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Northwest Centre for
Biblical and Theological
Literacy

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***FIT TO SERVE AND SERVE AGAIN?
Biblical and Theological Foundations That Inform and Define a
Policy of Potential Pastoral Leadership Restoration After
Significant Moral Failure
Prepared by the Northwest Centre for Biblical and Theological Literacy for FEBPAC***

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Preface

The Northwest Centre for Biblical and Theological Literacy (NCBTL) is a new entity within Northwest Baptist Seminary whose mission is to serve FEBPAC and other segments of our Fellowship family through stimulating biblical and theological literacy development in our churches and communities, as well as serving as a theological resource for our denominational leaders.

This Report is the first opportunity for NCBTL to provide these services to our churches and we are grateful to have this occasion to support the work of FEBPAC. The guiding committee that produced this report included Dr. Brian Rapske, Dr. Archie Spencer, Dr. Lyle Schrag and Dr. Larry Perkins. We were assisted by Dr. Kent Anderson. A draft of the report was circulated to all pastoral leaders in FEBPAC, asking for their input and suggestions for improvement. Their input has shaped the final report in various ways and improved it. We thank those that invested time in responding.

The mandate given to NCBTL was to provide biblical and theological data that FEBPAC leadership would find pertinent to the drafting of policy and process relating to the discipline and possible restoration of pastoral leaders who have experienced moral failure of various kinds. You will not find consequently specific policy or process in this report. Rather the summary seeks to offer some guidance for developing such policy and procedures based upon biblical and theological principles discerned through this study.

The issues are complex. Biblical texts in each case present their own challenges and we readily admit that our exegesis and interpretation will not be the final word in every case. Space limitations prevent more detailed and substantive comment on many textual details.

We trust that the report will be useful and enable FEBPAC to witness more faithfully to the goodness, grace, and glory of our God.

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Explanation of the Document and its Purpose

FEBPAC asked the Northwest Centre for Biblical and Theological Literacy (NCBTL) to provide a summary of biblical and theological perspectives that gives foundation for developing a formal policy and process to guide FEBPAC's response to the personal moral failure of pastoral leadership and define avenues for potential restoration. This document represents the results of NCBTL's inquiry. NCBTL had no mandate to draft policy or procedures but was encouraged to suggest areas of policy development indicated by the biblical and theological data.

Key Questions

The biblical data and subsequent theological discussion provide us with direction regarding the following questions:

1. What kind of immoral action constitutes "moral failure" and what are the consequences of such transgression? Are there categories of moral failure during pastoral employment that require resignation and may also permanently disqualify a person from pastoral vocation?
2. Who is affected by the moral failure of spiritual leaders and what are the lingering effects?
3. What constitutes 'sincere repentance'? What is involved in forgiveness?
4. Does God forgive post-conversion transgression in the case of sincere repentance?
5. Does God employ people in his service who transgress after conversion, but are repentant?
6. What principles of restoration – personal, congregational and community – does the Bible indicate by narrative report and specific instruction should be followed?
7. Does God enable people who transgress in the post-conversion context and are repentant to advance vocationally in ministry leadership responsibility?

For purposes of this paper "restoration" means the "reestablishment of norms for acceptable conduct in a relationship." The relationship may include leadership responsibilities. It includes "restored trust." Forgiveness is distinct from restoration, but restoration cannot occur without forgiveness. We do not assume in this paper that restoration will be achievable in every case.

A Biblical and Theological Framework

NCBTL and FEBPAC church leaders fully recognize the hermeneutical challenges involved in discerning appropriate biblical principles to guide the development of a policy for potential pastoral restoration in the event of serious moral failure. We have sought to follow the methods generally associated with an historical, grammatical, contextual approach to exegesis and subsequent interpretation. We have striven to allow the voice of Scripture to be heard so that the consequent policy will truly be based upon the inspired and authoritative word of God, to which FEBPAC remains fully committed. It will be the case that the interpretation of scriptural passages will be discerned differently by various individuals, but we have sought to apply exegetical and hermeneutical methods as consistently as possible and to affirm principles

supported by the broad sweep of Scriptural teaching. Believers will apply the information discerned from Scripture in various ways.

Further, Baptists generally regard the teachings of the New Testament as interpreting and defining the meaning and application of the teachings of the Old Testament because of the pivotal significance of Jesus Messiah. As the writer of Hebrews argues, a new covenant is now present through the ministry of Jesus, which fulfills the previous covenant. Hermeneutically this means that what is presented in the Old Testament is interpreted through the framework of what is now revealed in the New Testament.

We also recognize that Scripture for whatever reason may be limited in its direct guidance. Narratives may not provide exact parallels to current experience; aspects of process defined in Scripture, given the development of ecclesiology in the intervening centuries, may not give precise instruction; some narratives and discussion will provide general direction from which we have to extrapolate more precise principles and processes. In this paper we have chosen to be somewhat encyclopedic in our review of the biblical data, erring on the side of including too much so that those developing policy regarding pastoral restoration will have access to the essential wisdom of Scripture and subsequent theological discussions.

We also note that instruction regarding the principles and processes of possible leadership restoration needs to be provided for congregations, church boards, pastoral leaders and denominational leaders. Our Baptist polity, which we believe arises from sound biblical principles, requires us to respect the role of local churches in any process, while also recognizing the relational and other difficulties that attend to such events. Local churches and their leaders usually will benefit from external assistance to work through these matters over the long term.

Early in our discussions it became evident that several, key theological principles needed to be established and defined.

a. The nature of sin. Scripture teaches that every human being is depraved and continually struggles with sinful impulses. Although not every human being is as evil as they could be, all human actions, decisions, and thoughts are marred by sin – that disposition to obey human will rather than God’s will. Christian leaders experience the same struggles with sin common to every believer. It may be, however, that the context of leadership introduces these believers to new and unforeseen temptations and sinful activity. Access to power, self-interest, and pride (to name a few significant immoral impulses) in the absence of serious and effective safeguards create potent opportunities for evil.

The nature of temptation is such that as humans we are never done with it. The specific temptation may change because individuals can through the Holy Spirit learn how to deal with such temptations. However, Jesus followers encounter temptation every day. For those in positions of Christian leadership temptation comes in various modes, not always easily recognizable. If a Christian leader does not take initiative to put in place safeguards to counter areas of temptation to which they have personal and particular exposure, then they are not acting responsibly. Church boards also bear some responsibility in these matters, taking steps to ensure that undue temptation is not being placed in a leader’s way. Spiritual integrity and accountability of Christian leaders is not just an individual responsibility.

b. The nature of salvation. A biblical understanding of salvation leads us to believe that a Christian becomes the residence of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 3, 6). Further, the act of baptism as defined by Peter (1 Peter 3:21) is the believer’s “pledge of a good conscience towards God” and marks the transition from the kingdom of sin into the

realm of grace (Romans 6:10-14). Believers turn their backs on sin and Satan and commit themselves in obedience to serve Jesus as Saviour and Lord in the context of a local faith community.

In this transformed condition believers possess the resources not to sin. Paul affirms that if we keep in step with the Spirit, we will not permit “the flesh” to bring its work to completion (Galatians 5:16). He also encourages us to believe that God provides the believer with ways and means to respond to temptation without sinning (1 Corinthians 10:13). Finally, God provides believers “with complete armour” by which we can deal with Satan’s devices (Ephesians 6:10ff). Sin is a present danger, but not a necessary action. Sin does not represent God’s failure, but the believer’s (James 1:13-15).

Further, when believers do sin, God expects quick and sincere repentance to be the immediate reaction. Forgiveness is promised by God when repentant confession is offered. However, with repentance comes the responsibility to take action to change attitudes, behaviours, and circumstances so that when the temptation comes again, strategies are in place to rebuff it. There is a gravity to sin that God expects his people to grasp in their response to sinful urges. As well the consequences of some sins carry forward through generations and touch multiple relationships in different ways. Attempts to redress the consequence of transgression will take time and in some cases be quite complex. However, any process of restoration will need to consider aspects of redress.

c. The nature of ethics in leadership. Many stories and specific teachings in the Bible indicate that God expects those entrusted with the leadership of his people to embrace and transparently model key ethical standards that are core, kingdom principles. The two summary commands to love God and love neighbour introduce into leadership roles both obligations and constraints. When Moses selects leaders for Israel (Exodus 18:21), he is advised by his father-in-law to “select capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain...” As well, Moses is to teach the people, including these leaders, “the decrees and laws and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform” (18:20). Moses should not assume that these individuals will automatically know what to do or how to behave in their new roles. Training in ethics was necessary.

In the New Testament Jesus emphasizes this ethical dimension as he contrasts leadership in the kingdom with leadership among human institutions. He focuses upon the need to serve people (*diakonos*), indeed to become slaves (*doulos*) to others, as the primary responsibility of kingdom leadership, even to the point of self-sacrifice (Mark 10:40-45). Jesus himself becomes the primary example of this ethical leadership. Peter develops this teaching in specific application to ‘elders’ in 1 Peter 5:1-4, underlining the need for such leaders to be “examples to the flock.” Similarly, Paul in his description of the characteristics that Christian leaders should possess (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1) emphasizes ethical behaviour in the family, in personal relationship, and in the community. “Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22) summarizes Paul’s instructions to Timothy about Christian leadership.

When Christian leaders fail to act ethically, then repercussions extend to their roles as leaders. Because Christian leadership is a trust that is given by God’s people, violation of that trust requires those in leadership to step aside so that trust has potential to be restored to some degree at all levels. Passages such as Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Timothy 5:17-20 and Galatians 6:1-5 indicate some elements of process that believers should follow in dealing with ethical failure.

d. The reality of forgiveness. In biblical terms God defines himself as the God who forgives. However, forgiveness does not mean eliminating the consequences of sinful actions. God forgives David for his immoral and murderous actions, but David must still live with the consequences of his sinful behaviour. Believers are to forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32). Even when forgiveness is given, humanly speaking it is not possible to forget the pain and difficulty caused by a person's sinful action, but God provides grace by which to deal with the knowledge of failure in the context of the *agape* principles of 1 Corinthians 13 or as Peter claims "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). The practice of forgiveness is a spiritual discipline and requires constant attention.

Within the canon of Scripture the Holy Spirit has preserved accounts of leaders who sinned. Undoubtedly David or Peter would have wished that their transgressions would not have gained such notoriety, but rather were forgotten in the mists of history. Apparently there is something spiritually useful and beneficial in believers remembering their sins, reflecting upon their repentance and forgiveness, and rejoicing in their restoration. Every Christian lives as a restored sinner (cf. 1 Timothy 1:12-17). The public memory should not serve to generate ongoing disdain towards the sinner, but rather, if sincere repentance and restoration has occurred, this should result in acknowledgement of God's grace and power to deal with the realities of human sinfulness.

The processes of restoration then have to reflect carefully both the reality of the sinner and the one(s) sinned against. This is particularly the case when a Christian leader sins egregiously, thereby affecting the lives of many within the congregation and perhaps also the external community. Offending pastoral leaders carry the full responsibility for their action because they are in positions of power and influence. Blaming victims¹ is not an acceptable excuse for transgression. Bringing victims to a place of forgiveness will require significant spiritual care and time.

e. The significance of leadership in the faith community. Leadership within the kingdom of God is both a sacred role and community function. The language of "shepherd" used to describe Christian leadership is related to Jesus' role as "chief shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4). The imagery of head and body that Paul uses to describe the relationship between Jesus Messiah and the church indicates his ultimate directive, leadership role among his people. Yet, Jesus through the Holy Spirit does gift some believers so that, with the recognition by the community of faith, such individuals might be entrusted with specific care for the body of believers, i.e. the church. This shepherding imagery also demonstrates how the transgressions of one person can disrupt the health of the entire body. Gifting is not the sole determiner of leadership, however. Demonstrated obedience to Jesus in a wide variety of relationships, humility, willingness to serve, and resistance to the allure of power and wealth are also key aspects, which if lacking, disqualify a person from leadership. As well, lack of spiritual experience (1 Timothy 5:22) should caution a congregation against appointment to leadership.

There is no entitlement to Christian leadership. Just because a person has served in a leadership role for a time does not require a congregation to continue to entrust such a person with leadership. Texts such as Romans 11:29 must be interpreted primarily within their Pauline context and not lifted out and wrongly applied to justify continuation in

¹ It may be the case, however, that a victim will need to engage the implications of their own sinful behaviour which may have occurred in the context of the violation. As well, occasionally entrapment can occur. Evaluating such cases will be extremely difficult.

leadership despite unethical practice. Similarly, individuals whose adult family members do not always demonstrate spiritual faithfulness should not be disqualified from leadership roles (based upon passages such as 1 Timothy 3:5). Further, pastoral leaders are accountable for their service. Their duty to care for and protect the “flock of God” is clear and Paul particularly indicates that elders are accountable to the congregation as well as to God for their service.

Paul notes carefully in 1 Corinthians 3 that Christian leadership possesses a community orientation and collaborative essence (e.g. the interactive roles of Apollos, Paul and others in the development of the Corinthian church, based upon God’s primary power) that must be recognized. Whatever Christian leadership accomplishes is an act of God’s grace and God’s initiative. No single leader can claim total credit for spiritual development in the lives of others. Whatever Christian leaders do in their roles must build upon and enhance the foundational work of the Messiah. Every Christian leader’s work will be evaluated by God.

f. The reality of Christ’s church. As the church develops in the record of the New Testament various kinds of moral failure occur among its members. Such cases are treated seriously by the apostles and the consequences often are severe (e.g. Ananias and Sapphira, Peter’s lapse in Antioch, the Corinthian church member, etc.). Discipline in cases of moral failure becomes part of continuing discipleship as the church exercises care for its people. The discipline and restoration of pastoral leaders fits within this larger frame of concern for the purity, reputation, and health of the body of Christ. Because pastoral leaders are “examples to the flock,” their ethical responsibility is greater. Violation of the trust that such leaders receive from the congregation represents a most serious contravention of pastoral responsibility and cannot be ignored or downplayed without significant consequences. In these matters we have to remember that local churches belong ultimately to Jesus, who is their Lord.

2. Narrative examples in the Old and New Testaments of Leadership Failure and Response

A. OT Narratives of Sin and Restoration

i. Abraham’s Deceit (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18)

Some may question whether Abraham is at fault in these two narratives. For fear of his life from Pharaoh and Abimelech Abraham requires Sarah to describe herself as his sister, rather than wife. Although Genesis 20:12 explains that she truly is his half-sister (same father but different mother), Abraham still participates in deception by not acknowledging Sarah to be his wife as well. Despite the covenant promises made by God to him personally, his actions in these two instances reveal his own spiritual weakness and willingness to jeopardize everything by allowing Sarah to be taken into the royal harems of Pharaoh and Abimelech. Despite this Yahweh graciously intervenes to preserve Sarah and these pagan kings from harm. Abraham becomes wealthier through this deception, which does not seem to have any effect upon his standing before Yahweh and his role in the covenant already established.

It is difficult to discern in the Egypt account (Genesis 12) whether Abraham is repentant for his deception. According to Genesis 20 he justifies his deception by claiming that Sarah is his half-sister, but no repentance seems evident. One might get the impression that his deception did in fact preserve his life.

ii. Moses and Murder (Exodus 2)

When Moses becomes an adult in Pharaoh's court, he is also aware of his Israelite roots. He intervenes in a dispute between an Egyptian and an Israelite, ultimately killing the Egyptian. The narrative indicates that this killing is deliberately and intentional (Exodus 2:12). Forty years later when Yahweh summons Moses to lead Israel from Egypt, this serious transgression does not hinder Yahweh's intent for Moses to be Israel's leader.

iii. Aaron and the Golden Calf Incident (Exodus 32-34)

At God's instruction Moses had left Aaron and Hur in charge of the people of Israel while he ascended Sinai to receive the stone tablets upon which the finger of God had inscribed the law and commandments (Exodus 24). After forty days passed, the people became restless, presumed that Moses must have perished on the mountain, and demanded that Aaron "make us a god who will go before us" (Exodus 32:1). Aaron takes the gold given to him by the Israelites, fashions a golden calf and declares "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4), violating the first several commandments Yahweh had recently established for Israel. He then declares a feast to Yahweh. In his evaluation of Aaron's action Yahweh says that the Israelites have worshipped this statue and offered sacrifices to it. God threatens to destroy Israel, which would presumably include the leaders such as Aaron. Moses, however, intervenes and intercedes and although several thousand Israelites perish in judgment, Yahweh carries forward with his covenant plans and Aaron is consecrated as High Priest (Exodus 40:12-14).

This story of sin and restoration involves a significant religious leader who colluded with the people of Israel to violate the first three of the Ten Commandments. Death should have been the result, apart from the expression of God's mercy. Not only was Aaron spared death, but was appointed and consecrated as High Priest to lead Israel in worship in the newly constructed Tabernacle. We do not know whether Aaron expressed repentance. He may have been among the Levites who rallied to Moses and carried out God's punishment upon Israel, but if so this would be an implied reading.

iv. Aaron and Miriam's Challenge to Moses' Leadership (Numbers 12)

When Moses married a Cushite woman, Aaron and Miriam "began to talk against Moses" (Numbers 12:1). Apparently they challenged Moses' supremacy as leader and primary spokesperson for Yahweh in Israel. Yahweh becomes angry with them and infects them with some form of leprosy (Numbers 12: 10). It is only Moses' intervention that led Yahweh to bring healing to Miriam. This pattern of sin, intervention with Yahweh by Moses, followed by restoration occurs a number of times in the Pentateuch.

v. Gideon's Idolatry (Judges 8:22-27)

After Gideon's successful campaign against the Midianite leaders Zeban and Zalmunna, the Israelites press him to become their king. Gideon refuses. However, he exacts tribute from them – "an ear ring from your share of the plunder" (v.24). From this gold Gideon fashions an "ephod" and "all Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it" at Ophrah (v.27). Exactly what this "ephod" was and what Gideon intended by it remains disputed. However, the text does say that "it became a snare to Gideon and his family" (v.27), presumably because of its idolatrous influence upon Israel. Again, the text that follows does not indicate that Gideon's actions caused Yahweh to remove him as judge in Israel.

vi. Samson (Judges 14-16)

Samson surely remains an enigmatic figure among the various “judges” that Yahweh appointed to protect Israel. However, he was a chosen leader who made Nazirite vows before Yahweh. Yet in his relationships with various Philistine women (sexual immorality with prostitutes; cf. Judges 16:1,4) he violated Mosaic law. It led to the shaving of his head, a violation of his Nazirite vows, and his capture by the Philistines. Yet, the story ends by Yahweh allowing Samson to gain a decisive victory over the Philistine leadership when he destroyed the temple of Dagon (Judges 16). There seems to be repentance and restoration to some degree in this account, even though Samson perishes along with the Philistines.

vii. David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12; cf. Psalm 51)

The sordid action of David, the divinely appointed king of Israel, with respect to Uriah and his wife Bathsheba surely ranks as one of the most remarkable episodes in the Bible. Sexual sins of various kinds accompanied by murder and deceit multiply as David allows his lust for Bathsheba to overwhelm his judgment. Only when confronted by Nathan, the prophet, who used the famous parable of the poor man’s ewe to bring condemnation to David, does the king realize the magnitude of his sin and seek repentance. Yahweh’s judgment is that David by these actions has “despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in his sight” (2 Samuel 12:9). There are numerous consequences to David’s actions, not least of which is the death of a just man, the destruction of a marriage, the death of the child produced through adultery, and God’s judgment that “the sword shall never depart from your house...I will raise up evil against you from your own household” (2 Samuel 12:10-11). Absalom’s subsequent rebellion is one expression of this judgment. What is particularly reprehensible is that Uriah is not an Israelite and David fails to witness to this man about the goodness and justice of Yahweh.

For a time David loses his kingdom through Absalom’s attack. However, David is repentant (as he expresses in Psalm 51) and Yahweh does restore the kingdom of Israel to his leadership.

In this story we discern a sequence of serious sexual sins and murder by the primary leader of Israel. God brings judgment, even though David does repent. David does retain his role as king in Israel. The consequences of David’s actions mar the final years of his reign and disturb his family significantly.²

viii. Jonah and his Disobedience (Jonah 1-4)

The story of Jonah’s response to Yahweh’s prophetic commission is well known. Within the story Jonah, as Yahweh’s prophet, refuses a commission to travel to Nineveh and present to this non-Israelite people God’s ultimatum – repent or be destroyed. Eventually and with continued reluctance Jonah does arrive in Nineveh and shares God’s oracle. To his dismay the people of that city do repent and God holds back judgment.

In this case we do not have an overt transgression of the Ten Commandments, but we do have egregious rebellion by a prophet against God’s

² David’s census of Israel (2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21) is another example of a spiritual leader’s sinful action. The origination of David’s impulse to take the census is attributed to God (2 Sam. 24:1) or to satan (1 Chron. 21:1). The texts do not explain what led David to take this action nor precisely why it is such a sinful activity – other than that it might lead David to glory in Israel rather than in Yahweh. What stimulates David’s repentance is also unclear – his own conscience (2 Sam. 24:10) or some divine punishment (1 Chron. 21:7-8 – note the sequence in the text).

directive. Even when he complies and fulfills the commission, he continues to regret Yahweh's action, questioning Yahweh's action.

Did Jonah repent? Was Jonah restored? If so, what did this restoration entail? Yahweh acted to ensure that his message did reach the Ninevites in time, despite Jonah's recalcitrance. The story does indicate the power of Yahweh to accomplish his purpose even when leaders he has appointed do not agree with his wisdom.

ix. Nebuchadnezzar's Insane Episode (Daniel 4)

We only have a few examples in the Old Testament where non-Israelites develop a relationship with Yahweh. Surprisingly, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, seems to be one. His spiritual journey leads from idolatry to "praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are true and his ways just and he is able to humble those who walk in pride" (Daniel 4:37). It was Nebuchadnezzar's pride and arrogance that moved Yahweh to bring upon him seven years of insanity, in which he lived and acted as an animal. When this period ended and his reason returned, he acknowledged the sovereignty of Yahweh and he was restored to his role as king of Babylon.

The pattern of heinous sin, punishment and restoration emerges in this narrative. We do not know what the long term consequences of Nebuchadnezzar's actions were because the text does not describe them. However, he does say that he "was re-established in my sovereignty and surpassing greatness was added to me." In other words Yahweh seems to add to his greatness after this episode.

x. Manasseh's Repentance (2 Chronicles 33:10-20)

The Chronicler evaluates Manasseh's reign in these terms: "Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel." When Manasseh did not repent, God brought the Assyrians against Israel and he was led captive to Babylon. In this situation "he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of the fathers" (2 Chronicles 33:12). Yahweh graciously responded and "brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom" (2 Chronicles 33:13). There is mention of "the acts of Manasseh even his prayers to his God" as recorded "among the records of the kings of Israel" (2 Chronicles 33:18). In the Greek Apocrypha of the Old Testament we find "The Prayer of Manasseh." Whether this is an authentic expression of Manasseh cannot be determined. In this prayer Manasseh asks Yahweh:

And now I bend the knee of my heart,
implore you for your kindness.
I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned,
and I acknowledge my transgressions.
I earnestly implore you,
forgive me, O Lord, forgive me!
Do not destroy me with my transgressions! (NRSV)

According to 2 Chronicles 33:13 Yahweh responded to Manasseh's confession of sin and repentance and restored him to the throne of Israel.

In Manasseh's case his sinfulness was outright rejection of Yahweh's covenant, practicing idolatry and necromancy (2 Chronicles 33:6). Yet, despite his outrageous actions in defiance of Yahweh's express commands, forgiveness

and restoration to kingship were granted when genuine repentance was expressed.

x. Ezekiel's Statement About Levites (Ezekiel 44:10-14)

In his vision of the restored temple Ezekiel describes the Levites.³ He describes them as those “who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols” and as a result “shall bear the punishment for their iniquity.” But despite this offending behaviour “they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house....” Yahweh, however, limits their ministry and does not permit them to function as priests. Yet, he says, “I will appoint them to keep charge of the house, of all its service, and of all that shall be done in it.”

Observations drawn from Old Testament Narratives of Sin and Restoration:

1. Religious and political leaders in Israel and in one instance a non-Israelite leader, Nebuchadnezzar, sinned in diverse, terrible ways.
2. Failed leaders usually did not recognize their transgression without some kind of divine intervention.
3. Often Yahweh responds with judgment which then leads to repentance.
4. When these leaders expressed repentance in some form, Yahweh forgave.
5. Restoration to their commissions and roles occurs in many instances, including the case of adultery.
6. Sometimes this restoration resulted in greater accomplishments, but in other cases further ministry for God was limited.
7. Sometimes dire consequences resulted from their actions which lasted for long periods of time.
8. Yahweh deals directly with these individuals, but sometimes used human beings as his messengers (e.g. Nathan the prophet delivers Yahweh's message to David and Daniel the prophet shares God's judgment with Nebuchadnezzar).
9. There is value in remembering sin, repentance, forgiveness and restoration, as demonstrated in the canonical resumes of restored sinful leaders.
10. Sometimes the offended party (e.g. Moses) intervenes on behalf of the offender for restoration.

B. Old Testament Narratives of Sin without Restoration:

i. Cain's Murder of Abel (Genesis 4)

Cain's murder of Abel is quite unexpected in the initial chapters of Genesis. Yahweh's response is to consign him to be “a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.” Cain does not seem to express repentance, but he does complain that his punishment is “too great to bear” (Genesis 4:12-13). So, Yahweh “appointed a sign for Cain” in order to protect him from death at the hands of other people (Gen. 4:15). Cain seems to flourish (Genesis 4:16-24) and perhaps this is a kind of restoration. Various forms of human creativeness and inventiveness emerge within his offspring. Enoch is one of his descendants. Yet we hear of no reconciliation with Adam and Eve. He and his family live apart.

ii. Achan's Sequestering of Plunder (Joshua 7)

Achan stole from the plunder of Jericho, all of which was “dedicated to Yahweh” and was to be destroyed (Joshua 7:1). All Israel suffered from the consequences of Achan's action. Once it was discovered and Joshua confronts Achan, he admits how

³ Cf. Numbers 3-4, 16-17.

he coveted the wealth and stole it (Joshua 7:20-21). However, this confession does not preserve Achan and his family from punishment. Achan was a family leader and soldier in Israel.

iii. **Eli and his Sons** (1 Samuel 2-3)

As Samuel begins his service in the Tabernacle under Eli's direction, it occurs in the context of the wicked deeds of Eli's son in the sanctuary. Eli is well aware of what they are doing and forbids them to act in such ways, but they ignore him. Eli seems to take no further remedial action. Finally, Yahweh sends "a man of God" who foretells the destruction of Eli's family and the installation of a new "faithful priest" who will act honourably. Samuel, of course, is that new priest.

God reveals to Samuel what he will do to Eli and his family because "of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them...The guilt of the Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering" (1 Samuel 3:14).

iv. **Saul's Disobedience** (1 Samuel 15)

Saul's refusal to destroy Agag, the king of the Amalekites, as Yahweh ordered and his preservation of "sheep, oxen,...and all that was good" (1 Samuel 15:8-9) brings drastic judgment. Yahweh declares "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands." Saul's response when confronted is that it was not his fault, but rather it was the people who sinned (1 Samuel 15:21). The result is that Samuel informs Saul that Yahweh "has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Saul then seemed to express repentance (1 Samuel 15:24-26), but Samuel, speaking for God, refused to accept his repentance. There was no pardon.

Observations Drawn From Old Testament Narratives of Sin Without Restoration:

1. What leads Yahweh to act differently in these cases, in contrast to the previous ones? In some cases people failed to heed the warnings that Yahweh shared and did not repent. Yahweh acts in judgment and there is no restoration.
2. In other cases the text is silent regarding the response of the person. We observe that restoration does not seem to occur in every case of moral failure perpetrated by a Christian leader. However, on what basis Yahweh acts as He does remains locked in the mystery of his sovereign will. In the case of Achan it seems to be for the good of the entire people of God.
3. In the case of Saul God acts to remove him eventually from leadership, but this takes time, indeed years to accomplish. Saul remains in his position until he dies in battle. What guidance, if any, does Saul's situation give regarding the sinfulness of leaders and their continuance as leaders?

C. New Testament Narratives of Sin and Restoration.

i. Peter's Denial of Christ (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:16-18, 25-27; 21:15-19).

One of the most provocative stories in the Gospel narratives relates Peter's triple denial of his association with Jesus in the midst of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. All four Gospels incorporate this sober chapter in Peter's spiritual history. The language which the Gospel writers attribute to Peter indicates that his responses to the girls and others in the courtyard or gateway into the High Priest's residence were not mild dismissals of Jesus. The cursing that accompanies his denials emphasizes his complete rejection of any relationship with Jesus, employing the language of apostasy. Given his leading role among the apostles in the Gospel

narratives, his actions truly are astonishing. Jesus has warned his followers that the people who reject him in this life, he will reject in the life to come. Peter puts himself in this category. His sin is public and egregious, and it puts into question his very loyalty to the Messiah. After his third denial and the rooster's crowing, Peter knows how far he has fallen in fulfillment of Jesus' recent prophetic warning. His sorrow is deep and bitter.

By various means the Gospel writers signal Peter's restoration. However, Jesus' conversation with Peter recorded in John 21:15-21, with the concluding command "follow me" and the repeated injunction "feed my sheep/lambs" represents Jesus' deliberate communication of forgiveness, restoration, and renewed commission as his apostle.

ii. Peter's Hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-21)

About twenty years after Jesus' resurrection and the amazing events that inaugurated the new Messiah community that we call the 'church', we encounter Peter as a significant Christian leader acting in a sinful manner, i.e. "not acting in line with the truth of the Gospel" (Galatians 2:14). Paul accuses Peter publicly before the Antioch church of hypocrisy because he stops eating with non-Jewish believers. His action affects other leaders, such as Barnabas who "joined with him in his hypocrisy."

We do not discern any account in this text of Peter's repentance, forgiveness and restoration. However, subsequent references to Peter's work as an apostle in the Corinthian correspondence, as well as the two epistles that bear his name, would indicate that restoration did occur, presumably because Peter responded appropriately to Paul's public accusation.

iii. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 9:19-31)

Few conversions to faith in Jesus match the drama that framed Saul of Tarsus' sudden repentance and appointment to apostleship. In fact it was so unexpected, given his record of fanatical opposition to the Messianic community and feverish attempts to destroy it, that it took some time for Jewish Christians to consider his conversion genuine. Luke writes that "everyone was afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Without the strategic intervention of Barnabas on Saul's behalf, few if any in the Jewish church, particularly in Jerusalem, would have accepted him. It was Barnabas that "led him to the apostles" and told them Saul's story (Acts 9:27).

In this story we discern a type of restoration, in which another church leader stood up for and defended the genuineness of the individual's spiritual integrity, a person who had sinned grievously, albeit it in a pre-conversion context.

iv. Mark, Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:13; 15:36-41; 2 Timothy 4:11)

Paul and Barnabas take Mark, Barnabas' nephew, with them on their first apostolic journey under the oversight of the Antioch church. For some reason Mark, when Paul and Barnabas carry their mission to the region of Pisidia, decides to return to Jerusalem. Several months later, when Barnabas suggests that Mark accompany them on their second journey, Paul absolutely refuses. Apparently Mark's action during the first journey in Paul's mind disqualified Mark from further service.

Barnabas was of a different mind. Perhaps it was because of the family connection. Barnabas chose Mark as his associate for his mission work and Paul chose Silas. Barnabas again acts as an agent of restoration. The church leaders and congregation apparently blessed both mission teams. If Mark is the same person that Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 4:11, then it seems that eventually Paul and Mark

were reconciled in ministry. In this case we are dealing with people who are recognized as leaders within the churches.

Observations drawn from New Testament Narratives of Sin and Restoration:

1. We have much less material in the New Testament and so the number of cases from which to draw guidance is much more limited.
2. The intervention of other spiritual leaders seems to be critical in the process of restoration.
3. Identifying moral failure is a public event, as is the restoration process. What does this say about efforts to keep things under wraps within the church?
4. Jesus himself gets directly involved prophesying Peter's failure as well as intentionally taking initiative to restore Peter.
5. Leadership failure usually occurs because of deception, false teaching, and divisiveness than because of sexual sin. Is our scale of values in this regard representative of what we discern in the early church? Should the restoration process adapt to the nature of the moral failure?

D. New Testament Texts related to Sinful Leadership Behaviour Without Restoration.

i. False teachers (2 Timothy, 2 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and Revelation 2)

In the later sections of the New Testament materials we find various references to believers who became involved in false teaching. Sometimes we have names associated with these actions (e.g. Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17)). In this case Paul asserts that "they have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some." Their engagement in teaching activity suggests some kind of leadership role which they have misused for the purposes of false teaching. We have no hint of their repentance, forgiveness and restoration.

Peter describes (2 Peter 2) false teachers who blaspheme, have "eyes full of adultery" and "they never stop sinning." Their teaching activity destroys the faith of others. They become entangled again in the corruption of the world and have "turned their backs on the sacred command." Peter warns such that they will perish under God's judgment. John warns his audience (1 John 2:18-20) about "antichrists" who have left the community of faith, i.e. people who deny the Father and the Son (2:22). In similar vein Jude warns of "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (v.4). He describes them as "men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit" (v.17). Again he warns such that "the blackest darkness has been reserved forever" for them. Finally, in Revelation 2:14-16 the writer warns the church in Pergamum about the people there "who hold to the teachings of Balaam" and the "teachings of the Nicolaitans." Presumably these are people within the Pergamum faith community who are espousing false teachings from their positions of influence.

Paul warned the elders of Ephesus (Acts 21:30) that "even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."

In none of these cases do we hear of repentance, forgiveness and restoration. It may have happened, but the focus in the New Testament texts is upon the safety and protection of the faith community as the priority, rather than spiritual ministry to the person(s) engaging in disseminating false teaching.

ii. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

The story of Ananias and Sapphira ranks as one of the surprises in the life of the early church. Some in the church sold property in order to assist people in the

growing churches who needed help. In the case of Barnabas his act of generosity was noted. Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira both desired the kind of recognition that Barnabas received. Whatever their motive, they too sold some property, but despite their claim, they only contributed a part of the property's price to the needs of the poor. When Peter discovers their deceit, he pronounces God's judgment upon them both and they died on the spot. Fear of God fills the church. Within the narrative there does not seem to be any opportunity for repentance and restoration.

iii. Diotrophes (3 John)

The author of 3 John identifies Diotrophes as a leader in the church "who loves to be first" and "will have nothing to do with us" (v.9). In particular he accuses Diotrophes of "gossiping maliciously about us" and "refusing to welcome the brothers," preventing others in the congregation from demonstrating hospitality. Here again we have a leader who apparently is misbehaving and betraying the trust placed by the congregation in his leadership. John criticizes him publicly and rejects his claims, warning people "not to imitate what is evil but what is good."

Observations based on New Testament Narratives of sin without Restoration:

1. Sources are limited in what they reveal about these various incidents. It may be that Diotrophes responded to John's evaluation, repented and continued as a spiritual leader, but we cannot tell from the text.
 2. None of these cases deal with sexual immorality directly, it seems, but rather with false teaching, deception, and divisiveness.
 3. When confronted with their transgression, it does not appear as if any of these individuals or groups were repentant.
3. Contribution of Biblical Contexts that discuss general and specific issues related to Restoration

A. Gospel Narratives

Within the Synoptic Gospels issues of forgiveness and restoration emerge occasionally in the teaching of Jesus. However, it is worth noting that in his interactions with Jewish religious leaders, despite their marred records as leaders of God's people, Jesus consistently challenges them to repent of their rebelliousness and join his movement. He constantly reminds them of their accountability to God for their leadership (Parable of the Tenant Farmers, Mark 12:1-10). Those who do repent, continue to function in leadership roles within the Jewish community, at least for a time. For example, Joseph of Arimathea is a member of the council, but seems to accept Jesus as Messiah. To be a follower of Jesus did not require him to resign his role in the council. Synagogue rulers who become Jesus followers seem to continue in their roles.

In his general comments regarding kingdom leadership Jesus emphasizes the serving role, humility, faith in God, and sacrifice, all for the sake of the Gospel and Jesus (cf. Mark 10). Kingdom leadership is not engaged for purposes of exercising power, accumulating wealth, or personal ambition. As he says, the servant is not greater than his master.

Jesus' call for a new standard of righteousness and for his followers to "be perfect as their heavenly father is perfect" applies to Christian leaders. Exemplary leadership requires disciplined spirituality. The first and second commands apply to all Jesus followers. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" sets the standard for Christian leadership. Hearing Jesus' words and putting them into practice demonstrates a wise Christian leader, as well as a wise disciple. Obedience to God's will (Matthew 7:21-23) is more important than prophesying, exorcism, or miracles. Ultimately Christian leadership is all about "taking up your cross and following Jesus."

In his fourth discourse in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 18) Jesus elaborates his vision for life within the new kingdom community. He begins by defining leadership in terms of humility exemplified in the caring, respectful response to "little children." The "little ones" defines the least disciples in the kingdom. "Receiving" such a one is "receiving" Jesus. Conversely Jesus followers, including leaders, who hinder and discourage the faith response of a "little one" will be judged by God. Jesus urges careful spiritual discipline of the total self so that a person does not harm the "little ones" (18:7-9). The parable of the lost sheep illustrates what such humble, serving, sacrificial care looks like in practice, particularly in the worshipful work of a Christian leader.

Jesus then addresses the question of sin within the kingdom community and how this is to be dealt with (Matthew 18:15-20). Jesus anticipates that sin will occur and outlines a process for resolving relational breaches that occur because of sin. The initiative in this case is with the person who is "sinned against." There seems to be need for people aggrieved to draw the attention of transgressors to their harmful behaviour. We might use the term "whistleblower" today to describe this response. The process moves from private repentance, forgiveness and restoration, to a very public process ("tell it to the church"). Without repentance the process can only result in expulsion from the church community ("treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector"). The escalation embedded in the process is designed for one outcome – repentance and restoration. Without repentance there can be no restoration. Jesus indicates that he personally is involved in this process, present through the prayers of his people and their attempts to embody kingdom principles.

Lastly, Jesus responds to the question from Peter regarding limits to forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35). The parable of the unforgiving servant is designed to demonstrate why there should be no limits to human forgiveness. The magnitude of what God has forgiven each believer in Jesus Messiah far outweighs any human wrongdoing that we as humans may be asked to forgive. It can be argued from this parable that forgiveness is one of the primary spiritual disciplines, which, if not practiced, brings into question one's commitment to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. The accountability related to forgiveness expressed in the parable further emphasizes its importance in kingdom life. This principle of forgiving applies to Christian leaders in their own spiritual practice.

This discourse touches the matter of pastoral restoration in various ways:

1. Some elements of process are defined. In particular there is warrant given to the one offended by sin to initiate action. People's sinful behaviour needs to be named and addressed and it seems that transgressors are blind to their harmful actions for the most part.
2. The importance of spiritual discipline in kingdom living so that harm does not come to any "little one" is emphasized.
3. Forgiveness where repentance is evident is required. However, Jesus does not address the question of restoration. Whatever should occur in terms of restoration is left undefined. However, the comment that "you have won your brother" suggests some form of restoration occurs. As well the forgiveness of the debtor in the parable suggests restoration is possible.

We see Jesus practicing these principles in the case of Peter's denial and restoration to apostolic mission.

B. Pauline Epistles.

An adequate engagement of the matter of leadership restoration in the Pauline epistles should probably begin by considering salvation and its general behavioral/ethical implications and how these particularly relate to the requirements and responsibilities of pastoral/church leaders.

i. Salvation Dynamics

The apostle Paul makes it very clear that the impact of salvation upon those who are in Christ Jesus is absolutely profound. By faith in Christ, believers have been united with him in death and have therefore died to sin; having been united with Christ in his resurrection, they can live a new life (Rom. 6:1-4, 11-23; Col. 3:1-17). Paul writes that they were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:9-11) and that it is the will of God that they are called to a holy life and created in Christ to do good works (1 Thess. 4:3-10; Eph. 2:1-10). Salvation causes a transfer of realm for believers; they are no longer in the realm of the flesh but in the realm of the Spirit. Bought with a price, their bodies are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit who indwells them so that they do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:15-20; Rom. 8:4-14). Formerly free from the control of righteousness and slaves to impurity and increasing wickedness, in Christ believers have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God and to righteousness (Rom. 6:11-23). Paul declares these to be the facts of salvation.

ii. Ethical Implications

In many ways and by various images, Paul asserts that while the facts of the dynamics of salvation are clear, it is incumbent upon believers in Jesus Christ to live consistent to their new realm of existence and submissive to their new master. Paul exhorts concerning the new realm that believers should determine positively to count themselves alive to God (Rom. 6:11-23), set their minds on things above (Col. 3:1-17), be led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:4-14), pursue righteousness (2 Tim. 2:22-26), honor God bodily (1 Cor. 6:15-20), live a life worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1) and for Christ (2 Cor. 5:14f.), offer their bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1f.), cling to good (Rom. 12:9), behave decently and clothe themselves with the armor of light, with the Lord Jesus Christ, with virtuous behaviors (Rom. 13:12-14; Col. 3:1-17), and walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:13-26). Arguably quoting Jesus' own words, Paul can encourage the positive embrace of the new realm in terms of loving and pleasing one's neighbor for their own good (Rom. 13:8-10, 15:1f.; 1 Thess. 4:3-10; Gal. 5:13-26).

Paul, however, is a spiritual realist and recognizes that Jesus followers live in a broken world and spiritual leaders minister among people processing and coping with this reality. 2 Tim. 2:19 epitomizes the absolute negative requirement related to the old realm of sin: "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." Believers are told by Paul that they have no obligation to live according to the flesh (Rom. 8:4-14), but must in fact count themselves dead to sin, not letting it reign in their bodies, putting to death whatever belongs to the earthly nature and not being conformed to the pattern of this world (Rom. 6:11-23; Rom. 12:1f.; Col. 3:1-17). This is spoken of in terms of hating evil, putting aside deeds of darkness and not thinking of how to gratify desires or to use freedom to indulge the flesh. (Rom. 12:9; 13:12-14; Gal. 5:13-26). Paul advises flight from sexual immorality and evil desires (1 Cor. 6:15-20; 2 Tim. 2:22-26) and pleasing or living for oneself (Rom. 15:1f.; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). The reason is that, such a pattern of life characterizes wrong doers who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Consistent to their present identity as those who are destined to inherit the kingdom, believers should be purifying themselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, and perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Cor. 7:1). Our contemporary western society has its own particular cocktail of sinful seduction that is highly sexualized, violent, abusive, consumeristic, obsessed with power, and narcissistic. Paul's challenge to first century believers resonates with Jesus followers today and requires an equal measure of the Holy Spirit's help for believers to withstand this satanic onslaught.

The apostolic instruction and expectation is that, consistent to their identity as citizens of the realm of the Spirit in the gospel's salvation dynamic, believers will say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, living self-controlled, upright and godly lives

in this present age (Tit. 2:12). Encouragement that this is possible in the Holy Spirit is offered through the “armour of God” (Ephesians 6:10-18).

iii. Leadership Life and Ministry

Christian leadership is not exempt from living out the reality of the salvation dynamic with consistency. In fact, a pattern of consistency of profession with praxis is not only an essential qualifier for ministry, it is faithfulness to the ministry and the ministry itself. Paul writes to the Corinthians that those given a trust must prove faithful at 1 Cor.4:1-5 and then a little later on gives some sense of that faithfulness in urging the Corinthians to “imitate” him, advising that his purpose in sending Timothy is to remind them of “my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Cor. 4:16-17) Consistency is what must stand back of Paul’s first notices in the character/behavior lists that congregational leaders be “above reproach”, “worthy of respect” (2x) and “blameless” respectively (1 Tim. 3:1-12; Tit. 1:5-9). If the instruction of congregational leaders is to say “No” to ungodliness and “Yes” to a life of self-control and godliness, but their lives belie the proclaimed truth, such inconsistency would put them in the same place as those errorists who “claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him” (Titus 1:16). In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 Paul shows why holiness is incompatible with sexual immorality. Christian truth must be both didactic and mimetic; both declared and incarnated by the instructor.

iv. Church Discipline & Leadership

Perhaps the most significant instance of church discipline in the Pauline correspondence is the incident recorded at 1 Cor. 5:1-13 where a Corinthian believer is in a sexually immoral relationship with his father’s wife. Whether he holds a leadership role in that congregation is not stated, but the principles that Paul defines are certainly applicable to the general subject of pastoral restoration. This individual apparently claims to be a believer in Jesus, but his pattern of sexual behavior, far from rising to the level of Christian consistency is not even acceptable in pagan eyes! Paul advises the following response from the church: 1) it should mourn this man’s sinful behavior, formally pass judgment upon him, and hand him over to Satan (a disciplinary action with ultimate restorative intent). 2) Having expelled the man from their fellowship, they were not to associate or even eat with him.

In his counsel to the Corinthian believers Paul names immoral people, covetous, swindlers, and idolaters (1 Cor. 5:10) as those with whom they should not associate. He repeats the list in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, expanding it to include fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers nor swindlers. It suggests that Paul did not consider sexual sins as a special class of transgressions. Their implications may be particularly harmful, but he did not regard such sin as of a different order than other sins.

If there is any certainty that 2 Cor. 2:5-11 relates a later moment in this man’s experience, the man, having been punished by the majority, far from resisting (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:21) expresses sorrow for his sinful behavior. Paul advises that the Corinthians not cause him to be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow by resisting his efforts to re-enter the congregation as this might give Satan opportunity to “outwit” them. Rather, they should reaffirm their love for him, forgive him, and extend him comfort. This compares favorably with Gal. 6:1 where Paul advises that those who are spiritual should restore a person trapped in sin with gentleness, watching that they themselves are not tempted. The ideal is portrayed in the Corinthians’ own response to Paul as, under his bracing disciplinary engagement of their disobedience, they experienced a godly sorrow leading to repentance and salvation without regret. He rejoices further in their further expressions of earnestness, eagerness to clear themselves, and indignation, alarm, longing, concern and readiness to see justice done (2 Cor. 7:8-13).

Is this the pattern of discipline for congregational leaders as well? Paul readily admits at 1 Tim. 5:19-20 that elders will be caught in sin. He advises that only when an accusation against them is confirmed by two or three witnesses should sinning elders be reproved before everyone as a warning. In the case of a divisive person, who may or may not be a church leader, Paul advises that he be warned twice. If the congregation's actions fail to call him to repentance, they should have nothing to do with him (Tit. 3:10). Paul's readiness to punish every act of disobedience signals a significant interest in the purity of the congregation (2 Cor. 10:6). The damaging pervasiveness of unaddressed patterns of sin is likened to a small batch of leaven permeating an entire lump of dough.

There are two specific examples where Christian leaders are vigorously engaged for failure by Paul. In the first example, Paul relates the events of his face-to-face and highly public confrontation of the apostle Peter over the issue of Peter's refusal to eat with uncircumcised believers (Gal. 2:11-21). It is a spectacular instance of the damaging persuasiveness of a leader's theological failure. Paul accuses Peter of hypocrisy—acting inconsistently to his knowledge of the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:14). The second instance finds Paul's pleading with two female Christian ministry associates who have fallen out with one another to the risk of the Philippian congregation and its ministry. It is instructive that Paul does not command but "pleads" and that there is no rehearsal of the events of the falling out or assignment of blame. He rather appeals to that broadest base of commonality on which they should be able to agree—"in the Lord." Moreover, Paul is prepared to co-opt the assistance of a Philippian member of the congregation named Syzygus (probably a leader) on account of the certain ministry gain from a reconciliation and the potential loss without it. (Phil. 4:2f.)

v. Forgiveness and Restoration (Galatians 6:1-5)

Paul addresses the question of Christian transgression in Galatians 6. The very general condition "if someone is caught in a sin" applies equally to Christian leaders. Restoration is the anticipated response, with Spirit-sponsored meekness (cf. Galatians 5:23). This action should be engaged by those who are Spirit-led (*hoi pneumatikoi*), with care lest they succumb themselves to some form of temptation. In other words the work of restoration has its spiritual risks, but is aided by the Holy Spirit.

If Paul's injunction to "bear the burdens of one another" refers to this work of restoration, then he links this spiritual work to our obligations to "fulfill the law of the Messiah" (Galatians 6:2). Further, Paul urges a consistent practice of spiritual self-examination (Galatians 6:4) by all believers, but particularly Christian leaders, understanding our accountability to the Lord for our actions.

4. Theological Anthropology Issues

i. The Options for Pastoral Restoration Within Theological Discussion

John Armstrong, Reformed theologian and director of Reformation and Revival Ministries, identifies three approaches to pastoral restoration as practiced in various parts of the Christian church: "1) immediate restoration to church office (within 12 months of sexual failure); 2) future restoration; 3) personal restoration but with no possibility for restoration to office."⁴ In support of the first category there is the general principle that "If God forgives all sin immediately, then we should forgive and restore to office the fallen pastor immediately. If not, we are refusing to do what God does, completely and totally forgive."⁵ He indicates that the

⁴ <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/book-reviews/5-church/227-can-fallen-pastors-be-restored-by-john-h-armstrong>

⁵ John Armstrong, *Can Pastors Be Restored: The Church's Response to Sexual Misconduct* (Chicago, ILL: Moody Press, 1995), 36.

second approach seems most common “in which a pastor may be restored to the ministry following counseling and evidence of repentance over an extended period of time.”⁶

Armstrong, however, argues in favor of the third approach particularly in relation to sexual immorality on the following basis:

1) Adultery is a unique sin (1 Cor 6:15-20). “Its uniqueness . . . is not in its degree of evil but rather in the direct way sexual sin strikes at the body, and through the body, at the whole human personality.”⁷

2) Therefore immorality “has such serious and lasting consequences that its reproach never fully departs in this life (Prov 6:32,33).”⁸ Thus adultery is a greater sin than most others because of its consequences, which include the destruction of trust, which is so important to Christian leadership.⁹

3) “Adultery by pastors . . . is an even greater sin than adultery in general. Why? . . . Their sin becomes a grievous public assault upon the nuptial image of Christ (the groom) and the church (His Bride), because the pastor is called upon to be a role model of purity as an under shepherd in service to the Bridegroom Himself.”¹⁰

4) A pastor who has committed sexual sin no longer meets the qualifications of an elder since he is no longer above reproach and blameless (1 Tim 3:2).

5) “In general, men who fall sexually have followed a pattern of deception, misinformation, and outright lying for months, if not years. . . . All sin is deceitful, but sexual sin seems particularly able to deceive and to harden the human heart of those caught in its follies.”¹¹

6) The early church held to complete disqualification from pastoral ministry when an elder had sinned sexually.¹²

Armstrong admits that, “No sure biblical text supplies indisputable evidence for restoration to the pastorate after the fall into sexual sin. But by the same token, no text directly argues for permanent disqualification.”¹³ Nevertheless Armstrong takes a dogmatic view that the fallen minister should not be restored to his former position. He may, however, minister in any other capacity in which he is gifted.¹⁴

According to John McArthur “when referring to his body, Paul obviously had sexual immorality in view. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 he describes it as a sin against one’s own body—sexual sin is in its own category.”¹⁵ He notes as well that “certainly it disqualifies a man from church leadership since he permanently forfeits a blameless reputation as a one-woman man (Proverbs 6:33; 1 Timothy 3:2).”¹⁶ McArthur agrees with Armstrong’s conclusions.

Others biblical interpreters disagree with the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 6 and other passages that Armstrong and McArthur use as the basis for their conclusions regarding the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁹ Ibid., 52-53.

¹⁰ Ibid., 68-69.

¹¹ Ibid., 105-106.

¹² See chapters 7 and 9 of Armstrong.

¹³ Ibid., 142.

¹⁴ Ibid., 132, 154.

¹⁵ John McArthur article <http://jimkang.wordpress.com/2006/11/06/should-fallen-pastors-be-restored-to-leadership/>

¹⁶ Ibid., <http://jimkang.wordpress.com/2006/11/06/should-fallen-pastors-be-restored-to-leadership/>

particularity of sexual sin, such transgression by spiritual leaders, and its implications for restoration to spiritual leadership. The appendix in this paper, for example, offers an alternative exegesis and interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:2 which would not support Armstrong's conclusion that sexual sin necessarily disqualifies a person from restoration to spiritual leadership.

With respect to Proverbs 6:30-32 certainly the writer condemns the adulterer and describes graphically the self-harm such action generates. However, the writer focuses upon the severe response of the jealous husband who bends every effort to seek revenge. In the eyes of the offended spouse the perpetrator can never overcome the shame involved in this transgression. It is the "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" reparation principle that is invoked. However, when we come to the New Testament Jesus rejects this principle as part of his Kingdom ethic (cf. Matthew 5:38-42) and also recalibrates the act of adultery in such a way that virtually condemns every male for this sin (Matthew 5:27-30). However this does not disqualify every male from becoming a spiritual leader.

Let us return specifically to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. What is Paul asserting? We are not sure whether this discussion is connected with the matter of church discipline discussed in chapter 5 or addresses a more general problem of sexual immorality within the Corinthian congregation. However, it seems to reference the specific mention of πόρνοι (sexually immoral) in 6:9 as outside the Kingdom. Some of the Corinthians had engaged in such activities prior to their conversion, but "were washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (6:11). To return to such behaviour as believers in Jesus is inappropriate because they belong to the Messiah and their bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit" (6:15,19). "Everything" therefore is not permitted to believers.

Paul does distinguish sexual sin from other sins. First he rejects the notion that sins committed in and through the body have no spiritual significance, as if a believer's physical body had no connection with spiritual realities. Paul does not accept the Corinthian slogan iterated in v.13, which promotes a dualism that is inconsistent with Christian thought. The quote from some Corinthian Christians seems to be "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy them both." Rather Paul argues that our 'body' (σῶμα) has eschatological significance because it will be transformed in the resurrection and persist into our eternal existence (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). Our transformation as believers involves our whole selves – physical and spiritual components. Our bodies then are "for the Lord" (τῷ κυρίῳ) (v.13). In the end times God will resurrect our bodies as part of our spiritual transformation because it is part of the self.

Our bodies serve as important means by which to communicate our allegiance to the Lord Jesus expressed in our actions. Thiselton¹⁷ argues that the Greek word μέλη, often rendered as "members" of the body, should more adequately be explained as "limbs and organs." If this is correct then Paul is arguing that our very "limbs and organs" as believers becomes "the limbs and organs" of the Lord Jesus, i.e. for his use, through our conversion. By joining, bonding or gluing (κολλᾶν) (v. 16) the believer's body (σῶμα) with a prostitute, one is violating the boundaries of identity and ethics in the Messiah. The believer is bonded or glued to the Messiah and is "one spirit" with the Messiah (v.17). Physically bonding with a prostitute violates both the ownership claims of the Messiah on the believer, as well as the believer's "oneness in spirit" with the Messiah. The believer's body then is in fact "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (vv. 15,19). By quoting Genesis 2:24 (v.16) Paul emphasizes that physical intimacy with a

¹⁷ Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 465-66.

prostitute replicates in some manner the same physical intimacy which God intends to be enjoyed within the marriage covenant, with concurrent elements of self-commitment involving the entire person. So this is a serious sin and perhaps a distinctive sin in this regards. This act of sexual immorality in fact becomes spiritual adultery.

1 Corinthians 6:18b is notoriously difficult to interpret. Recent discussion considers 6:18a probably to be another Corinthian church slogan which Paul modifies in 6:18b. At this point Paul seeks to identify precisely the manner in which sexually immorality is a distinctive sin. The operative phrase is εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα, translated in the NIV (2011) as “against their own body.” However some question whether the preposition εἰς means “against” or “into” and some argue that Paul intended both meanings. Further what is the referent for ἴδιον σῶμα? Is it the believer’s own personal body or is it the body of the Messiah¹⁸ with whom he or she now is identified? Or is Paul again being deliberately ambiguous intending his audience to see the double reality of the believer’s physical body and also the integration of the believer into the Messiah’s body, i.e. the church. Sexual immorality is both a grievous sin against the self, but also a grievous sin against the Messiah and his people. So Paul certainly marks this sin’s destructiveness, spiritual debilitation, and significant damage to the identity of the believer. Yet he makes no comment regarding the possibility of forgiveness and possible restoration of spiritual leaders who may transgress in this manner. Paul identifies this “body” as the “temple of the Holy Spirit” and thus defines sexual immorality as sacrilege.

Presumably Paul addresses this question precisely because some believers in Corinth are in fact acting as if such sexual immorality was immaterial for spiritual life in Christ. When he concludes this section with the command to “honour God with your body,” presumably he is expecting that those who have transgressed in this way will repent and change their behaviour, but he says nothing about disqualification for service at this point.¹⁹

With respect to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Armstrong interprets this to mean that sexual sin disqualifies a pastor from future ministry.²⁰ “This seems to be true precisely because of the gravity of the offense, the person in whom the sin was committed, and the high nature of ministerial calling itself.”²¹ He goes on to say, “All sin is deceitful and potentially destructive of pastoral ministry. What I am arguing for is this: sexual sin is especially able to deceive, to harden the heart and to bring untold harm and destruction to those touched by it (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20); thus it destroys pastoral leadership whenever it occurs. It is a fire of destruction that burns scores of people when it occurs in the life of one chosen to shepherd the flock of Christ. It nurtures the cynicism of the world, since the fallen pastor can no longer have a ‘good reputation with those outside’ and it destroys trust within the church by making the man no longer ‘above reproach’ or ‘blameless.’”²² We would agree with the destructive capacity of sexual immorality with respect to spiritual leadership, but would not agree that this necessarily results in every instance with complete and permanent disqualification.

¹⁸ Consider the similar exegetical question that emerges in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:29 as to whether the “body of the Lord” refers to the physical body of Jesus represented in the communion elements or the “body of the Lord,” i.e. the church, or both.

¹⁹ Necessarily this exegetical treatment of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 is not as complete as we would wish to provide, but hopefully it indicates why this Pauline text needs to be treated carefully when it is used in application to sexual transgression by spiritual leaders.

²⁰ <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/book-reviews/5-church/227-can-fallen-pastors-be-restored-by-john-h-armstrong>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

It is a little curious that, after Armstrong so strongly states his position, he leaves a loophole. He claims, "for a variety of reasons. . . we can find permanent disqualification from pastoral ministry the norm (with a few exceptions) for the pastor who yields to sexual sin."²³ Again, "the general principle should be that men should not seek to reenter the office of pastor . . . I believe we must conclude that the church should not make a general or procedural practice of restoring sexually fallen ministers, at least not for the foreseeable future. Any exception should be viewed as establishing the general principle."²⁴ Then, after arguing for this position through 200 pages and seeking to establishing the "biblical" position, Armstrong seems to conclude that restoration in such cases may yet be possible. He says: "But, since it is not clearly stated in Scripture that a man who falls into sexual sin cannot be ultimately restored to the pastoral office, (even after a long season of bearing the fruit of true repentance) I think (with great caution and care) we have to leave the door open to the possibility (Galatians 6:1). That being said, I hold firmly to a high standard of accountability for the moral life of the pastor (I Timothy 3; Titus 1, among others) and certainly I would not subscribe to the full restoration of every seemingly repentant pastor in every case."²⁵ We were not expecting this! Perhaps at the end of the day as a matter of integrity he feels he cannot go beyond what the biblical data will support. However, if in his view the teaching of Scripture is that sexual fallen pastors are disqualified permanently from office, then there are no loopholes. So after proclaiming support for the third approach to dealing with fallen ministers, Armstrong ultimately takes a modified position, somewhere between his second and third approach.

Armstrong seems to agree with our conclusion in the end, but we would argue that the New Testament in particular gives more hope for restoration to leadership than Armstrong would allow.

An Alternative to Armstrong and McArthur

Few theologians seem to have addressed the theological foundations and or ethical implications of restoring fallen pastor in opposition to Armstrong. This is true of both the history of theology and the contemporary context. Certainly this is a need. There are some works of an applied and/or psychological nature but the fact is that the best (most thorough and historical) systematic theological attempt to date is Armstrong's and his position is not without difficulties. Part of the reason for this lack is that the concept of pastoral sin, forgiveness, and restoration would necessarily come under the category of Theological Anthropology, including related ideas of sin (as a general and specific category), forgiveness, and the extent of redemption based on the finished work of Christ, as well as the full implications of sanctification. Any model of pastoral restoration would have to respect the boundaries set by such a comprehensive view of redemption. What would such a view entail, theologically? Obviously a proper view of sin, redemption and forgiveness.

I. Original Sin and the distinction regarding Sexual Sin

It would seem that an important question from a theological point of view is the relationship between Sin as an *originalae peccatum* and "sins."²⁶ In systematic theology the act

²³ John Armstrong, 142.

²⁴ Ibid., 151-152.

²⁵ <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/book-reviews/5-church/227-can-fallen-pastors-be-restored-by-john-h-armstrong>

²⁶ The one book in the Protestant Free Church tradition that deals with this distinction is G. C. Berkouwer's exhaustive treatment in his *Studies in Dogmatics*. This is easily the most thorough treatment of this

of redemption applies to the first order issue of original sin, whereas it applies to the second order issue on a case by case basis but always under the economy of redemption. Redemption has implications for various “sins” only in subordination to the larger issue. It would seem that the proscription against pastoral restoration to full ministry is built upon an incomplete view of sin in Armstrong’s work. A decision to resolve the issue will not be based upon a special distinction between sins, as though some sins are less destructive or more easily redeemed. This is an important flaw in any insistence that Paul seems to treat sexual sin as somehow more deeply destructive of the person. Sin is destructive regardless of its type. The social and relational consequences of some sins have greater destructive impact than others and so in these cases potential for restoration will have to be assessed more rigorously and the time taken to affirm spiritual integrity may be quite lengthy. This understanding of sin and redemption calls for restoration through process. The problem is that this process often is either incorrectly structured or trivialized.

II. Redemption:

Equally important is the view of redemption that stands as the basis of any given policy. Such a policy must allow for the fact that, based on an understanding of justification, sanctification and glorification, all sin is eventually defeated and overcome. It is so theologically already in the finished work of Christ and will be so eventually as an eschatological reality. Our view of potential pastoral restoration after serious moral failure then must encompass the possibility that such sin may be overcome in this life within the nurturing context of the church and through the significant, transformational power of the Holy Spirit.

III. Forgiveness:

Situations involving pastoral failure tax us with respect to forgiveness more than any other human failure, it seems. Yet our theology of sin and redemption requires of us the widest possible latitude with respect to forgiveness. To be sure no balanced doctrine of forgiveness can be accounted for without considering also the consequences of sin. But it is all too easy to design a policy that majors on consequences and overlooks the complete magnanimity of God’s forgiveness. Balance is the key. We also have to distinguish between the act of forgiveness and the possibility of restoration to spiritual leadership. Restoration should follow the path of enabling an acceptance of forgiveness and consequences, as well as a sustained period of demonstrated spiritual integrity, and this process should not be borne by the perpetrator alone. This is a community effort as Galatians 6 makes clear.

The bottom line is that any policy will have to be developed in such a way as to respect the doctrinal and actual comprehensiveness of sin, salvation and sanctification. Under the statement of faith currently upheld in the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches any policy should ultimately allow for the possibility of restoration, but equally require a system of accountability that is faithful to both the justice and love of God.

Summary:

1. What kind of immoral action constitutes “moral failure” and what are the consequences of such transgression? Are there categories of moral failure during pastoral

distinction in the Evangelical/Reformed tradition. Henri Blocher’s *Whatever happened to Original Sin* is also helpful.

employment that require resignation and may also permanently disqualify a person from pastoral vocation?

- a. While some types of moral failure strike human perception as being particularly egregious and destructive, care must be taken not to give the impression that resignation from ministry leadership is only required in the case of sexual sin. The New Testament indicates clearly that false teaching, greed, lying and divisiveness are treated with equal seriousness. In our contemporary context use of pornography and abuse of power should also be included.
 - b. The seriousness of sexual sins and their consequences should not be negated. Immorality of this nature challenges our claims to be Jesus followers and destroys our ability to testify to the Gospel in a potent manner, until repentance and recovery are demonstrated. Scripture certainly warns transgressors that such sinful actions devastate lives and destroy relationships. Yet, sin is sin and placing sexual sin in its own unique category on the scale of evil does not seem warranted.
 - c. Within the Scriptures we find examples of advocacy for the repentant offenders (e.g. Moses, Barnabas). This would indicate that it is important for the transgressor to have a spiritual guide or advocate who can walk with him through the process. This is important not only for the offender, but also for those who are responsible to administer the process of restoration. Galatians 6:1-3 warns such “spiritual ones” to take precautions in the process lest they too become entangled in sin. It is quite possible, for example, that denominational or congregational leaders involved in these processes may be tempted to exercise favouritism or for some reason fail to follow the approved process. Who then advocates for the offender to ensure that he is being cared for?
2. Who is affected and what are the lingering effects?
- a. Attention must be given to the recovery of the transgressor’s social and spiritual network. This includes family, close friends, congregation, and the community at large.
 - b. The reputation and witness of the faith community registers as a very important consideration in the application of discipline and restoration.
3. What constitutes ‘sincere repentance’?
- a. One of the primary initial indicators that restoration is possible is the recognition by the transgressor that personal actions were sinful against God and against individuals and the congregation, and this transgression required explicit, repentant action. This is the first step in repentance.
 - b. In the event that the transgressor refuses to acknowledge error and rejects attempts for recovery and restoration, the New Testament indicates that the church has to act to remove the person from leadership and ultimately from the congregation. In order to enable this action to proceed, church boards need to require pastoral leaders to sign their agreement at the start of employment to abide by appropriate ethical standards and acknowledge their awareness of and agreement with the necessity to resign should violation of these standards occur.
4. Does God forgive post-conversion transgression in the case of sincere repentance?
- a. All the indications that we have in biblical narratives and in the instructional portions of the New Testament are that the redemption available in Christ extends to all sin, whether original sin or specific, post-conversion sin, when sincere repentance is offered by the offender.

5. Does God employ people in his service who transgress after conversion, but are repentant?
 - a. Restoration to some form of service is desirable, but not necessarily the same service. The focus is on enabling the transgressor to once again be a productive disciple of Jesus and enabling those affected by the transgressor to discern God's grace and wisdom in the process. Restoration to fellowship with God, restoration in relationships with those immediately affected, restoration to worship and restoration to service as a believer are the immediate goals. Whether there will be restoration to spiritual leadership will have to be evaluated on an individual basis.

The scriptural data provides general direction as to when and under what circumstances restoration to pastoral service might occur. Sincere and publicly verified repentance is necessary. Restored relationships should be demonstrated. The essential qualifications for spiritual leadership outlined by Paul in 1 Timothy 3 will need to be demonstrated and affirmed anew. Often the support and recommendation of other trusted spiritual leaders who have followed the individual's journey of recovery and restoration will be crucial. General guidelines regarding the amount of time that should transpire before any consideration of new pastoral appointment are not, in our view, provided. God only acted to summon Moses to new leadership after forty years of tending sheep! Conversely, Mark's re-engagement in ministry under Barnabas seems to have occurred within a year or two. Peter's restoration after his denial of Jesus seems to occur within a matter of days.
 - b. Moral failures of various kinds will require discipline and action for restoration to discipleship as the first priority, i.e. restoration to faith and spiritual vitality so that the person can live and serve as a believer. The effect of the offence upon family relationships will require primary attention.
 - c. The concept of pastoral vocation does not give any sense of entitlement to an individual's continuance as a pastoral leader.
6. What principles of restoration – personal, congregational and community – does the Bible indicate by narrative report and specific instruction should be followed?
 - a. The Bible and particularly the New Testament mandates the discipline of Christian leaders and the work by the local church necessary for their restoration primarily as believers, and then, as appropriate, to positions of leadership.
 - b. In our view the New Testament data does not support the contention that sexual sin perpetrated by spiritual leaders is more venial than other types of sin. A treasurer who steals from the church, a youth pastor involved in sexual abuse, an elder addicted to pornography, a pastoral associate who consistently deceives – these all are representative of moral failure that should result in removal from positions of spiritual leadership because of the serious violation of trust given by God and the congregation.
 - c. Moral failure, often accompanied by patterns of deception, in most cases will not be recognized initially by the perpetrator, but by another party who needs the guidance and courage of the Holy Spirit to name the issue. Paul required two witnesses before a congregation acted with respect to an elder. This raises the question of what evidence is necessary to have in hand before action is taken.
 - d. The dynamics of the discipline matters in the Corinthian church (if Paul's comments in 2 Cor. 2 are related to the actions in 1 Cor. 5) indicate that the purity of the church, the witness of the faith community, clarity about the scale of ethical values,

and the personal salvation of the transgressor are all significant elements in discipline and restoration. Yet Paul expects the local congregation to take the lead in dealing with this situation of moral failure.

- e. We live in a media rich age and the church, whether local or as a denominational family, needs to recognize this reality and act accordingly with wisdom and care in cases of pastoral discipline.
- f. Counsel and teaching about biblically consistent policies and practices for leadership discipline and restoration need to be provided to congregations, pastoral leaders, church boards, and denominational leaders. Clarity about appropriate and due process is very important.
- g. Within Baptist polity decisions regarding pastoral discipline and restoration must be done in ways that respect a congregation's ultimate decision-making mandate given to it by the Holy Spirit. Within a local church the role of the congregation, the church board, and the staff in responding to situations of a leader's moral failure needs careful oversight. The realities of congregational life and inevitable conflicts of interest will in most cases make advisable the use of external assistance in order to assist the local church confirm the offense, provide advocacy for the transgressor, offer victim care, give guidance to the church board as to process, and minister encouragement to the congregation throughout the journey. There needs to be clarity as to how various affected parties (i.e. family, congregation, specific victim, denominational family) participate in decisions related to repentance, forgiveness and, as possible, restoration to pastoral leadership. What respective roles in the process of restoration do the congregation of record have, the denominational leadership, and congregations which may in the future desire to consider the restored offender for a ministry leadership role?
- h. In our litigious culture great care will need to be taken both with respect to what is communicated publicly and how this is done so that privacy of information laws are followed.
- i. The emphasis in the New Testament upon the ethical standards for church leaders should urge every pastoral leader gazetted by FEBPAC to sign an ethical standards form, in which it is stated clearly that violation of the standards will result in discipline, which in most cases will result in immediate resignation or in some instances temporary cessation of involvement in pastoral leadership. Local churches should be urged to have all of their employees sign this same ethical standards statement at the beginning of any paid employment, whether fulltime, part-time or temporary. There is a relationship between our Articles of Faith and any subsidiary statement of ethical standards for spiritual leaders. Strong commitment to both will be important elements in promoting moral and spiritual integrity.
- j. As well FEBPAC should provide guidance to local churches as to their responsibility to pastoral leaders who transgress, particularly during the process of investigation, repentance, forgiveness and restoration. Care for the family of the offender cannot be overlooked.

- k. The public testimony of the Scriptures regarding offending leaders directs us to remove any “conspiracy of silence” regarding clergy misconduct.²⁷ Paul desires the entire congregation to be aware of moral failure among its leaders (1 Timothy 5:20).
 - l. The New Testament teaches in several contexts (e.g. Romans 13, 1 Peter 2) that believers should respect the secular authorities. This instruction directs the contemporary church to respect the legal requirements that may entail a particular offence. For example, if the offence involves sexual impropriety with a minor, then legal authorities have to be informed.
7. Does God enable people who transgress in the post-conversion context and are repentant to advance vocationally in ministry leadership responsibility?
- a. There are examples in the biblical narrative where repentant offenders are not only restored to leadership, but the subsequent leadership role seems to result in greater accomplishments (e.g. Moses, Nebuchadnezzar, Peter). While this should not be used as a principle to expect restoration to leadership, it does give encouragement that serious transgression does not necessarily disqualify a person from future leadership. The will of God for a person resides in his sovereign plans.

²⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, narrates the story of the ostracism of a young woman victimized by a “young, popular parish pastor.” In other words this issue has entered into the world of literary novels presumably because of its frequent occurrence. The infamous example of Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church is a case in point (1872). In a 1987 survey published in *Christianity Today* 23% of responding clergy self-reported engagement in what they defined as inappropriate sexual behaviour.

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Appendix

1Timothy 3:2 and Implications for Moral Failure and Pastoral Restoration

"Husband of One Wife" (μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα)

As Paul begins to outline the primary characteristics of those the community chooses to be its spiritual, servant mentors or leaders, his key concern is that candidates for such roles be "irreproachable" (3:2). The idea seems to be that such a person has done nothing that could be attack or criticized as immoral or improper within or without the Christian community. He is beyond attack. This is a high standard.

Paul then elaborates what this might entail. His first point is that such a person should be beyond criticism because "he is a one-woman man". This is an unusual expression and Paul's turn of phrase has created uncertainty as to his precise meaning. Four interpretations have been proposed.

1. "He is to be a married man".
 - a. The term "man" and "woman" are also used in Greek to mean "husband" and "wife". So this phrase can also be translated as "the husband of one wife". This suggests to some that the spiritual leaders in the church must be married. The later reference to "caring for the household" (3:4) and having good relations with his children would support this proposal.
 - b. Yet, we must pause and ask whether such a meaning is coherent with the wisdom and practice of the church as expressed in other parts of the NT?
 - i. Timothy was not married – yet he seems to exercise leadership functions. Was Paul married? This is a question whose answer remains uncertain.
 - ii. Paul in 1 Cor. 7 seems to argue that singleness in fact enables a person to serve God more effectively! (vs. 17, 25-38).
 - c. If we adopt this kind of perspective, then we must also argue that our spiritual leaders must also have children and those who do not, are not eligible. However, the church has never held this position.
 - d. It is also the case that most adult males in antiquity were married and so this instruction would probably be a moot point.
 - e. It is interesting to note, however, that false teachers in Ephesus were forbidding the practice of marriage (1 Timothy 4:3; cf. 2:15).
2. "It forbids polygamy and keeping concubines"
 - a. This is the most natural understanding of "one woman", i.e. that a man, if he is married, should only be married to one woman.
 - b. Polygamy did exist in Judaism in the first century and rabbinic laws expressly forbid it.
 - c. Marital infidelity was endemic in Greco-Roman society.
 - d. However, we must ask whether polygamy or sexual promiscuity was a problem in the Ephesian church? It is unclear. Some suggest that 2 Tim. 3:6 may imply such sexual impropriety, but this is not a necessary implication.
 - e. So this interpretation does fit the general Jewish and pagan cultural context in which the church exists, but does not seem to define a problem that the church in Ephesus was wrestling with particularly. Yet, Paul in his advice may be warning against possible dangers, rather than actual practices.
3. "Faithful to one wife" – fidelity since conversion.
 - a. Perhaps all that Paul means is that a potential spiritual leader, if married, will have an exemplary marriage.
 - b. This understanding would permit a spiritual leader to be remarried after the death of a spouse, but would disallow polygamy and sexual immorality.

- c. It may also cover the situation where a person, divorced prior to conversion, was remarried and has demonstrated fidelity to his spouse (cf. 1 Cor. 7 and Paul's teaching on this issue).
 - d. It probably would eliminate a person who, as a Christian initiated divorce with a spouse.
4. "Can only be married once".
- a. This was the position of the early church. There are easier ways Paul could have chosen to say this, but the phrase certainly could carry this meaning.
 - b. In the early church celibacy after the death of a spouse we viewed as meritorious.
 - c. It would be coherent with Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7 that singleness enables a person to serve God whole-heartedly, allowing remarriage but preferring celibacy.
 - d. Paul does encourage some believers to remarry. This is his explicit advice in 1 Timothy 5:14. So does Paul suggest that there should be a higher standard for spiritual leaders in contrast to other Christians in terms of remarriage?
 - e. There are two different views on remarriage:
 - i. Some who support this interpretation believe that Paul in this text prohibits remarriage for any reason.
 - ii. Some who support this interpretation believe that Paul in this text prohibits remarriage only if the first marriage ended in divorce.
 - iii. However, there is nothing explicit in the passage that would require either interpretation. Paul elsewhere allows for remarriage (1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Cor. 7) and one would think he would be consistent.

There is another piece of data that we should consider. In 1 Tim. 5:9, Paul discusses the category of Christian widows. To be enrolled as a widow in the church there is an age rule (over sixty) and a marriage rule ("a one man woman" "ἕνός ἀνδρός γυνή"). Now Paul advises younger widows to remarry. However, he never says that such remarriage will disqualify this person from being enrolled in the church as widow if her second spouse should die and she is widowed a second time (5:11-14). This would suggest that the phrase "one man woman" refers primarily to marital fidelity, and does not preclude those remarried. If this is the interpretation of this phrase in 5:9, then one would expect Paul to express a similar sense in 3:2 with the phrase "one woman man". This would support that interpretation in 3:2 that spiritual leaders must be faithful to their spouses, but may remarry if their spouse dies.

The question of whether Paul would consider a man who has remarried, but was divorced prior to conversion as a "one woman man", depends I think on one's understanding of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7. Paul uses the term 'unmarried' in ways that seem to include a variety of situations – previously married, but not currently married. However, he seems to distinguish this category from virgins (i.e. those never married) and widows. If this is the case, then 'unmarried' would seem to refer to those previously married, but divorced. Paul does discuss such as situation in 1 Cor. 7:15. His advice about marriage in the Christian sphere then would seem to cover those who have never been married, those whose spouse has died, and those who are divorced because their spouse has initiated separation. If this is a correct reading of 1 Cor. 7, then Paul would seem to allow divorced Christians, under strict circumstances, to be remarried and this would not disqualify them from service as spiritual leaders in the church. Paul's interpretation would be further elaboration on the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5/19 and Mark 10.

Paul's emphasis in 1 Tim. 3:2 and 3:12 would seem to be upon marital faithfulness as a primary characteristic of spiritual leaders. If this cannot be demonstrated, then it leaves them open to attack and will diminish their ability to serve as spiritual leaders. This eliminates from consideration Christians who practice polygamy or adultery.

Unfortunately, the New Testament does not give us as much clarity as we might wish on the matter of divorce and remarriage. There does seem to be some suggestion that in certain

circumstances remarriage would be possible. Given this uncertainty, we should be careful lest we be unnecessarily harsh or unwisely permissive. If a person who has been divorced and remarried has demonstrated over years a sincere fidelity to his spouse as part of his Christian testimony, then this should be taken into consideration. Every person has sin in their background and experienced God's forgiveness as a believer. Should this not also apply in cases where divorce was initiated by an unbelieving spouse or during a person's pre-Christian experience?

So, the bottom line is that Paul through this phrase is requiring marital fidelity as the standard for Christians who serve the community as mentor/leaders.

If this interpretation of 1Timothy 3:2 is cogent then the following implications should be considered when it comes to pastoral restoration in cases of marital infidelity:

1. Marital infidelity by pastoral leaders is sufficient reason for such leaders to resign from their positions immediately.
2. Marital infidelity does not mean permanent exclusion from pastoral leadership.
3. An extended period of marital fidelity, as testified to by the pastoral leader's spouse, may signal (but not necessarily requires) that the affected leader may be ready for another pastoral posting.

