



# ***INTRODUCING SALISBURY REFORMED SEMINARY ...***





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# ***INTRODUCING SALISBURY REFORMED SEMINARY ...***

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# **PART ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**









# Introduction

In recent years, a number of ministers have expressed concern about the fact that there are few suitable places of spiritual learning in the United Kingdom. Through the gracious providence of God and the inward leading of his Spirit, they have been meeting together prayerfully to explore the possibility of establishing a theological seminary in Salisbury. Their hopes have now been realised, although they continue to recognise their total dependence upon God for guidance, provision and blessing. They look to him to prosper this seminary and to equip men, called by him, for the work of the ministry.

## Biblical Patterns

If men are to devote themselves to preaching and teaching, they themselves need first to be instructed in the Truth (*Matthew 13:52; Acts 18:24-26; 2 Timothy 2:2*).

Samuel appears to have founded institutions which scholars sometimes call *The Schools of the Prophets*. In these places, gifted young men, “*sons of the prophets*”, gathered around some great prophet like Samuel (*1 Samuel 19:20*) and, later, around other great prophets like Elijah and Elisha (*2 Kings 4:38*), whom they recognized as “masters” or “fathers” (*2 Kings 2:3, 12*). Under such mature teachers they were instructed in the things of God; and they were taught to develop their spiritual gifts and engage in various religious exercises (*1 Samuel 19:20; 2 Kings 9:1*). Such places apparently existed at Bethel (*2 Kings 2:3*), Jericho (*2 Kings 2:5*) and Gilgal (*2 Kings 4:38*); and the Lord was pleased to bless and prosper them, for one of these places near the Jordan – probably at Jericho – had so many students attending that a new building had to be erected (*2 Kings 6:1-4*).

While there was not the same kind of arrangement in New Testament times, we must remember that the apostles were taught by





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the Lord Himself for three years (*Mark 3:13,14; 6:7; Luke 22:28*). It is true that Paul missed out on this, but he tells us that he was “*brought up*”, that is, ‘educated’ or ‘nurtured’, “*at the feet of Gamaliel*” (*Acts 22:3*), the eminent Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (*Acts 5:34-40*); and above and beyond this training, he was taught by the risen Lord and in a supernatural way (*2 Corinthians 12:1-7; Galatians 1:11, 12*).

Later, these apostles taught younger men who spent much time with them (*Acts 13:5; 16:1-3*); and later still, of course, it became a standard practice for mature teachers to instruct others who were less knowledgeable and experienced in the truths of Holy Scripture (*Acts 18:26*).

*“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).*

## **Historic Precedents**

### **The Genevan Academy**

When, in 1536, John Calvin came to Geneva, he was determined to establish an academy. His early efforts failed when he was driven into exile in 1538, but after a stay in Basel and a longer stay in Strassburg, Calvin, in 1541, returned to Geneva and sought once again to fulfil his hopes for an academy. This time he was successful. In his book *John Calvin: his Life, Letters and Work*, Hugh Y. Reyburn writes,

“It is not difficult to discover Calvin’s intention in creating the university (i.e. the academy). The most pressing difficulty with which he had to deal was the incessant demand for ministers. From every part of France where a congregation adhering to the Reformed faith had taken shape a message was sent to Geneva asking for a minister. These messages increased in





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number every year, and he was at his wits' end in dealing with them. The College was destined to furnish him with the supply of ministers."

In the *schola publica* (the more advanced part of the Academy, distinguished from the more basic *schola privata*), John Calvin and Theodore Beza taught as professors of biblical interpretation, serving along with three other professors responsible for Hebrew, Greek, Exegesis, Ethics, Philosophy, and so on. When students enrolled, they were required to sign the Confession of Faith, and then they took twenty-seven lecture courses.

The building for the Academy was not completed until 1564 (the year of Calvin's death), by which time there were approximately three hundred students, the majority of whom were from other countries.

### **Bristol Baptist College**

Historically, nonconformists were greatly disadvantaged when it came to further education, including the study of theology.

However, as the result of a gift made in 1679 by Edward Terrill, a member of Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol, and the funds made available by Robert Bodenham, another Broadmead member, it was possible to secure a building for use as a college, along with houses for two ministers. Some of the money was put aside to be available to future Baptist students. The College was actually established in 1720.

The ministers of Broadmead Baptist Church became principals and lecturers at the Academy: among the former was Bernard Foskett (1727-1758), Hugh Evans (1758-1781) and Caleb Evans (1781-1791), and among the latter were Andrew Gifford (1728-1729), Robert Hall (1785-1791), and John Ryland (1793-1825).

In Foskett's time as Principal, the 1720s, there were just four





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students; sixteen were there in the 1730s; and twenty-nine in the 1740s; and, overall, between the years 1720 and 1860 some eight hundred students were trained in this place for the Baptist ministry.

Both the church at Broadmead and the Academy accepted *The Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)* and this document continued as the recognized doctrinal standard until 1832 when the basis of the Baptist Union tragically changed to admit those who “agree in the sentiments usually denominated evangelical.”

By 1815 all students learned Hebrew, Greek, theology, church history and logic. The library in 1722 contained only 198 volumes, but several ministers’ libraries, donated to the Academy, increased the number to thousands of volumes.

Until 1806, Bristol Baptist College was the only college for the training of Baptist students.

## **The Log College**

William Tennent, born in Ireland in 1673, left his native country for America in 1718 where he became a Presbyterian minister. He served in various places, but in 1726 he was called to the church in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania, and remained a minister there until 1742.

Tennent desired above all else to see the prosperity of the Church in that part of America, and he also had a concern for the young men growing up around him (including his four sons) whom he thought could one day be a real blessing to the Church. As there were no colleges in his area, he built a log house about one mile from Neshaminy Creek, and therefore near to his church. This ‘Log College’, as it was called, became the first theological institution of the Presbyterian Church in America, the immediate parent of Princeton Theological Seminary.

Tennent’s eldest son, Gilbert, who himself profited from the tuition of his father, became assistant to him in teaching the other





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students. Although outwardly unimpressive, history records that God richly blessed the College; and many men who studied theology there, and were subsequently licensed by the Presbyteries, became eminent, powerful, Gospel preachers, greatly used of God in the revival known as “the Great Awakening.”

George Whitefield visited the Log College in 1739, and wrote:

“The place wherein the young men study is a log house about twenty feet long and nearly as many broad, and to me it seemed to resemble the school of the old prophets, for their habitations were mean...From this despised place seven or eight worthy ministers of Jesus have lately been sent forth; more are almost ready to be sent, and the foundation is now laying for the instruction of many others.”

William Tennent’s four sons were trained there, as were Samuel J. Finley (who became president of Princeton) and Charles Beatty (who succeeded Tennent as minister at Neshaminy).

### **The College at Trevecca**

In the 18th Century, the Lord poured out His Spirit in revival power upon parts of Britain. Many men worked tirelessly in the Lord’s service: men such as George Whitefield, John Wesley and Charles Wesley in England; Daniel Rowland, William Williams and Hywell Harris in Wales. The Countess of Huntingdon used her wealth and influence to promote the Gospel. She founded chapels so people had the opportunity to hear the Word of God being preached.

As a result of her early friendship with Philip Doddridge and her knowledge of his academy at Northampton, the Countess of Huntingdon had developed a real interest in theological education. This interest became a matter of concern when she realized there was a lack of preachers to supply pulpits; and, burdened to establish a college where men, called of God, could be trained, in 1765 she shared





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her burden with Hywell Harris and found that he, too, had been praying about establishing such a college. They shared the same vision.

The College was founded in Trevecca, close to Hywell Harris' home. The Countess rented from him the building, Trevecca House, and financed the renovations that were needed. Some doubted the wisdom of the project, including John Wesley, who in 1768 wrote to his brother, Charles, as follows: "Did you ever see anything more queer than their plan of institution?", and John Berridge, who wrote negatively the same year to the Countess: "The soil you have chosen is proper. Welsh mountains afford a brisk air for a student; and the rules are excellent; but I doubt the success of the project."

Notwithstanding such criticisms, on 24 August 1768, the building was opened as a college, the preacher being George Whitefield who preached from the words of *Exodus 20:24*: "*In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee.*" The following Lord's Day he preached again to thousands in front of the building. It was a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and afterwards Berridge wrote thus to the Countess:

"I am glad to hear of the plentiful effusion from above on Talgarth. Jesus has now baptized your College."

The students were from a variety of backgrounds, from both England and Wales, such as John Glazebrook, who had been a collier, and Joseph Shipman, who had been expelled from Oxford University for his faith. These men were to be blessed of God as they preached the Word.

There was an emphasis on spiritual development and practical service through preaching commitments in the College, as well as intellectual progress. Regulations were strict. John Fletcher retained his parish at Madeley but became the first Principal; his prayerful





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approach challenged the students to seek God. Joseph Benson, Fletcher's biographer, wrote that

“prayer, praise, love and zeal, all ardent, elevated above what one would think attainable in this state of frailty, were the element in which he [John Fletcher] continually lived...The students...seldom hearkened long before they were all in tears, and every heart caught fire from the flame which burned in his soul.”

Hywell Harris went to the College regularly, exhorting and encouraging them and, at anniversaries, many Revival leaders from England and Wales – including John Wesley – visited this blessed place, rejoicing together in the felt presence of God

In its early years, the College produced some able preachers. Sadly, however, it later went through some difficult times, with a fall in standards and problems with finances and with personnel. In 1791, the College moved to Cheshunt in Hertfordshire.

### **The Pastors' College**

During Charles Spurgeon's time as minister of New Park Street (1854-1861), a number of young men were brought to faith in Christ. These men had a zeal for the spread of God's Word, but they lacked a proper education and a good understanding of doctrine. Spurgeon felt increasingly that something should be done to provide them with proper and adequate instruction.

Spurgeon conceived the idea of establishing a college – “a very weighty enterprise and a great responsibility.” He talked over the possibility with Rev. Jonathan George of Walworth, who suggested making contact with Rev. George Rogers, a Congregational minister at Albany Road Chapel, Camberwell. This man was eventually to become the first Principal of the Pastors' College.

At first, in 1856, there was just one student (T.W. Medhurst). Once a week this young man received teaching from Spurgeon at his





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lodgings and sometime later he stayed with Rev. George Rogers at Camberwell, where a second student joined him and profited from the teaching being given.

Soon there were eight, all boarded at Rogers' home, but with further increase of numbers, the classes started to be held in the New Park Street Chapel, and the students were given accommodation in the homes of the members.

When the Tabernacle opened, the College moved there, to the lecture hall and its adjoining rooms, on the lower level. By this time there were sixteen students. Spurgeon wrote,

“the theology of the Pastors' College is *Puritanic*. We know nothing of the new *ologies*; we stand by the old ways...Both our experience and our reading of the Scriptures confirm us in the *belief of the unfashionable doctrines of grace*; and among us, upon those grand fundamentals, there is no uncertain ground.”

He continued,

“The Presbyterian Churches of Rotterdam and Amsterdam, which are frequently supplied by our students, and are resolutely orthodox, have again and again sent us pleasing testimony that our men carry to them *the old theology of the Westminster Assembly's Confession*. Let wiseacres say what they will, there is more truth in that venerable *Confession* than could be found in ten thousand volumes of the school of affected culture and pretentious thoughtfulness. Want of knowing what the old theology is, is in most cases the reason for ridiculing it. Believing that the Puritanic school embodies more of Gospel truth in it than any other since the days of the apostles, we continue in the same line of things, and by God's help, hope to have a share in that revival of evangelical doctrine which is as sure to come as the Lord Himself.”







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In the College, the text-book on theology for many years was Dr. A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology*. The course, which lasted two years, covered other subjects besides theology, and these included: Hebrew, Greek, Homiletics, Pastoral Theology, and English Composition.

The College was part of the life of the Tabernacle, with the students being very much involved in the church and in its activities.

At the beginning, when the Pastors' College began, Spurgeon said, "I had not even a remote idea of whereunto it would grow." From humble beginnings the College did grow; and, by the will of God, it remarkably served its generation. By 1866, in London alone, students from the College had formed eighteen new churches and had been instrumental in the reviving of seven old and dying churches.

## **The Holy Ministry**

Scripture teaches that the office of the ministry has been divinely instituted.

God appointed "*prophets*", around from "*old time*" and even "*since the world began*" (Luke 1:70). Among these was Abel (Luke 11:49-53), Enoch, the seventh in lineal descent from Adam (Jude 14), Noah (2 Peter 2:5) and Abraham (Genesis 20:7; cf. 18:19).

Moses, of course, was an exceptional prophet to whom God communicated directly (Numbers 12:6-8) but, unable to bear the responsibility alone, the Spirit of God also empowered seventy elders who "*prophesied, and did not cease*" (Numbers 11:25).

Like their prophetic forerunners, Moses and his elders were *extraordinary* ministers. Supernaturally called and miraculously endowed, they were able infallibly to declare the revealed will of God (See also: Exodus 3:1-22; Psalm 74:9; Ezekiel 3:10, 11).





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Under Moses, however, *ordinary* ministers were also appointed. These were, in the first instance, Levitical priests, part of whose task was to “*teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law*” (*Deuteronomy 33:10*; cf. *Ezekiel 44:15, 16, 23*; *Malachi 2:7*). They ministered in the Tabernacle (*Lev. 10:8-11*) and in the Temple (*2 Chronicles 20:5, 13, 14-17*. See also: *Deuteronomy 31:9-13* and *Jeremiah 36:1-6*).

Israel quickly discovered the benefit of having “*a teaching priest*” in the midst (*2 Chronicles 15:3*). It was through the ministry of priests that the Lord was pleased to effect real reformation among the people (*17:8-13*).

In the synagogue, too, there was preaching (*Acts 15:21*). Prophets and priests preached there (*Nehemiah 8:6-8*), but according to Jewish writers, another class of ordinary minister, the ‘chief ruler’ of the Synagogue, had special “authority to preach and to expound the law”.

A divine promise, given through Jeremiah, declared that in Christian times God would give “*pastors*” whose special task would be to teach “*knowledge and understanding*” (*Jeremiah 3:15-17*).

The ministry was evidently retained as a standing institution in the Christian Church. Our Lord himself intimated that his Church required a new order of instructed “*scribes*”, each of whom would be as a “*householder*”, or head of a family, taking care of other believers and providing for their spiritual needs (*Matthew 13:52*; cf. *Luke 12:42*).

To facilitate this, he charged some to give themselves wholly to the duty of being official teachers and guides (*Matthew 10:5-10*; *Luke 10:1-4*) and then, before his departure, he communicated a ministerial commission to others (*Matthew 28:19-20*). This ministry was to continue “*unto the end of the world*” (v 20).

On ascending, Christ gave special gifts for the benefit of his Church;





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and, besides *extraordinary* ministers – apostles, prophets, and evangelists – he gave *ordinary* ministers – “*pastors and teachers*” – who followed up the work of the former in a restricted, local sphere (*Ephesians* 4:11). These were meant to “*labour in the word and doctrine*” (*1 Timothy* 5:18; cf. *1 Corinthians* 9:14; *Galatians* 6:6).

“*Teachers*”, after “*apostles and prophets*”, are “*set*” in “*the church*” (*1 Corinthians* 12:28; cf. *Romans* 12:8; *Galatians* 6:6; *2 Timothy* 2:2). From the epistles to the seven churches in Asia Minor, we gather that the ‘teacher’ was the presiding officer in each church. These epistles are addressed to the “*angels*” of the churches, further symbolized as “*stars*” (*Revelation* 1:16, 20; 2:1 ff.). In prophetic language, ‘star’ means a ‘ruler’ (e.g. *Numbers* 24:17). ‘Angel’ signifies a ‘messenger’ (e.g. *Malachi* 2:7 – “*messenger*”, literally ‘angel’). Together, the figures suggest rulers who are also teachers.

James, it appears, occupied that office in the church at Jerusalem (*Acts* 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; *Galatians* 2:12). Epaphras appears to have been the minister at Colosse, since Paul, in his letter to the church there, describes him as “*our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ*” (*Colossians* 1:7; cf. 4:12, 13). In his absence, some think that Archippus held the office (*Colossians* 4:17). And finally, Epaphroditus appears to have been minister of the church at Philippi (*Philippians* 2:25).

### **Eldership**

It is true that the New Testament refers to “*elders*” or “*bishops*” (both words appear in the New Testament, but it is certain that they are used to denote the holders of the same office. See: *Acts* 20:17,28; *Titus* 1:5,7; *1 Peter* 5:1,2 – “*overseers*” is the word elsewhere rendered “*bishops*”), but this does not nullify or negate the ministerial office; rather, when rightly understood, it defines and confirms that office, showing that the ministry remains in Christ’s Church.





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Let it first of all be established, and as a fundamental principle, that the essential character of the office of 'elder' lies in government, the terms 'elder' and 'bishop' both conveying the idea of a 'ruler.'

'Elder' was a title borrowed from the Jews, among whom it described those with authority to govern. In earliest times the elders seem to have been the heads of the principal families, responsible for the ordering of affairs within the family circle (*Exodus 3:16,18; 4:29*). Under Moses, they had committed to their care the supervision of the whole nation and the law made provision for recognized elders to act as judges in every city (*Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Joshua 20:4; Ruth 4:2,9*). With the institution of the synagogue, a further stage of development was reached. The elders in the locality became the elders of the synagogue. Each synagogue had a bench of them to manage its affairs and conduct its discipline. These were the "rulers" (*Mark. 5:22; Acts 13:15*). Therefore, although of extensive use among the Jews, the title was always expressive of authority and government. As Dr. James Thornwell says: "The word elder denotes a ruler and nothing more."

### **Bishop**

The term 'bishop' had been common among the Greeks. "In Athenian language", remarks Dr. J.B. Lightfoot, "it was used to designate commissioners appointed to regulate a new colony or acquisition." It occurs quite often in the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the *Septuagint* (280-150 BC); and, as this had a wide circulation among Greek-speaking Jews before Christ came, it is likely that the term was chosen for church officers on account of its usage there. In that version it is used to describe "officers" (explained as 'captains'), "overseers" and "rulers" (*Numbers 31:14; 2 Kings 11:19; 2 Chronicles 34:12*). All are words denoting power of government.





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### **Other Titles and Descriptions**

Elders or bishops are said to preside over Christian assemblies in harmony with Christ's purpose, *"them which...are over you in the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 5:12); and it is acknowledged that they have responsibility as spiritual rulers: *"them that have the rule over you"* (Hebrews 13:17; cf. 1 Timothy 5:17).

The real function of eldership, then, concerns general control and superintendence and elders who 'rule' fulfil all the duties of their office.

### **Shepherding**

A legitimate question at this point is, "How are we to understand those Scriptures which speak of elders or bishops 'shepherding', appointed to 'feed' the Church? Does not this imply that they are really all ministers and preachers?" No, it does not.

In the Bible 'shepherd' is a word used to describe 'princes' and 'rulers':

*"[The Lord] saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd" (Isaiah 44:28).*

*"David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd" (Ezekiel 37:24).*

*"When he [the Assyrian] shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men [margin: princes]" (Micah 5:5).*

Other examples may be found in Jeremiah 6:3; 22:22; and Ezekiel 34:23-24.

What then of this word 'feed'? As used in the Old Testament, it has the idea of government and supervision in general, as the following verses show:

*"And all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying ... the Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my*





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*people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel”  
(1 Chronicles 11:2).*

*“The judges of Israel...I commanded to feed my people.”  
(1 Chronicles 17:16).*

*“Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage”  
(Micah 7:14).*

In each case, the marginal reading is ‘rule’ since that is the real meaning of the word. Dr. William Wilson, in his *Old Testament Word Studies*, says that when the word is used metaphorically like this, it always means “to lead or guide as a shepherd.”

This prepares us, I suggest, for those New Testament references which speak of elders as ‘shepherding’ and ‘feeding’ the Lord’s people. The work of ‘shepherds’, involving management and supervision, is to be carefully distinguished from the specific and particular work of ‘teachers’:

*“He [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors [or shepherds] and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11).*

As for the shepherd’s duty, it is undoubtedly to ‘feed’; but, as Professor T.M. Lindsay observes, “the word translated ‘feed’ means to shepherd, and implies more the idea of government and guidance than of instruction.” So the meaning of the word is exactly the same as its Old Testament equivalent. Paul therefore reminds the Ephesian elders that the Holy Ghost has made them “overseers” so that they might “*feed [or shepherd] the church of God*” (Acts 20:28). Peter also exhorts elders to “*feed the flock*” and then carefully explains what he means, telling them to use their authority of oversight but with real care to avoid domination and oppression (1 Peter 5:1-3).

### **Apt to Teach**

We conclude that eldership is properly understood in terms of





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government. A man who is an elder is to be considered a ‘ruler’, not necessarily a public ‘preacher’ or ‘teacher’. He must, of course, be “*apt to teach*” (1 Timothy 3:2) because his ruling work requires that he should “*admonish*”, “*exhort*” and “*convince*” (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Titus 1:9), but this does not mean that he must be qualified to ‘preach’. The word translated “*apt to teach*” occurs in only one other place and there definitely refers to teaching in private conversation.

*“The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:24,25).*

Of course, it may be necessary for an elder, in the event of the need arising, publicly to expound the Scriptures. But he should not be expected to have a special preaching gift and his duties, in and of themselves, do *not* include regular public preaching.

### **The Teaching Elder**

The Bible does teach that an elder may, *in addition to his ruling duties*, be called to *the public preaching ministry*. There is ground then for the distinction historically made in the Reformed churches between *teaching* and *ruling* elders: the former, called and enabled also to preach and teach; the latter, not publicly teaching, but confined to the work of assisting and helping in the government.

*“Governors (1 Corinthians 12:28) were, I believe, elders chosen from the people, who were charged with the censure of morals and the exercise of discipline along with the bishops (i.e. ministers). For one cannot otherwise interpret his statement, ‘Let him who rules act with diligence’ (Romans 12:8).” (John Calvin, The Institutes: 4:3:8).*





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In case any should feel that all this is doctrinal ‘hair-splitting’, let it be said right now that the distinction being made is both biblical and important, and that the failure to recognise it has resulted in confusion and tragic spiritual loss for many of our churches.

Let us state the position as clearly as we can. Evidence has been produced showing that while all elders have jointly the government and spiritual oversight of the church, an elder might *also* be called into the ministry. Now when that happens, he is still an elder and he continues to function as one, but he is now a ‘teaching elder’. That is the position. Already Scriptures have been quoted in support of it, but what further evidence is there for distinguishing between ruling and teaching elders?

1. The model which the apostles followed when providing for the future regulation of the Church was that of the Jewish synagogue, and we do know that each synagogue had an eldership (*Acts 13:14,15*) as well as regular preaching on the Sabbath day (*Acts 15:21*). What is not generally known is that, while all elders were responsible for spiritual management, not all were involved in the public ministry of the Word. Dr. John Lightfoot, deservedly renowned for his knowledge of the ancient Jewish writings, says:

“We may observe from whence the apostle taketh his expressions, when he speaketh of some elders ruling and labouring in word and doctrine, and some not; namely, from the same platform and constitution of the synagogue, where the ‘ruler of the synagogue’ was more singularly for ruling the affairs of the synagogue, yet was he ever a student in divinity; and the ‘minister of the congregation’, labouring in the word, and reading of the law, and in doctrine, about the preaching of it: both these together are sometimes called jointly ‘the rulers of the synagogue’, being both elders, that ruled.”







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2. Whenever elders are mentioned in the New Testament the word is in the plural. We read, for example, of supplies being sent from Antioch to *“the elders”* of the church at Jerusalem (*Acts 11:30*). Paul and Barnabas, visiting again the newly-founded churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ordained *“elders in every church”* (*Acts 14:23*). From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and called for *“the elders of the church”* in that place (*Acts 20:17*). Titus, as an apostolic delegate in Crete, was told to ordain *“elders in every city”* (*Titus 1:5*). The sick are exhorted, in certain circumstances, to call for *“the elders of the church”* (*James 5:14*). In all the apostolic churches this was the pattern. Now if, as some would have us believe, there is no distinction between ruling and teaching elders, and all elders are scripturally commissioned to preach as well as rule, then all those early churches, no matter how small, must have had a number of brethren gifted for public preaching, all of whom were financially supported by the church (see: *1 Corinthians 9:14*; *1 Timothy 5:17,18*). Is that really conceivable?

Dr. Robert Dabney has some pertinent things to say about this:

“Some of the churches, as Jerusalem and Antioch, were so large that they employed many preachers at home. This we grant (*Acts 13:1*). But as to the vast majority of the primitive churches, we utterly deny it. Many of them were the handfuls of Christians collected by the first labours of the apostles, and meeting in private houses. History tells us that the little island of Crete had one hundred ‘cities’; that is, walled towns, of which the most were nothing more than villages; yet Titus was to ordain a plurality of elders in every one of these where there were Christians.”

Let us press the point home. How many churches today are able to ordain and then support a number of brethren qualified to preach? Very few indeed. If that is the apostolic plan, it seems





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quite impracticable. But if the majority of elders in our churches are ruling elders, and only some are called to preach, it is a plan which certainly can be copied.

3. In one passage, Paul makes a list of spiritual gifts. He includes those which were miraculous and temporary, but he also mentions the ordinary gifts which would be permanent. He says:

*“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly **teachers**, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, **governments**, diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).*

‘Helps’ are commonly understood to be “deacons, who assist church rulers in providing for the table of the Lord, the ministers and the poor” (Dr. John Brown). ‘Governments’ must surely refer to ruling elders, government being their principal work; while ‘teachers’ will be such elders as are gifted and called to expound the Scriptures, best described as teaching elders.

4. In another place, the apostle specifies the different gifts exercised by office-bearers in the Church (*Romans 12:6-8*) and he teaches that they are basically of two kinds: spiritual and practical. These alternate throughout the list and, to make things plain, we will set them down in two columns:

### **COLUMN 1**

*“Prophecy”*

(an extraordinary gift, now ceased)

*“he that teacheth”/ “he that exhorteth”*

(teaching was followed by exhortation –  
*Acts 14:21,22*)

*“he that ruleth”*

(the word to describe an elder’s work –  
*1 Tim. 5:17*)

### **COLUMN 2**

*“ministry”*

(‘diaconia’ – the word for deacons’ work)

*“he that giveth” (lit. “distributeth”)*

(the external aspect of the work –  
providing for the needy)

*“he that showeth mercy”*

(the internal aspect of the work –  
sympathy and compassion)





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There is a clear distinction within the eldership here (first column). While some elders are recognized as public preachers (*“he that teacheth”/“he that exhorteth”*), others are simply rulers (*“he that ruleth”*).

5. When the ascended Lord bestowed gifts upon his church, *“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors [shepherds] and teachers.”* (Ephesians 4:11). All these gifts have something in common: they relate to the verbal communication of truth. But there are important differences. The first three are extraordinary and were for the Church at the beginning, whereas the last two are ordinary, given to local churches, and intended to be permanent. Now when it says, *“and some, pastors and teachers”*, the same office is meant. If it were otherwise, it would have been phrased differently: *“and some pastors and some teachers.”* Within the one office of elder, then, Paul appears to recognize two distinct orders: namely, ordinary elders and *“pastors and teachers”* (or elders *with* the gift of teaching). As already observed, the apostle is listing the gifts which are exercised in public instruction. He carefully avoids using the simple word ‘pastor’, since that word might be understood to include all the governing elders; and he chooses instead two terms which unmistakably identify the officers as the ‘teaching elders’.

6. One verse which, on account of its importance has to be quoted, is: *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”* (1 Timothy 5:17). This shows that there is indeed a divinely ordained difference within the eldership. I believe that Dr. David King of Glasgow gave the sense exactly when he said:

“The general description of elders is, that they are all rulers – ministers are included in that description – and the specified





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peculiarity by which some are distinguished from the rest is, that, besides ruling, they labour in word and doctrine.”

I will only add this: if all elders are called to ‘rule’ *and* ‘preach’, as some maintain, how is it that Paul wants “*double honour*” given to those who only do half of what they are supposed to do?

7. Finally, *Hebrews 13* deserves mention. Those referred to in verse 7 would appear to have been their teaching elders:

*“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow...”*

Further on, in verse 17, there is a separate and quite distinct exhortation concerning their ruling elders:

*“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls...”*

Then, at the very end of the chapter, (v. 24), the author sends his greetings to the *whole* eldership and the wording here is significant: “*Salute **all** them that have the rule over you...*”

## **Leadership**

*“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, **especially** they who labour in the word and in doctrine.” (1 Timothy 5:17).*

Dr. Douglas Bannerman observes:

“By apostolic injunction, ‘special honour’ was to be given to those presbyters who, besides ‘ruling well’, laboured in the Word and in teaching. This would naturally lead to such a ‘minister of the Word’ presiding, as a rule, in the meetings of the congregation, and of the eldership” (*The Scripture Doctrine of the Church*, p 548).

There is evidence of this principle of leadership being worked out





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in the earliest church and the one about which we happen to know the most: the church at Jerusalem. We are told that there were elders in the Jerusalem church (*Acts 11:30*) but, in the words of Dr. Ralph Wardlaw, “there is something distinctive and peculiar as to James.”

When, three years after his conversion, Paul visited Jerusalem, he not only met with the apostle Peter but he was also introduced to James. “*Other of the apostles*”, he says, “*saw I none, save James, the Lord’s brother*” (*Galatians 1:18, 19*). James, of course, was not an apostle, and the wording here suggests that he was in a different category from the apostles. It would be possible to translate as follows: “Another of the apostles I did not see – only, I did see James.” But although not one of the Twelve, he *was* linked with the apostle Peter; and later in this same epistle his name appears *before* the names of Peter and John, who “*seemed to be pillars*”. This can only mean that he occupied a prominent position of leadership in the Jerusalem church (*Galatians 2:8,9*).

Accordingly, it was James who sent delegates to Antioch with information about the situation in Judea. “*Certain [persons] came from James...*” (*Galatians 2:12*).

Throughout the *Book of Acts*, James is carefully distinguished from others. After Peter’s release from prison, the apostle is told by *the Lord* – and there is significance in that – “*Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren*” (*Acts 12:17*). It seems as if James was already minister of the church. He may well have been so even when the Twelve were in Jerusalem. If that was the case, he must have occupied his position with apostolic approval. He certainly had that approval at the famous Council of Jerusalem. He presided over that Council, with apostles present, and, summing up the debate, he recommended the course of action.





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*"After they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me...My sentence is..." (Acts 15:13,19).*

Perhaps even more to the point is the fact that afterwards, when Paul visits Jerusalem, he attended an elders' meeting over which James presided. *"The day following",* we are told, *"Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present"* (Acts 21:18).

We may be sure that he was one of the elders, for sometimes he is not specifically mentioned, just *"the elders"* (Acts 11:30). But who can doubt that this man, with his teaching ministry, was anything other than the presiding elder of the Jerusalem church?

There is every reason to believe that, generally, there was a minister or pastor in each of the apostolic and primitive churches. On the isle of Patmos, the ascended Lord delivered to the apostle John messages for the seven churches in Asia Minor. Each of these was addressed to one called *"the angel"* or 'messenger' (Revelation 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14). But who was that? The term appears to be borrowed from the ancient synagogue where the public minister, entrusted with the charge of teaching and conducting worship, was called the angel of the synagogue. This officer, who exercised authority along with the other rulers, had no jurisdiction beyond the congregation in which he ministered. Bishop Burnet, a respected authority, believed that to be the correct interpretation, observing: "Among the Jews, he who was the chief of the synagogue, was called...Sheliach Tsibbor, the angel of the church." This accords with the view of Dr. Robert Dabney, who wrote:

*"After all the thorny discussions as to the interpretation of this term, there is none so natural and tenable as that which makes the angel, in imitation of the well-known order and use of titles in the synagogue, the preaching presbyter, who presided over his brethren the presbyters, and was the public*





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mouth-piece, or messenger of the church of God, and of God to the church.”

Why then was the teaching elder early recognized as a leader? Scripture enables us to answer this question:

**First of all**, the Lord rules his church by his Word. Therefore, by virtue of his office, the teacher possesses unique authority.

*“Remember them which have the rule over you, **who have spoken unto you the word of God...**” (Hebrews 13:7).*

**Secondly**, the gift of teaching, ranked the highest, requires special respect.

*“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly **teachers...**” (1 Corinthians 12:28).*

**Thirdly**, in the teaching elder two gifts unite, the gifts of teaching and ruling.

*“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” (1 Timothy 5:17, cf. Romans 12:6-8).*

**Fourthly**, our Lord gave us to understand that the servant who regularly delivered the Word was the steward particularly entrusted with the management of the church.

*“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make **ruler over his household**, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” (Luke 12:42).*

**Fifthly**, since the teacher speaks for God, he receives a special call. He is therefore one whom the Lord has sent.

*“How shall they preach, except they be **sent?**” (Romans 10:15. cf. Acts 13:2; 1 Corinthians 9:15 and Jeremiah 23:21).*

**Sixthly**, the teacher (whenever possible) is ‘full-time’ and financially





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supported by the church, which enables him to concentrate on the work of pastoral oversight.

*“Even so hath the Lord ordained that **they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel**” (1 Corinthians 9:14, cf. Galatians 6:6).*

**Seventhly**, in Scripture, only teaching elders are actually called ‘pastors’.

*“He gave some...pastors and teachers” [called together as one set of men] (Ephesians 4:11, cf. Jeremiah 3:15).*

Note: Others assist in general pastoral work, (Acts 20:17, 28).

We must avoid a subtle extremism at this point. The minister, or teaching elder, should *not* be the sole ruler in the church. Ruling elders are empowered to join *with him* in every act of government and discipline. His teaching and presiding ministry, however, should not be threatened by ruling elders. There is real danger in the present emphasis on the *absolute parity of elders* (a doctrine which should not be confused with the historic Reformed doctrine of ministerial equality). Scripture requires the teaching elder to lead, in a God-fearing and humble manner, and as an elder among elders. When this happens, God’s work will be done in God’s way and it may well be that some of our presently troubled churches will recover peace and prosperity.

## **The Call to the Ministry**

The word ‘apostle’ means ‘one sent’. In the strict and official sense it denotes ‘the twelve’ (and Paul, of course), all of whom were immediately ‘sent’ by the Lord and who therefore may be described as “*the apostles of Jesus Christ*” (Luke 6:13; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 3:2). In a more general sense, however, the term applies







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to anyone 'sent' through ordinary means. So ministers of the Gospel generally are described as those 'sent', as in:

*"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will **send forth** labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38).*

*"How shall they preach, except they be **sent**?" (Romans 10:15).*

Immediately the question arises: "What exactly is intended by this word 'sent'?" Scripture teaches that there is a personal and secret call, heard in the heart. The Holy Spirit refers to it when, speaking of Barnabas and Saul, he says, "*I have **called** them*" (Acts 13:2). This inner call will normally find recognition and expression in the outer call of the Church, through election and ordination. It did, in fact, in the case just mentioned. As the church worshipped the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, either directly or through one of the prophets, "***Separate me Barnabas and Saul***" (Acts 13:2). As a result, the church chose and set apart the two men, and then "***sent them away***" (Acts 13:3). Thereafter they were called 'apostles' or 'sent ones' (Acts 4:4, 14; 1 Corinthians 9:5, 6). Saul – or Paul as he came to be known – was an apostle in the proper and unique sense of the word; Barnabas was simply a Gospel emissary dispatched by the church at Antioch (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:23 – "*messengers [literally, apostles] of the churches*").

Evidently, a minister should know deep inside himself that he is 'called' to Gospel work. This call was once described by Dr. J.H. Jowett as "a sense of the divine initiative, a solemn communication of the divine will, a mysterious feeling of commission." As you can see, it is not exactly easy to define; but one thing is clear: only the Lord can call men. He is the Sovereign; and it is his prerogative to appoint his servants. "*No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is **called of God***" (Hebrews 5:4). Paul tells us that it was the Lord, and no other, who put him "*into the ministry*" (1 Timothy 1:12). Christ





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*“sent”* me, he says, *“to preach the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 1:17). As this is a continuing work, the Lord still issues a distinct call to his chosen servants.

Ministers are *“ambassadors”* (2 Corinthians 5:20); and as the Puritan Thomas Manton correctly observes,

“If any should usurp the place of an ambassador without the prince’s leave and command, it would be accounted horrible pride.”

Indeed, the Lord condemns those who invade the ministerial office and intrude into its sacred functions. It was Korah’s great fault that he wanted to take upon himself the priesthood; and this fault was accounted rebellion and judged accordingly (*Numbers 16:1-3, 8-10, 31-33; cf. Jude 11*). Referring to others who dared to assume a preaching role, the Lord says, *“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran”* (*Jeremiah 23:21*). Unspeakably solemn are the words which follow: *“Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord”* (*Jeremiah 23:30-32*). There are other passages to the same effect e.g. *Numbers 18:7; Deuteronomy 18:20; 1 Samuel 13:8-14; and Ezekiel 13:1-3*. Although similar to Manton’s words quoted above, the remarks of Dr. Breckinridge are worthy of inclusion here.

“For a man, then, to presume to be an ambassador for Almighty God, and that touching questions no less awful than the glory of his throne, and the endless state of his rebellious subjects, without a settled conviction in his own soul, that this fearful trust is laid on him by the King eternal, is insane audacity.”

**No-one should** therefore enter the ministry without a distinct consciousness of the divine call. This must be stated with full clarity and emphasis. For:

**First of all**, if we do not insist upon it, the Lord will be provoked by blatant disregard of his revealed will. When Jeroboam opened the





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priesthood to all and sundry, *“this thing became a sin unto the house of Jeroboam”* (1 Kings 13:33,34).

**Secondly**, unsuitable men will enter this work and, as a result, the cause of Truth will suffer.

*“The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted”* (Psalm 12:8).

**Thirdly**, a ministry will be performed without real authority. Not only does the call constitute the commission but it is indispensable for the proper exercise of that commission. The Pharisees’ question could well be put to those who hold office without calling:

*“By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”* (Matthew 21:23; cf. Titus 2:15).

**Fourthly**, there will be confusion rather than order in the Church. According to the apostle, *“God hath set some in the church...teachers”* (1 Corinthians 12:28). Now ‘some’ cannot possibly be made to mean ‘all’. Paul himself makes that clear when he proceeds to ask, *“Are all teachers?”* (1 Corinthians 12:29). His question expects a negative answer. We conclude that God intends that his ministers should be distinguished from others, not least by reason of the fact that they are specially appointed by him.

**Fifthly**, in times of severe difficulty and discouragement, a man without a sense of calling is likely to lose heart and perhaps give up altogether; but a man whom God has charged with a work will endure all manner of hardship, believing that, come what may, he must faithfully discharge his duty. Take Jeremiah for an example. Faced with opposition and persecution, he addressed those who were desiring his death as follows:

*“The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city...As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.”* (Jeremiah 26:12,14).





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**Sixthly**, promises of the Lord's presence and of success in the work are only made to those properly called. "Go", said God to Moses, "and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:12. See also: Isaiah 6:7,8; John. 20:21,22). Uncalled men can hardly expect to enjoy the divine blessing. The Lord says: "I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all" (Jeremiah 23:32). Luther remarks on this verse, "Though they preach some profitable truths, yet do they not profit the people."

**Seventhly**, the great purpose of the ministry is to bring glory to God (1 Peter 4:10,11); but how can a man glorify God when he is acting independently of him? A master is honoured when his servants act at his command. Thus the centurion's rank was evidenced by the fact that he could issue orders to men. "I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (Matthew 8:9). Surely the Lord is honoured by the same kind of obedience.

### **A True Call of God**

What are the elements, then, which constitute a true call of God?

1. There must be ***some indication of the divine Will through the Scriptures***. The Bible is 'quick' or 'living' and there are times when it seems particularly to 'talk' to us (Hebrews 4:12; Proverbs 6:22). As we read and meditate upon it, certain words, verses, or passages become prominent, impressing themselves repeatedly upon our hearts. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this..." (Psalm 62:11). In this way, the Lord reveals his purpose.
2. There develops ***a strong and irrepressible desire to engage in the work of the ministry***. Paul writes: "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Timothy 3:1). Two different words are used here. The first really means 'to





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reach out after' or 'to stretch oneself towards.' It suggests that the subject has a high view of the ministerial office and that he seeks it, not for some carnal or ambitious reason, but because it will enable him to proclaim the glorious Gospel of grace to sinful men (*Acts 20:24; Ephesians 3:8*). The second word lays stress upon the actual emotion and it could be translated "sets his heart upon." The thought here seems to be that there is, in one truly called, a strong inclination of heart to consecrate the entire life to the work of the ministry. Neither difficulty nor discouragement is able to remove or suppress this desire. (*Romans 1:14,15; 15:20,21*).

3. There must be ***possession of the necessary gifts***. Whom the Lord calls, he qualifies and enables. Paul writes: "[God] hath made us able ministers of the new testament" (*2 Corinthians 3:6*). The word 'able' really means 'sufficient'; and one commentator, coining a word for the purpose of bringing out the meaning, renders the clause as follows: "[God] hath *sufficienced* us." This gives the sense exactly. Elsewhere, speaking rather more personally, Paul says the Lord "*enabled*" him so that he could enter "*into the ministry*" (*1 Timothy 1:12*). The same point is being made: namely, that a vital part of the call is the God-given ability to teach and lead others. In one particular place, the apostle seems almost to equate the call with the gift. He describes himself as "*made a minister*", not in consequence of some special call, but as a result of "*the gift of the grace of God*" – that is, the ministerial gift, as the context itself makes clear (*1 Timothy 1:2,8*).

4. A call to the ministry will involve ***real and deep conviction***. "*The preparations [margin: disposings] of the heart in man...is from the Lord*" (*Proverbs 16:1*). That word 'preparations' suggests 'a placing of things in order' or 'a setting of things in battle-array.' What God does, in the sovereign outworking of his will, is to concentrate a man's thoughts upon a particular matter. As a result, one idea





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predominates in his heart. There is a striking example of this in the case of Nehemiah. In his personal memoirs, he tells us, “*I arose, neither told I any man **what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem.***” (Nehemiah 2:12). Through the sovereign operation of the Spirit, then, the Lord’s servants become aware of their duty and so strong is the conviction that they feel compelled to preach. “*Necessity is laid upon me*”, wrote the apostle, “*yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9:16; cf. Galatians 1:16; Jeremiah 20:9).

5. ***The opinions of spiritual men and women*** constitute another vital factor. No-one should take it upon himself to judge his own competence. The consent and approval of the Lord’s people are vital elements in a true call to the ministry. According to the *Book of Acts*, Timothy was “***well reported of by the brethren***” before being called to minister along with Paul and Luke (Acts 16:2). Sometimes this is more than mere recognition or confirmation. The Lord can actually issue a call through others. Take the case of John Calvin, for example. While passing through Geneva, he met with Guillaume Farel, the minister, who became convinced that God had chosen Calvin to preach the Gospel. He told him as much, adjuring him to remain in the city; and, later, Calvin recalled Farel’s words and their effect upon him. It was, he said, “as if God had from heaven laid his hand upon me to arrest me.”

6. There should be ***some evidence of the divine blessing***. A young mechanic who thought the Lord was leading him into the ministry said to one of his church’s elders, “I feel that I have a call to preach.” The wise old man replied, “But have you noticed whether the people have a call to hear you? I have always noticed that a true call of the Lord may be known by this, that people have a call to hear you.” The fact is, that special blessings are promised to ministers; and even when they first begin to exercise their





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gifts, these blessings are usually in evidence (*Exodus 4:10-12; John 20:21,22; 2 Corinthians 3:5,6*). Their early attempts at preaching are often blessed to the conversion of souls. God said of those who claimed to be prophets,

*“If they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, **then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings**”* (*Jeremiah 23:22*).

7. A man’s call is made clear by ***the leadings of providence***. The apostle came to see that God had been at work in his life from the very beginning, ordering everything with a view to his entrance into the ministry. “God”, he wrote, “***separated me from my mother’s womb.***” (*Galatians 1:15*). The more he thought about it the more he realized that he had been “***separated unto the gospel of God***” (*Romans 1:1*). Now, where there is a real call to the ministry, there will be a similar realization. Reviewing the past, it should be possible for a man to see that God has equipped him with specific qualities, provided him with adequate training, directed him in his studies, granted him particular experiences, and opened to him a door of opportunity. Through the gracious illumination of the Spirit, there will be not only a recognition of God’s providential leading, but also an understanding of his will with respect to future service.

*“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it...**”* (*Isaiah 30:21*).

We need ministers today. But no-one should even attempt the work unless he has an unmistakable conviction that the Lord has called him. Since the Lord alone can issue this call, we must pray that he will call more men into the holy ministry. There is a prophetic Scripture which says, “*The Lord gave the Word: great was*





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*the company of those that published it” (Psalm 68:11). May that Scripture still further fulfilment, to the glory of the Triune God!*

### **A Minister’s Work**

This will include the following:

1. The faithful preaching and teaching of God’s Word, with dependence upon the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 2:2; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:17*);
2. The administration of the Gospel ordinances in their original purity (*Matthew 28:19, 20; John 1:33; Acts 20:7, 11*);
3. The conducting of public worship (*Acts 13:1, 2; 1 Timothy 4:11-15*), which will include: the singing of praise (*Psalm 95:2; Ephesians 5:19*), the offering of prayer (*Acts 6:4; 13:1-3; 20:36; 1 Timothy 2:1-8*), the reading and preaching of the Scriptures (*Deuteronomy 31:11; Nehemiah 8:8; Colossians 4:16; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 4:2*), and the pronouncing of the benediction (*Numbers 6:22-27; 2 Corinthians 13:14*);
4. The overall care of the church and its members (*Luke 12:42; Acts: 6:4; Ephesians 4:11-13; Revelation 2:14, 15, 17*);
5. The defence of the church’s orthodoxy and purity (*Matthew 7:15; Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 1:3,4; 4:6, 7, 16; 2 Timothy 2:25, 26*);
6. The superintendence of church discipline (*1 Timothy 4:11; Titus 2:15*), with rebuke (*1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 2:15*), suspension (*2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15; cf. Leviticus 13:4,6*), and exclusion (*1 Corinthians 5:1-5,11,13; Titus 3:10*);
7. The encouragement and maintenance of biblical church unity (*Ephesians 4:11-13; Galatians 5:15*).







## **PART TWO**

### **THE SEMINARY**







# The Seminary

Salisbury Reformed Seminary has been founded on clearly defined principles and convictions. This means the Seminary will preserve the following distinctives and emphases:

**Conservative:** The Seminary will uphold biblical doctrine, worship and practice:

- the Bible, as God's infallible and inerrant Word, the absolute, final and only authority for all truth;
- devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the true God, is the only object of supreme affection;
- holiness of life, begun in regeneration and continued in sanctification whereby we are conformed, not to this world, but to the image of God's beloved Son;
- the Sabbath day, appointed now as the first day of the week, and observed by a holy resting from work and recreation and by the proper, reverent observance of God's holy ordinances;
- serious-mindedness, being firm in the cause of God, attentive to His Word, and faithful to His Church;
- faithful service, heartily performed, with the full understanding that God sees all things;
- throughout life, glorifying God in heart and life, which is the end for which we were made and redeemed.

**Evangelical:** This is derived from a Greek word, *euangelion*, which means 'gospel' or 'good news'; and, from the time of the Reformation, those who rediscovered the original and authentic message of Christianity have been commonly called 'evangelics' or 'evangelicals.' The Seminary believes and affirms the biblical Gospel *and* the need to make it known, emphasising the following doctrines:





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- our first parents, although created with knowledge, righteousness and holiness, fell into a state of sin and misery, which is where we all are by nature;
- God's eternal Son became incarnate that he might be our Substitute, obeying perfectly the Law's precept and suffering fully the Law's penalty, that Heaven may be opened to us and Hell closed;
- the Gospel, strictly taken, is the 'good news' about Jesus Christ, who must be received as God's gift to sinners and depended on alone for salvation;
- the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's work to make sinners spiritually alive and so to renew them that they answer God's call in the Gospel;
- all those who turn to Christ, trusting solely in him and his work for sinners are justified, that is, they are accounted and accepted as righteous for Christ's sake alone;
- the Church consists of those who in all ages, through God's free grace, are in a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, evidencing their faith in lives of godliness and holiness
- at the appointed time Christ will return to this world, to raise the dead, judge the entire world, and establish His glorious kingdom.

***Reformed:*** The term has reference to the Reformation of the 16th Century and the Seminary unashamedly identifies itself with that great movement of God's Holy Spirit. To be 'Reformed' is to hold, along with the Reformers, certain important principles:

- the Holy Scriptures constitute the sole and sufficient authority for all matters of faith and practice; expounding and applying God's written Word is the great responsibility of all those called into the ministry;





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- God, in sovereign and awesome majesty, formed a determinate decree, before the world and time, concerning whatever comes to pass;
- in his amazing condescension, mercy and grace, God entered into an eternal covenant of grace with his Son, as representative of his elect, that upon his fulfilling of all righteousness, the elect would be brought into a state of salvation and enjoy the blessedness of eternal life;
- sinners cannot save themselves, either in whole or in part: salvation is a free gift of divine grace, sovereignly given to the elect;
- there is need for an inward, spiritual experience of saving grace, which creates such gratitude in the heart that, in the spirit of true devotion, God is esteemed, desired and loved above all others and his moral Law is readily followed as the holy rule of all conduct;
- God is to be worshipped, not after human traditions and innovations, but strictly and only according to biblical appointments; and therefore Roman Catholic errors and corruptions must be renounced while everything possible is to be done so to purify the visible Church, in its doctrine, worship, government, and practice, that it may be restored to its original beauty and strength;
- the manifestation of God's glory is the great, chief end of God in everything that he has done, in his eternal decree and in his works of creation, providence and redemption, and therefore his glory must be the chief aim of men in all their holy service.

## **Doctrinal Standard and Basis**

The Bible will be the Seminary's primary and ultimate authority. The version used will be the *Authorised Version* (1611), still the



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most accurate and faithful translation of God's Word in the English language, the underlying Texts of this version being the *Hebrew Masoretic* and *Greek Received Texts*, the authentic and preserved Texts of Holy Scripture.

As a subordinate standard, the Seminary will recognize the clear, strong, comprehensive declaration of historic Christianity set forth in *The Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689), but will at the same time show the deepest respect for those other grand 17th Century Confessions: *The Westminster Confession of Faith* of 1647 (Presbyterian) and *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* of 1658 (Congregational). Teaching in the Seminary will reflect the biblical doctrine of these *Confessions* and it is within this theological framework that the seminary will seek to serve God and his Church.

Students will be expected to recognize and respect these convictions, even if in some matters they remain yet to be convinced.

Every effort will be made to foster fellowship with Reformed ministers and their churches, avoiding sectarianism, party-mindedness, exclusiveness, prejudice and bigotry.

## **Seminary Objectives**

To equip men called to the ministry with a knowledge of Scripture, and related subjects, that they might cultivate godliness in themselves and in others, and exercise a biblically-based, Christ-centred and Spirit-filled ministry to the glory of the Triune God.

In training men, our endeavour will therefore be:

1. To teach them that ***the Bible is the inspired (God-breathed) Word of God***, infallible and inerrant, the sole authority for faith and practice;
2. To ground them in the ***Evangelical Reformed Faith***, the first term





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- alluding to the ‘good news’ that God has provided salvation in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, which salvation is received by faith alone, and the second term designating the doctrines rediscovered in the Reformation of the 16th Century, that uphold the truths taught in Holy Scripture;
3. To help them to be ***men of God***, not only with doctrinal knowledge in their minds but also ***with experimental knowledge*** in their hearts;
  4. To encourage them in the exercise of their preaching gifts, emphasising their responsibility to preach, freely and fully, and with passion for men’s souls, ***the glorious Gospel of Christ***;
  5. To instruct them in ***the doctrines of grace***, sometimes called “Evangelical Calvinism”, and to show how these doctrines affect every area of our lives, as well as the worship, government and practice of churches;
  6. To persuade them of the worth of ***conservative religion***: namely, to choose and to follow “*the old paths, where is the good way, and [to] walk therein*” (Jeremiah 6:16);
  7. To convince them of the importance and value of ***Confessional Christianity***, as seen in *The Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689), *The Westminster Confession* (1647) and *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), all three of these documents being essentially one, but differing in areas such as church government and the sacraments;
  8. To impress them with the need for ***reverent worship***, such as Scripture requires and the *Westminster Directory of Worship* (1648) outlines and describes; and to emphasize the law of worship, carefully defining and applying *the Regulative Principle* which states that there must be positive scriptural appointment





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and prescription (in clear commands and approved examples) for every ordinance of worship. *Quod Scriptura non jubet, vetat* – “What Scripture does not prescribe it forbids”;

9. To exhort them to adopt and to maintain ***the biblical doctrine of separation***, particularly in these days of compromise and apostasy, largely brought about by theological liberalism, practical worldliness, and the ecumenical, charismatic and new-evangelical movements; but also to urge them to uphold ***the biblical doctrine of unity***, seeking fellowship with such as are sound and steadfast in the Truth and are firmly adhering to the fundamentals of our most holy faith;
10. To incite them to appreciate the reality of ***spiritual experience***, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, showing that

*True religion's more than notion;*

*Something must be known and felt.*

*Joseph Hart (1712-68)*

and also to move them to desire Holy Spirit revival, which is nothing less than *a divine visitation*, God coming to his people and granting them an overwhelming sense of his presence, power and favour, which today is the supreme and desperate need of the Church.

Since our ultimate end must be the glory of the Triune God, and our subordinate end, the reformation, restoration and recovery of the Church, it will be our purpose and desire to supply churches with ministers, or pastors, who have imbibed the doctrines and principles outlined above and who will love and care for their people, faithfully directing them into the way of life, comfort and holiness.

## **Governance**

The Trustees are those to whom the general oversight of the







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Seminary is entrusted. All Trustees will be committed to the conviction that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's infallible and inerrant Word and constitute the only, sufficient, and infallible authority for faith and practice. They will also subscribe to the Reformed Evangelical Faith, as defined above and expounded in the three 17th Century *Confessions* to which reference has already been made. Formal, annual subscription to this belief and confessional stance will be required.

The Trustees will meet four times a year and on other occasions as and when necessary.

## **The Course**

Salisbury Reformed Seminary offers a course of study for men who are called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Preparing for the ministry is the principle focus of all studies in the course which has as its distinctives the following elements – conservative, Reformed and evangelical teaching rooted in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and a commitment to biblical inspiration, authority, sufficiency and inerrancy. The course will be taught by men who are themselves active in pastoral ministry, and will be practical in nature, availing students of the experience that the teachers have built up over many years.

There is the need today for men to be able to preach "*the whole counsel of God*" as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ and his Word, the Bible. Such preaching will have the aim of bringing sinners to true faith in Christ and to nurture and feed the flock of God. Therefore such men who apply to study at the Seminary should themselves be converted, and faithful Christians, with a genuine zeal for holy living. They will need to have a commitment to rigorous and diligent study.





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The course will last for three years but can be extended to four should the need arise. Teaching modules will take the form of two full weeks of lectures and ten monthly sessions of two days each making a total of 140 teaching hours in a year. Directed reading and assignments will take up the students' time between lectures in their home churches. The student's local pastor will have a role in practical training, e.g. in preaching, pastoral visiting and evangelism. The pastor will be requested to submit an annual report on the work done and progress made.

We pray that the Lord God will guide gifted and called men to the course, to the end that there will be a fresh generation of ministers of the Gospel whose hearts have been affected by truth and who prayerfully desire the salvation of souls and the revival, by the Holy Spirit, of the Church in the 21st Century.

Lecture notes will be provided for the course, along with a list of books recommended for reading. Lectures may also be placed on the Seminary's website and use will be made of Skype, which allows for intercommunication.

In addition to these courses, students will be encouraged to spend time working alongside a minister in a church other than his own.

## **Syllabus**

The 3-year course will cover the following subjects through six departments.

### **1. Biblical Studies:** Coordinator – Neil Pfeiffer

- Doctrine of Scripture
- Old and New Testament Introduction
- Hermeneutics
- Old and New Testament Exegesis



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### **2. Church History:** Coordinator – Roland Burrows

- Church History
- History and Theology of Revival

### **3. Systematic Theology:** Coordinator – Malcolm Watts

- Reformed Systematics
- Reformed Confessions
- Reformed Worship
- Covenant Theology

### **4. Preaching:** Coordinator – John Saunders

- Homiletics
- Biblical Evangelism and Missions

### **5. Biblical Languages:** Coordinator – Simon Green

- Greek and Hebrew Courses
- Language Tools

### **6. Pastoral Ministry:** Coordinator – David Kay

- Public Ministry
- Pastoral/Biblical Counselling
- Practical Ministry Issues
- Apologetics
- Ethics

### **Pastoral Coordinator between Seminary and Local Church:**

Dewi Higham

## **Lecturers**

The lecturers, approved by the Trustees, will be suitably qualified men – ministers and well-taught, informed laymen – confessionally Reformed.



## ***Salisbury Reformed Seminary***

# **Lecturing Trustees**

Malcolm H Watts, Principal

Roland Burrows, Christopher Buss, Richard Clarke, Simon Green,  
Dewi Higham, David Kay, Pooyan Mehrshahi, Neil Pfeiffer, John  
Saunders, John Thackway

## **Course Structure**

The Seminary course sessions will take the following form.

- There will be two blocks of one week from Monday to Friday which will provide 20 hours of lectures in the week.
- The first week will be held in January and the second in September.
- Ten other shorter blocks during the year will be held on a Friday and Saturday per month providing 10 hours each over the two days. This will give a total of 140 hours in one year.

The students will spend the rest of their assigned time in their home churches being mentored by their Pastors, reading, studying and preparing assignments.

## **Course Principle**

We remind all applicants that the Seminary is specifically intended for men who sincerely believe they have been called by God into the ministry and are recommended to the Seminary by the local church of which they are members. The Course is not intended to be of an academic nature but one that encourages serious study of Biblical doctrine, preaching and pastoral practice, with a desire to serve the Lord as one filled with the Spirit ministering for the glory of God.





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### **Admission**

Students must be men who profess and evidence a biblical experience of conversion; a desire to grow in the knowledge of God and his Word; and a conviction of being called to the ministry, recognized by their minister, or pastor, and by their church.

Students will be interviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees.

### **Accommodation**

Suitably priced accommodation will be recommended.

### **Course Cost**

Current annual fee: £750, plus living expenses and course materials.

### **Financial Support**

It is to be hoped that the student's local church, and perhaps other churches, will be able to offer them financial support.





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*“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6).*

*“Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8).*

*“According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” (Numbers 23:23).*

