

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

THEME

**Church Matters
Ministry Matters**

Toronto Baptist Seminary
Scholarship for the Church



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Editor Dr. Glendon G. Thompson
General Editor Dr. Christopher W. Crocker
Managing Editor Daniel G. Morden
Editor-at-Large Kirk M. Wellum

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Editorial

Throughout 2025, the *Gospel Witness* has explored Acts, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. Quarterly, we've seen:

February: a summary of Acts; how Acts 7 provides a thesis for understanding the book, the Gospel in Acts and why the writings of Luke are reliable;

May: Revival, its history and characteristics; the Holy Spirit in the Tanakh; a Pentecost sermon and salvation in Acts;

August: a biblical theology of the Spirit; conversionism; the searching, comprehending, teaching Spirit; and a testimony of credo-baptism.

The November issue begins with Principal Wellum offering his insights into the future of theological education in Canada. With rising costs and hybrid models of education, what will this education look like? With insights from ARTS (Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries) and other forums, Wellum offers his perspective. As many veteran pastors have done a good job of informing the coming generations of men how difficult pastoral ministry can be, Nathan Nadeau of Jarvis Street Baptist Church balances this by considering some of the deep joys of ministry. Thirdly, and reaching back to the *Gospel Witness* from 1982, we present a "From the Archives" special article from 1952. Here, a seasoned T. T. Shields preaches on the hallmarks of the pastoral office. Finally, I offer an historical-theological sketch of Gender and the Pastoral Office, which is important as once well-guarded strongholds of complementarianism come under pressure to conform.

In 2026, our theme will be apocalyptic literature and eschatology. Anticipate articles on Daniel, the Olivet Discourse, Revelation and more. Our *Gospel Witness* year will follow our typical pattern: biblical studies; biblical theology; history, theology, and ethics; and lastly,

church life and issues. As you can imagine, these categories paired with our theme will make for some interesting—and God willing, useful—articles.

We hope that the Gospel Witness continues to edify and interest you. If you have any suggestions for themes, would like to contribute or would like to encourage others to subscribe, please visit <https://tbs.edu/the-gospel-witness>. A new online repository of past issues will also be launched soon.

Dr. Christopher. W. Crocker,
General Editor

The Pastors Shortage and Theological Education

KIRK WELLUM

Principal, Toronto Baptist Seminary

ABSTRACT: *In this opinion piece, the intersection between pastoral shortages and theological education is explored. The issue, towards a solution and the blessings are covered through the lens of years of pastoral and academic experience in a Canadian setting.*

KEYWORDS: *pastoral shortage, theological education, challenges, blessings*

PART ONE: THE CHALLENGE

In the May/June issue of *Faith Today*, Rick Hiemstra, the Director of Research and Media Relations at The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), wrote an article titled, “Waking Up to the Pastor Shortage.” Five months later, I was invited to join what was called The Pipeline Symposium, a meeting of pastors, denominational leaders, and theological educators, to discuss how the coming shortage of pastors developed and what could be done about it.

According to Hiemstra, over the next twelve years, half of Canadian evangelical small-church pastors will reach retirement age because they are members of the Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964. This means that if we assume ten thousand evangelical congregations in Canada, with an average of 1.5 pastors per congregation, and if they retire at age sixty-five, evangelicalism in Canada will need 625 new pastors each year over the next twelve years to replace those retiring, not accounting for other reasons evangelical pastors might leave their ministries.

If this projection is correct, and even if it is less severe than anticipated, it suggests that we currently lack enough pastors to fill the gap, especially Canadian pastors who were trained and reside here. This raises the question, why?

One reason is that many students entering seminary today choose to study counselling rather than pastoral studies. This shift began in the 1980s when counselling was first introduced into seminary training. Since then, the growth of counselling has paralleled a decline in pastoral studies that prepare men for the Christian ministry. The Master of Divinity, which is the primary qualification for aspiring pastors, has been overshadowed by degrees specializing in counselling. At first glance, this might not seem problematic because pastors counsel their congregations; however, pastoral ministry involves much more than counselling, and proper preparation for ministry encompasses many fields of study that are integral to the Master of Divinity degree.

There is also a trend toward “second-career” pastors, who pursue pastoral ministry in their 40s or 50s. These older individuals often take longer to complete their seminary training because they are occupied with other commitments, such as employment and family. When they graduate, their pastoral ministries tend to be shorter because they are older when they begin their roles. Additionally, they are less likely to be hired as lead pastors in established congregations seeking younger pastors or older men with greater pastoral experience. While God can call men to serve as pastors at various ages, and we are thankful for those who answer His call, we need to address the shortage of younger men being trained for pastoral ministry. Merely increasing the number of older pastors is not a sustainable long-term solution.

Several factors influence this situation. In our secular Canadian culture, the Christian ministry often lacks social prestige, which young men must learn to accept. Additionally, theological education is costly, and young men can rarely afford to take on significant debt because full-time ministry work, especially in urban areas, does not always pay well. Many Christian seminaries wisely avoid accepting funding from

government sources, including student loans, to prevent government interference in their operations, admissions, and curricula. However, the lack of government financial aid means prospective students must rely more heavily on private scholarships and bursaries, which are not always easily accessible.

But perhaps more significant than any of these factors, which have always existed in some form, is the decline in the church—both in leadership and membership—that strongly encourages young men to prayerfully consider God’s call on their lives regarding pastoral service. Calling has become increasingly personal and linked to individual authenticity, leading parents and others to ask young people what they want to do rather than what God desires for their lives. Ministry, especially pastoral ministry, is not a priority for many Christian parents or even potential marriage partners. It is challenging and can threaten financial security. The high cost of housing (whether buying or renting) has become unaffordable, especially in urban areas, so worried parents and their significant others tend to discourage their sons and spouses from pursuing other careers.

Additionally, several ideological, political, and sociological factors warrant attention. The first is the widespread use of social media and the rise of pseudo-expert theologians. Social media enables the dissemination of all kinds of nonsense, including biblical and theological falsehoods, all presented as “truth.” To be sure, there is much excellent material online if one is discerning and knows what to look for, but the algorithms often suggest content that, while it may get many clicks, is not always edifying. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of which expert group people trusted, leading to significant disruptions across many churches and ministries. More recently, the gospel has become increasingly politicized and, as a result, distorted by those who could benefit significantly from an introductory course in hermeneutics and eschatology before making dogmatic claims.

This has led to widespread criticism of pastors by the “sheep,”

referring to church members who spend excessive time on Substack, X, or YouTube. Rather than showing respect for those who work hard to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15), they adopt the rhetoric of online teachers and criticize and dismiss their pastors’ teaching. As my wife has noted more than once, “What young person would want to be a pastor if they have grown up in such an environment and have seen this kind of ministerial abuse?” The failure to respect and honour those who labour in the Scriptures on their behalf might seem justifiable to those who become highly motivated by what they hear online. Still, their approach and often bombastic words conflict with the gospel and the church’s unique role in the world, not to mention the gentleness and patience required of new covenant pastors (2 Tim. 2:22–26).

PART TWO: TOWARD A SOLUTION

How do church leaders and congregations address the shortage of pastors? How can we encourage young men to enroll in programs of study such as the Bachelor of Theology and the Master of Divinity? How can we motivate them to begin in their twenties rather than later? How can we help them recognize that a pastoral preaching ministry is highly esteemed by God and critical to the church’s growth and maturity? How can we support and encourage them financially? And how can we prepare them biblically and theologically, while we strengthen them spiritually and emotionally to be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10)?

First, churches and their leaders must carefully and prayerfully identify potential future leaders. Those selected should, at a minimum, receive in-house biblical and theological training, and, in many cases, additional, more extensive, seminary education if they aim to serve as teaching pastors, elders, or Christian missionaries locally or internationally.

When seminary training is needed, serious consideration should be given to local institutions. Sending young people abroad for training, whether in person or online, is less than ideal because students may

lose contact with their home churches and pastoral leaders, who are essential to their personal and spiritual development.

In Canada, for instance, the lack of local pastoral training often leads students to pursue theological education in the U.S., resulting in more extended absences from their home congregations and weaker ties to the Canadian church. They are also more likely to seek relationships and employment opportunities that encourage them to remain in the United States. Supporting Canadian seminaries helps keep future pastors connected to Canada, which is crucial to the church's domestic growth. It also connects students with Canadian pastors, churches, and denominations, fostering networks that support their ministries.

Second, churches and individual Christians must respond to the financial challenge facing Christian evangelical seminaries and their students. Maintaining conservative theological education will require substantial financial support. Without assistance from churches and the broader Christian community, future pastors might resort to government-funded seminaries that teach theological liberalism or to well-funded independent seminaries that promote idiosyncratic and frequently divisive doctrines that do not align well with mainstream historic Christianity.

For example, compared with a seminary such as Toronto Baptist Seminary, government-funded seminaries or those supported by large foreign church denominations or funding agencies have significantly greater financial resources. As a result, they can pay professors higher salaries and provide more research opportunities, increasing their academic influence. They charge tuition fees that are comparable to or slightly lower than those of colleges and universities covered by the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), making them more financially attractive to students. This, however, does not mean that the education they provide is suitable for the unique Canadian Christian and cultural context.

Financial support beyond tuition, along with generous aid from Christian donors, is crucial for maintaining conservative theological education. It also allows faculty to participate more effectively in

Canadian Christian scholarship, which requires all the support it can get. Seminaries are specialized Christian ministries that should work together with local churches to help them fulfill the Great Commission, given by our Lord Jesus Christ, the true and only head of the church, to teach everything He has commanded (Matt 28:19–20).

Third, we need to carefully assess the content and delivery methods of theological education itself. Regarding content, extensive surveys of the Old Testament and New Testament are necessary to help future pastors develop a comprehensive understanding of the Scriptures. Theology should encompass biblical, historical, and systematic theology. Advanced homiletics is essential for equipping preachers and teachers to deliver God's word clearly and engagingly. The study of biblical languages will include Hebrew and Greek, with Latin and other languages available for those pursuing advanced degrees or serving in cross-cultural contexts. Courses in pastoral theology and leadership development are vital for those called to shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28–31). Church history, apologetics, ethics, and counselling complement a balanced academic and practical program at the MDiv level, grounding pastors in God's past work and preparing them to instruct those who doubt, those seeking to live a life pleasing to God, and those wanting to help others know, love, and serve the Lord. By God's grace, TBS can provide quality instruction in all of these areas, even though we are a smaller church-based seminary.

Fourth, over the past five years, TBS, like nearly all post-secondary institutions, has rapidly expanded its online offerings because they open opportunities for students who cannot spend years relocating to attend a seminary or hours navigating urban traffic to attend lectures and participate in other parts of a comprehensive theological program. This is beneficial because it enables us to reach students worldwide. However, despite these advantages, online learning also brings significant challenges. Online students miss out on the community aspect of seminary life. While they can connect virtually, it's never quite the same as being there in person. Providing spiritual guidance

from afar is also tricky, as is maintaining academic and personal standards. In my experience, churches rarely request a potential pastor's academic transcript, but they consistently ask about who they are as individuals and leaders—something hard to evaluate online. Some institutions are exploring solutions such as “hubs,” similar to what were once called “extension centres,” which may prove helpful. Still, whether these can replace the in-person classroom experience and the personal interaction it involves remains to be seen. This is where a close working relationship between the seminary, the student, and a local church, along with its leadership team and congregation, is invaluable. More effort is needed to involve seminary students in church life. In Toronto, TBS requires all residential students to complete “fieldwork” at a local church. This needs further development so that, wherever a student is located in the world, they are simultaneously part of a strong Christian congregation.

Fifth, the increasing reliance on artificial intelligence also presents challenges. When students, professors, and pastors depend on AI to compose their papers, lectures, or sermons, this raises significant concerns. Today, we need leaders who have a personal relationship with God rather than relying on a computer. We need Christians who connect directly with the Lord Jesus and through whom the Holy Spirit demonstrates His power. We need leaders who wrestle with the Scriptures and pray to the triune God as they consider how to teach and interpret His inscripturated revelation for those they serve. This is another area in which online instruction and interaction can impede genuine learning and memorization. No matter how advanced AI becomes, it can never replace what only God can do through the preaching, prayers, service, and hard work of his people. Future pastors must learn to read and write; they must learn to think God's thoughts after him. God blesses his faithful servants, not ridiculously expensive machines, when it comes to doing his work in his way. While AI may eliminate other jobs, it will not eliminate the need for Christian preachers and pastors, and this is a message we must communicate to young men, along with the challenge to step out in faith, work hard,

and trust the Lord.

Finally, today, in addition to a variety of denominations, there is an increasing number of non-denominational churches. Traditionally, churches preferred their pastors to attend seminaries aligned with their doctrinal beliefs. However, not all churches belong to denominations that maintain their own seminaries, particularly within their home countries. Moreover, many non-denominational churches have an entrepreneurial and authoritarian leadership structure, making them reluctant to support seminaries outside their control unless they can oversee the institution, its professors, and its curriculum. Provided there is substantial doctrinal agreement, existing seminaries can help train prospective pastors for denominational and non-denominational churches, thereby working to bring unity to the people of God and to provide networks that support the church wherever it is found. In this way, more pastors will be trained and available to do the work of the ministry wherever God calls them to serve.

PART THREE: THE BLESSINGS

There is nothing quite like the privilege of teaching the Scriptures and preparing fellow Christians for service in the world. All Christians are called to serve and live for the glory of God, but this does not mean that God calls everyone to serve as a preaching or teaching pastor or elder in ministry. The Lord Jesus has given pastors, elders, and overseers to His Church because He works through them to care for His people. This remains true even though the Church, as a new-covenant community, is a born-again, Spirit-filled family of believers. Until we enter into the New Heavens and New Earth, we need those whom the Lord has set apart to shepherd His flock.

The church and its pastors are entrusted with the gospel of God. While Christians, as individuals, live in this world, we engage in many activities. However, we must remember that our primary responsibility remains the same: to live out the gospel in our lives and share it whenever opportunities arise. As we do so, we must keep in

mind that the world, its governments, and institutions will never truly be “Christianized.” Salvation does not come through law, education, or financial reform. Men and women, boys and girls, must be born again through God’s life-giving power. This means Christians should focus on the New Jerusalem that will be revealed when God creates all things new. This dying world is not our forever home; one day it will be destroyed by fire and remade for God’s children.

Although few Christians are wise, influential, or of noble birth by human standards, God has chosen the foolish to shame the wise, the weak to shame the strong, the lowly and despised and things that are not to nullify the things that are. Our mission is to run the race set out for us by God, fight the good fight, and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (1 Cor. 1:26–31; Heb. 12:1–2). We are to pray for everyone and, as far as it depends on us, to make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy (1 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 12:14). These are pleasing to God our Saviour, and these things must profoundly define our lives as Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole.

The world neither knows nor understands us. But contrary to what they think, we have an essential job to do. It has never been easy, and it remains difficult today. Yes, in these days there is a shortage of pastors, and in a sense, the labourers have always been few compared to the size of the task. But we must not panic. We need to trust in God. He is on our side. We must do what God has called us to do. Let us pray and ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field (Matt. 9:37), and then let us do what we can to identify and prepare for service those whom He calls to shepherd His church.

The Wonder of Ministry

NATHAN NADEAU

Elder, Jarvis Street Baptist Church

ABSTRACT: *The notion that ministry is foreboding and hard has wide purchase among current and would-be pastors, for whom the sentiment has often become a mantra, with nary a riposte. But the mantra need not become a self-fulfilling prophecy, since beyond all else, ministry is a wonder of wonders. In pursuit of the latter conviction, this article reflects on and considers Christianity ministry as a joyful and wondrous pursuit, and a special calling “further up and further in” to the presence of God and the experience of Christ.*

KEYWORDS: *ministry, joy, wonder, discipleship, suffering, education*

INTRODUCTION

Christian ministry is many things. One often hears, for example, that it is a challenge, a burden, or a cross. This is true—and yet to live is a challenge, a burden, and a cross. We live in a fallen world, even we the redeemed bear the indelible mark of that fallenness, and Christ calls every believer to take up our cross and follow him. But life is also joy and wonder, and Christian ministry is, in many ways, a wonder of wonders.

I am not a senior pastor, nor have I clocked decades of ministry from which to draw the reflections I make below. I have been a pastor for the last decade, served in various ministries for most of the decade before that, and spent my teen years as a member of that mythical band affectionately labelled “PKs” (pastor’s kids). I say this to indicate that the reflections which follow come not only from theological conviction but also from personal experience. I believe that wonder is part and parcel of the Christian life and is uniquely experienced in

Christian ministry, and so the reflections below can serve as wind in the sails of would-be pastors, teachers, or Christian ministers who are often daunted at the “sea of troubles” they perceive ministry to be.

Do not be daunted by reports of what it will cost you—such reports are common to all walks of life. Instead, realize that if the call to ministry is your higher calling in the Lord, then it is a call to experience Christ and his blessings in a special way. Below are three reflections on this greater part of the experience ministry: its wonder and its joy.

LAKESIDE REVERIE: THE PASTOR’S OWN DISCIPLESHIP

“Now walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them: ‘follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ And they immediately left their nets and followed him” (Matt. 4:18–20).

What kind of call was our Lord’s call to discipleship? It was certainly an unprecedented one. Jesus, in his call to discipleship, cut against all contemporary figures in the history of religions. He is no mere Rabbi, no Zealot, and no peripatetic philosopher, but rather is one whose authority “wholly transcended that of contemporary apocalyptic prophets.”¹ He is one who, as it has been said, “dared to act in God’s place,” for he exists eternally as God the Son. Yet in what manner did Jesus come to those disciples by the lakeside? He did not come to them in a tempest, as God manifested himself to Job. He did not come to them in fire, dark clouds, or lightning, as God thundered on the mountain to Moses, who could only bear the train of his presence. Jesus came to the disciples in humility, as one like them and yet so unlike them. He came to them as one in whose eyes they saw the eyes of the promised one of God. He came to them as one who, yet saying little, was nonetheless manifest to all he called (John 1:41).

1 Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*. Translated by James Greig. (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 64.

Jesus proclaimed the message of the kingdom to the masses, it is true. Even so, he called select disciples. Those disciples were to make other disciples, yes (Matt. 28:16–20), but were nonetheless themselves recipients of a special calling. The same can be said of the pastor, to whom Christ comes as it were “by the lakeside” of our prior concerns and says “follow me!”

Yet how have we conceived of this special call to ministry? Is it the call of a general who moves the lines on the map only for a new front rank (you and I) to die on the field? The military illustration is not an unbiblical one. And many see the call to Christian service as a rather daunting directive which we are yet dutybound to embrace. But is this right? When we think of our calling as Christians, we have no problem attaching love, fellowship, salvation, and “mystic sweet communion” to the depths of our experience, and yet many have failed to see ministry this way. I suggest, however, that it is and must be the same for the call to ministry—which is simply a call “further up, further in” to this fellowship. I suggest that the call to ministry is akin to what might be called the reverie at the lakeside of those first disciples. Were those days of your calling, too, not a dreamlike encounter with the One for whom you would at once leave everything behind?

I would object to significant and fundamental swaths of the thought of the French-German polymath and theologian, Albert Schweitzer, who penned the following words as the climax of his famous *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Yet the reflection seems to me to capture part of the essence of the pastor’s discipleship often forgotten once the work has begun:

He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, he came to those men who knew him not. He speaks the same word, “follow thou me!”, and sets us to those tasks which he must fulfill in our time. He commands. And to those who hearken to him, whether wise or unwise, he will reveal himself in the peace, the labours, the conflicts and the suffering that they may experience in his fellowship, and as an

ineffable mystery, they will learn who he is.²

I believe that Schweitzer is wrong to portray one's relationship with Jesus as merely mystical and experiential (as opposed to revelatory, salvific, Pneumatic, etc.). And yet our relationship with Jesus is not less than this. Despite deep flaws in Schweitzer's own conception of Jesus elsewhere, he perhaps helps to enlighten our senses to the realities of that fateful calling scene in the Gospels.

Again, what is this experience? I say "reverie," because what we are left to imagine here on the part of the disciples' perception is very likely spelled out for us elsewhere: wonder and awe at the power of Jesus's authoritative words. For example, what Mark calls "great fear" at Jesus's stilling of the storm on the lake of Galilee (Mark 4:41), Matthew calls "wonder" ("they wondered/were in awe," from *thaumazein*; Matt 8:27). It is the same awe that filled the earliest band of Christians (and those around them) when, meeting daily in the temple, they witnessed the power of faith in Jesus's name as signs were done by the Spirit through the apostles (Acts 2:43, cf. Acts 3). Since this awe is ubiquitous throughout the Gospels at the authoritative words of Jesus, do we expect it was not present there at the disciples' calling, when they left all to follow?

The call to the pastorate is likewise a call into a wondersome deeper communion with Christ. What characterizes this communion? The slave-master relation is a common motif in the letters of Paul by which we conceptualize our relation to our Lord. Yet Christ's regency is one of liberation (Gal 5:1), and he calls his disciples friends: "no longer do I say that you are slaves, since the slave does not know what his Lord is doing: but I say that you are friends, for all that I have heard from my father I make known to you" (John 15:15).

The call to the pastorate is a full embrace, in the very vocation of your life, of this same deep communion with our Lord who calls you

2 Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. Translated by W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911), 401.

friend. The pastor is given a rare and unique gift as an under-shepherd to relate to the Lord in a deeper and special way that would not otherwise have been known. It is his special grace to you, and the joy and wonder of this call can be had right where you are. Christ's coming to you is as the daily approach of one whose words at once fill you with awe and wonder and excitement as they do with duty. You only must fight the superficial distractions of the "form" of your tasks in order to experience anew the one who is always calling you to do them, who still says "follow me!"

THE TRENCH: THE PASTOR AS SOLDIER

Perhaps your call to ministry is or was crisis-borne. There is likely no shortage of historical examples of ministers who took on the task somewhat begrudgingly. I do not wish the above reflection to suggest that ministry is easy or comfortable in ways we normally define ease and comfort. It is not. Then again, living is not. Indeed, it seems to be a leitmotif of the Pauline epistles that Paul's ministry is a call to sufferings various and sundry, emphasized in no greater place than his catalogue of trials in 2 Cor. 11:22-29. Yes, Paul was flogged, was often "without," was pressed-in on all sides, and so on. Yet Paul also enjoyed the hospitality of many saints (consider Lydia who prevailed upon Paul and Silas to stay in her house in Acts 16:15). Paul enjoyed late nights of close fellowship in extended teaching (e.g., Acts 20:7-12). Paul even enjoyed a fairly lengthy tenure of two years working at Ephesus and teaching daily in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:1-10); these are examples of a wider pattern. Two realities emerge from this observation, what I call the trench and the tower.

Ministry is a kind of spiritual trench-warfare, with all the suffering such an activity entails. The occasion of this piece is not to dwell on such challenges (they are well-known, and well-treated elsewhere). But only this: you must recognize that it is precisely because of trials, and in and by trials, that we experience a special joy, power, and fellowship with Christ that would otherwise be unknown.

This is, of course, known to all Christians who suffer, but pastors experience this in a special way, having added on to their own burdens those of the flock. Paul sees this latter burden—unique to pastors—as something like the cherry on top of the cake of his catalogue of ills (2 Cor. 11:28). Yet he goes on to say this: “for the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10), and in a similar context even speaks of having been initiated into a “secret” in this regard—the secret of contentment in Christ (Phil. 4:12, cf. vv. 10–14, 3:7–11).

The “secret” is for all believers, but the minister—again to co-opt Lewis’s phrase—is initiated “further up, further in” to this holier mystery of joy through trial. It is never trite to repeat the same sentiment found in the verses cited above. Do you believe that Jesus can redeem trials? That he can give suffering as a gift for greater ends (Phil. 1:29–30 and context)? Do you believe that in suffering you might gain a vision of eternal perspective that would otherwise have remained outside your view? If you do so believe, then know that these blessings are often especially manifest to the Christian minister, who is prepared by God not only to grow by his own trials, but to minister this truth to others.

THE TOWER: THE PASTOR AS RESIDENT EXPLORER

But ministry is not all trenches. As Paul can speak of “having little . . . going hungry . . . being in need” he can also speak of “abounding . . . being well-fed . . . having plenty” (Phil. 4:12). Even if rhetorical, it is clear that even Paul’s life was not all trenches. The aforementioned “school of Tyrannus” of Acts 19:9 serves a useful image here. If the trench represents sleepless nights, tears of anguish, and the often-lonely bearing of the burdens of a world-weary flock, the tower represents rest, fellowship, and space for growth. “Leisure” is a bad word to many, and its colloquial sense of “relaxation” certainly describes the abuses of many pastors who seek to carve out a comfortable life on the dime of their poor congregations. This is, of course, anathema, and judgement

is coming. Yet the word for “school” used in Acts 19:9, *scholē*—while there being used of the actual structure and location of the hall—more broadly indicates the “free time” needed to be educated. This is part of the pastor’s joyful calling.

In this usage, leisure is not to be defined as rest from work, but rather as free time to devote to higher tasks. Leisure was classically seen as necessary for certain vocations, for without leisure the most noble of vocations could not be achieved, since they require long and undistracted stretches of time over years. This is wonderfully illustrated in a dialogue between the Greek philosopher Socrates and Glaucon, his student Plato’s brother.

Is warfare so easy any farmer will be at the same time a soldier, and a shoemaker or any other trade, whereas not one person would be competent at backgammon or dice who did not practice it from childhood, but treated it only as a hobby? And are we to believe that anyone who picks up a shield or any other of the weapons and tools of war forthwith be competent to fight in heavy armour, or any other kind of warfare? Are there any other tools which will produce a craftsman merely by being picked up, or prove useful to someone who has not acquired knowledge or had sufficient practice? . . . Then, inasmuch as the work of the Guardians is of greatest importance, it would require more leisure [*scholē*] than any other business, and the greatest art and training.³

Warriors require “leisure”? Again, contemporary usage of the term fails us here. But in its proper context we can understand that the most important callings demand extended time (leisure) for free and serious development.

The scribes of the old covenant embraced the same understanding. Hellenistic Jewish literature thus could express the following (Sirach 38:24): “The wisdom of a scribe comes by the opportune time

3 Plato, *Republic*, 2.374

of leisure (*scholē*), and the one who has little business will become wise.”

This is perhaps a closer parallel to the office of the pastor, who is a “scribe educated for the kingdom.” When our Lord thus says “every scribe educated for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out from his storehouse things new and old” (Matt. 13:52), can we not understand that such “education” requires *scholē*? It does.

Are you being called to the pastorate? You must then see yourself as those scribes of old, or as one like a guardian of a great and noble city. You are part of a noble band of few, and you are afforded (and so must protect for yourself), opportune times of leisure. Again, this is not relaxation. It is rather like school, where the school almost literally becomes the “tower” I describe. But you will have many “towers” afforded to you in ministry, for your upbuilding: a home office (however humble the square-footage), a coffee shop, a fellowship of friends with whom to discuss good books, a calendar of select events to attend in order to stimulate your reflection on the God, the word, and the world. The pastor must understand God’s word first and foremost, but must also be a student of God’s world, and so is afforded the space and time to get the pulse of the culture and its products, to take in great books both Christian and secular and set them within the Christian worldview. It is true that, as a pastor, you will work many late nights, and that you will at times be called to do holy things at so-called “unholy hours.” But you will, as often, have your quiet mornings to read, pray, think, and write. You will have the conferences, the fellowships, the phone calls, the emails, the great books. Your enviable task will be to prioritize the construction of the cathedral-like structure of your inner life, with Christ as the master planner. This is not for increasing the self, but to grow strong for the task ahead in order to be a “tower” for others. All of this happens away from the fray, and is a great blessing of ministry.

TAKE JOYFUL ARMS AGAINST A SEA OF TROUBLES

A “top ten” list of other sources of joy for the pastor could probably be

enumerated. It might include the increasingly important fact that no AI will ever threaten your job (if you are actually pastoring properly), or that the proverbial and dreaded “Monday” might well be your weekly day off, or that people will bless you in surprising and unanticipated ways, often much more than you can bless them. Beyond these, you of course have the joy of caring for people and declaring God’s word. I have neglected these last more obvious and deeper joys for sake of space and their superior treatment elsewhere.

In the end, however, the joy and wonder of Christian ministry is simply this: the joy and wonder of a life pursuing the call of Christ. We all face a “sea of troubles” in the world, but the pastor is called to take arms against that sea in a special way. The “arms” can be joyful, if you will only fan the embers of the blissful memory of your first calling, if you will accept the paradox of joy in suffering and fight for joy even in the midst of trials, and covet and guard your much-needed time in the tower, surrounded by friends.

If, all the while, you remember that this is a call to a noble and adventurous life in the service of a captain who has promised sure victory, then you may see the pastorate less as a daunting duty, and more as a doorway to wonder, joy, and the deeper experience of Christ.

From the Archives

A Pastor: One of Christ's Greatest Gifts to the Church¹

T. T. Shields

Pastor, Jarvis Street Baptist Church (1910–1955)

President, Toronto Baptist Seminary (1927–1955)

ABSTRACT: *This sermon was preached in Central Baptist Church, Toronto, Monday Evening, December 29th, 1952 at at the Induction Service of the Rev. Geoffrey Adams into the Pastorate of that Church.*

I suppose there are few aspects of gospel truth of which the majority of people who profess and call themselves Christians are less informed than the Scriptural doctrine with respect to the ministry. That is not difficult to understand. It is probably because the minister usually is somewhat reluctant to discuss his own office, and there is no one else to discuss it for him. But I want to speak a little of that this evening.

Here [in Eph. 4:8–13] is a picture of our Lord, ascended above all heavens that He might fill all things. He “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. “That is a mere truism to most of us, that the Lord Jesus is the Head of the church. But in His Headship what does He do? “He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. “On the ground of His meritorious and vicarious ministry, and by the exercise of His great power, He led captivity captive, and entered triumphantly into Heaven. Perhaps it was then in part, at least, the prophetic Psalm was fulfilled: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;

¹ This article is condensed and lightly modified from its original printing in the 14 January 1982 issue of the *Gospel Witness*.

and the King of glory shall come in.” There, enthroned in Heaven He received gifts. What gifts? We have asked for a collection, this evening, for this church’s building fund. That is necessary, for these material things have their place in the work of the Lord. But in that position of exaltation there is nothing said about His conferring material wealth upon His church. I believe He will supply if and when we need it. We have seen it in Jarvis Street. They said we could not carry on, but we did — no, we didn’t, but the Lord carried on for us. I have often said that when Peter said to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee,” — he enunciated a great principle. I have said it a hundred times around the world that the work of the Lord was never hindered by even an hour, primarily, for the want of money. Any such retardation of God’s work is always caused by a deeper want than that. It is the lack of that which Peter had when he said, “Such as I have give I thee.” God will empower us to minister to needy people, and when He does we need not worry about the money.

What did our Lord do? He gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists. I have known evangelists of whom I have been a bit doubtful as to their having been the gifts of the ascended Lord—as I have been equally doubtful of some men called pastors. But He does give evangelists, those who are divinely gifted for the proclamation of the gospel. All true pastors are in His hands. I would say to any young preacher here that if you want to be a star preacher make sure that you are held in the hand of Him that walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in His hands.

I. A PASTOR IS A DIVINE GIFT

I remind you, members of Central Baptist Church, that a pastor is a divine gift. The schools cannot make a pastor; no university or nor theological seminary can make a pastor. They can guide them a little in their studies, but a real pastor is God’s gift. “How shall they preach, except they be sent?” That does not mean unless a missionary

committee sends them. What it means is this: that no man can possibly preach the gospel unless he is sent of God. It is not hard to discern when you have come to know a man who is going on God's errand. Divinely commissioned, the gift of God. You will be careful what you do with God's gift, won't you? Prize him highly. The pastor is a gift of God. I have said to Brother Slade very often, as he and I have talked things over: "We are not primarily concerned about buildings, and that sort of thing: give us a man." That is what we want. Every house is built by some man. These things do not happen; somebody builds them. But if we have the right man we may be sure that everything else will come all right. If you have the right pastor you are bound to have blessing.

Unless a man is appointed by the Holy Ghost he will never accomplish anything, though he may wear a long coat, and clerical collar, and become a polished ecclesiastic. He must be placed there by the Spirit of God. I am glad that that has been your thought, that you have waited for God's leading, until at last somebody came whom you feel God has selected. Accept him then as God's selection.

II. A PASTOR MUST BE A TEACHER

I do not believe a man can be a true pastor who is not a teacher. They speak sometimes about "pastoral work." Do you know what is meant by that? The average pastor is a kind of a glorified nursemaid, to carry breakfast to bed to sick saints. That is not the pastor's business. By all means, see the sick saints if they cannot come to see you: that is all right in its place. But a pastor's real duty is to teach. He must teach line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. He must be a doctrinal preacher to be a pastor; he must get down to the depths and lay his foundations deep and broad. A true pastor must needs be a theologian. Do not be frightened by that word theology. Do you know what it means? It means the science that logically relates the truths of revelation one to another. A young man came to see me once, who said he wanted to come to the Seminary. He said, "I want to get out and preach the gospel, and I want a short course." I said, "How long are

you prepared to spend!" He said, "I think I ought to be fit for something in two years." I said, "What did you do before you came here?" He said, "I was a butcher." I said, "How much time did you serve?" He said, "I served seven years." I said, "You served seven years learning to be a butcher, and you think two years would be quite enough to learn to be a preacher?" A pastor must be a teacher. I am glad to know that is the type of ministry you have had here.

I was in a certain place at a ministers' luncheon, which they had arranged, I do not know whether in my honour or dishonour, but anyway it was arranged for me. I was sitting beside a Baptist minister and next to him was a minister of another denomination. During the progress of the meal these two brethren talked, and they talked about the great problems they had in the church: the ladies' aid, and the young people's societies—and a lot of other piffling puerilities. I know what I would have done with them; it wouldn't have taken me long to settle problems such as they named (I do not remember what they were now, but some silly little things). Any full-grown man would have settled it at once, and said, "Let us get on with the Lord's work." He gave some pastors and teachers; not to coddle the saints, not to tell everybody how lovely they are. I remember a great convention in the Metropolitan Church, when they discussed the question whether Christians should attend the theatre, and the dance, and all that kind of nonsense. It was an "ecumenical" conference, and they brought them from all over the world—university presidents, and theological presidents, and all the rest of it, and they spent days discussing this great problem! Is it any wonder that the church of Christ has gone on the rocks? Where is the blame? Right in the pulpit.

III. "FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS"

I like this next line; it has been an unspeakable comfort to me: "for the perfecting of the saints." Do you know what that means? It means that even saints are not perfect. I have never met a perfect saint yet. I have met a good many who thought they were perfect. I have repeatedly

quoted Mr. Spurgeon, and I quote him now, when he once said, “My experience with perfect people has been most unfortunate.” And so has mine. I hope you will have the very salt of the earth here, but you will not find the saints of Central Church perfect. But you are here to make them perfect.

It is a lovely thing to see the saints growing up into Christ, when you see them growing out of the idiosyncrasies of the old man, putting off the old man, and putting on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, I tell you that is one of the advantages of an extended pastorate. When you have been here twenty-one years, Brother Adams, you will know. You will have seen people growing up into Christ.

IV. “UNTO THE WORK OF MINISTERING.”

How do you make the saints perfect? “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Biblical ministry will make a church a working church; they will want to do something, and they will not want to leave it all to the minister. Every member of the church ought to be doing something; every member of the church ought to be a worker. I am sure that, just as the minister finds his place by the appointment of the Holy Ghost, so every member of the church will find his or her place and function in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:28–31).

That will include somebody to play, somebody to sing, somebody to administer affairs, each one differing from the others, but the same Spirit working through all the members of the one body. And by the constant proclamation of the truth, and the exposition of the great principles of God’s Word, the saints are gradually perfected unto the work of ministering. Then they will not always have to come to the Pastor, and say, “What shall I do?” I have seen it: I have found people doing things, and wondered who told them. I never did. It was a very

necessary piece of work, with the blessing of the Lord attending it: maybe visiting the sick, maybe going to the hospital, maybe distributing tracts, or teaching in the school, or something else, and something new. But they found their place. In a church that is rightly taught in the things of God the members of the church will find a job.

Let me remind you, dear friends, that in the body of Christ there are no “vestigial remains.” Every organ has its proper function, and every person has something to do for which he or she is divinely equipped, and is therefore responsible to God alone. And by the Pastor’s teaching, teaching, people will come to find out the good works which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them, and they will all be at it. Mr. Moody said once that he would rather get ten men to work than try to do ten men’s work himself.

A Presbyterian minister in a certain place where I was Pastor, said, “I wish you would let me into your secret.” I said, “What do you want to know?” He said, “Just this: I spend my time trying to please my people, and I do not succeed very well, and so far as I can make out, in my contact with them, your people spend all their time trying to please you.” I said, “That is ideal, isn’t it? Why shouldn’t they?” It is easier for several hundred people to please one person than for one person to please several hundred. Therefore you start pleasing your Pastor. You will do that, if he is God’s man, if first of all you please God. He will be pleased with whatever you do so long as you please Him. All at it, everybody at it, all the time.

You are in a good neighbourhood here. I doubt not that within fifteen minutes’ walk of this house there are thousands of people who never go to church at all. I envy the locality of some churches in Toronto. We are far downtown, and to get a large Sunday School we have to bring them miles and miles. Many churches have thousands of children all around them, and within walking distance. You are set down in the midst of a strawberry bed. Go and pick the strawberries. I do not know what membership you have, but if everybody goes at it, perfecting the saints, unto the work of ministering, as they learn

from what they hear from the pulpit, and as they give themselves to a diligent personal study of the Word of God, they must become instructed Christians; then they will go out, and will know how to lead people to Christ, they will know how to encourage the backslider, and to support the weak, and be serviceable to everybody. What then?

V. “TILL WE ALL COME IN THE UNITY OF THE FAITH.”

You cannot bring people into the unity of the faith all in a minute. Somebody is quite sure the church is going to be raptured and taken away before the Lord comes, or at His coming. And there is going to be a great Tribulation. Now do not waste time arguing about that. Oh, how people love to split hairs! I believe in contending for the faith, but I hate contentiousness as I hate the devil. Don't be contentious. Preach the Word, in season and out of season, and little by little if the Word is preached people will gradually come into the unity of the faith. We have a lot of people in Jarvis Street church who used to be convinced Anglicans, who are now the best Baptists I have got. Some others used to be out and out Presbyterians who are Baptists now, and I would not change them for any Baptist I know. Why? Because they have learned from the Word of God, and we have come into the unity of the faith.

VI. “AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD.”

Never forget that is central to everything. Here is the divine curriculum, and your “major” must be the study of the Son of God. You may be ignorant of some other things, but God will forgive you if you know His Son well. You remember what the apostle Paul said. He was a man of great erudition, a great scholar, and his enemies said, “Much learning hath made thee mad.” Nobody called Paul “unlearned and ignorant;” they charged rather that he knew too much. When he was no longer a young man, but Paul the aged, he said, “I count not myself to have apprehended, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which

also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12–13). He said, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” “I have been studying Him these many years, but I am still an undergraduate; I am still studying Him.” Oh, if you can get people thinking about Christ, and studying Him . . . they will be sure to come into unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

VII. “UNTO A PERFECT MAN.”

Do you know what the business of the church is? The business of the church is to make men, real men—not invertebrates of the genus *homo*, not flabby wobbly sort of people. Mr. A. J. Balfour, before he was Lord Balfour, once in the House of Commons described certain honourable members as resembling very much “That wibbly wobbly sort of stuff the ladies make; I think they call it blanc mange.” Pour them into any shape of vessel, and they will take the shape of the vessel into which they are poured. What a lot of wibbly-wobbly people there are in the world! I can see them now, even in the pulpit. No, no, the business of the preacher is to make men, so to teach that they may become men. I like to read the story of David. There was one remarkable thing about David’s reign, and it was this: he built no cities, but he did fight battles. But there was something about him that made men. Oh, what a treat to meet a man!

“Unto a perfect man.” There is nothing that will make men like this book. One can easily tell when our Caesar has been feeding upon the strong meat of the Word. He has muscle and sinew; he has brawn and courage. It is said, in the Acts of the Apostles, “And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. When they saw the boldness of Peter, and John. . . they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” They behaved like their Master; did just what He did; they saw the boldness, the courageousness, of Peter and John. That is what the Word of God does for us.

**VII. “UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE
OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST.”**

Oh, see what there is before us! “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” I have had men say to me: “You know I was an Anglican, and then I was a Presbyterian, and I was a Methodist, and in between times I spent a little time in the Salvation Army. Now I am a Baptist. I have had a lot of experience.” I always say, “Too much experience, brother, for me to welcome you. How long will you stay with us?” “No more children—” babes: they had their expensive toys on Christmas, and are tired of them already—“carried about with every wind of doctrine.” That is what we have in our day. You will find the Pentecostal Assemblies, and the Nazarenes, and all the rest of them, filled with Baptists who have been starved out of their own churches. They left because they did not get anything, so they go anywhere they preach the gospel, and thank God there are a great many people whom we do not agree with in everything—we haven’t come to the unity of the faith in respect to them—but we do praise God that they tell people to believe on Christ, and trust in the cleansing of His precious blood. However I may disagree respecting some things, I give the hand of fellowship to anyone who preaches Christ crucified as the sinner’s only hope.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” I wish I had time to take a medical course, I should like to study anatomy and physiology for four or five years—or perhaps twenty! I might then dare to try to expound this next verse: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Isn’t that a great verse? Every member contributing something to

every other member, and all members together building up the body by growing up into Christ, to the edifying of the body in love. That should be characteristic of a New Testament church. Then you would observe that all life organizes itself. You cannot organize an oak or a beech, or any other kind of tree: they organize themselves according to their own nature. So does a vital church, a body in which life abounds. In such a body every member will find and exercise its own peculiar function. I do not know of anything this side of Heaven to equal the fellowship found among a lot of Bible believers, who just believe the Word.

I have this word, and I am done. You see the picture there. It is true of the body at large, but it is true of the individual church too: a healthy exuberant body, health in the eye, and the ear; health in every muscle. You see the man or woman able to do things. I saw a man once; I was at the end of the road waiting for a train in the early morning, and there was a train backed up on a higher platform, and they were loading barrels of apples into freight cars. There were two men, and they were sweating lifting the barrels and rolling them in. They would say, "One, two, three," and up it would go. They were piling them in three tiers. I looked in the other direction, and observed rather a stout man walking up and down the platform. The baggage men were loading up the baggage car, and among the things they were loading were some iron bars with great big iron balls on the ends. I knew what dumbbells were like, but I had never seen any dumbbells like that, but that is what they were. There were two men, and they would lift these things up to their knees, and then "One, two, three," and they would roll them into the car. I wondered what they were for. I kept my eye on the man, walking along with a walking stick. He went up the steps to the higher platform, looked down at the men with their barrels of apples, smiled, and said, "How much do you call that?" I forget how many hundred pounds. He said, "I thought so. Let me see." He took two fingers, and picked up a sealed barrel of apples, and played with it as though it were nothing. Then he walked into the car, holding a barrel in front of him, and with a little flip threw it up on top of the others. I said, "Who can

he be?” He was a Frenchman, Louis Cyr, who had been performing in the town the night before, and these were his dumbbells that he had been playing with. But it was refreshing to see a man of strength like that. I like to see men like that, full grown, with a body throbbing with life and energy, to whom nothing seems too hard. That is the sort of church to have, Brother Adams, and I believe you will have it.

May God’s blessing be upon you, and upon all you people, so that there may be a consistent testimony on the part of every member, that every member may represent Christ. May God bless you all.

On Gender and the Pastoral Office

CHRISTOPHER W. CROCKER

*Professor of Church History, Toronto Baptist Seminary
General Editor, Gospel Witness
Lead Elder, Markdale Baptist Church*

ABSTRACT: *This article is a survey that argues from Scripture, theology and Church history that the self-evident teaching of the Bible is that the pastoral office (pastors/elders/overseers) is for qualified and called Christian men. It likewise sketches the forces that challenged this historic understanding and some of the negative impacts this has brought to Christianity. It ends with a call for biblical fidelity. This article is very much meant to be a sketch, a basic overview providing any reader a quick overview and further reading.*

PREFACE: *The background experience to this article is as follows. For about the first six years of my life I attended a church that was part of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada. It took a complementarian stance. Then I was raised, baptized, married, and ordained in a church that was part of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ, now CBOQ), which, while nominally traditional, was part of a formally and increasingly egalitarian denomination. Since 2014, I have been part of complementarian churches. However, traditionally conservative Baptist groups such as The Fellowship and the Canadian National Baptist Convention are wrestling with the issue of egalitarianism. As a disclaimer: this article should in no way be viewed as deprecating the vital role of women within the church in areas where they are free to serve, but rather articulating a defence against forces that would and have undermined God's exclusive design for men in the pastoral office. This is*

the focus, vs. what women may rightly do, because this is the point that has been under attack. Neither is it a suggestion that all egalitarians are not Christian. Likewise, it touches primarily on the question of gender as it relates to the Church and not the home or society.

KEY WORDS: *Gender, Offices, Pastors/Elders/Overseers, Deacons, Egalitarianism, Complementarianism, Introduction*

The office of pastors/elders/overseers¹ is the primary ecclesiastical office and is reserved for qualified and called Christian men. The second is that of deacons (not handled at length in this article). Appointed by the church to lead the local church, pastors/elders/overseers exercise general oversight and spiritual leadership of a local congregation. Working under their authority, the church appoints deacons who provide support to the elders and church through practical service. This statement linking pastors and gender is a self-evident statement from the witness of Scripture, theology, and church history. This short article will provide a sketch of each of these to establish this point. Then, it will likewise sketch factors that began to challenge this traditional Christian understanding, namely Feminism (defined below). Lastly, it will be shown how the move from traditional Christian teaching and practice on this issue has negatively affected the Church and sketch a gender/office continuum that one might find in various contemporary churches and denominations.

NEW TESTAMENT

While Jesus elevated the dignity of women from that of contemporary Jewish and Roman culture, He nevertheless upheld traditional Old

¹ These are synonymously used in Scripture: e.g. Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-2. However, like the president of the synagogue, it has long been held that among the eldership one man acted as a leader, a first among equals. These terms describe the breadth of the office: shepherding (protection, care and instruction), eldership (spiritual maturity and example), and overseer (general and spiritual oversight).

Testament teaching and example on gender roles.²In fact, He choose twelve male disciples and appointed them as authoritative apostles to establish the early church. In the writings of these apostles, inspired by the spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11), they established churches with elders and deacons (e.g. Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5).³ The elders/overseers/pastors are, like the apostles, always referred to in the masculine in both passing instances and specific examples. When they are specifically mentioned, there are qualifiers that clarify that the office is masculine beyond any doubt. Paul writes to Titus, saying, “husband of one wife” (Tit. 1:6). Paul is even clearer elsewhere, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12a); thus governing the church and then teaching to mixed-congregations is for men only. Here again is included, “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2). When one adds to these the various household codes, male headship in the church is indisputably the teaching of Scripture.⁴

A THEOLOGY OF GENDER

Mankind, created by God, was male and female. This design He pronounced “very good” (Gen 1:27) and is to His glory. Men and women were created equal in value and complementary in role to fulfil the Creation mandate of exercising dominion over the earth; reflecting

2 I.e. While there were four prophetesses in the Old Testament, while Deborah served as a co-judge with Barak and while there were even queens, the norm that is found is that men were prophets and kings. The priesthood, which has the most direct parallels to the new covenant office, was exclusively reserved for men.

3 On gender and the diaconate, all the [proto-] deacons in Acts 6 were men. Likewise, in 1 Tim. 3:8–13 the masculine is used throughout—even the qualifier “husband of one wife.” While in Rom. 16:1 Phoebe is described as a “servant” (or deaconess/female who serves) it is unclear if this describes her action or office (though women were clearly co-labourers with Paul [Phil. 3:3] and probably served widows [1 Tim. 5:9–16]). On the latter, the interpretive tool that we use the clearer to understand the less clear would apply here.

4 To study further the Biblical perspective, see Gen. 1:26–28, 2:7, 18–25, 3:1–22; Rom. 8:16–17, 12:3–8; I Cor. 11:3–9, 12: 1–31; Gal. 3:26–29; Eph. 5:21–33; Phil. 2:3–4; Col. 3:12–19; I Tim. 2:11–14, 3:1–7, 5:17–20; Tit. 1: 5–9; I Pet. 2:13–25, 3:1–7, 4:10–11, 5:1–6.

the image of God together. Men are called to humble headship and women to humble help (Gen 2:7, 20; 1 Cor 11:3). Men and women are created of equal value and yet complementary in role. Biblical teachings are not culturally bound but are related to the relationship of Father and Son in the economy of redemption (1 Cor. 11:3), Creation (1 Cor. 11:8; 1 Tim. 2:13), and Christ's relationship to His bride, the Church (Eph. 5:32). Complementarity is a vital matter of orthopraxy that has been near universally held by orthodox churches for nineteen centuries—indeed amongst old covenant believers since creation. To embrace egalitarianism is to do a grave disservice to biblical hermeneutics and compromise on Scriptural authority, inerrancy, sufficiency, and clarity; dismissing not only numerous passages but the thrust of Scripture. Gender issues are as old as the Fall (Gen. 3:15). God's people, as imperfect as they are, have sought to model biblical teaching throughout the ages, bringing immense blessing to Western civilization. This is the ministerial wisdom church history brings to this issue. However, over the last century, cultural 'isms' like feminism and church 'isms' such as forms of liberalism (and now progressivism), have seen these issues heightened amongst Christians. As biblical complementarity erodes, it negatively impacts the family, church, and society and leads to further perversions in sexuality and gender identity. The redeemed must model God's life-giving truths to fallen humanity; not succumb to it as mainline churches have done. Church History

Apart from the brief appearance of the office of deaconess,⁵ church

5 Outside of the New Testament, there is a 2nd century letter written between Governor Pliny and Emperor Trajan in which "deaconesses" are mentioned (Pliny's letter to Trajan, Letter 10); the 2nd century document, the Didache ch. 15, reserved the office of deacon for men; in a 3rd century document called the Apostolic Constitutions, book 8 and chapter 19, a prayer is offered for the ordination of Deaconesses; more clearly, a 3rd century document, known as the Didascalia, chapter 16, offers practical instructions for the function and role of deaconesses; particularly, assisting the Elders in ministering to and serving amongst women. Until the abuses of women as part of the Montanist movement caused this office to become exclusively male, there is evidence that for at least some churches, the office of deaconess existed from the 2nd–5th centuries. However, "deaconess" was a sub-office of the diaconate for specific roles and was not seen in the same light as 'deacon.'

history is unanimously clear on the pastoral office being male from the earliest times. For example, there is a reason why the Church speaks of the Church Fathers. The extremes of Montanism (see note on deaconess) on the one hand and the want of biblical illiteracy (for what women could do) on the other, account for some of the establishment of a traditionalism that prevailed throughout the Middle Ages. There were of course nunneries, nuns, abbesses, anchorites, female orders and female saints; however, ecclesiastical offices were reserved for men. These facts are seen in an interesting light when one considers that throughout most of history, women, and not men, have been the majority constituents of the Church. Another important angle is that Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants (except for Liberal or now Progressive Protestantism; and also streams of Pentecostalism), have all held to such traditionalism. Challenges to Traditionalism

While there were some early Protestant attempts to liberate the offices from traditionalism, this process can be seen to have begun in earnest with the arrival of theological and biblical liberalism, and feminism. First, if the Bible was being questioned on the deity of Christ, miracles, the atonement and salvation, hell, etc, surely it might be wrong on gender. Second, Feminism is the “advocacy of equality of the sexes and the establishment of the political, social, and economic rights of the female sex; the movement associated with this.”⁶ Feminism has come in four general waves: 1) property, marriage and voting rights, i.e. “suffragettes” (late 1800s–early 1900s); 2) gender roles and sexual liberation, i.e. “hippies” (1960s and 70s); 3) economic and social discrimination, especially in the workplace, and often against white women by ethnic minorities (1980s and 90s); and 4) #MeToo movement on the one hand and homosexuality and transgenderism on the other (2000–Present). This last wave has been accompanied by a distinct counter-feminist movement. These cultural changes eventually saw the church as a last holdout to non-feminism. According to feminists, churches needed to be liberated from Biblical

6 Oxford English Dictionary, “Feminism.” < https://www.oed.com/dictionary/feminism_n?tl=true > (Nov 2025).

traditionalism if women were to be free. Thus, the traditionalism of churches became a target, and hence the Bible. Often undermined by liberalism or moderatism, many churches and denominations had little to fall back upon to uphold their traditionalism in the face of such cultural pressures. A typical egalitarian argument would rely on cultural hermeneutics (i.e. that gender in Scripture is descriptive of the prevailing first century culture and not a divine prescription) or a redemptive historical model (that sees the New Testament loosening standards, a loosening which continues to the present). A favourite verse is Gal. 3:28, “there is neither male nor female,” which, taken out of context, is used to say there is no difference between men and women, and therefore women may serve in the pastoral office. However, in context this verse means all have equal access to salvation while recognizing a host of distinctions still exist between those who are in Christ. Vague references to Pheobe (Rom. 16:1) or Deborah are also cited.⁷

19TH AND 20TH CENTURY EXAMPLES OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN:

Canada:

**Usually preceded by the ordination/appointment of deaconesses.*

United Church of Canada (Rev. Lydia Gruchy [2/3 of all recent ordinations have been women])

Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1947

Presbyterian Church of Canada, 1962

Christian Reformed Church, 1996

⁷ A work that summarizes egalitarianism and complementarianism is: Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (MI: Zondervan, 2005). For more ‘conservative’ egalitarian defences see: Joseph Dutko, “6 Egalitarian Books That Won’t Scare Off Your Complementarian Friends,” [josephdutko.com/6-egalitarian-leaning-books-that-won-t-scare-off-your-complementarian-friends](https://www.josephdutko.com/6-egalitarian-leaning-books-that-won-t-scare-off-your-complementarian-friends) (Dec 2025). This list includes Stanley J Grenz et al, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1995).

Alliance, 2007

Other Western Nations

**Usually preceded by the ordination/appointment of deaconesses.*

Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army

Northern [American] Baptists, 1882

United Methodist Church, USA, 1956 (deacons and elders, 1924).

Southern Baptists, 1964 (rescinded, 1984)

Aimee Semple McPherson, Four Square Gospel Church, 1920s

Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1960s

Church of England, 1994

Roman Catholic Church petition for women to be allowed to be priest (500,000 signatures)

One such ordination and denomination may serve as an example: Canadian Baptist Ministries (formerly Canadian Baptist Federation), and specifically the CBOQ (formerly BCOQ). The first ordination of a female pastor occurred in 1947, Muriel Spurgeon (later, married name, Carder). She first felt called into the ministry in high school though her father was skeptical. In seminary at McMaster one of her professors joked about assembly deciding if they would ordain women, ‘If one of you would just marry her, I wouldn’t be left with a problem.’ She recalled watching the Assembly debate the matter only to have it pass with three dissenting votes.⁸ However, the CBOQ remained largely traditional until the next ordination in 1979, after which female ordinations increased in the 1980s and then 90s. This corresponded to the ordination of women in the Atlantic Baptist Convention in the 1980s, which passed largely because of ‘autonomy’ and not because they were fully egalitarian.⁹ In 2005 5% of pastors were female. In 2023

8 “Muriel Carder.” < <https://baptist.ca/2013/09/muriel-carder/> > (2020) ; see also Gord Heath, “Rev. Dr. Muriel M. Spurgeon Carder (1922–2023): A Canadian Baptist Renaissance Woman,” open article < <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/15/8/973> > (Nov 2025).

9 Melody Maxwell, “You Can’t, ‘Cause You’re A Girl’: Atlantic Baptist Women

the number had risen to 16%. Significantly in that same year, the CBOQ assembly passed a motion reaffirming women in ministry (because it had been challenged by some in the 2000s), and unanimously installed its first female executive minister, Leanne Friesen. As egalitarianism grew in influence in the post-war era, leading evangelical figures such as Wayne Grudem and John Piper came together to stand for and discuss a biblical anthropology in the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (1986/87). As their basis they crafted the Danvers Statement (1987/88).¹⁰ In all of this, and to differentiate themselves from negative forms of traditionalism and create a new language, they introduced to our theological discourse the term “complementarian.”¹¹

THE EFFECTS OF FEMINISM

The last century and a half saw Western civilization, including the Church, embark upon a grand social experiment in anthropology contrary to God’s design and that negatively impacted churches. The chaplain to her majesty the late Queen Elizabeth II, Gavin Ashenden, said this about the Church of England’s February 9, 2023 decision to bless same-sex marriages (latter known as ‘Prayers of Faith and Love’) and thus his decision to leave Anglicanism. (Subsequently, the triumph of feminism was entrenched with the appointment of the first female Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, October 3, 2025). His entire reflection is noteworthy, even that which comes before and after the following quote, however, this quote is a fair excerpt and summary of the influence of feminism:

Navigating Call, Ordination, and Opposition, 1976–1987,” in MJTM 22 (2020–2021), 61–82.

10 <https://cbmw.org/about/the-danvers-statement/>

11 For helpful complementarian texts see the CBMW website. They have published their own history (Claire Smith, A History of Complementarianism, CBMW (Nov 2025) < <https://cbmw.org/2025/11/17/a-history-of-complementarianism/>> (Dec 2025). There are many works on the subject but the following was and is pivotal: John Piper and Wayne Grudem, Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Biblical Feminism. (IL: Crossway, 2006).

Feminism and the accompanying ideology of egalitarianism has presented a competing or a sub or even non-Christian competing political anthropology. It's been astonishingly successful. It's taken the society we live in by storm. The church seemed entirely unprepared for feminism. In fact, it mistook it as a movement promising simply justice and fairness. It failed to notice that it carried a competing and contradictory understanding of the nature and purpose of our humanity and sexuality, not unlike perhaps a Trojan horse. This was a devastating mistake. It still hasn't been recognized for what it is by the politically liberal-minded church, which constitutes a serious failure of perception, being overwhelmed of theological perception, being overwhelmed by political perception. In other words, the triumph of secular ideology over Christian discernment. And we've now seen there's a very serious trajectory of development from the beginnings of feminism. There's nothing to stop the ideological train of progress from moving from equality of value, which is the only principle of equality the scriptures recognize, to equality of function, which they have done. There's no difference in terms of what men and women do. The administrative management that has emerged in the church over the last two decades is in fact made up entirely of people committed to feminist principles. Feminism as was always going to lead to the normalization of homosexuality. Homosexuality and feminism have been like Siamese twins in the progressive value system. And as a result, we can see that the same sex blessings that Synod has legitimized in fact symbolically mark the triumph of the next stage of the progressive capture of the church. But the incorporation of feminism into the theology of the church has had profound theological and spiritual consequences as well as political and economic ones. Feminism is in fact a complex philosophical and political system of thought which has had several evolutions. Indeed, the whole highly charged turf arguments reflects a civil war between the second and third wave feminism. Retrospectively, the church's approach to feminism now appears to have been simplistic and ideological-

ly naive. It was mistaken simply as an instrument of equality. But with equality came also the idea of relativism. And with relativism and egalitarianism, homosexuality then emerged as being valued equally with heterosexuality. The Bible might describe the practice of homosexuality as falling short. But feminist egalitarianism provided an alternative epistemology. It was declared not only of equal value, but in some terms superior since it came with a cache of victimhood that postmodernity imbued it with. The values of secular culture had suddenly triumphed over biblical and theological culture because feminism had smuggled them in.¹²

Here, Ashenden, much familiar with this issue in Anglicanism, states that feminism contradicts a biblical Christianity, was a ‘Trojan horse’ of secularism that is rooted in a non-Christian epistemology, which has been naively embraced and ultimately sets the church on a trajectory toward LGBT. Egalitarianism, at its root, is a non-Christian view of gender, radically different from anything that Scripture knows. His own Church of England has known numeric decline as have most other egalitarian denominations.¹³ (though there are some mitigating factors that stem this). When the Church comes to look like the world her alternative witness is taken away. This was evident in Canada when, on the eve of Covid, CBC predicted that one third of all church buildings would close in the coming years.¹⁴ Accelerated by Covid 19, this came close to being fully realized. The majority of these were Anglican and United Churches, both denominations that had, at an early date, embraced egalitarianism and LGBT. Or, to pick

12 Gavin Ashenden, “Ashenden scripted- On leaving the Church of England after it decides to bless the un-blessable.” Youtube, Feb 20, 2023 < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNkEg-higV4> [6:41-10:02] (Nov 2025).

13 As a generalization, though the reasons can be complex and there are other mitigating factors (and even complementarian churches can know decline for a host of other reasons, however, revival always comes through orthodoxy).

14 E.g. “Why it matters 9,000 churches and religious spaces will close over next 10 years,” CBC (May 27, 2019). <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/churches-closing-1.5150876>> (Dec 2025).

back up the Baptist example from Ontario and Quebec, the BCOQ had approximately 480 c. 1900. Today it has less than 300. Decline in others denominations has been more noticeable (i.e. the American Baptists [USA] went from 9000 to 4600 congregations in a similar timespan) In a 2016 study, “Theology Matters,” the findings were hardly surprising: churches that take the Bible seriously tend to be healthier and growing, whereas those that do not (and egalitarianism should be placed here) tend to be plateaued or dying.¹⁵ This is all because, as pointed out in the theology section, gender has a direct bearing, not only on God’s design for the Church, but other vital theological areas, including the Gospel itself. Concerning orthodoxy it is a bleeding secondary issue. Concerning orthopraxy it is a primary practice.

Feminism is a lie that does not work; moving away from God’s design has brought untold harm. On the whole feminism, and by extension, egalitarianism, has greatly harmed the faithfulness and thereby the vitality of the Church away from God’s good design, which is that qualified and called Christian men assume the pastoral office. Like all heterodoxies there is a silver lining, as it has caused a deeper biblical anthropology than mere traditionalism allowed. Likewise, it allowed a careful handling of what was biblical and what was cultural in our gender norms. Nevertheless, God has a clear design for gender, particularly in the life of the Church, as demonstrated in this summary article from Scripture, theology, history and the challenges and effects brought about by feminism. We are wise enough now to no longer feel the pressure to experiment but to rest in God’s good designs for men and women.

POSTSCRIPT:

AN EGALITARIAN-COMPLEMENTARIAN CONTINUUM

Because of the historical development and present cultural and

15 David Millard Haskell, “Theology Matters: Comparing the Traits of Growing and Declining Mainline Protestant Church Attendees and Clergy” in *Rev Relig Res* 58 (2016), 515–541.

ecclesiastical complexities there exists both a continuum and a pool of options on the subject of gender and office. Below is a continuum intended to guide the discernment of the practical outworking of this matter:

Egalitarianism

Where men and women are created equal in value and in role. Any qualified or called woman or man may serve in the governing and teaching office of pastors/elders/overseers. The variation in practice, rather than reflecting various questions in the subject, can be seen as a continuum (though there are exceptions).

Full egalitarianism: The church is fully feminized with a large portion of office being held by women, perhaps even at the senior denominational post(s), and women are not only accepted in these roles but encouraged.

Egalitarianism: Where both men and women regularly serve as pastors/elders/overseers and preach, with varying ratios. This is church or denominational policy. It is embraced.

Technical egalitarianism (or egalitarian traditionalism):

Technically, women and men can serve in the pastoral office or preach, however, either because of a biblical reservedness, traditional culture, or denominational policy, this may or may not be the common practice. Variants of this may include where a “senior pastor” must be male but other pastors/elders and preachers may be women.

The Divide

Whether the office of pastors/elders/overseers as the governing and teaching office is open to men or to men and women; and whether or not women can preach/teach in mixed settings.

Complementarianism: Men and women are understood to be created equal in value and complementary in role. The office of pastors/elders/overseers as a governing and teaching office is reserved for qualified and called Christian men; only men may preach/teach to mixed settings. Rather than seeing complementarianism as a continuum, with the above definition in place, it is better to see complementarians answering a variety of questions differently.¹⁶

16 While some would categorize patriarchy as distinct from complementarianism, where it affirms the above, I treat it as a synonym or part of complementarianism.

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