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REFORMED FORUM

FALL/WINTER 2024 MAGAZINE

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THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST: PRIEST, PROPHET, AND KING

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It is with joy that I welcome you to this issue of *Reformed Forum Magazine*. In these pages, we turn our attention to the ordained office—a theme that highlights the unique roles, gifts, and graces the Lord has bestowed upon his people for the advancement of his kingdom. The ordained offices of minister, elder, and deacon serve vital purposes in the life of the church, reflecting Christ's loving care for his body. As we prepare to release the second edition of *Order in the Offices: Essays Defining the Roles of Church Officers*, we are reminded anew of the biblical mandate for faithfully stewarding the special roles Christ has instituted for his church.

The apostle Paul speaks of those who minister as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). While Paul addresses this specifically to those holding office, Scripture is clear that every believer is also a steward of God's varied grace (1 Pet. 4:10). Peter teaches us that each Christian is like a living stone, uniquely shaped and placed in the spiritual temple God is building (1 Pet. 2:5). Unlike modern bricks, no two stones in this structure are interchangeable; each of us has a specific role and place in God's kingdom. If we do not function according to the gifts God has entrusted to us, the entire structure suffers. This is both a great encouragement and a call to action. The Lord has designed us to serve in ways that only we can, and the body of Christ flourishes when each part plays its unique role.

At Reformed Forum, we seek to be faithful stewards of the rich theological heritage passed down through the ages, from the apostolic church to the Reformation, and now to us. We believe that these truths are a treasure to be guarded, shared, and applied in the life of the church today. Your continued support makes this possible, and we are deeply grateful for your partnership in this important work.

As you read this issue, I pray you are encouraged, enriched, and strengthened in your own calling to serve the Lord with faithfulness and joy, knowing that he is at work in and through his people for the glory of his name.

In Christ's Service,

Camden Bucey
Executive Director

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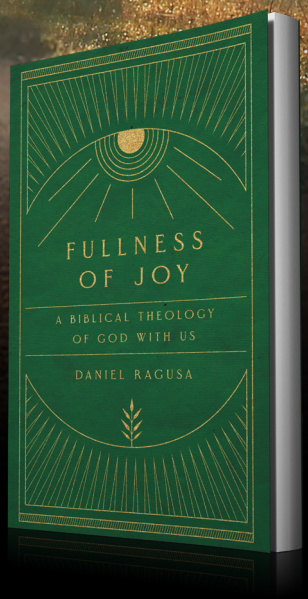
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ORDER IN THE OFFICES

QUESTIONS FOR THE EDITOR

CAMDEN BUCEY & MARK R. BROWN

Thomas Gainsborough, Wooded Landscape with a Cottage and Shepherd, Public Domain

The following are a series of questions created by Camden Bucey and answered by Mark R. Brown, general editor of *Order in the Offices: Essays Defining the Roles of Church Officers*. Rev. Brown is a retired ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The first edition of *Order in the Offices* was self-published in 1993. Reformed Forum is publishing its second edition.

Background

Q. What initially motivated you to coordinate, edit, and publish the first edition of *Order in the Offices* in 1993?

A. When I planted Westminster OPC, Hollidaysburg, PA, right out of seminary, I had a naive two-and-a-half-office view that saw some distinctions between pastors and ruling elders. As the church grew rapidly, I soon had a session of six elders from various backgrounds. Over several years, some of them pushed harder and harder for a strict two-office view with no distinctions between the pastor and the ruling elders. In effect, they pushed a Plymouth Brethren approach with a board of lay elders and no ministers of the Word or clergymen. They pushed for a rotating pulpit and were offended at my encouragement for young men to consider a call to the gospel ministry.

Beloved OPC pastor Charles Dennison encouraged me to study the matter and gather a book of essays on the subject of officers to benefit the whole church. I had no trouble gathering a group of OPC and PCA ministers who were willing to contribute essays. I had to self-publish the first edition of 1993 because no Reformed publisher would take it on at the time. To the surprise of many, it went through three printings with over two-thousand copies sold through my primitive efforts at publicity by phone call and letters.

Q. What prompted the creation of the second edition more than thirty years later?

A. The second edition comes out this fall because of continued interest from a new generation of seminarians and young pastors. Camden Bucey of Reformed Forum came to me and offered to publish a thirtieth anniversary edition—this time in a fine hardcover binding.

Q. What are the key additions or changes in the second edition of *Order in the Offices*?

A. Changes to the second edition include a new essay by Dr. Alan Strange, a revised essay by Rev. Gregory Reynolds, a new preface and introduction by the editor, an updated annotated bibliography, and a kind foreword by the Rev. Danny Olinger, General Secretary of the OPC Christian Education Committee.

The Three-Office View

Q. Can you explain the three-office view of church office as outlined in the book? How does this view differ from the two-and-a-half-office and two-office perspectives?

A. The classic three-office view of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches sees ministers of the Word, ruling elders, and deacons as the three ordained officers continuing in the church. The two-and-a-half-office view is ambiguous and inconsistent. It is really a variant of the three-office view while calling her ministers "teaching elders" in contrast to ruling elders and deacons. The Baptists have a two-office view with pastors and deacons. In Reformed circles, the strict two-office view, with its Plymouth Brethren origins, is beyond the bounds of the Reformed governmental standards since it has only lay elders and deacons.

Q. Why do you believe the three-office view remains important for the health and growth of the church today?

A. The three-office view clearly defines and distinguishes the offices to promote order and harmony in the congregations. Two-and-a-half- and two-office views confound the offices and promote strife, envy, and tensions. For example, dissident elders were quick to tell me, "I teach Sunday school; therefore, I am a teaching elder."

Challenges

Q. What are some of the main challenges you faced when promoting the three-office view within the broader Presbyterian community?

A. The two-and-a-half-office view was the clear majority view in the OPC thirty years ago. Hodge's and Smyth's teachings on office had been forgotten. That is why we published *Order in the Offices* to encourage the rediscovery of these men and to include some contemporary defenses of the three-office view.

Q. Do other Christian traditions hold to a three-office view?

A. All other non-Anglican churches, as diverse as Baptists and Lutherans, see the presbyter-bishop of Scripture as the pastor or minister of the Word. This is the essence of the three-office position—a distinct office of preacher-pastor. I call this view generic or catholic Presbyterianism versus a sectarian Presbyterianism. The sectarian view elevates the elder as the essential officer of Presbyterianism. But the minister is not an elder who teaches but a preacher who also governs. Preaching and preachers, not ruling and rulers, is the essence of a gospel church.

Take this test from Philippians 1:1b (NKJV), "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Where do the elders fit in with the bishops and deacons? If you include the elders with the bishops, you get a sectarian Presbyterianism. No other Protestant tradition does that! Include elders with deacons as the two names for lay leaders in the church and you have generic or catholic Presbyterianism.

Q. What are some of the common objections or obstacles to adopting a polity in accordance with a three-office view?

A. There should be no objections to adopting a three-office polity in our churches. The Reformed churches list minister, elders, and deacons in their confessional documents. Presbyterians, less consistently, allow freedom for both minister-elder-deacon and teaching elder-ruling elder-deacon formulations.

Practical Implications

Q. How can understanding and implementing the three-office view improve the functioning and unity of local congregations?

A. One goal of *Order in the Offices* is to help local church members understand the distinctives and functions of the biblical officers. This may lead to more respect for each man's distinct calling and hopefully less envy and strife among the officers.

Q. What practical steps can church leaders take to educate their members about the distinct roles of ministers, ruling elders, and deacons?

A. The pastor must take the lead in defining and distinguishing the offices to promote peace and unity in the church. Smyth's *Ecclesiastical Catechism* is an excellent teaching guide in this regard—good for both Sunday school and home use.

Q. What advice would you give to young men considering a call to the gospel ministry today?

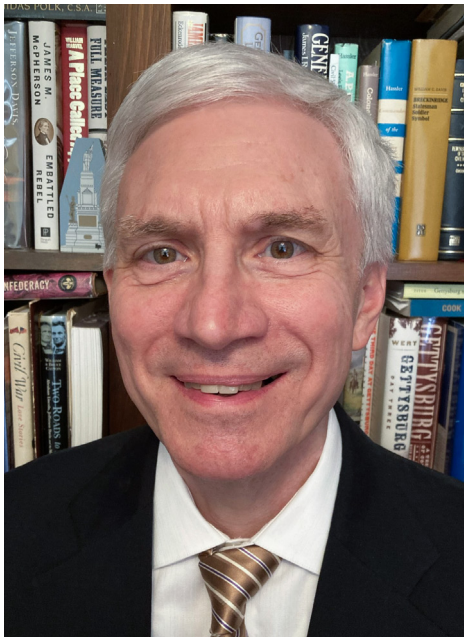
A. The first goal of *Order in the Offices* was to help young men and seminarians consider the distinctive calling, training, and functions of the office of gospel minister of the Word. Again, a minister is not just an elder who teaches. He is called to give his whole life to the service of the Word. It is this high calling that *Order in the Offices* seeks to promote.



Richard Ansdell, Highland Shepherd, Public Domain



Camden Bucey is Executive Director of Reformed Forum. He is a minister at Hope Presbyterian Church in Grayslake, IL, and Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.



Mark R. Brown is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. A graduate of Geneva College and Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Mark founded Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hollidaysburg, PA, in 1977, where he continued as pastor for forty years until his retirement in 2017. In addition to Order in the Offices, *he has contributed articles to* New Horizons *and* Ordained Servant *magazines.*

THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST: PRIEST, PROPHET, AND KING

ROBERT ARENDALE

As the one mediator between God and humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the great and final offices of prophet, priest, and king. This essay focuses particularly on his priestly role, as described in Hebrews 10:1–10, and draws out two implications for the church today. Under the old covenant, priests repeatedly offered sacrifices—offerings that were distinct from the offerors themselves. But Christ, in discharging his office as the one true mediator of the new covenant, is both the offeror and the offering. He offers himself as the final sacrifice, the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament priesthood anticipated.

Exegetical Considerations

Hebrews 10:1–10 provides a profound contrast between the inadequacy of the old covenant sacrifices and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. In verses 1–4, the author of Hebrews emphasizes that animal sacrifices could never truly save anyone. Verse 4 states plainly, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." The law, with its sacrificial system, could not perfect those who drew near. These sacrifices, repeated year after year, especially on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), could not cleanse the conscience of sin. The old covenant, though divinely instituted, was never meant to be an end in itself. It was, as the author of Hebrews puts it, a "shadow of the good things to come" (10:1), pointing forward to the reality fulfilled in Christ. This shadow was anticipatory—preparing God's people for the coming of the one true sacrifice. All the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Mosaic administration were provisional, awaiting the coming of the Messiah who would embody the true and final offering.

In verses 5–10, the inadequacies of the old covenant sacrifices are contrasted with the perfect and once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The author of Hebrews emphasizes Christ's obedience in his role as the spotless, perfect sacrifice who sanctifies his people through his death (v. 10). Here, Psalm 40:8 is applied to Christ, specifically highlighting his incarnate mission: "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb. 10:7, 9). This declaration speaks to Christ's role as the obedient servant, perfectly fulfilling the Father's will in his life, death, and resurrection.

It's worth noting that the phrase "Jesus Christ" appears in verse 10, which is one of only three occurrences of this exact expression in Hebrews (see 13:8, 21). As observed by Dr. Bob Cara in his commentary on Hebrews, these instances carry a certain creedal quality, emphasizing the significance of the truth presented in 10:10.[1] The author of Hebrews uses this phrasing to underscore a crucial point: while it is impossible for animal sacrifices to take away sins (v. 4), it is through Jesus Christ's once-for-all offering on the cross that salvation is accomplished (v. 10).

This passage also brings into focus the Trinitarian nature of our salvation. The Son's submission to the Father's will points to the eternal covenant of redemption (*pactum salutis*), in which the Father, Son, and Spirit covenanted together to save a people. The Son took on flesh to fulfill this divine purpose, and in doing so, he accomplished what the old covenant could only foreshadow. Hebrews 10:10 captures the heart of this truth: "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Pastoral Reflections

This passage holds profound pastoral implications for us today. Two reflections, in particular, help us understand the richness of Christ's priestly office in relation to his work as prophet and king.

1. Our Salvation is Trinitarian and Secure

One of the striking features of Hebrews 10 is the intra-Trinitarian exchange between the Father and the Son. Verses 5 and 7 reveal the Son's willing obedience to the Father's will as he enters the world: "I have come to do your will, O God." As Dr. Cara writes, "The [author of Hebrews] sees this speech being spoken by Christ prior to but referring to his incarnation."[2] This dialogue reflects the eternal plan of redemption within the Godhead, where the Father sent the Son, and the Son submitted in perfect obedience, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

This Trinitarian work of redemption assures us that our salvation is as secure as the bond between the Father, Son, and Spirit. Just as the covenant of redemption is unbreakable, so too is the salvation of those whom Christ has redeemed. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, for it is rooted in the eternal purpose of the triune God.



2. Christ's Priesthood is All-Sufficient and Final

Hebrews emphasizes the finality of Christ's priestly work. The language of "first" and "second" in verse 9 is particularly striking: "He does away with the first in order to establish the second." The old covenant, with its temporary and anticipatory sacrifices, has been fulfilled and set aside by the new covenant in Christ. The old covenant was never an end in itself but pointed forward to Christ, the great high

1. Robert J. Cara, *Hebrews: A Mentor Commentary* (Christian Focus, 2024), 381.

2. Cara, *Hebrews*, 377.



priest, who offered himself as the perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice.

In Christ, the shadows of the Old Testament give way to the reality of redemption. The history of salvation, as revealed in Scripture, finds its culmination in Christ's first and second comings. He is not only our great high priest but also our prophet who reveals God's word, and our king who reigns over his people in righteousness. Christ is our all in all! He is the great endpoint of history in his first and second coming! Indeed, he is our very life (John 17:3).

Conclusion

The office of Christ as the ultimate prophet, priest, and king is at the very heart of our salvation. In Christ, these three offices come together in perfect harmony, securing our redemption and ensuring that God's plan is brought to completion. As the final prophet, he not only delivers God's word but is himself the incarnate Word—revealing the Father perfectly. As our great high priest, he offers the once-for-all sacrifice that atones for our sins, fulfilling and surpassing all the old covenant shadows. And as our eternal king, he rules over us in righteousness, leading us into the fullness of the kingdom of God.

Hebrews 10 underscores Christ's priestly work, but we must not lose sight of how his priesthood is inseparably linked to his prophetic and kingly offices. The covenant of redemption, the very foundation of our salvation, reveals the triune God's eternal plan to bring us into fellowship with him. Christ's obedient fulfillment of this plan as prophet, priest, and king ensures that we are secure in God's hands.

This passage reminds us that our faith is not merely about individual salvation but about being brought into the glorious reign of Christ. We are a people under his kingship, guided by his prophetic word, and covered by his priestly intercession. Therefore, let us live as those who belong to the Messiah, the anointed one who holds all three offices in perfection.

Hebrews 10 calls us to behold Christ in the fullness of his threefold office. As our prophet, he continues to speak God's truth into our lives. As our priest, he not only offered the perfect sacrifice but also continues to intercede for us at the right hand of the Father. As our king, he reigns supreme over all creation, including our hearts and lives.

In Christ, we find the full scope of God's redemptive plan brought to completion. His perfect fulfillment of the offices of prophet, priest, and king assures us that our salvation is secure, our access to God is unhindered, and our future is gloriously certain. Let us, therefore, draw near to God with confidence, hold fast to our confession without wavering, and spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:19–25). In Christ, our prophet, priest, and king, we have a sure and eternal hope.



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"We are a people under his kingship, guided by his prophetic word, and covered by his priestly intercession. Therefore, let us live as those who belong to the Messiah, the anointed one who holds all three offices in perfection."

OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS AND NEW TESTAMENT SPECIAL OFFICE

R. ANDREW COMPTON

Christian interpreters have long struggled with how to view the priests of ancient Israel. Though Hebrews gives sustained attention to Christ's own high priesthood as fulfilling the priesthood of the Old Testament, other New Testament writers have recognized an ongoing priestly calling for the church of Christ (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6). In this, there is a need to rightly understand the Old Testament's distinctive portrait of priesthood.

Such a quest for understanding, however, is complicated by a long tradition of Protestant discomfort with the priesthood. Reformation-era polemics against the Roman Catholic Church colored the study of the priesthood in Israel, such that early critical biblical studies (which were born out of the Reformation milieu, even though they departed from the Reformation's Scripture-grounded theology) framed the differences between priests and prophets as the result of an evolutionary development of the Old Testament books. Julius Wellhausen posited that Israel was originally prophet-driven. The prophets were viewed as the progenitors of a warm, word-centered, action-driven, and democratic religion. But in the exilic and post-exilic periods, Wellhausen contended that the priesthood made a power grab and rewrote Israel's Scriptures to highlight priestly rituals and societal structures. Thus, the warmth of the prophets was said to be eclipsed by the cold formalism of the priesthood.[1]

Confessional protestants have rejected this construal of the situation and rightly so. The hermeneutic employed by the Wellhausenians undermines one's ability to know anything of the history to which the Old Testament testifies. The past several years has witnessed the publication of several positive studies of the Old Testament priesthood by Protestant writers using a redemptive-historically informed hermeneutic.[2] While there is no question that the Old Testament prophets did, at times, inveigh against the priesthood, their criticism was with the failure of the priesthood, not with the priesthood as such. But what do we learn from the priesthood, especially as it relates to believers in the New Testament era—not just those who hold the general office of believer but those called to special office?

In 1998, Derke P. Bergsma wrote a stimulating book chapter on special office in the New Testament.[3] In it, he surveyed the history of kingship, prophetism, and priesthood, noting that history has fluctuated between periods when the three offices were more or less united in individuals (e.g., during the period of the patriarchs) and when the three offices were separated (e.g., in Old Testament Israel and Judah). Most interesting for this present article is Bergsma's contention that in the New Testament church, the three offices of kings, prophets, and priests are again separated although now the three offices are correlated with New Testament special office: kings = elders; prophets = pastors; priests = deacons.

There is something commendable about Bergsma's study, although as scholarship of Israel's priesthood advances, models like his are in need of retirement. For example, to portray the priesthood as deacon-like, Bergsma unduly privileges the import of Leviticus 13–15 that speaks of the "role of the priests in regard to the sick in the community and the control of disease."[4] While ancient Near Eastern priests have historically been recognized as the custodians of public health, cultic concerns for purity (a theologically laden system of symbols, types, and shadows) cannot be collapsed into the category of mercy ministry and/or medical care.[5] Furthermore, the priests in Israel were responsible for activities that overlap in significant ways with kings and prophets, making efforts to highlight associations with one New Testament office over the others unwarrantedly selective. What do we learn about priests in the Old Testament?

Despite numerous priestly antecedents in Genesis and Exodus (e.g., Melchizedek, Jethro/Hobab, etc.[6]), Old Testament ritual and legal texts arrive at a vocational Israelite priesthood haltingly. Once it arrives, it discusses it more occasionally than systematically. Exodus 19:6 makes the stunning predication that Israel is a "kingdom of priests" (or perhaps better, a "priestly kingdom"[7]), but in verses 22 and 24, priests are mentioned off hand as though they are already a well-known and established office. It is not until Exodus 28 that Aaron and his sons are consecrated as a priests, heads of a hereditary priesthood.

The legal sections of the Pentateuch list numerous responsibilities of the priests and several narrative passages are illustrative of

1. For the history of these developments, see Ziony Zevit, "The Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis: Its History and Origin," in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, eds. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis, vol. 408, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (T&T Clark, 2004), 189–217; Peter J. Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999): 3–24.

2. For a small sampling, see Andrew S. Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, vol. 43, New Studies in Biblical Theology (IVP Academic, 2017); Edward T. Welch, *Created to Draw Near: Our Life as God's Royal Priests* (Crossway, 2020); David S. Schrock, *The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Crossway, 2022); T. Desmond Alexander, *Face to Face with God: A Biblical Theology of Christ as Priest and Mediator*, Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (IVP Academic, 2022).

3. Derke P. Bergsma, "Prophets, Priests, and Kings: Biblical Offices," in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Crossway, 1998), 117–131.

4. Bergsma, "Prophets, Priests, and Kings: Biblical Offices," 130n4.

5. Suessmann Muntner, "Medicine: In the Bible," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (Thompson Gale, 2007), 13:720–722.

6. For a fulsome treatment, see Malone, *God's Mediators*, 47–67.

7. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (IVP Academic, 2006), 330.

these duties. While a complete survey goes beyond this article, a summary from secondary literature suffices to show the priests' varied jobs in Israelite society, especially as they overlap with jobs popularly associated kings/elders and prophets/pastors. A source of special importance is T. J. Betts's published dissertation, *Ezekiel the Priest: A Custodian of Tôrâ*.[8] Contrary to proposals that limit priestly duties to sacrifice and ritual, Betts shows that teaching the Scriptures was central to the work of the priesthood not only in Ezekiel's day but from the outset.

Priests can be broadly conceived of as sanctuary overseers and, in the period of the tabernacle, were tasked with transportation of the tent. Numbers 3–4 lays out the work of the priests and Levites in this regard. (While there is a distinction between priests and Levite, for our purposes it suffices to note that Levitical duties are *priestly* in nature.[9]) They were also responsible for overseeing of temple repairs (2 Kings 12, 22; 2 Chronicles 24, 34) as well as money collection for temple work and for broader use in Israelite society (Num. 31:25–54). Distinctive cultic responsibilities included acting as officiants over sacrifices and other corporate and individual rituals, and civic responsibilities included custody of the silver trumpets (Num.10:1–10) and assisting Israel's civic leaders.[10]

Of special note, however, is their custodianship of the Word of God. It was not just the prophets who spoke on God's behalf. Priests offered blessings (most notably see Num. 6:22–26), gave oracles from the Lord via the *Urim* and the *Thummim*, and diagnosed matters pertaining to holy and profane, clean and unclean according to God's revelation in the Torah. They performed judicial functions[11] (e.g., Deut. 17:8–13; 21:5) including overseeing the king's own copying of God's law (Deut. 17:18). And finally, they were the chief teachers of God's word in Israel (e.g., Lev. 10:11; Deut. 31:9–13; 33:10). Where does this survey bring us in terms of seeking Old Testament precedents for special office in the New Testament?

Whereas Bergsma wanted to associate the priests narrowly with deacons, our survey showed the difficulty of doing so. One simply cannot limit the ministry of the word to the prophets and judicial rule to the kings. This also goes the other direction: kings at times engaged in (customarily) priestly and prophetic actions (e.g., 2 Sam. 6:12–14; the Davidic Psalms) and prophets engaged in "kingly" judgments[12] and other customarily priestly work (e.g., Ezek. 20:1–4; 22:1–2; 43:18–27).

But what this priestly breadth does show is that the Old Testament priesthood as a whole is perhaps the closest thing we have to *all* the offices of the New Testament church. No doubt there is discontinuity between Israel's priests and church office as there is evident in numerous other places in Scripture. There is no analogy to *Urim* and *Thummim* among humans called to church office in the New Testament; the church has no deliverer of oracles from the Lord (except for those who relay the oracles already inscripturated in the Word of God). The types and shadows of the Old Testament purity system are no longer functioning in the church such that ritual specialization is practiced in the same way. The distinctive civic/cultural and religious/cultic interwovenness of the Israelite theocracy is no longer operative in our era of redemptive history.[13] And certainly the hereditary element of priests all being descended from Levi does not find analogy in the New Testament.

But there is also a closer continuity between the priests and special office in the church than we find with kings and prophets. This is seen especially in their role and ubiquity in Old Testament society. Not only were 99.99% of ancient Israelites not eligible to be king (not being of the tribe of Judah, not being of house of David, etc.), but also most Israelites had little to no access or exposure to the king himself. Soldiers might see their king on the battlefield, but what of the numerous farmers and villagers living in far-flung hamlets of the kingdom? The same is the case with the prophets. Only those who were both endowed with the Spirit and caused to stand in God's presence (e.g., Isa. 6:1–13; Jer. 1:4–19) ever received the prophetic commission. While there were bands of prophets, they were still a small portion of the population, and their messages were likewise oracular; they primarily revealed God's word through immediate inspiration.

The priests, however, were a more regular presence in ancient Israel. Since the Levites did not receive a localized portion of territory to inhabit, they were spread throughout the land. And while some did spend most of their careers at the Jerusalem temple, most did not. Even Jeremiah belonged to a priestly family laboring in Anathoth, showing that the priests practiced their callings in sufficient numbers throughout the land. If an Israelite sought out counsel, judgment, instruction, or any other distinctively spiritual care, the priest was the most accessible and likely person for them to consult.

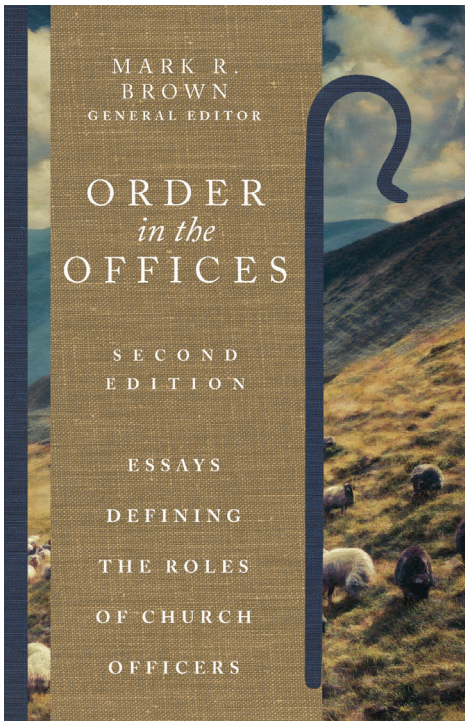
What we find in the New Testament, however, is a delineating of unique tasks and callings among church officers with a special mandate and focus on those tasks. In keeping with the "accessibility" of the priesthood, pastors, elders, and deacons live among the people of God and minister to them in a local setting. But now God has designated officers according to a variety of gifts and needs. Still, these officers can all look back upon the work of the priesthood in Israel to see not only how Christ is the fulfillment of this office—he is our great high priest—but also how God cared for his church then and continues to care for it now through those who are conformed to Christ's priestly image.



Dr. R. Andrew Compton is Professor of Old Testament Studies, Registrar, and MTS Program Director at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, IN. He is a minister in the United Reformed Churches of North America.

8. T. J. Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest: A Custodian of Tôrâ*, vol. 74, Studies in Biblical Literature (Peter Lang, 2005).
9. Malone, *God's Mediators*, 44.
10. For relevant passages, see Betts, E*zekiel the Priest*, ch. 2.
11. That Marvin Sweeney interpreted the famous incident in 1 Kings 3:16–28 (where Solomon rendered judgment over a matter concerning two women) as a *critique* of Solomon for appropriating priestly judicial responsibility to himself shows the strong association judgment had with priesthood. (See *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library [Westminster John Knox Press, 2007], 82). Sweeney's interpretation of the text as a supposed critique is not compelling, but that does not change the fact judicial work was usually done by the priests.
12. Though as we have already noted, judgment was *not* in fact the sole prerogative of the king.
13. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 124–126.

NEW REFORMED FORUM PUBLICATIONS



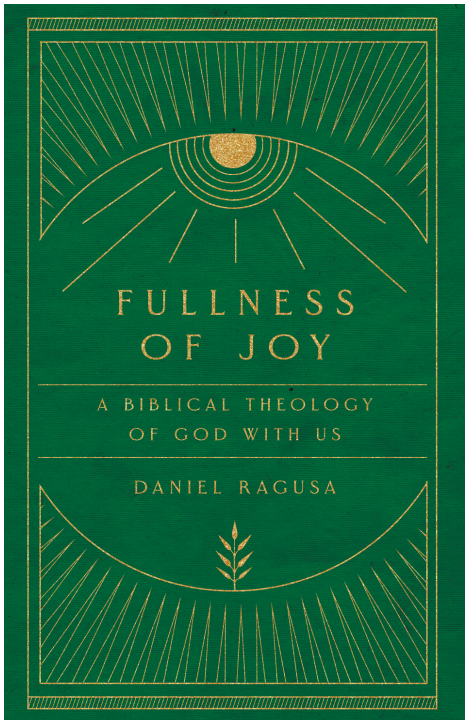
The second edition of *Order in the Offices*, edited by Mark R. Brown, is an essential guide for navigating the complexities of church governance in an era of confusion and conflict. This compelling anthology calls Christians to embrace the biblical model of church leadership, providing a convincing case for the historic three-office view of ministers, elders, and deacons.

Grounded in Christ's teachings on church government and enhanced by one revised and one new chapter, *Order in the Offices* offers a rich blend of theological depth and practical wisdom. The diverse essays work together to illuminate the vital importance of maintaining clear distinctions between offices, demonstrating how this framework preserves the church's integrity and effectiveness.

This book serves as an indispensable resource for church leaders, theology students, and laypeople across denominational lines who desire to deepen their understanding of biblical church structure. By returning to these foundational principles, readers will find their understanding of church governance reinvigorated and their engagement in their church's life and mission bolstered.

In a time when pervasive egalitarianism can erode biblical notions of office in the church, and especially the specific task of the minister of the Word, this second, and slightly expanded, edition of *Order in the Offices* is most welcome! This is an excellent collection of stimulating essays which examine the biblical foundation of the classic Reformed and Presbyterian understanding of the offices in the church. The careful reader will be richly rewarded with a new appreciation of God's gift of the minister of the Word and the elders in the church and their distinctive duties. May many read this book. Highly recommended!

Cornelis Van Dam
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament
Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, Hamilton, ON



Contained within the pages of Scripture is the wonderful and often surprising history of God's special revelation. The heart of this history is God's covenant promise that he will be our God and we will be his people. *Fullness of Joy: A Biblical Theology of God with Us* follows the organic and progressive unfolding of God's covenant that is consummated in a bond of friendship and crowned with joy that is full and forever. Inspired by Psalm 16:11, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore," this book uncovers the history of God's revelation with an uplifting and joyful perspective. Those who read this book will see how all the types and shadows of the Old Testament in which God dwelt with his people for his glory and their joy, like the altars of the patriarchs, the tabernacle of Moses, and the temple of Solomon, looked forward to Jesus Christ, our Immanuel, and his body, the church, filled with the glory of his Spirit.

Don't let the size of Dan Ragusa's book deceive you. Tracing the theme of God's presence with his people from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to consummation, Ragusa's book is a goldmine of biblical-theological insights into the triune God's purpose to enjoy perfected communion with his people in Christ. Ragusa confirms the truth of Geerhardus Vos' observation that the Bible is "a historical book full of dramatic interest."

Cornelis Venema
President Emeritus
Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Dyer, IN

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"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."
Colossians 3:17

FACULTY FOCUS: CARLTON WYNNE

RYAN NOHA & CARLTON WYNNE

The following is an edited excerpted interview by Ryan Noha of Carlton Wynne, a new faculty member of Reformed Forum. Carlton sits down with Ryan Noha to discuss growing up in a mainline Presbyterian church, becoming a confessional Presbyterian, and serving his Lord in his family, church, and the work of Reformed Forum.



Carlton Wynne teaching The Theology of Calvin's Institutes (Books 1–2)

Q. Carlton, I've been blessed to get to know you over the years, first, through an excellent ThM class that you taught at Westminster on modern theology in 2019, and then through our work together at Reformed Forum. Let's begin much further back than that, however, with your upbringing in the church. How did you become a Christian and then a confessional Presbyterian?

A. I grew up in a Christian home in Houston, Texas, where my family attended and I was baptized in First Presbyterian Church, which became a congregation in the PC(USA) denomination, but is now a church in ECO. I believe the Lord regenerated me through the ministry of a Sunday school teacher whose name I cannot remember. I have a vague memory of realizing that the gospel was about Christ, that I needed him, and that it was very important for me to trust in him. I was probably five or six years old.

My understanding of Scripture and things of God at a young age came largely through my father, who became very interested in Ligonier Ministries and books by R. C. Sproul. I remember reading *The Holiness of God* and *Chosen by God* as a middle schooler, bringing my biblical questions to my dad. His little green leather Bible was often open next to him on his bed (usually with a *TableTalk* magazine next to it). I spent many evenings lying on that bed, talking with him about the things of God.

Beyond my father's discipleship and my mother's example, the Lord very graciously put men in my life who modeled for me Christian love and leadership throughout my time in youth ministry, college, and more formal ministry capacities—first as an intern with Reformed University Fellowship in the PCA then later in seminary and in pastoral ministry.

Not only did I become a believer at a very young age in a Christian home while attending church, but significantly, at the age of twelve, I witnessed my church rent asunder by a debate and ultimately a vote over whether to remain permanently in the then recently formed PC(USA). Six-hundred people, including my family, left that church and formed a church in the EPC, which, incidentally, has since migrated into the PCA.

During those days, I became aware of the significance of orthodox doctrine for the life of the church, and I witnessed its real-world impact on relationships, families, and the spiritual welfare of God's people. Through my father's involvement in that controversy, I gained a keen sense that church life could be messy, but it was important. That awareness has only grown over the years.

A confessional Presbyterian identity came much later. As a senior in college on my way to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology at Tenth Presbyterian Church, I stopped at the bookstore at Westminster Theological Seminary and bought my first copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith. I had heard of the Confession but had never read it. The Lord has a little sense of humor because I would later return, obviously, to Westminster as a student then as a professor.

As the years went by, I became more involved in church ministry. I was an intern with Reformed University Fellowship at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, and then attended seminary at RTS in Charlotte. It was there that I grew to love systematic theology, and I realized that how important it is for Christians to have a theological structure—revealed in and developed out of the Scriptures—if they are to properly read their Bibles, to think about the Christian life, and to understand the gospel. The Westminster Standards became, for me, the framework in which I would grow in my knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Lord Jesus.

After seminary, I was called back to Dallas to serve as an assistant pastor, but I soon left to study at Westminster. Now I'm back in the pastoral ministry. Through those years, my conviction grew that a confessionally Reformed outlook is not only true and faithful to the Scriptures but also useful and important for believers in the pew.

Q. How do you now as a family man, as a head of a household, strive to carry on their [saints who have encouraged you in the faith] legacy by discipling the next generation in Christ? Introduce us to your family life and tell us how the Lord is working in your lives to mature you in all in Christ.

A. I'd be glad to. I'm married to my wonderful wife, Linley, for twenty-one years. We met in college where she became a believer. At every step of the way since, she has devoted herself not only to me but also increasingly to the church and to the raising of our three fabulous boys, ages sixteen, fourteen, and twelve. What we try to do in our home is to make the grace and truth of the Lord part of the warp and woof of everyday life.

Since our boys were babies, we have tried to think and live in terms of a Christian worldview—from my wife taking them to the park, showing them flowers and animals, to doing family devotions and reading from theologians that other children probably don't hear read in their homes very much. By God's grace, they're very patient with me and are willing to listen and even to take an interest in theological and apologetic matters. Of course, that's a great joy to me. Like John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" [3 John 1:4]. All three of my sons are communing members of our church here in Atlanta, and it's just a delight to be their dad.

My serving as a pastor and teacher brings unique privileges to our family. Among the privileges are all the ways that the church and seminary world have introduced our family to friends, books, and voices that we would otherwise never have encountered. And yet, as children of any pastor knows, there are unique challenges as well. Thankfully, the church where I serve loves and cares for our family as any other family. I think our boys would freely acknowledge that our commitment to the church and to Christ is not some performance but born out of the Lord's design and his grace to each one of us.

Q. Indeed. God has been gracious to you not only as a family man but also as a churchman, even an ordained servant in the PCA. What is your current pastoral call? How is the Lord building up the saints in your midst through the ordinary means of grace, particularly the preaching of the Word?

A. It's my great joy to serve as the associate pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. Our church has deep roots in the PCA; it was the host of the original convocation of sessions that helped organize the launch of the PCA back in the 1970s. The church itself was started in 1901. I was called to serve on the pastoral staff in the heart of COVID in 2020. The original and continuing plan was for me to serve in a preaching, teaching, and shepherding function—preaching at our Sunday evening services and working closely with our senior pastor, Aaron Messner. All of it has been, as Lane Tipton says, "an unqualified delight."

Week to week, I lead in worship, teach a Sunday School class (currently working very slowly through the Westminster Confession of Faith), and preach at our evening service. We also have a gathering on Wednesday evenings, where the pastors share a teaching load. Currently, we're teaching a series on eschatology, which will lead into a study of the book of Revelation.

I also have the great privilege of promoting good Christian literature among our congregation. I help out with a "book of the month" initiative, where on the first Wednesday evening of the month, we take a break from our normal teaching series, and I give a presentation and lead a discussion on a classic or helpful work of theology. So far, we've done everything from Augustine's Confessions to R. C. Sproul's *The Holiness of God* to Athanasius's *On the Incarnation* to Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*. And we just started Jonathan Landry Cruse's *What Happens When We Worship*.

During the week, I meet with people for lunch, do premarital counseling and, of course, weddings and funerals—and all the wonderful opportunities that the Lord opens up through pastoral ministry to minister to the Lord's people. Over the years, I've grown to love the flock in Atlanta, and I am increasingly thankful for the opportunity to preach and teach God's Word to them. On the side, I teach about three classes a year at the Atlanta campus of Reformed Theological Seminary. Currently, I'm teaching a class titled Christ, Culture, and Contextualization. I also have the privilege of teaching apologetics and on the Westminster Standards.

To continue reading about Carlton's writing, his introduction to and involvement with Reformed Forum, and how to remember Carlton in prayer, please use the following link: https://reformedforum.org/?p=45465

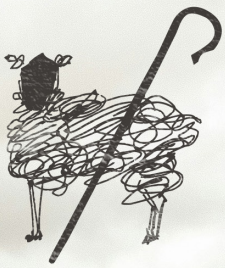


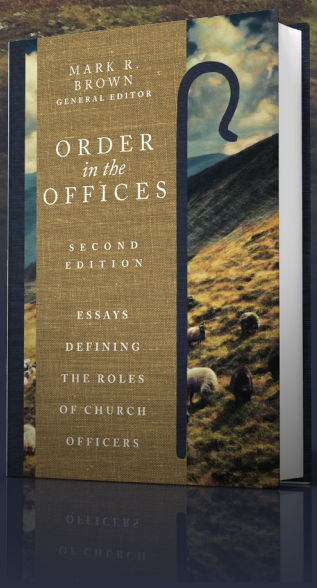
Ryan Noha is Director of Education and Advancement for Reformed Forum.



Dr. Carlton Wynne is Associate Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCA) and Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia.

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A SACRED TRUST: CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

RYAN NOHA

The rich concept of stewardship has fallen on lean years. As a boy in the United Methodist Church, I thought of stewardship as the name of a committee. Brighter minds tend to apply it narrowly to the responsible use of money. The Bible, however, urges a more holistic view of stewardship as basic to Christian identity and the church's ministry.

Created and Redeemed for Stewardship

Stewardship presupposes ownership, and God owns everything. "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof . . ." (Ps. 24:1). Man belongs to that fullness in a unique way as God's own image, entrusted with the responsibility to exercise dominion throughout the earth according to the law of his sovereign king. The calling to faithful stewardship is built into his very creation.

Man's responsibility to God is only intensified by the work of redemption. We have been redeemed, ransomed, even bought with a price—"the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19). We now belong to him, not in part, but altogether: our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19–20), our thoughts (2 Cor. 10:5), our deeds (Eph. 2:10), even our very lives (2 Cor. 5:15). The supreme comfort of belonging to Christ carries with it a radical call to stewardship of his grace.

Responsible stewardship begins with the recognition that we are not owners, but caretakers, entrusted with the task of using all our resources for God's glory. But what does it mean to steward well? And how does this responsibility intersect with the work of ministry, particularly in the context of ordained office? The apostle Paul's single-minded devotion to Christ in his gospel ministry makes him an ideal case study in biblical stewardship.

Paul's Example of Stewardship in Ministry

In 1 Corinthians 4:1–2, Paul writes, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." Paul understands ministry as a sacred trust from God, wherein the treasure of the gospel must be carefully protected and faithfully proclaimed. Although his apostolic office expired with the foundation-laying era of the church, Paul's exemplary profile in Christian stewardship has abiding validity for all servants of Christ:

- Paul received his stewardship as "the gift of God's grace," a great privilege to be humbly exercised according to his power (Eph. 3:7).
- Paul recognized the unique scope of his stewardship as a minister to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:15–21; Gal. 2:7).
- Paul's chief aim as a steward was to be "found faithful" in the sight of his master (1 Cor. 4:2–3; 1 Thess. 2:4).
- Paul exercised his stewardship as a matter of "necessity," saying "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).
- Paul guarded the content of his stewardship, knowing "nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2; cf. 3:11).

Serving in ordained office today remains a solemn responsibility to "care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Pastors, elders, and deacons are themselves gifts from Christ to his church, equipped by the Holy Spirit to teach sound doctrine, shepherd the flock, and administer mercy, respectively.

Paul's repeated use of the imagery of the church as a body makes explicit that laypeople are no less called to faithful stewardship. Each member or part has received gifts of grace for the well-being and building up of the whole (1 Corinthians 12; Eph. 4:7–16; cf. 1 Pet. 4:10). Working together and making diligent use of the means of grace, primarily the proclamation of the Word, the church strives together for maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28).

Stewardship through Reformed Forum

Reformed Forum's mission is rooted in the conviction that we have been entrusted with a precious treasure: the truth of God's Word as understood through the Reformed confessions. Just as Paul stewarded the mysteries of God with diligence and faithfulness, we seek to manage carefully and distribute the rich theological heritage handed down to us. Self-conscious of our distinction from the institutional church, we embrace our supportive role in providing resources that encourage the church's fulfillment of the Great Commission through the ordinary means of grace.

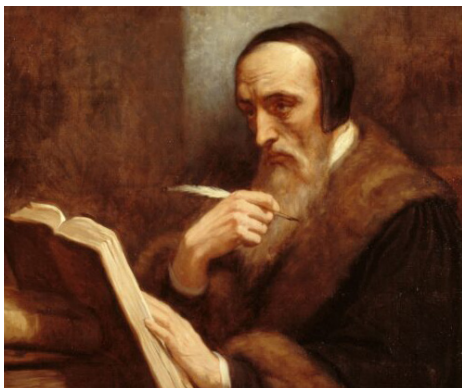
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As you reflect on the theme of ordained office and the call to steward God's gifts, we invite you to pray with us, give generously, and share our resources with others. We are all stewards—called to manage what God has given us for his glory and the advancement of his kingdom. May we be found faithful in this high calling.

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