in counseling (the biblical method promoted by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, NANC). This school is teaching sound doctrine and believes in the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures for counseling. Hav-

ing a NANC executive board member, Dr. Backus, in charge of the counseling program was a pleasant surprise. The seminary may not have the “bling” of most seminaries, but that was not the reason I chose to study with them. What I find here are very small classes, but the upside is that you are able to build relationships with other students and the professors better, which is a blessing. A small class also guarantees that enough time will be given for any personal questions that you may have. I find the professors to be academically stimulating, balanced, relevant, and caring for their students. Even though I am not Presbyterian, we have a common Reformed faith and a passion to serve our Lord and Savior.

The seminary has already enhanced my ministry greatly. Working in the trenches I find that the more I learn of our great Lord and Savior, the more I love him and desire to serve him. WRS has only helped to cultivate a passion for Christ.

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For example, this past year at the PMP module during a class I took called “The Life and Epistles of Paul,” I was challenged in many ways. One way was unexpected, for it happened during a side note in the class. Dr. Battle talked about how Paul taught that God rewards the “labor” in glory. It was the proper labor unto the Lord, not “the results” of the labor, that was important. I went back home encouraged in ways not expected. Being a church planter and not using worldly or pragmatic means is hard because you don’t visibly see lots of “results.” I came back even more eager to labor for the Lord.

WRS has helped in so many ways. The most important way is that it has made me sharper and more balanced in ministry. Many of the assignments can be directly incorporated into ministry and are a great blessing first to me personally and secondly to the body in the church. They allow you to go at your own pace. What I enjoy most are professors that are very smart, yet are not interested in pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge. They pursue knowledge for the sake of ultimately pursuing Christ and walking upright with him. The goal is equipping men to succeed with Christ in the ministry. My respect and admiration for the professors has grown. They are men of God and in many ways are missionaries like me. They are very accomplished men who have chosen to use their skills in this small but effective seminary for God’s glory, depending on him to raise up churches and people to provide for the seminary and their livelihood.

As you can see, WRS is the perfect fit for this missionary pastor. May the Lord raise up men serious about serving

WRS has helped in so many ways. The most important way is it has made me sharper and more balanced in ministry. . . . As you can see, WRS is the perfect fit for this missionary pastor. May the Lord raise up men serious about serving the Lord and holding to the historic orthodox faith. May the Lord direct many of them to WRS.

the Lord and holding to the historic orthodox faith. May the Lord direct many of them to WRS. A seminary like WRS is much needed, and I am grateful to the Lord for it! May the Lord bless the labor of WRS for the next twenty-five years!



¹ Richard Peralez currently is a student in the Pastoral Mentorship Program at WRS, and is serving as the pastor of the Siouxland Community Bible Church in South Sioux City, Nebraska, as a home missionary under the American Mission for Opening Churches.

LAY LEADERSHIP

SEMINARY TRAINING – A FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY

ROLAND L. PORTER¹

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1).

In preparing to write this article I prayed for help and then recalled reading a list of principles from which the following are drawn. There are certain principles involved in ministry, a unifying center around which we are called to build our preaching and ministry.²

- First, there must be Christian character, which is the personal foundation for ministry.
- Next comes an “attitude adjustment.” The pastor needs the attitude of a servant, a servant’s heart and mind to serve Christ and his Church.
- Next needed is love for God and God’s Church, and we also need love for a lost world. To properly minister we also need knowledge, but as Paul insisted, “The greatest of these is love.”
- Somewhere in these precepts there is sacrifice. “How much can I give?” we ask. This allows us to receive the very best God has for us.
- Submission to authority is the best way to learn how to exercise authority.

- We must always remember that our ministry is to glorify God, just as salvation is to glorify God.

I came to seminary to learn how to minister, and the dear, faithful teachers at seminary taught me that the tools of ministry are the Word of God and prayer.

The power of ministry is the Holy Spirit, and the model is Jesus the Christ. The list of principles above is not intended to be exhaustive, but to represent the more salient principles. I have found that their purpose is to ever remind us to be conscious of and guided by certain moral and ethical mores, and I hasten to add, these were graciously exemplified in character and behavior by all the members of the faculty at WRS.

Theology training is very practical in that it provides the firm foundation for ministry. Coupled with biblical interpretation, these have provided me with the ability to comprehend and share Scripture both in Bible teaching and in preaching.

In theology classes I learned that there is a necessary balance between biblical theology and systematic theology. Biblical theology goes to God’s Word in

the text and raises the question, “what did this mean to the original writer and what does it mean to the church today? Systematic theology is the study of God and is basic to true exegesis in God’s Word. Theology training is very practical in that it provides the firm foundation for ministry. Coupled with biblical interpretation, these have provided me with the ability to comprehend and share Scripture both in Bible teaching and in preaching.

In church ministry classes I learned much about visitation, the necessity of keeping in touch with those dear souls who are not physically able to attend worship services. Because of these classes I have found visitations not only helpful to those I have visited, but also they in turn have caused me to grow in compassion.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones in his book *Preaching and Preachers* states, “Preachers are born not made. This is an absolute. You will never teach a man to be a preacher if he is not already one.”³ While I believe this is true, I also believe it takes training and practice to hone the skills needed to be an effective preacher. Thanks to the patience, diligence, and perseverance of the WRS professors, I have been able to compose and deliver a sermon with a modicum of effectiveness. Learning that preaching is a science and

an art was the turning point for me in my seminary training.

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Having “stayed the course” for such an extended time (fourteen years), I see the need to do the same, because a congregation needs a pastor to “stay the course.” Paul’s words echo for me, “But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; a wide door has opened to me for effective work” (1 Cor 16:8-9).

In seminary I experienced a process of Christian maturing. This maturing became evident while visiting Remann Hall (an institution for juvenile offenders). I discovered, quite to my surprise, that I could draw on my knowledge of Scripture. This was joined with the spiritual stability, spiritual independence and confidence gained from the instruction received in class. Of special use was the knowledge of God’s attributes. Also, the verse, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5), came to mind, frequently reminding me of who I was. This highlighted for me the value of my theology courses.

Also I found strength from Heb 5:14, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” My professors brought this verse to the forefront

of my thinking, and gave me much “solid food” in the theology classes.

The course on American church history magnified how prevalent it was, and still is, to be tempted to stray from the truth into false doctrine. Hence, the necessity to cling to the truth found in God’s Word, and not try to make it say what we want it to say. This was one of the chief reasons I chose to study at WRS. At WRS the inerrant Word of God is taught, preached, and adhered to faithfully. From this I have developed a sense of confident security in following doctrines of truth I learned at seminary, and I believe this brings the power of the Holy Spirit to bear in my ministry.

Growth does not end with seminary graduation. The continuance of doctrinal study since graduation holds delightful surprises in that God’s grace, divine love, and truth become emblazoned signposts to lead me into deeper understanding of who God is. 📖

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¹ Roland Porter (Cert.C.M. 2008) is an active lay leader in the Historic Vaughn Bay Church in Vaughn, Washington.

² Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe, *Making Sense of the Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 31-46.

³ *Making Sense of the Ministry*, 107.

Study the Westminster Shorter Catechism on the web!

<http://www.bpc.org>

SEMINARY TRAINING FOR THE POLICE BEAT?

JOHN GALLE¹

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand; and it shines unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

– Matthew 5:14-16

Much has happened since I graduated from seminary in 1990—far different from my expectations at that time, but which I believe God was preparing me for even before I knew. I entered the police world late in life by most standards, eleven years ago at the age of 42, and after what I believe were 19 years in Christian education. I remember well some of the struggles as the “senior” member of my academy class and the quizzical looks of “are you out of your mind?” Even my family, while supportive, had some trepidation and concern, both for my sanity and my safety.

The realities of police work are overwhelming when you stop to consider them. The demands are 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They work when others are sleeping and sleep when others work. They miss social gatherings and events, Christmas mornings with their families; and their weekends never seem to match the normal world. The work is often crisis driven, much like an emergency room where every decision is important and may have unpredictable and serious consequences. The risks are injury, lawsuits, or even death. It is an

occupation which is constantly open to public scrutiny: police are expected to be where they are needed, unafraid in the face of danger, instantly solve any problem, and always be in control. It is emotional work—but they are not permitted to demonstrate emotion. Few other professions accept injury and death as do police, and they are reminded of it daily by the equipment they wear. They deliberately put themselves in harm’s way daily, whether it be on a traffic stop or stepping between an abuser and his victim; and THEY become targets for hate groups,

The work is often crisis driven, much like an emergency room where every decision is important and may have unpredictable and serious consequences. The risks are injury, lawsuits, or even death. It is an occupation which is constantly open to public scrutiny: police are expected to be where they are needed, unafraid in the face of danger, instantly solve any problem, and always be in control.

anarchists, or gangs. August Vollmer, the father of modern policing, once stated in frustration that police are expected to “have the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of David, the strength of Samson, the

patience of Job, the diplomacy of Lincoln, the tolerance of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and finally, an intimate knowledge of every branch of the natural, biological, and social sciences.” In reality, it would be hard to find a job more written about and less understood than that of a police officer. Their world has been scrutinized by writers, playwrights, Hollywood producers, politicians, and the press; yet the world knows little of the world they occupy. Men and women enter the field filled with idealism and a desire to solve crime and make this a better world. After five years they often feel like the best they can do is to maintain order and try to hold the line. They are filled with negativity: the judicial system doesn’t work, criminals have the advantage, and victims are re-victimized. They see themselves unappreciated by the community they try to serve, hounded by the local politicians, and scrutinized by the media which is more interested in scandal than in the thousands of everyday acts of courage. And then they are expected to take off the uniform, open the door and say “Hi, honey, I’m home.” Job satisfaction is often low, divorce rates high; suicide and self destructive behaviors are not uncommon.

While daunting, the need to demonstrate a biblical lifestyle is enormous. We see people and the consequences of sin at its worst. We deal constantly with the results of poor choices and the hopelessness of temporal things. We are often cast into the position of counselor, confessor, advisor, surrogate parent, or mentor. In some senses, the job is a mission field in itself. A pastor friend and I were recently talking about our similar backgrounds yet divergent careers, when we came to the conclusion that we often deal with the

While daunting, the need to demonstrate a biblical lifestyle is enormous. We see people and the consequences of sin at its worst. We deal constantly with the results of poor choices and the hopelessness of temporal things. We are often cast into the position of counselor, confessor, advisor, surrogate parent, or mentor. In some senses, the job is a mission field in itself.

same people and circumstances, but from differing perspectives. I remember an occasion several years ago transporting a prisoner in the early morning hours. I had my radio on a Christian music station and he began to share with me how he had recently come to Christ through the witness of a jail chaplain and asked me to pray for him as he struggled with numerous “demons” in his life. As officers, we certainly have opportunities to demonstrate compassion, integrity, and Christian character to those we come in contact with. But beyond this, Christians understand that their hope and trust is not in this world’s systems, but only in the work of Christ. One evening I was returning from booking someone into jail, knowing that he would probably be back out on the street before I finished my report, when I was reminded of the psalmist bemoaning the seeming prosperity of the evildoer. I’ve also felt the frustration of seeing someone escape justice in court

because of a legal technicality. At times like this we are reminded that the psalmist always concluded with trust in the justice and righteousness of God.

As a Christian, I find myself daily challenged in ways that I have never faced before, working in a largely non-Christian environment, but serving a community in ways that others could not. I also find myself learning to apply lessons with difficulty—lessons I had often taught so glibly to others. As a “person of faith,” I have often been viewed with suspicion by coworkers, and frequently challenged to compromise principle. Even as a Christian, it is easy to fall into the trap of self reliance and not realize our crucial and

I am thankful for the grounding in God’s Word I received at seminary and believe it provided the foundation for my work today. I am also thankful for the lessons of my teachers and their mentorship in my life to give me perspective and encouragement.

God-given role. On one occasion early in my career I had to take a very difficult stand on an issue that put me in opposition to fellow officers, but it was a stand that established the importance of integrity and value of Christian principle in my life, a position for which I later earned respect, if not agreement. During this time I often thought of Christians we had stud-

ied in church history classes, who had stood on principle and died for their faith, and how little the opposition I faced compared. But I am also reminded of the lesson of the beatitudes, that we are salt and light—not that we become salt and light—that we are already salt and light to the world by our calling. And since we are salt and light, we can’t be hidden, even if we want to be. In this, I am thankful for the grounding in God’s Word I received at seminary and believe it provided the foundation for my work today. I am also thankful for the lessons of my teachers and their mentorship in my life to give me perspective and encouragement. Luther wrote that “every man in his office must be useful and beneficial to the rest, that so many kinds of work may all be united into one community, just as the members of the body serve one another.” Whether as pastor, teacher or police officer, God has called us to serve him. In each new challenge, I have valued the preparation I have received. 

¹ John Galle (M.R.S. 1990) is Chief of Police, Sumner, Washington. He is an active lay leader in the Valley Bible Church of Sumner, Washington.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS FOR WESTERN REFORMED SEMINARY

TITOLYRO¹

It is hard to believe that it has already been twelve years since I graduated from Western Reformed Seminary. It seems like it was just yesterday that Allister Stone, Joshua Musyoka, Mark Baldwin, and I roamed the hallowed halls at Western Reformed. The countless hours of ping pong with professor Chris Lensch teaching all of us lessons in humility, Dr. Battle's jokes after which he would almost die of laughing at himself, Dr. Backus's counseling classes at the speed of light, and having top ramen every single day for lunch and dinner are still so fresh in my mind. But so are the invaluable lessons that I learned in seminary that have been so helpful to my ministry.

Since graduating from WRS, my ministry has been focused on two fields: pastoring a local church and leading a Christian school. The training I received at Western Reformed equipped me to be faithful to the Lord in both of these fields. For the remainder of this article I am going to focus on the impact that the years at WRS have had on my pastoring a local church because that is my present vocation.

I serve the Lord as the pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Olympia, Washington. My week revolves around seven activities: teaching Sunday

school, preaching morning and afternoon sermons on the Lord's Day, leading a college-age group, counseling, leading a teenage boys book study, teaching the Wednesday evening Bible study, and being involved in one of three aspects of denominational life (the presbytery or synod, the Presbyterian Missionary Union, and WRS). Besides these scheduled activities, there are always unexpected needs that pop up each week.

I realized that the professors were doorkeepers, as it were, opening up the wonders of theological knowledge. I was introduced to Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Schaff, Bruce, Metzger, Berkhof, Adams—all men that I fell in love with and continue to study to this day.

As I look at these areas of ministry, I find it hard to isolate which class helps in which area because each discipline I studied at WRS goes hand in hand with the next as an integrated whole. For example, the counseling classes I took obviously help when I am sitting across the table from a family of the church, but so do the theology classes because there is no good counseling unless we are able to present God in his fullness. Or, one may think of the impact that

church history can have on one's preaching. Yet, it doesn't stop there. It also helps me sift through all the aberrant teaching that is currently infesting the church because, somewhere, somebody has already dealt with it. Thus, I am able to stand on the shoulders of greater men than I am in serving Christ's church.

One area on which I can easily see the impact of my seminary education is my love for studying. During the three years it took for me to finish seminary, I was barely able to scratch the surface of learning, and that was frustrating at times. I eventually came to terms with that as I realized that the professors were doorkeepers, as it were, opening up the wonders of theological knowledge. I was introduced to Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Schaff, Bruce, Metzger, Berkhof, Adams—all men that I fell in love with and continue to study to this day. I don't think I would have developed this passion for theological knowledge, nor would I know where to go to get it, if it wasn't for the faculty of WRS.

Another area that had a great impact on me and thusly on my ministry was the seminary's faculty's passion for biblical languages. While I was at WRS, several seminaries on the West Coast dropped biblical languages as a requirement for the Master of Divinity program. Not at WRS, and I am thankful for that. I use the biblical language skills I learned in seminary almost on a daily basis (though Hebrew is still very painful for me, sorry Mr. Lensch) and I think my preaching and counseling are better because of it. Thanks to this emphasis at WRS, I don't have to succumb to the tyranny of commercial translations, as

Tom Lyon, my Advanced Greek instructor, used to say.

The last area of impact I would like to mention is my homiletics training. Despite having to read Virgil Anderson's book (which cured me of any insomnia problems I might have had), these classes were the most beneficial for me because they stretched me the farthest. Professor Len Pine mandated that we conform to very particular styles as we progressed through the different levels of homiletics. At the time his requirements angered me because I could not see the importance of doing things in ways that seemed so artificial to me. Now when I think back on those classes, I realize that Dr. Pine's requirements actually brought together all the elements of my seminary education, synthesizing thereby the pastor I have become and continue to become.

I truly can say that I would not be able to do what I do on a weekly basis if it wasn't for the training I received at Western Reformed Seminary. May the Lord grant this great institution another 25 years of faithful service in the Bible Presbyterian Church. 📖

¹ Tito Lyro (M.Div. 1996) is the pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Olympia, Washington. He also is an adjunct instructor in theology and Bible at WRS.

INTERNET MINISTRY

THE TREASURES OF SEMINARY

LAURIE COPELAND¹

Receiving a Reformed seminary education is an indescribable privilege. If a military academy exists for Christians, perhaps seminary is that setting. Years of rigorous studying, preparing for exams, reading weighty textbooks, writing long papers, and attending lectures are a costly sacrifice; but it is not labor done in vain. Acquiring knowledge renders a reward. “For the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Prov 3:14-15). To obtain knowledge is more valuable than precious jewels and will place a garland upon your head.

Seminary’s central role is to prepare godly men for the ministry of the Word and sacraments, but also serves another purpose. According to Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, “Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow men.”² A theological institution remaining faithful to orthodox Protestantism equips the student for every good work. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). In my seminary studies, I learned the importance of proper teaching. “Buy truth, and do

not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (Prov 23:23). There are many Scriptures describing the need for the study of the Scriptures. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Seeking knowledge is a noble charge.

According to Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, “Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow men.”² A theological institution remaining faithful to orthodox Protestantism equips the student for every good work.

In my studies of biblical interpretation, I learned the value of becoming acquainted with a variety of subjects in the application of Scripture. Seminary teaches the necessity of understanding the orthodox doctrines, the study of the ancient creeds, and church history. Discovering

the importance of doctrine, I learned its purpose in the proclamation of the gospel and for giving a defense of the truth. Christianity is not merely a way of life, but as Machen describes, Christianity is “a life founded on a doctrine.”³ Learning these doctrines has taught me the difference between the law and the gospel. A variety of subjects constitutes a seminary education. Through the studies of the orthodox creeds, I learned the teaching of Scripture. Machen defines creeds as, “Summaries of what the Bible tells us about the facts and promises upon which Christian experience is based.”⁴ Creeds also serve the purpose of refuting heresy. The term creed comes from the Latin term *credo*, meaning simply “I believe.” We observe several creeds employed throughout Scripture: “Simon Peter replied ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt 16:16). “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28). Learning the creeds allows me to witness to others with an accurate understanding of what the Bible says. In my testimony of Christ, I am able to recall particular subjects from the creeds and questions from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, which aid me in declaring the gospel.

A Seminary education includes reading the writings of authors from nearly every era, beginning from the first century through the present. Reading various books for each class, I found most of the authors to be enjoyable. Of those, John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* continues to be a resource that I employ in my witness to others. Finishing the first edition when he was just twenty-six, Calvin furnished a magnificent theological masterpiece. Beginning with the notable prefatory to the King of

With the ability to reach over fifty English-speaking countries, my education permits me to minister to people from various countries via the internet, through websites and email. Receiving email from all sorts of groups around the world, people are able to utilize my web links as a resource.

France, Francis I, Calvin presented an earnest request for the Protestant faith. Calvin wrote the *Institutes* with the outline of the Apostle’s Creed; the work consists of four books, and in its several editions reflects Calvin’s lifetime work. Commonly known for its remarkable logical structure, Calvin’s message is clear and brief, a benefit to any reader. Learning that nearly all knowledge is comprised of two elements, knowledge of God and of self, Calvin demonstrated that arriving at the knowledge of God largely comes through a sight of one’s own sin in light of God’s holy majesty. Reading some of the works of the church fathers such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, John Murray, and Cornelius Van Til, I am supplied with answers to refute the misinformation of modern Christianity. Becoming acquainted with notable authors and classic books is the result of a quality education and is further useful in my witness and presentation of the gospel.

With the ability to reach over fifty English-speaking countries, my edu-

cation permits me to minister to people from various countries via the internet, through websites and email. Receiving email from all sorts of groups around the world, people are able to utilize my web links as a resource. Although the creation of a new website is in progress, my education has contributed to one of my older sites, which continues to witness the truth of Jesus Christ. With the ability to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, the internet is serving to reach countries where the dominant religion is Muslim and to places where the name of Christ is unknown.

Answering questions and providing encouragement to those I meet has become more effective because of my theological studies. In my witness to Christ, I am better equipped to proclaim the gospel and defend the faith. I am more suited to interact with other religions and even cults in my preparation to make a defense to anyone who asks me for a reason for the hope that is in me (1 Pet 3:15).

Christian scholarship through a seminary education provides a reward greater than any earthly treasures. The study of Scriptures and pursuance of knowledge renders an imperishable crown. My experience in seminary was one of the most joyful experiences in my life and is now being fruitful and effective in my life and ministry. God's Word is faithful to all generations (Ps 119:90). 

¹ Laurie A. P. Copeland (M.R.S. 2008) maintains an active internet web ministry. She also teaches a women's class at the Hillcrest Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington, in addition to discipling several women and children.

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² J. Gresham Machen, "Christian Scholarship and Evangelism," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (P & R Publishing, 2004), 137-138.

³ J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity in Conflict," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 564.

⁴ J. Gresham Machen, "What is the Gospel," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 132.

***Thoughts or Comments
on this issue of the WRS
Journal?***

By all means feel free to submit letters to our editor! Letters should be limited to 300 words, and either type-written or sent electronically. See our contact information on the inside front cover.

Thank you!

ENCOURAGEMENT

THE PRINCETON SEMINARY CURRICULUM¹

BENJAMIN BRECKINRIDGE
WARFIELD²

Editor's note: This famous essay by B. B. Warfield not only explains the philosophy of the Old Princeton curriculum, but it also is an apology for classical theological education for the ministry. It is the same high view of the gospel ministry that motivates Western Reformed Seminary and its students and supporters. Although written nearly a hundred years ago, this essay's defense of thorough ministerial training in the academic disciplines related to Scripture study is more timely than ever. -JAB

Much of the confusion into which opinion as to the proper curriculum of a theological seminary is apparently drifting, seems to arise from altering, or perhaps we would better say varying, conceptions of the functions of the ministry for which the theological seminary is intended to provide a training. A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training necessary for it. A rationalistic view of the functions of the ministry entails a corresponding conception of the training which fits for it. An evangelical view of the functions of the ministry demands a consonant training for that ministry. And a high view of the functions of the ministry on evangelical lines inevitably produces a high conception of

the training which is needed to prepare men for the exercise of these high functions. Our Episcopalian brethren are complaining bitterly of the difficulties they are experiencing in obtaining candidates for orders with anything like adequate equipment. They may enact canons galore requiring real and precise tests to be applied. What they find impossible is to convince either examiners or examined that these tests should be seriously applied. They do not see the use of it, when all that is required of the clergy is *Ut pueris placeant et declamationes fiant*. Pretty nearly anybody seems to them "to know enough to get along in a parish." Similar difficulties are not unknown to Presbyterians. All the requirements which can be stuffed into a Form of Government will not secure that a high standard of training will be maintained, if a suspicion forms itself in the minds of

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the administrators of this Form of Government that a minister does not need such learning. And this suspicion will inevitably form itself—and harden into a conviction—if the functions of the minister come to be conceived lowly: if the minister comes to be thought of, for example, fundamentally as merely the head of a social organization from whom may be demanded pleasant manners and executive ability; or as little more than a zealous “promoter” who knows how to seek out and attach to his enterprise a multitude of men; or as merely an entertaining lecturer who can be counted upon to charm away an hour or two of dull Sabbaths; or even—for here we have, of course, an infinitely higher conception—as merely an enthusiastic Christian eager to do work for Christ. If a minister’s whole function is summed up in these or such things—we might as well close our theological seminaries, withdraw our candidates from the colleges and schools, and seek recruits for the ministry among the capable young fellows about town. The “three R’s” will constitute all the literary equipment they require; their English Bible their whole theological outfit; and zeal their highest spiritual attainment.

It has not been characteristic of the rationalistic bodies to think meanly of the functions of the minister or of the equipment requisite to fit him to perform them. Their tendency has been to treat the minister rather as an intellectual than as a religious guide; and they have rather secularized than vulgarized his training. For a hundred years, now, our Unitarian friends have been urging upon us this secularized conception of the ministerial functions and of the minister’s training. Ex-president Charles W. Eliot, of Harvard, for example, winningly commended it to

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us a quarter of a century ago in a much-talked of article in the *Princeton Review*, but was happily set right by Dr. F. L. Patton in the next number. What now attracts attention is that this secularized conception has begun to wander away from home in these last days, and to invade evangelical circles. It is a highly honored Presbyterian elder whose voice carries far over the land, who has lately told us that the proper function of the ministry is to mediate modern advances in knowledge to the people, through the churches. Were that true, the ministry would no longer be a spiritual office, but only an educational agency; and training for it should be sought not in theological seminaries, but in the universities.

He would be the best-equipped minister who had obtained the most thorough knowledge, not of the ways of God with men and the purposes of God’s grace for men, but of the most recent currents of thought and fancy which flow up and down in the restless hearts of men.

Extremes meet. Pietist and Rationalist have ever hunted in couples and dragged

down their quarry together. They may differ as to why they deem theology mere lumber, and would not have the prospective minister waste his time in acquiring it. The one loves God so much, the other loves him so little, that he does not care to know him. But they agree that it is not worth while to learn to know him. The simple English Bible seems to the one sufficient equipment for the minister, because, in the fervor of his religious enthusiasm, it seems to him enough for the renovating of the world, just to lisp its precious words to man. It seems to the other all the theological equipment a minister needs, because in his view the less theology a minister has the better. He considers him ill employed in poring over Hebrew and Greek pages, endeavoring to extract their real meaning—for what does it matter what their real meaning is? The prospective minister would, in his opinion, be better occupied in expanding his mind by contemplation of the great attainments of the human spirit, and in learning to know that social animal Man, by tracing out the workings of his social aptitudes and probing the secrets of his social movements. If the minister is simply an advance agent of modern culture, a kind of University-Extension lecturer, whose whole function it is to “elevate the masses” and “improve the social organism”—why, of course, art and literature should take the place of Greek and Hebrew, and “sociology” the place of Theology in our seminary curriculum. If the whole function of the minister is “inspirational” rather than “instructional,” and his work is finished when the religious nature of man is roused to action, and the religious emotions are set surging, with only a very vague notion of the objects to which the awakened religious affections should turn, or the ends to which

the religious activities, once set in motion, should be directed—why, then, no doubt we may dispense with all serious study of Scripture, and content ourselves with the employment of its grand music merely to excite religious susceptibilities.

Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.

But, if the minister is the mouth-piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what his will for his people—then, the whole aspect of things is changed. Then, it is the prime duty of the minister to know his message; to

know the instructions which have been committed to him for the people, and to know them thoroughly; to be prepared to declare them with confidence and with exactness, to commend them with wisdom, and to urge them with force and defend them with skill, and to build men up by means of them into a true knowledge of God and of his will, which will be unassailable in the face of the fiercest assault. No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs—to all their needs, from the moment that they are called into participation in the grace of God, until the moment when they stand perfect in God's sight, built up by his Spirit into new men. For such a ministry as this the most complete knowledge of the wisdom of the world supplies no equipment; the most fervid enthusiasm of service leaves without furnishing. Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.

How worthily our fathers thought of the ministry! And what wise provision they made for training men for it, when they set out the curriculum of their first theological seminary! This curriculum was framed with the express design that

those who pursued it should come forth from it these five things: "a sound Biblical critic"; "a defender of the Christian faith"; "an able and sound divine"; "a useful preacher and faithful pastor"; and a man "qualified to exercise discipline and to take part in the government of the Church in all its judicatories." A well-rounded minister this, one equal to the functions which belong to a minister of the New Testament order. But that we may have such ministers, we must provide such a training for the ministry as will produce such ministers. And that means nothing less than that our theological curriculum should provide for the serious mastery of the several branches of theological science. A comprehensive and thorough theological training is the condition of a really qualified ministry. When we satisfy ourselves with a less comprehensive and thorough theological training, we are only condemning ourselves to a less qualified ministry. 📖

¹ B. B. Warfield originally wrote this article as "Our Seminary Curriculum" in the *Presbyterian* (Sept 15, 1909), 7-8. It is reprinted in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. by John E. Meeter (Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), Vol. 1, 369-373. Western Reformed Seminary considers the old Princeton Seminary as part of its spiritual heritage; see the *WRS Journal* 4:2 (August, 1997): *Hodge and Princeton: A Bicentennial Reminder of Our Roots*.

² Benjamin B. Warfield was Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1887-1921.

NOTES

NOTES

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PASTOR / PREACHER

PASTORING AND PREACHING

JOHNDYCK¹

The call to the ministry is a very high calling, one which no man should dare to take upon himself. The work is more than what is humanly possible, but the Lord promises to provide for those whom he has called to that work. In this supply he also abundantly blesses the gospel labourer. It is a work which continually places a man upon his knees and makes him to know the need of wisdom, strength and power from the Lord.

PREPARATION

In pursuing a godly ministry, solid instruction in God's Word is absolutely necessary to meet the difficulties of the ministry. When the Lord calls a man into the ministry (Rom 10:15), he also prepares that man with a good understanding of all the truth God has declared (2 Tim 2:15; Titus 2:1) so that he may defend the faith (Titus 1:9). I am grateful for the good foundation I received in my years at Western Reformed Seminary. The emphasis there on the authority of God's Word and the absolute sovereignty of the Lord who does all things according to his own will has been valuable in meeting the demands and difficulties of the ministry.

PROVIDENCE

I was called to the ministry and taken under care of the Northwest Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Church; and, while waiting for the Lord's direction and for open doors to attend Western Re-

formed Seminary, I served in the Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church for a couple of years. I taught Sunday school classes, attended session meetings, preached occasionally, and served wherever I could. The Lord gave my wife and me our first two sons and then allowed us to make our way west to Vancouver, B.C., and eventually to Tacoma, Washington. During this time the Lord provided for us in many remarkable ways, including food and clothing, vehicles and gas to make them go, as well as housing. It was a time of trial and of waiting upon the Lord, a time when the Lord showed us in many special ways that he was caring for us. We also made many special friends as new relationships were established at church and among students and faculty at the seminary. It has been an honour to be co-labourers with many of these men as we have served the same Lord, though often separated by great

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distances. These friendships have been the source of trusted comfort and counsel throughout the years of ministry.

PASTORING

The Lord's providence was no less evident as I entered into the work of the ministry after I was ordained. There were doctrinal controversies brewing when I first started in the work, many of which also involved personality conflicts. One of the first tasks assigned to me by the presbytery was to write a paper to address questions that had arisen regarding biblical worship and the regulative principle. Even though this specific controversy had not been addressed in my seminary classes, the exegetical and theological training I had just completed were valuable in being able to answer objections in a way which emphasized the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

There were also financial difficulties for the church and for our family, and the Lord showed Himself to be no less faith-

ful then than he had been during the years of my classroom training.

PLANNING

What does a typical week in the ministry of the gospel look like? It is hard to think that I have ever had a typical week, but I do have plans for one! Preaching has pre-eminence in the work of the gospel, so most of my weekly activities center on preparation for the services of the Lord's Day and our Bible study on Wednesday night. I am expositional in my preaching, going through a particular book of the Bible in an ongoing series. More recently I have been preaching through the historic creeds of the church on Sunday evenings, beginning with the ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene, Athanasian, etc.) and continuing through some of the Reformed creeds. I am presently going through the instruction of the Council of Dort. This has been a challenge, as it is more topical in nature and requires a different approach in preparation.

An ideal week begins with a reflection of the previous Lord's Day and preparation for the one to come. Unless some special occasion or circumstance intervenes, my text will follow in series from the previous week. On Tuesday I begin work on the bulletin, choosing hymns and Scripture texts that will develop the themes of the coming Lord's Day. I also begin preparation on the Bible study for Wednesday night, and finish that on Wednesday. On Thursday I work on the messages for the Lord's Day. Friday is the day that seems to work best for a day off in our family schedule. On Saturday I finish the bulletins and print them, making final preparations for the

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sermons and Sunday school lessons of the following day.

Interspersed with those activities are the phone calls, counseling, and visiting which give variety to every week. Many aspects of pastoral life are not as orderly and ordered as seminary classes. The firm deadlines of Wednesday night Bible studies and Sabbath day preaching continue, but the Lord also undertakes for

In the early years of the seminary's existence, I saw men who had a godly burden to see it prosper for the sake of the ministry. They would take second jobs in order to provide for their families when the income from the seminary was not adequate to pay them fully. And they always taught with a love of the truth, the joy of the Lord being their strength.

the unexpected emergencies and questions that arise from time to time.

PREACHING

Most of this weekly work is preparation for the first day of the following week, in the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day. It is a great privilege, as well as a solemn duty, to be able to minister to the Lord's people in this way and to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus through faith alone. This message

of hope to sinners can only be proclaimed when there is confidence in the Scriptures as the very word of God, a confidence which was emphasized in my classroom days at WRS. "Preach with authority directly to the hearer" was the feedback I received after delivering my first sermon in homiletics class. The opinions of men are irrelevant if we do not start and end with what God's Word plainly says.

PERSEVERANCE

One of the practical lessons I have learned from the professors at WRS is that the Lord will see his servants through every test and trial. We are called to be faithful ambassadors of his message and he will grant daily strength and meet every need. In the early years of the seminary's existence, I saw men who had a godly burden to see it prosper for the sake of the ministry. They would take second jobs in order to provide for their families when the income from the seminary was not adequate to pay them fully. And they always taught with a love of the truth, the joy of the Lord being their strength. They had an earnest desire for the progress and growth of the students, and did not do their work as a trial or a hardship, even when there may have been only a few students in the class.

May the Lord continue to use Western Reformed Seminary to faithfully train men for the ministry and to give growth to our Bible Presbyterian churches. 

¹ John Dyck (M.Div. 1990) is pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Edmonton, Alberta. In addition, he is the stated clerk of the Bible Presbyterian Church, General Synod.

SOME OF A PASTOR'S MOST USEFUL BOOKS

STEVEN BRINEGAR¹

During my second year of seminary, I took a class called Public Speaking in the Church. One of the assignments for this class was to give a five minute speech on a book which impacted my life. In preparation for this assignment, I spent a few minutes looking at my small library and thinking, "How much do I use this book?" and "How many times do I think about this book?" The assignment did not allow, as I recall, for us to pick the Bible. After only a few minutes of thinking, I decided on the book which I would speak about: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. When Dr. Battle saw my outline to present this book, he started laughing. While not the typical book to present, I was very serious about the impact on this book on my life.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Western Reformed Seminary, I have been asked to speak about the relationship of my seminary training and my current role as a pastor. As a pastor, the only authority I have is to declare the truth of God's Word. I am to declare the whole counsel of God. The goal of my preaching is that I and those in the congregation will apply God's truth to our lives. We cannot arrive at a correct application if we do not first have the correct meaning.

This is why I chose this book and why even today I still use it weekly (if I'm teaching from the New Testament). The *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and En-*

glish Lexicon is the Old Testament resource that I utilize. Depending on the text and the week, I reference the lexicon for the important words in a text and on occasion I translate most of the passage from the original Greek or Hebrew. If I need the definition of a word, I will always turn to the lexicon as my source for that definition.

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For example, in Ps 37:5 we read "commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." What does it mean to "commit" your way to the LORD? In my New King James Bible, a footnote appears that says this word means "to roll away." I was at a complete loss as to the real meaning of the phrase, "roll your way to the Lord." So, I turned to the *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* and found the Hebrew word on page 165. Reading the entry that is found there, I noticed that this word is also used in Josh 5:9 in a figurative sense.

Joshua 5:9a says, “Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’” The Lord makes this statement on the occasion of entering the Promised Land. After 400 years, the time of being away was over. The idea is that the burden which has been upon the people, the Lord rolled off of them. This insight then helps to explain why the English translation of Ps 37:5 uses the word “commit.” We roll the burden of our way unto the Lord—we give it up wholly to him. You could pick a hiker with a heavy backpack full of equipment, finally find a resting point, and then roll off the backpack onto the ground. The imagery is lost in the translation. Too often, we commit in a half hearted way. Rather than truly “rolling our way” from us to the Lord, we hold on to it and spend a lot of time worrying. Instead, we should roll it completely from us to the Lord. This beautiful imagery is lost in the English translation.

In preparation for the Sunday sermon, I generally spend several hours reading commentaries on the text. Following this, I put together some sort of short and rough outline of the text. Then, I turn my attention to the original languages. I focus in on key words. Next, I spend some time refining the outline. After studying the text in the original, I normally change the outline considerably as new insight is gleaned from the text. I have found that having several points to a sermon helps the congregation follow along. I never attempt to have a set number of points, but instead I allow the text to tell me how many points. Furthermore, I try to develop the one overarching theme of the message. On a recent Sunday, I spoke from 2 Cor 5:9-15. I had two points answering the overall question, “Is Living for Christ

really worth it?” One of the best pieces of advice I received concerning preaching is to have only one point. Have one overarching point that the congregation will leave thinking about.

This insight then helps to explain why the English translation of Ps 37:5 uses the word “commit.” We roll the burden of our way unto the Lord—we give it up wholly to him. You could pick a hiker with a heavy backpack full of equipment, finally find a resting point, and then roll off the backpack onto the ground. The imagery is lost in the translation.... This beautiful imagery is lost in the English translation.

In sermon preparation, the original needs to play an important part in understanding the text. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, in 1:7 teaches:

“The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old,) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic;

so in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

The Confession teaches that God inspired the originals and that the text in the original is what ought to be appealed to, not an English translation. I have found it most important to appeal to the original and see the full meaning of the text in order to understand various passages. I have been at times surprised by what I see in the original. While there are many translations which do an excellent job of communicating the meaning of the original to us today and are truly the Word of God, the pastor gains much insight and understanding from studying the original languages.

While there are many translations which do an excellent job of communicating the meaning of the original to us today and are truly the Word of God, the pastor gains much insight and understanding from studying the original languages.

In my time in seminary, there were many classes which have greatly helped my preaching and pastoring. The classes in English Bible provided a framework and introduction to each of the books of the Bible. The theology courses provided the underpinnings of doctrine and showed how interconnected each area of theology is to one another. However, the

classes which I found the most helpful were the language classes.

When speaking with young men, I have often found that they dismiss the importance of the language classes. For anyone serious about being a Bible teacher, I highly recommend learning the original languages. My time in seminary was both a trial and a blessing. The real blessing came in the midst of the trial as the LORD gave strength, endurance, and understanding. Looking back, I consider my three and half years at seminary as invaluable preparation for my ministry.



¹ Steven Brinegar (M.Div. 2006) is pastor of the Columbia Bible Presbyterian Church, Scappoose, Oregon. He also is the assistant stated clerk of the Bible Presbyterian Church, General Synod.

WRS: A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR PASTORING AND PREACHING

LEONARD W. PINE¹

When the Lord first called me to the preaching ministry in 1980, I knew that I was going to need more than just an undergraduate education. A lot of the guys around me in college were eager to get into the ministry right after graduating with their B.A. in Bible, but I had the idea of seminary rather ingrained from my upbringing in the Bible Presbyterian Church under the pastorate of John Janbaz in San Bernardino, California, as well as the mentorship of my pastor in Southern Oregon, Harold Anderson. Though not pastoring a BP church or ministry, Rev. Anderson had talked long of his seminary days at Biola in the distant past, and had convinced me of the value of further training.

Then, I had the opportunity to travel on a couple of ministry teams for Bob Jones University and saw first-hand what happens when young, enthusiastic men with minimal training get into the pastorate. Many of the churches that we visited were pastored by such men. Though they were often well-loved by their people, they had little respect given to them simply because they hadn't lived through most of the life experiences common to the older people in their congregation. Their preaching also often reflected a lack of life experience and wisdom, though technically they were usually quite respectable. They made a lot of mistakes in administration, and often faced counseling situations that were simply beyond them. More than one of these

young men confided in me, some with tears, that they wished they had stayed in school for more education, training, and experience. Seeing the reality of minimally trained men trying to struggle through ministry further cemented in my mind the conviction that I needed more training.

I had been accepted in the graduate School of Religion at Bob Jones already when Rev. Janbaz called and talked to me at length about the benefits of a real seminary, not just a graduate school, for a minister of the gospel. I also began to see that a breadth of education would be helpful, in terms of being taught from more than one perspective in different schools. And, as I moved toward the ministry of a Bible Presbyterian pulpit, I came to believe that I needed to attend our Bible Presbyterian seminary, WRS. It was a choice I have not regretted. At the time, WRS was not accredited, but that did not concern me, since I had no desire to become an academic—I was interested in the pastoral ministry of the BPC. When I finished my other graduate work in speech at Bob Jones, my wife and I moved to Tacoma and I began the work.

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Clearly, Western Reformed Seminary had designed the Master of Divinity program with the aim of producing men who could handle the Word of God well. The program was heavy in original languages, theology, biblical introduction and interpretation, and church history. Keeping the studies vital was accomplished by constant and lively (read, *spirited, intense, and sometimes loud*) class discussion, times of fellowship and recreation with students and staff, and practical application in local church and presbytery ministry. My favorite classes were the Oxford-style classes in theology I had with Dr. Hascup, which stretched my mind and challenged my heart to really *know* what I believed, and moreover, to be able to defend it. My other favorite classes were all the exegetical courses in which we translated and wrestled with various books from the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Battle and Rev. Lensch had the ability to lead us through the studies with a very practical and thorough approach that challenged our often presumptuous perceptions of the texts with which we were dealing. We learned to be more than commentary preachers, and that training has stood me well in all the years of ministry since.

It took me five years to finish my three-year Master of Divinity degree, during which time I was able to work in the local churches of the Northwest Presbytery and at Heritage Christian School. The seminary's classes were thorough and helpful, and the willingness of the administration to work with a working husband's schedule was a genuine blessing. I had ample opportunity for ministry in all aspects of church life, and the coursework gave me the tools I needed to do that ministry, especially the theo-

logical tools. Since I already had degrees in Bible and speech, and an advanced degree in public speaking, the seminary worked with me to help me pay my school bills by allowing me to redesign the homiletics training the school was doing and then teach those and other classes in the practical theology department, which was expanded while I was there. While I hope that my students learned a great deal and profited from those classes, I know that I did, as the teaching opportunity helped to hone my thinking and practice in order to stay current and useful to my students.

In the trenches of church life, as a church planter and pastor, I knew how to search the Scriptures and present the whole counsel of God; knew how to find answers to previously unanswered (or unthought-of!) questions; knew how to address the needs of the people in my congregation; knew how to work within the context of a connectional church in Presbytery and Synod.

When I had the opportunity to pursue my doctoral studies in preaching a few years after graduation, the seminary further demonstrated its commitment to its students by assisting me financially to undertake the studies so that I could be a more valuable professor to the students; and along the way my own

ministry was blessed as well. I will always be grateful for the heart of the seminary administration to improve what it offers to its students—and for its support of its faculty. I have been thankful to be able to continue my teaching to the present, and look forward to it for many more years to come.

It is not possible, even in a three-year degree like the M.Div., for a school to cover everything that a man may want or need to know. But WRS gave me tools that stood me well, even when I went on for doctoral studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. There, the classes and examinations and procedures were nothing new to me. Papers, oral examinations, extensive reading, discipline to accomplish much in a little time, evaluations, lectures—all played their part. The training that I had received at Bob Jones and Western Reformed had prepared me very well for the advanced studies. And in the trenches of church life, as a church planter and pastor, I knew how to search the Scriptures and present the whole counsel of God; knew how to find answers to previously unanswered (or unthought-of!) questions; knew how to address the needs of the people in my congregation; knew how to work within the context of a connectional church in Presbytery and Synod; and knew, also, how to tap into the fellowship of the men with whom and under whom I had studied when I ran into a problem beyond my ability to immediately grasp or surmount (the greatest blessing of a dedicated seminary education, in my opinion). Of course, I have since found out that as much as I knew, it was not enough. I had to keep growing in my walk and wisdom. I think that one of the greatest blessings of my seminary work must be that it forced me

to realize that there was so much more that I did not know, and therefore I had to face all the duties and opportunities that faced me with humility and dependence upon the Lord.

The wealth of course material, practical wisdom, and the bonds of Christian fellowship and fraternity I obtained through the course of my training have stood me well through my ministry, due to excellently planned and executed training programs at these wonderful schools. But it has been the seminary education provided by WRS that has been the bedrock of my ministry. I am grateful for the dedication of the faculty of WRS to training ministers and laborers for the church, especially the Bible Presbyterian Church to which the Lord has called me. May God grant that WRS flourishes and grows as she serves the BPC for many years to come, supporting not only this denomination, but all the church of our Lord as he ordains. 📖

¹ Leonard Pine (M.Div. 1993) is a Minister of the Bible Presbyterian Church and is now the Field Representative of the Presbyterian Missionary Union. He also is an adjunct faculty member of WRS.

COUNSELING

SEMINARY AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING

ERIC LASCH¹

Since childhood I have loved and studied God's Word, but as I got older I began to realize that my understanding of Scripture was more eclectic than systematic. Not until my late thirties did I find a theological focus in Reformed theology. By my early forties, my family and I were attending the Grand Island (NY) Bible Presbyterian Church. We soon heard announcements at church about a biblical counseling course offered locally, taught by our pastor, an adjunct professor at Western Reformed Seminary. As I sat in that first introductory course, our pastor/professor Dr. Kevin Backus said one evening to the class that if you really want to be an effective counselor, you'll need to be well grounded theologically and biblically. While I doubted whether God would ever use me to counsel others, I had for several years hoped one day to receive a Reformed seminary education. In addition, I had been recently ordained as a ruling elder and I knew that to fulfill an elder's duties of caring for the flock, a seminary education would help in many ways. A few months later, I met the president of Western Reformed Seminary, Dr. John Battle, and soon thereafter decided to enroll in their distance learning, pastoral mentorship masters program for biblical counseling.

The coursework at WRS I found to be well designed to give a person interested in biblical counseling a systematic

understanding of Scripture. There were many courses: five biblically rich counseling courses, five theology courses, four Old Testament survey courses, four New Testament survey courses, four church history courses, as well as evangelism, discipleship, and hermeneutic courses. It took me four years to complete the course work, which included reading texts and classroom notes, writing papers, taking exams proctored by my mentor, and attending concentrated classes once a year. I continued to work full time and studied in the morning, evenings, and Saturdays. It was a challenge at times, but the Lord gave me strength and time to finish. By God's grace and with the full support of my pastor, wife, and daughters, in May 2005, I was awarded the degree of Master of Christian Ministry.

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In God's providence, I did become a biblical counselor, certified by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors in October 2004. In the cases that I

have encountered, it is very clear to me that Dr. Backus was absolutely right about the necessity of being well educated in theology and Scripture. So many types of issues come up every single counseling session. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the point. First, it is not uncommon for counselees to misunderstand what a certain passage means. Using what I learned in seminary, I am often able to explain a difficult passage because of understanding the context of the book, the historical setting, the purpose of the author, or even the genre of the literature. Second, believers who seek counseling are struggling with various problems, pain and turmoil, whether it be in the home, work or church. But the real issue is always buried in their heart. It may involve any number of sins, sinful thoughts, or sinful reactions; but it also includes misconceptions and misunderstandings about God, about themselves, about sin, about priorities, about marriage, about children, about emotions, or about circumstances. In order to help believers, I need to have a broad and comprehensive understanding of all of Scripture, including a good foundation in theology, in the law of God, in wisdom literature, in the gospel, in the writings of Paul, even in church history at times. The heart issues we struggle with in the 21st century are no different than any prior period of time. Scripture is timeless with excellent examples from real life, didactic instruction, common sin patterns, and hope. If we are going to effectively counsel, we must be skilled in using the best tool of all—God’s Word.

During my four years of study at WRS, I was humbled in two significant ways. First, the in-depth study of theology proper, the attributes and works of

God, of his dealings with mankind, served to deepen my view and appreciation of the one true God—and decrease my high view of me! My view of God had been too low for decades, which caused all sorts of problems in my thinking, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, the people God has placed before me to work with in the counseling center also have too low a view of God.

In order to help believers, I need to have a broad and comprehensive understanding of all of Scripture, including a good foundation in theology, in the law of God, in wisdom literature, in the gospel, in the writings of Paul, even in church history at times.

One of the things that I often find necessary to emphasize is for the counselee to gain a more lofty view of his Maker. The horizontal (human/human) problems and conflicts that we wrestle with are often rooted in the vertical (God/human)—a faulty view of God and his ways, reflecting a weak personal relationship with him. The second way I was humbled was the more I studied and learned, the more I realized how little my mind was, how little I knew, and what little capacity I had to learn. What great theologians and pastors God has raised up in the past to benefit his church to this day! My own faltering pilgrimage helps me to work gently and humbly (as opposed to

highhandedly or arrogantly) with others struggling on their path of sanctification. I often muse as I am preparing for the next session that the reason God has given me this particular counselee is because God is reminding me of my weakness in this area and granting me the gift of sanctification in the same or similar area. How can I counsel an angry husband without being reminded of my weakness in this area? How can I counsel someone depressed without remembering that I too react sinfully to circumstances I don't like? The education I was blessed to receive from WRS has paid and is paying big dividends for me spiritually and to those I counsel.

Scripture is timeless with excellent examples from real life, didactic instruction, common sin patterns, and hope. If we are going to effectively counsel, we must be skilled in using the best tool of all—God's Word.

Since graduation from Western Reformed Seminary three years ago, I continue to read widely both theological and practical counseling books. I have especially enjoyed reading Puritan literature (e.g., *A Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson, *Mortification of Sin* by John Owens, and *The Anatomy of Secret Sins* by Obadiah Sedgwick). These godly Puritan pastors clearly understood the machinations of human nature. All have a high view of God, Scripture and the

church and an equally low view of man due to his sinfulness. In addition, I have gained much insight over the years from the solid Reformed preaching in my local congregation. Such constant biblical instruction has given me a deeper understanding of myself, of God and his Word; this helps me to counsel others more effectively.

Are you interested in growing as a student of God's Word, being changed by that Word, and helping others to grow spiritually? Then consider getting advanced education at Western Reformed Seminary. Young men are usually able to go to Tacoma and study directly under the professors. Working family men should consider the distance learning program. For both groups, a seminary education will increase your ability to be used by God in the service of others. I am so thankful to my Father for the strength, time and opportunity he provided to do the seminary work, as well as the privilege of counseling other believers. 📖

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HOME MISSIONS

SEMINARY AND A HOME MISSIONARY

RICHARD PERALEZ¹

I am currently a missionary pastor serving in northeast Nebraska in a city called South Sioux City. It is hard to believe that the United States has become a mission field. Unfortunately, the “Christian” church as a whole is like the church in Sardis, which had the reputation of being alive, but in reality was dead. I graduated from Bible College in 1995 and have been in ministry since that time. Because of the challenging times in which we live, the Lord pressed upon my heart the need to be sharper in the ministry and to obtain more learning. I currently pastor a small Bible church. I am Reformed in my soteriology, premillennial, and very conservative theologically. Finding a school that was affordable, that would allow me to stay in my current ministry, and that would be like-minded was a challenge. I came across Western Reformed Seminary, which seemed to fit the bill. I enrolled at WRS two years ago in the distance learning program (the Pastoral Mentorship Program, PMP). I am currently pursuing a Masters in Theological Studies with a double minor in historical theology and biblical counseling. Most schools have strayed theologically from the historic orthodox faith and are not nouthetic in counseling (the biblical method promoted by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, NANC). This school is teaching sound doctrine and believes in the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures for counseling. Hav-

ing a NANC executive board member, Dr. Backus, in charge of the counseling program was a pleasant surprise. The seminary may not have the “bling” of most seminaries, but that was not the reason I chose to study with them. What I find here are very small classes, but the upside is that you are able to build relationships with other students and the professors better, which is a blessing. A small class also guarantees that enough time will be given for any personal questions that you may have. I find the professors to be academically stimulating, balanced, relevant, and caring for their students. Even though I am not Presbyterian, we have a common Reformed faith and a passion to serve our Lord and Savior.

The seminary has already enhanced my ministry greatly. Working in the trenches I find that the more I learn of our great Lord and Savior, the more I love him and desire to serve him. WRS has only helped to cultivate a passion for Christ.

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For example, this past year at the PMP module during a class I took called “The Life and Epistles of Paul,” I was challenged in many ways. One way was unexpected, for it happened during a side note in the class. Dr. Battle talked about how Paul taught that God rewards the “labor” in glory. It was the proper labor unto the Lord, not “the results” of the labor, that was important. I went back home encouraged in ways not expected. Being a church planter and not using worldly or pragmatic means is hard because you don’t visibly see lots of “results.” I came back even more eager to labor for the Lord.

WRS has helped in so many ways. The most important way is that it has made me sharper and more balanced in ministry. Many of the assignments can be directly incorporated into ministry and are a great blessing first to me personally and secondly to the body in the church. They allow you to go at your own pace. What I enjoy most are professors that are very smart, yet are not interested in pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge. They pursue knowledge for the sake of ultimately pursuing Christ and walking upright with him. The goal is equipping men to succeed with Christ in the ministry. My respect and admiration for the professors has grown. They are men of God and in many ways are missionaries like me. They are very accomplished men who have chosen to use their skills in this small but effective seminary for God’s glory, depending on him to raise up churches and people to provide for the seminary and their livelihood.

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WRS has helped in so many ways. The most important way is it has made me sharper and more balanced in ministry. . . . As you can see, WRS is the perfect fit for this missionary pastor. May the Lord raise up men serious about serving the Lord and holding to the historic orthodox faith. May the Lord direct many of them to WRS.

the Lord and holding to the historic orthodox faith. May the Lord direct many of them to WRS. A seminary like WRS is much needed, and I am grateful to the Lord for it! May the Lord bless the labor of WRS for the next twenty-five years!



¹ Richard Peralez currently is a student in the Pastoral Mentorship Program at WRS, and is serving as the pastor of the Siouxland Community Bible Church in South Sioux City, Nebraska, as a home missionary under the American Mission for Opening Churches.

LAY LEADERSHIP

SEMINARY TRAINING – A FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY

ROLAND L. PORTER¹

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1).

In preparing to write this article I prayed for help and then recalled reading a list of principles from which the following are drawn. There are certain principles involved in ministry, a unifying center around which we are called to build our preaching and ministry.²

- First, there must be Christian character, which is the personal foundation for ministry.
- Next comes an “attitude adjustment.” The pastor needs the attitude of a servant, a servant’s heart and mind to serve Christ and his Church.
- Next needed is love for God and God’s Church, and we also need love for a lost world. To properly minister we also need knowledge, but as Paul insisted, “The greatest of these is love.”
- Somewhere in these precepts there is sacrifice. “How much can I give?” we ask. This allows us to receive the very best God has for us.
- Submission to authority is the best way to learn how to exercise authority.

- We must always remember that our ministry is to glorify God, just as salvation is to glorify God.

I came to seminary to learn how to minister, and the dear, faithful teachers at seminary taught me that the tools of ministry are the Word of God and prayer.

The power of ministry is the Holy Spirit, and the model is Jesus the Christ. The list of principles above is not intended to be exhaustive, but to represent the more salient principles. I have found that their purpose is to ever remind us to be conscious of and guided by certain moral and ethical mores, and I hasten to add, these were graciously exemplified in character and behavior by all the members of the faculty at WRS.

Theology training is very practical in that it provides the firm foundation for ministry. Coupled with biblical interpretation, these have provided me with the ability to comprehend and share Scripture both in Bible teaching and in preaching.

In theology classes I learned that there is a necessary balance between biblical theology and systematic theology. Biblical theology goes to God’s Word in

the text and raises the question, “what did this mean to the original writer and what does it mean to the church today? Systematic theology is the study of God and is basic to true exegesis in God’s Word. Theology training is very practical in that it provides the firm foundation for ministry. Coupled with biblical interpretation, these have provided me with the ability to comprehend and share Scripture both in Bible teaching and in preaching.

In church ministry classes I learned much about visitation, the necessity of keeping in touch with those dear souls who are not physically able to attend worship services. Because of these classes I have found visitations not only helpful to those I have visited, but also they in turn have caused me to grow in compassion.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones in his book *Preaching and Preachers* states, “Preachers are born not made. This is an absolute. You will never teach a man to be a preacher if he is not already one.”³ While I believe this is true, I also believe it takes training and practice to hone the skills needed to be an effective preacher. Thanks to the patience, diligence, and perseverance of the WRS professors, I have been able to compose and deliver a sermon with a modicum of effectiveness. Learning that preaching is a science and

an art was the turning point for me in my seminary training.

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Having “stayed the course” for such an extended time (fourteen years), I see the need to do the same, because a congregation needs a pastor to “stay the course.” Paul’s words echo for me, “But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; a wide door has opened to me for effective work” (1 Cor 16:8-9).

In seminary I experienced a process of Christian maturing. This maturing became evident while visiting Remann Hall (an institution for juvenile offenders). I discovered, quite to my surprise, that I could draw on my knowledge of Scripture. This was joined with the spiritual stability, spiritual independence and confidence gained from the instruction received in class. Of special use was the knowledge of God’s attributes. Also, the verse, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5), came to mind, frequently reminding me of who I was. This highlighted for me the value of my theology courses.

Also I found strength from Heb 5:14, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” My professors brought this verse to the forefront

of my thinking, and gave me much “solid food” in the theology classes.

The course on American church history magnified how prevalent it was, and still is, to be tempted to stray from the truth into false doctrine. Hence, the necessity to cling to the truth found in God’s Word, and not try to make it say what we want it to say. This was one of the chief reasons I chose to study at WRS. At WRS the inerrant Word of God is taught, preached, and adhered to faithfully. From this I have developed a sense of confident security in following doctrines of truth I learned at seminary, and I believe this brings the power of the Holy Spirit to bear in my ministry.

Growth does not end with seminary graduation. The continuance of doctrinal study since graduation holds delightful surprises in that God’s grace, divine love, and truth become emblazoned signposts to lead me into deeper understanding of who God is. 📖

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¹ Roland Porter (Cert.C.M. 2008) is an active lay leader in the Historic Vaughn Bay Church in Vaughn, Washington.

² Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe, *Making Sense of the Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 31-46.

³ *Making Sense of the Ministry*, 107.

Study the Westminster Shorter Catechism on the web!

<http://www.bpc.org>

SEMINARY TRAINING FOR THE POLICE BEAT?

JOHN GALLE¹

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand; and it shines unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

– Matthew 5:14-16

Much has happened since I graduated from seminary in 1990—far different from my expectations at that time, but which I believe God was preparing me for even before I knew. I entered the police world late in life by most standards, eleven years ago at the age of 42, and after what I believe were 19 years in Christian education. I remember well some of the struggles as the “senior” member of my academy class and the quizzical looks of “are you out of your mind?” Even my family, while supportive, had some trepidation and concern, both for my sanity and my safety.

The realities of police work are overwhelming when you stop to consider them. The demands are 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They work when others are sleeping and sleep when others work. They miss social gatherings and events, Christmas mornings with their families; and their weekends never seem to match the normal world. The work is often crisis driven, much like an emergency room where every decision is important and may have unpredictable and serious consequences. The risks are injury, lawsuits, or even death. It is an

occupation which is constantly open to public scrutiny: police are expected to be where they are needed, unafraid in the face of danger, instantly solve any problem, and always be in control. It is emotional work—but they are not permitted to demonstrate emotion. Few other professions accept injury and death as do police, and they are reminded of it daily by the equipment they wear. They deliberately put themselves in harm’s way daily, whether it be on a traffic stop or stepping between an abuser and his victim; and THEY become targets for hate groups,

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anarchists, or gangs. August Vollmer, the father of modern policing, once stated in frustration that police are expected to “have the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of David, the strength of Samson, the

patience of Job, the diplomacy of Lincoln, the tolerance of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and finally, an intimate knowledge of every branch of the natural, biological, and social sciences.” In reality, it would be hard to find a job more written about and less understood than that of a police officer. Their world has been scrutinized by writers, playwrights, Hollywood producers, politicians, and the press; yet the world knows little of the world they occupy. Men and women enter the field filled with idealism and a desire to solve crime and make this a better world. After five years they often feel like the best they can do is to maintain order and try to hold the line. They are filled with negativity: the judicial system doesn’t work, criminals have the advantage, and victims are re-victimized. They see themselves unappreciated by the community they try to serve, hounded by the local politicians, and scrutinized by the media which is more interested in scandal than in the thousands of everyday acts of courage. And then they are expected to take off the uniform, open the door and say “Hi, honey, I’m home.” Job satisfaction is often low, divorce rates high; suicide and self destructive behaviors are not uncommon.

While daunting, the need to demonstrate a biblical lifestyle is enormous. We see people and the consequences of sin at its worst. We deal constantly with the results of poor choices and the hopelessness of temporal things. We are often cast into the position of counselor, confessor, advisor, surrogate parent, or mentor. In some senses, the job is a mission field in itself. A pastor friend and I were recently talking about our similar backgrounds yet divergent careers, when we came to the conclusion that we often deal with the

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same people and circumstances, but from differing perspectives. I remember an occasion several years ago transporting a prisoner in the early morning hours. I had my radio on a Christian music station and he began to share with me how he had recently come to Christ through the witness of a jail chaplain and asked me to pray for him as he struggled with numerous “demons” in his life. As officers, we certainly have opportunities to demonstrate compassion, integrity, and Christian character to those we come in contact with. But beyond this, Christians understand that their hope and trust is not in this world’s systems, but only in the work of Christ. One evening I was returning from booking someone into jail, knowing that he would probably be back out on the street before I finished my report, when I was reminded of the psalmist bemoaning the seeming prosperity of the evildoer. I’ve also felt the frustration of seeing someone escape justice in court

because of a legal technicality. At times like this we are reminded that the psalmist always concluded with trust in the justice and righteousness of God.

As a Christian, I find myself daily challenged in ways that I have never faced before, working in a largely non-Christian environment, but serving a community in ways that others could not. I also find myself learning to apply lessons with difficulty—lessons I had often taught so glibly to others. As a “person of faith,” I have often been viewed with suspicion by coworkers, and frequently challenged to compromise principle. Even as a Christian, it is easy to fall into the trap of self reliance and not realize our crucial and

I am thankful for the grounding in God’s Word I received at seminary and believe it provided the foundation for my work today. I am also thankful for the lessons of my teachers and their mentorship in my life to give me perspective and encouragement.

God-given role. On one occasion early in my career I had to take a very difficult stand on an issue that put me in opposition to fellow officers, but it was a stand that established the importance of integrity and value of Christian principle in my life, a position for which I later earned respect, if not agreement. During this time I often thought of Christians we had stud-

ied in church history classes, who had stood on principle and died for their faith, and how little the opposition I faced compared. But I am also reminded of the lesson of the beatitudes, that we are salt and light—not that we become salt and light—that we are already salt and light to the world by our calling. And since we are salt and light, we can’t be hidden, even if we want to be. In this, I am thankful for the grounding in God’s Word I received at seminary and believe it provided the foundation for my work today. I am also thankful for the lessons of my teachers and their mentorship in my life to give me perspective and encouragement. Luther wrote that “every man in his office must be useful and beneficial to the rest, that so many kinds of work may all be united into one community, just as the members of the body serve one another.” Whether as pastor, teacher or police officer, God has called us to serve him. In each new challenge, I have valued the preparation I have received. 

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS FOR WESTERN REFORMED SEMINARY

TITOLYRO¹

It is hard to believe that it has already been twelve years since I graduated from Western Reformed Seminary. It seems like it was just yesterday that Allister Stone, Joshua Musyoka, Mark Baldwin, and I roamed the hallowed halls at Western Reformed. The countless hours of ping pong with professor Chris Lensch teaching all of us lessons in humility, Dr. Battle's jokes after which he would almost die of laughing at himself, Dr. Backus's counseling classes at the speed of light, and having top ramen every single day for lunch and dinner are still so fresh in my mind. But so are the invaluable lessons that I learned in seminary that have been so helpful to my ministry.

Since graduating from WRS, my ministry has been focused on two fields: pastoring a local church and leading a Christian school. The training I received at Western Reformed equipped me to be faithful to the Lord in both of these fields. For the remainder of this article I am going to focus on the impact that the years at WRS have had on my pastoring a local church because that is my present vocation.

I serve the Lord as the pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Olympia, Washington. My week revolves around seven activities: teaching Sunday

school, preaching morning and afternoon sermons on the Lord's Day, leading a college-age group, counseling, leading a teenage boys book study, teaching the Wednesday evening Bible study, and being involved in one of three aspects of denominational life (the presbytery or synod, the Presbyterian Missionary Union, and WRS). Besides these scheduled activities, there are always unexpected needs that pop up each week.

I realized that the professors were doorkeepers, as it were, opening up the wonders of theological knowledge. I was introduced to Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Schaff, Bruce, Metzger, Berkhof, Adams—all men that I fell in love with and continue to study to this day.

As I look at these areas of ministry, I find it hard to isolate which class helps in which area because each discipline I studied at WRS goes hand in hand with the next as an integrated whole. For example, the counseling classes I took obviously help when I am sitting across the table from a family of the church, but so do the theology classes because there is no good counseling unless we are able to present God in his fullness. Or, one may think of the impact that

church history can have on one's preaching. Yet, it doesn't stop there. It also helps me sift through all the aberrant teaching that is currently infesting the church because, somewhere, somebody has already dealt with it. Thus, I am able to stand on the shoulders of greater men than I am in serving Christ's church.

One area on which I can easily see the impact of my seminary education is my love for studying. During the three years it took for me to finish seminary, I was barely able to scratch the surface of learning, and that was frustrating at times. I eventually came to terms with that as I realized that the professors were doorkeepers, as it were, opening up the wonders of theological knowledge. I was introduced to Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Schaff, Bruce, Metzger, Berkhof, Adams—all men that I fell in love with and continue to study to this day. I don't think I would have developed this passion for theological knowledge, nor would I know where to go to get it, if it wasn't for the faculty of WRS.

Another area that had a great impact on me and thusly on my ministry was the seminary's faculty's passion for biblical languages. While I was at WRS, several seminaries on the West Coast dropped biblical languages as a requirement for the Master of Divinity program. Not at WRS, and I am thankful for that. I use the biblical language skills I learned in seminary almost on a daily basis (though Hebrew is still very painful for me, sorry Mr. Lensch) and I think my preaching and counseling are better because of it. Thanks to this emphasis at WRS, I don't have to succumb to the tyranny of commercial translations, as

Tom Lyon, my Advanced Greek instructor, used to say.

The last area of impact I would like to mention is my homiletics training. Despite having to read Virgil Anderson's book (which cured me of any insomnia problems I might have had), these classes were the most beneficial for me because they stretched me the farthest. Professor Len Pine mandated that we conform to very particular styles as we progressed through the different levels of homiletics. At the time his requirements angered me because I could not see the importance of doing things in ways that seemed so artificial to me. Now when I think back on those classes, I realize that Dr. Pine's requirements actually brought together all the elements of my seminary education, synthesizing thereby the pastor I have become and continue to become.

I truly can say that I would not be able to do what I do on a weekly basis if it wasn't for the training I received at Western Reformed Seminary. May the Lord grant this great institution another 25 years of faithful service in the Bible Presbyterian Church. 📖

¹ Tito Lyro (M.Div. 1996) is the pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Olympia, Washington. He also is an adjunct instructor in theology and Bible at WRS.

INTERNET MINISTRY

THE TREASURES OF SEMINARY

LAURIE COPELAND¹

Receiving a Reformed seminary education is an indescribable privilege. If a military academy exists for Christians, perhaps seminary is that setting. Years of rigorous studying, preparing for exams, reading weighty textbooks, writing long papers, and attending lectures are a costly sacrifice; but it is not labor done in vain. Acquiring knowledge renders a reward. “For the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Prov 3:14-15). To obtain knowledge is more valuable than precious jewels and will place a garland upon your head.

Seminary’s central role is to prepare godly men for the ministry of the Word and sacraments, but also serves another purpose. According to Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, “Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow men.”² A theological institution remaining faithful to orthodox Protestantism equips the student for every good work. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). In my seminary studies, I learned the importance of proper teaching. “Buy truth, and do

not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (Prov 23:23). There are many Scriptures describing the need for the study of the Scriptures. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Seeking knowledge is a noble charge.

According to Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, “Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavors to proclaim the gospel to his fellow men.”² A theological institution remaining faithful to orthodox Protestantism equips the student for every good work.

In my studies of biblical interpretation, I learned the value of becoming acquainted with a variety of subjects in the application of Scripture. Seminary teaches the necessity of understanding the orthodox doctrines, the study of the ancient creeds, and church history. Discovering

the importance of doctrine, I learned its purpose in the proclamation of the gospel and for giving a defense of the truth. Christianity is not merely a way of life, but as Machen describes, Christianity is “a life founded on a doctrine.”³ Learning these doctrines has taught me the difference between the law and the gospel. A variety of subjects constitutes a seminary education. Through the studies of the orthodox creeds, I learned the teaching of Scripture. Machen defines creeds as, “Summaries of what the Bible tells us about the facts and promises upon which Christian experience is based.”⁴ Creeds also serve the purpose of refuting heresy. The term creed comes from the Latin term *credo*, meaning simply “I believe.” We observe several creeds employed throughout Scripture: “Simon Peter replied ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt 16:16). “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28). Learning the creeds allows me to witness to others with an accurate understanding of what the Bible says. In my testimony of Christ, I am able to recall particular subjects from the creeds and questions from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, which aid me in declaring the gospel.

A Seminary education includes reading the writings of authors from nearly every era, beginning from the first century through the present. Reading various books for each class, I found most of the authors to be enjoyable. Of those, John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* continues to be a resource that I employ in my witness to others. Finishing the first edition when he was just twenty-six, Calvin furnished a magnificent theological masterpiece. Beginning with the notable prefatory to the King of

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France, Francis I, Calvin presented an earnest request for the Protestant faith. Calvin wrote the *Institutes* with the outline of the Apostle’s Creed; the work consists of four books, and in its several editions reflects Calvin’s lifetime work. Commonly known for its remarkable logical structure, Calvin’s message is clear and brief, a benefit to any reader. Learning that nearly all knowledge is comprised of two elements, knowledge of God and of self, Calvin demonstrated that arriving at the knowledge of God largely comes through a sight of one’s own sin in light of God’s holy majesty. Reading some of the works of the church fathers such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, John Murray, and Cornelius Van Til, I am supplied with answers to refute the misinformation of modern Christianity. Becoming acquainted with notable authors and classic books is the result of a quality education and is further useful in my witness and presentation of the gospel.

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cation permits me to minister to people from various countries via the internet, through websites and email. Receiving email from all sorts of groups around the world, people are able to utilize my web links as a resource. Although the creation of a new website is in progress, my education has contributed to one of my older sites, which continues to witness the truth of Jesus Christ. With the ability to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, the internet is serving to reach countries where the dominant religion is Muslim and to places where the name of Christ is unknown.

Answering questions and providing encouragement to those I meet has become more effective because of my theological studies. In my witness to Christ, I am better equipped to proclaim the gospel and defend the faith. I am more suited to interact with other religions and even cults in my preparation to make a defense to anyone who asks me for a reason for the hope that is in me (1 Pet 3:15).

Christian scholarship through a seminary education provides a reward greater than any earthly treasures. The study of Scriptures and pursuance of knowledge renders an imperishable crown. My experience in seminary was one of the most joyful experiences in my life and is now being fruitful and effective in my life and ministry. God's Word is faithful to all generations (Ps 119:90). 

¹ Laurie A. P. Copeland (M.R.S. 2008) maintains an active internet web ministry. She also teaches a women's class at the Hillcrest Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington, in addition to discipling several women and children.

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² J. Gresham Machen, "Christian Scholarship and Evangelism," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (P & R Publishing, 2004), 137-138.

³ J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity in Conflict," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 564.

⁴ J. Gresham Machen, "What is the Gospel," in D. G. Hart, ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 132.

***Thoughts or Comments
on this issue of the WRS
Journal?***

By all means feel free to submit letters to our editor! Letters should be limited to 300 words, and either type-written or sent electronically. See our contact information on the inside front cover.

Thank you!

ENCOURAGEMENT

THE PRINCETON SEMINARY CURRICULUM¹

BENJAMIN BRECKINRIDGE
WARFIELD²

Editor's note: This famous essay by B. B. Warfield not only explains the philosophy of the Old Princeton curriculum, but it also is an apology for classical theological education for the ministry. It is the same high view of the gospel ministry that motivates Western Reformed Seminary and its students and supporters. Although written nearly a hundred years ago, this essay's defense of thorough ministerial training in the academic disciplines related to Scripture study is more timely than ever. -JAB

Much of the confusion into which opinion as to the proper curriculum of a theological seminary is apparently drifting, seems to arise from altering, or perhaps we would better say varying, conceptions of the functions of the ministry for which the theological seminary is intended to provide a training. A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training necessary for it. A rationalistic view of the functions of the ministry entails a corresponding conception of the training which fits for it. An evangelical view of the functions of the ministry demands a consonant training for that ministry. And a high view of the functions of the ministry on evangelical lines inevitably produces a high conception of

the training which is needed to prepare men for the exercise of these high functions. Our Episcopalian brethren are complaining bitterly of the difficulties they are experiencing in obtaining candidates for orders with anything like adequate equipment. They may enact canons galore requiring real and precise tests to be applied. What they find impossible is to convince either examiners or examined that these tests should be seriously applied. They do not see the use of it, when all that is required of the clergy is *Ut pueris placeant et declamationes fiant*. Pretty nearly anybody seems to them "to know enough to get along in a parish." Similar difficulties are not unknown to Presbyterians. All the requirements which can be stuffed into a Form of Government will not secure that a high standard of training will be maintained, if a suspicion forms itself in the minds of

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the administrators of this Form of Government that a minister does not need such learning. And this suspicion will inevitably form itself—and harden into a conviction—if the functions of the minister come to be conceived lowly: if the minister comes to be thought of, for example, fundamentally as merely the head of a social organization from whom may be demanded pleasant manners and executive ability; or as little more than a zealous “promoter” who knows how to seek out and attach to his enterprise a multitude of men; or as merely an entertaining lecturer who can be counted upon to charm away an hour or two of dull Sabbaths; or even—for here we have, of course, an infinitely higher conception—as merely an enthusiastic Christian eager to do work for Christ. If a minister’s whole function is summed up in these or such things—we might as well close our theological seminaries, withdraw our candidates from the colleges and schools, and seek recruits for the ministry among the capable young fellows about town. The “three R’s” will constitute all the literary equipment they require; their English Bible their whole theological outfit; and zeal their highest spiritual attainment.

It has not been characteristic of the rationalistic bodies to think meanly of the functions of the minister or of the equipment requisite to fit him to perform them. Their tendency has been to treat the minister rather as an intellectual than as a religious guide; and they have rather secularized than vulgarized his training. For a hundred years, now, our Unitarian friends have been urging upon us this secularized conception of the ministerial functions and of the minister’s training. Ex-president Charles W. Eliot, of Harvard, for example, winningly commended it to

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us a quarter of a century ago in a much-talked of article in the *Princeton Review*, but was happily set right by Dr. F. L. Patton in the next number. What now attracts attention is that this secularized conception has begun to wander away from home in these last days, and to invade evangelical circles. It is a highly honored Presbyterian elder whose voice carries far over the land, who has lately told us that the proper function of the ministry is to mediate modern advances in knowledge to the people, through the churches. Were that true, the ministry would no longer be a spiritual office, but only an educational agency; and training for it should be sought not in theological seminaries, but in the universities.

He would be the best-equipped minister who had obtained the most thorough knowledge, not of the ways of God with men and the purposes of God’s grace for men, but of the most recent currents of thought and fancy which flow up and down in the restless hearts of men.

Extremes meet. Pietist and Rationalist have ever hunted in couples and dragged

down their quarry together. They may differ as to why they deem theology mere lumber, and would not have the prospective minister waste his time in acquiring it. The one loves God so much, the other loves him so little, that he does not care to know him. But they agree that it is not worth while to learn to know him. The simple English Bible seems to the one sufficient equipment for the minister, because, in the fervor of his religious enthusiasm, it seems to him enough for the renovating of the world, just to lisp its precious words to man. It seems to the other all the theological equipment a minister needs, because in his view the less theology a minister has the better. He considers him ill employed in poring over Hebrew and Greek pages, endeavoring to extract their real meaning—for what does it matter what their real meaning is? The prospective minister would, in his opinion, be better occupied in expanding his mind by contemplation of the great attainments of the human spirit, and in learning to know that social animal Man, by tracing out the workings of his social aptitudes and probing the secrets of his social movements. If the minister is simply an advance agent of modern culture, a kind of University-Extension lecturer, whose whole function it is to “elevate the masses” and “improve the social organism”—why, of course, art and literature should take the place of Greek and Hebrew, and “sociology” the place of Theology in our seminary curriculum. If the whole function of the minister is “inspirational” rather than “instructional,” and his work is finished when the religious nature of man is roused to action, and the religious emotions are set surging, with only a very vague notion of the objects to which the awakened religious affections should turn, or the ends to which

the religious activities, once set in motion, should be directed—why, then, no doubt we may dispense with all serious study of Scripture, and content ourselves with the employment of its grand music merely to excite religious susceptibilities.

Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.

But, if the minister is the mouth-piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what his will for his people—then, the whole aspect of things is changed. Then, it is the prime duty of the minister to know his message; to

know the instructions which have been committed to him for the people, and to know them thoroughly; to be prepared to declare them with confidence and with exactness, to commend them with wisdom, and to urge them with force and defend them with skill, and to build men up by means of them into a true knowledge of God and of his will, which will be unassailable in the face of the fiercest assault. No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs—to all their needs, from the moment that they are called into participation in the grace of God, until the moment when they stand perfect in God's sight, built up by his Spirit into new men. For such a ministry as this the most complete knowledge of the wisdom of the world supplies no equipment; the most fervid enthusiasm of service leaves without furnishing. Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.

How worthily our fathers thought of the ministry! And what wise provision they made for training men for it, when they set out the curriculum of their first theological seminary! This curriculum was framed with the express design that

those who pursued it should come forth from it these five things: "a sound Biblical critic"; "a defender of the Christian faith"; "an able and sound divine"; "a useful preacher and faithful pastor"; and a man "qualified to exercise discipline and to take part in the government of the Church in all its judicatories." A well-rounded minister this, one equal to the functions which belong to a minister of the New Testament order. But that we may have such ministers, we must provide such a training for the ministry as will produce such ministers. And that means nothing less than that our theological curriculum should provide for the serious mastery of the several branches of theological science. A comprehensive and thorough theological training is the condition of a really qualified ministry. When we satisfy ourselves with a less comprehensive and thorough theological training, we are only condemning ourselves to a less qualified ministry. 📖

¹ B. B. Warfield originally wrote this article as "Our Seminary Curriculum" in the *Presbyterian* (Sept 15, 1909), 7-8. It is reprinted in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. by John E. Meeter (Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), Vol. 1, 369-373. Western Reformed Seminary considers the old Princeton Seminary as part of its spiritual heritage; see the *WRS Journal* 4:2 (August, 1997): *Hodge and Princeton: A Bicentennial Reminder of Our Roots*.

² Benjamin B. Warfield was Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1887-1921.

NOTES

NOTES

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