The Church, III

In this lesson, once again, we will talk about the church before we get into the sacraments. I think we will also talk about the sacraments today.

We have moved into discussing the church's offices. The head of the church is Christ, and Christ works through the ministry of men for three reasons we have already looked at. Now we come to the different categories of ministry Calvin sees in the church. Let us look to the Lord in prayer before we look at what Calvin says about ministry. I will use a prayer from John Calvin. Let us pray.

"Grant, Almighty God, since You proved our faith and constancy by many trials, as it is our duty in this respect as in all others to submit to Your will, grant that we may not give way to the many attacks by which we are tossed about, for we are assailed on all sides by Satan and all the impious. And while their fury is ever raging and burning cruelly against us, may we never yield to them. May we proceed in our warfare in reliance on unconquered might of the Spirit, even though evildoers prevail for a season. May we look forward to the advent of Your only begotten Son, not only when He shall appear at the last day but also whenever it shall please You for Him to assist the church and raise it out of its miserable afflictions. And even if we must endure our distresses, may our courage never fail us until at length we are gathered into that happy rest which has been obtained for us through the blood of the saint, Your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Let us look at the categories of ministry Calvin gives. Calvin says that God, for good reasons, works through the ministries of people. Then he proceeds to describe the different categories. He divides these into two large categories. The first is temporary and the second is permanent. He talks about temporary offices, which he also calls extraordinary. Then he talks about the permanent offices of the church, which he calls ordinary.

Let us start with Calvin's category of temporary or extraordinary offices. Here he places apostles, evangelists, and prophets. Those are the three temporary, or extraordinary, offices. These are the offices, as Calvin says in Book IV, chapter 3, section 4, "which God raised up at the beginning of His kingdom and now and again revives as the need of the time demands." That is a rather startling statement for us in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), is it not? We think of apostles as an office that does not continue and prophets as an office that does not continue. We will have to see what Calvin means by "evangelists," because in some sense we see that office as continuing. But Calvin says these offices were temporary, but God can raise them up again if He so chooses. As you probably know, Calvin on several occasions—including an inference in the *Institutes*—remarks that God had indeed revived these offices in the sixteenth century. According to Calvin, we could think of Martin Luther as a new apostle. That is quite interesting in the light it sheds on Calvin's esteem for Luther, seeing Luther as a new apostle. Also, this shows that Calvin is willing to see the apostolic office as one that could, under certain circumstances, be established again. Calvin, in some ways, I think, would put himself in the same category, as well as the other Reformers. Writing to the king of Poland in 1554, he talks about "the charge which the Lord gave us has been altogether extraordinary, when He employed our work to restore the churches." So Calvin sees the work of the apostles in establishing the church in the first century, and then the church had so deteriorated through history that, by the sixteenth century, it practically had to be reestablished. Thus there is the possibility of the office of the apostle being reinstituted. Now, Calvin never connects that new office or that reinstituted office with revelation or inspiration of Scripture or anything like that. But he does see a kind of extraordinary role for some people, namely Luther, in bringing back what had almost been destroyed in the church.

With that introductory comment on Calvin's view of the extraordinary, let us look at apostles, prophets, and evangelists and see how Calvin treats these. The apostle for Calvin was the person, or persons, primarily given the Great Commission. The Lord said to the apostles, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." Then he sees the category of evangelist, as he puts, "next to the apostles in office." There are the apostles, and then there are evangelists who assist the apostles. He would see, for instance, Peter as an apostle and Mark as an evangelist. Mark is Peter's assistant. Or, he would see Paul as an apostle and Timothy and Titus as evangelists. They are very close to the apostles, they assist and work alongside the apostles, but they are not described as apostles in the New Testament.

To define an apostle as Calvin does, I think, creates something of a problem. He links the office so closely to the Great Commission that apparently in Calvin's mind (as in the mind of many sixteenth-century people), the Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel everywhere was given to these apostles and only to these apostles. And that is what they did. They went and preached the Gospel in other places, starting in Jerusalem, and then in Judea, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. But limiting the Great Commission to the apostles hinders, I think, a development in Calvin of a full appreciation of the fact that the Great Commission is meant for all Christians, not just for the apostles. It is not that clear that the apostles went into all the world. In fact, the apostles were pretty reluctant to move out of Jerusalem. It took God's special effort to get Peter and the others beyond the limits of Jerusalem, even going elsewhere into Judea. Thus there is not a rapid obedience of the apostles, but a kind of slowness to obey that has to be overcome by special works of God in the hearts of these people.

To not link the Great Commission to the ongoing responsibility of the church to take the Gospel into all the world hindered, I believe, the development of the Protestant missionary movement. Calvin was missionary-minded in many ways, but his understanding of the role of the apostles as fulfilling what we call the Great Commission was, I think, exegetically a mistake and did not allow that text to function fully as a missionary mandate. It did not really come into its own, you might say, until the nineteenth century as Christian people began to think, "This is for us, too. We need to obey this. It is not only for the apostles, but it is for all people." The apostles fell far short of fulfilling that. They could not, 12 men (11 with another added), have taken the Gospel into all the world alone. I develop that idea in some detail in an article I wrote for the *Presbyterion* in 1979 when I first came to the seminary. It is called "John Calvin: Missionary Hero or Missionary Failure?" (*Presbyterion* 5 [Spring 1979]: 16-33). In some ways, Calvin has a great deal of missionary theology, missionary dynamic, and in his own practice he had a missionary heart. But at this one place I think there is a kind of misconstruction of the understanding of the Great Commission by limiting it to the apostles.

That is Calvin's view. The apostles were the people commissioned by God to take the Gospel into all the world. I think that is the way he can see the office of apostle being reconstituted in times of great emergency. When the Gospel has been lost, as you might say, it has to be taken again. We have to start over, just as in the New Testament period. Thus God raises up, in the sixteenth century for example, a man named Martin Luther. He is the one who reestablishes the Gospel, so Calvin says we can call him an apostle. That is the sense in which Calvin would see Luther as an apostle. As I said, Calvin had no thought that the words of Luther could be inspired as the words of Paul were inspired. But Luther was a man called to do a job in a critical age when everything, practically, had been lost. In Calvin's view, this is just as the apostles were then called to establish the Gospel where it did not exist.

What does Calvin say about prophets? This is another temporary, extraordinary office. Prophets are "those who excelled in a particular revelation," he says. This is in the category of New Testament

offices, people who excelled in a particular revelation. Does that class end? Does that office end? Well, Calvin says that is temporary and extraordinary. But then in Book IV, chapter 3, section 4 he puts it this way, "This class either does not exist today or is less commonly seen." Thus he kind of opens the door again for the reemergence of the office of the New Testament prophet.

Let me try to describe what I think Calvin means when he says that. The best way is to look at his commentaries on a number of New Testament passages. First, let us look at his commentary on Ephesians 4:11. There he describes prophets as "outstanding interpreters of prophecies who by a unique gift of revelation applied them to the subjects on hand." That sounds like he is saying the prophets were people whom God spoke to in order to give them an understanding of the revelation of Scripture so that they could apply that revelation in a very direct and powerful way. But Calvin goes on in his discussion of that same passage (Ephesians 4:11) to say, "I do not exclude the gift of foretelling, so far as it was connected with teaching." So apparently his understanding of the New Testament prophet was a person who could apply the Scripture in a direct and powerful way, and yet there would also be the possibility of what we call predictive prophecy. We see that in the New Testament prophets, with people like Agabus and others who foretell the future.

Let us look at his commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:10. He says, "I take the term prophecy to mean that unique and outstanding gift of revealing what is the secret will of God, so that the prophet is, so to speak, God's messenger to men." There it seems to come very close to what we call prophetic preaching. It does not mention foretelling here, but it seems to indicate that prophets were able to take the secret will of God. I understand Calvin to mean by that the will of God that He has revealed in the Scripture, so that the prophet is, so to speak, God's messenger to men. Calvin may mean more than that. He may mean there is some revelation to that prophet apart from what appears in the Scripture. But he seems to be bringing two ideas together constantly as he looks at New Testament prophets. One is what we today call prophetic preaching, and the other is predictive prophecy.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:28, he says, "I am certain in my own mind that Paul means by prophets not those endowed with the gift of foretelling but those who were blessed with the unique gift of dealing with Scripture, not only interpreting it but also by the wisdom they showed in making it meet the needs of the hour." There he definitely rejects the idea of foretelling and defines the prophet as a powerful preacher, a person who understands the Scripture and knows how to apply it to meet the needs of the hour. But then he goes on to say this: "From this verse (1 Corinthians 12:28), let us therefore learn that prophets are, one, outstanding interpreters of Scripture and, two, endowed with extraordinary wisdom and aptitude for grasping what the immediate need of the church is and speaking the right word to meet it." That is why they are, so to speak, messengers who bring news of what God wants. That whole passage deals with powerful preaching and correct interpretation, so that we could think of a number of people (for example, John Piper and people like that) who would seem to be modern-day prophets in that sense: powerful preaching and application of the Word of God to what we need. That is also in Bryan Chapell's book and in many others we could think of.

Well, what does Calvin mean when he says, that this class does not exist today or is less commonly seen? I am not sure how to solve that. Calvin seems in some places to say that there is also a predictive element to the office of prophet. I am not absolutely sure whether Calvin is saying that occasionally there could be people in later epics of church history who would be prophets in that sense, or if he is saying the New Testament prophet was primarily a person who could powerfully proclaim the revealed truth of God and apply it. If that is his meaning, why is this office not often seen?

There is quite a debate, as you might know, related to people like John Knox. Did John Knox truly think he was a prophet? He would often use that expression to describe himself. He would even, at times, predict the future. Thus some people think John Knox saw himself as a prophet. Well, he certainly saw himself and Calvin and Luther and the other Reformers as prophets in the sense of proclaiming the revealed truth of God. But Knox seems to go a bit further than that. My own thought on Knox is that he did not view himself as receiving revelation from God about the future, which he could then speak to the people, although he did give some very specific prophecies concerning what would happen to certain people, mainly the enemies of the Reformation. What he prophesied was that they would come to no good end. But he was rather precise as to how that would happen. My guess is that what Knox was doing was taking Scripture. Knox found in the Old Testament a kind of pattern for the ministry of Scotland. Thus he thought if he got everything lined up just right, then he would have a kind of history beforehand. I believe that is what Knox was doing. He read Scripture in a certain way. He said, "Here is Jezebel, here is what Jezebel did, and here is what happened to Jezebel. Here is Mary Queen of Scots, here is what she is doing, and here is what will happen to her." Thus my idea is that Knox's view of himself as a prophet was not that he was having words from God, saying, "This is what will happen in the future." Rather, he was saying, "This is how God has worked in the past in Scripture, and this is how he will work again." He made some pretty astute guesses, then, as to how things would turn out. In some cases, he seems to have gotten it just right. That is a different issue, although it is related to what we are talking about here.

I think about the best we can do on prophets is to say that Calvin saw these as New Testament people (present, of course, in the Old Testament too). He saw them as people who could understand and proclaim the Word of God with urgency, appropriateness, and power. And at least in his commentaries on some passages he says they can also predict the future as God so enables them to do that. There is still his confusing statement, "This class either does not exist today or is not commonly seen." That is a problem. I expect what Calvin means there is this. If you take both his definitions of prophet, there is not much of that sort of prophecy, and perhaps none. It is like with the apostles. You do not usually see apostles, but occasionally (Calvin thought) one appears, and Luther is the case in point. You do not often see prophets who have both powerful preaching and the predictive element, but Calvin does not seem to want to rule it out entirely as a possibility.

The question has been asked, could Calvin be hesitant on this question because of the Anabaptists? The Anabaptists and other radicals claimed that their words at times were inspired and could stand as Scripture. Calvin would certainly want to fight against that claim. He certainly does not want to open the door of possibility for present-day prophets too far, but he does not seem to want to shut it too tightly either, to go so far as to say it could not happen. Certainly Calvin's context influences him here.

We have the temporary or extraordinary category, in which we have looked at the apostles and their associates, the evangelists. And we have looked at prophets. Let us now move to the permanent or ordinary category of offices in the church. Calvin really does not like the word "clergy." You may have picked up on that. He says, "I would have preferred them [that is, pastors, elders, deacons, etc.] to be given a more proper name, for this appellation arose from error or at least from the wrong attitude." What is wrong with using the word "clergy" for the ministry? What does the word "clergy" mean? Well, it means "belonging to the Lord." Calvin says the whole church belongs to the Lord. Thus we should not use "clergy," a word that comes from a Greek word meaning "belonging to the Lord" or "the inheritance of the Lord." You see this word in 1 Peter 5:3. That is not an appropriate word for a section of the church. That is a word that should be used for all of the church. You might say that Calvin was not attempting to abolish the clergy. He certainly has offices he thinks should be preserved. But what he is attempting to do is to abolish the laity. In his proposed terminology, everyone becomes clergy. But

within that clergy, within all those who belong to the Lord, there are some who are called to specific offices. Calvin does not talk as much as Luther does about the priesthood of all believers, but I think you can get the same idea from time to time, as you certainly can here. You should not make a distinction between some in the church and others and say, "These belong to the Lord and these belong to the pastor," or something along those lines. Everyone in the church belongs to the Lord. Within that category of the church, everyone belonging to the Lord, there are certain specific offices to which certain people are called. These are permanent and ordinary in the sense of not being extraordinary. These are typical. Modern-day apostles and modern-day prophets are very atypical. These do not exist anymore, or at least they do not appear very often. But with these ordinary offices, we have a whole continuity of people who fill these offices.

The first of these ordinary offices is pastor. In some ways, in some very significant ways, pastors correspond today to the role of apostles and evangelists in the New Testament period, Calvin says, in that they are "sent by the Lord and are His messengers." The difference would be this: Calvin saw the apostles and their associates the evangelists as having no set limits. They are sent into all the world. But the pastor is called to a particular church. However, Calvin makes it quite clear that, although a pastor is called to a particular church, he is at the same time a minister to the whole church.

That is how we conceive of ordination in the PCA. A man is called and ordained to a particular church, but his ministry is not limited to that particular church. He is ordained to be a minister to the whole church. In the Presbyterian system, you have many opportunities to do that in your work in the presbytery and at General Assembly. Calvin, it seems to me, is very clear on this. He does want to see the office of apostle and evangelist as open-ended and without limit and the office of pastor as more specified and definite. The pastor, in Calvin's understanding, is responsible for preaching, for the sacraments, and for church discipline. He should share his role of responsibility for church discipline with some other officers of the church. But that would be included in the list of responsibilities for a pastor. Calvin puts it this way: "The function of a pastor or minister is to instruct the people to true godliness, to administer the sacred mysteries, and to keep and exercise upright discipline" (Book IV, chapter 3, section 6). It is all there, the two marks of the church and the later mark. Calvin does not make a separate mark but brings the third very close to the first two marks: to preserve the discipline of the church. He sees the pastor as the one ultimately responsible in all of that. If the church will remain the true church, the Word must be preached, the sacraments administered correctly, and discipline exercised.

In thinking of preaching the Word, Calvin asks this question: "Why are pastors so important in the church? Does not everyone have the chance to read the Scriptures for himself?" Why do we need preaching if we have Bibles? Can we not just have people read the Bible and apply it for themselves? Yes, Calvin says that it is true, they should do that. But (this is from his commentary on 2 Timothy 2:15), "Pastors carve and divide the Word, like a father dividing the bread into small pieces to feed his children." That is a rather beautiful image Calvin uses. People can read the Bible for themselves, but they do not always get it right, and they do not always understand it. It is complicated, it is big, and it is hard. But the pastor stands up, takes the bread, divides it into little tiny pieces, and hands it to his children. Keep that in mind when you prepare your sermons, those of you who will be pastors. That is what you will be doing.

Calvin has an office in this category of the ordinary that has not continued to be utilized in the Reformed tradition. He thinks the office of teacher is a permanent and ordinary office. He sees it as a separate office, both in his *Institutes* and in his ecclesiastical ordinances, which he brought out in 1541 for Geneva. I think Calvin was conscious of and believed that the offices of pastor and teacher could often

be combined in the same person. This was true in Calvin's own case. I think we would say he was both pastor and teacher. That is how he describes himself in his will, his final will, as pastor and teacher of the city of Geneva. By the way, Calvin, as far as we know, was never ordained. He just skipped over all that. He believes in ordination and teaches ordination, but he was never a priest in the Catholic Church. He was trained as a lawyer, and then he was kind of taken hold of by Farel and thrust into the work of the church. There was no one to ordain him. He ordained other people, but he was not ordained by anyone. He does not really say that or make that point, but we can see that by reading the history of Calvin. His role was as both a pastor and a teacher. Calvin does not include something in his description of a pastor that many modern pastors would think rather astounding. That is, he does not say anything about church administration or organization. He had to do a lot of that. But that does not really come forward here. He is conscious of the importance of preaching, administering the sacraments, and exercising discipline. I guess under exercising discipline he would think of the organization and administration of the church, all the responsibilities that go into that. Someone has said that we can kind of see the shift in the ministry of the modern period from preaching to administrator by noticing how pulpits have shrunk to something more like a podium while offices have gotten bigger. Maybe that is an indication of the signs of the time.

Let us get back to teachers. Teachers, I believe, in Calvin's view, correspond to the prophets. They do not correspond in the predictive sense but in the sense of the skill of applying the Scripture to the needs of the people and to the times. The ministry of the teacher is scriptural interpretation and teaching. The pastor, of course, does this, but Calvin saw the possibility of a separate office for teacher. This person would have responsibility not for the sacraments and not for discipline, but along with the pastor for the exposition of God's Word. The fact that this has dropped out has really left us with almost no clear place in the ministry of the Reformed church for a seminary professor. We have to be called as evangelists, because we do have a category for teachers. But that is not exactly what we are. We are more like Calvin's teachers. I would like to see that recovered as a separate calling for the teacher. Some churches now, as you may know, have teachers. That is what Dr. Doriani, a professor here, was at a local church before he became senior pastor at another church. I think "Theologian-in-Residence" was his official title. He was a teacher serving as a teacher in a local church, alongside the pastor who was also a pastor.

Where would Calvin place shepherding and discipling? I think he would place those in the description of a pastor. It takes some searching to find that terminology, but he uses it in the *Institutes* and also in his commentaries. I think he would see that as a role for pastors. That would fall under maintaining discipline. Shepherding, discipling—those sound like discipline. To Calvin, as I will point out in a moment and may have already said, the exercise of church discipline does not simply mean correcting people when they go wrong. It means helping them go right. He is very concerned with that positive aspect of discipline as well as with the negative aspect of discipline.

Along with pastors and teachers is the third permanent office of elders. The primary responsibility of elders is the spiritual welfare of the people. Along with the pastors, the elders are concerned with the spiritual welfare of the people and consequently with church discipline. Calvin says in Book IV, chapter 3, section 8 that the elders are chosen from the people. Calvin's Presbyterianism is not fully fleshed out, and it is limited by certain church-state problems that he struggled with in his days. Thus not everything was done in Geneva as would be done later. Yet I think Geneva was the first full expression of Presbyterianism that seems very comparable to what we have today in the *Second Book of Discipline* by Andrew Melville of Scotland. Calvin has certainly pointed in the direction that Melville would later follow. I say that because when Calvin says elders should be chosen from the people, it is not exactly the way it worked in Geneva. Geneva had a Consistory, like a session or a presbytery. There were 12 elders, but they were chosen by the councils. That would be like elders in the church today being chosen by the

local government. This is unthinkable for us, but in those days of union of church and state, you would have a much closer connection between church and state. Thus in those days elders were not chosen by the people but by the councils. That was not the way Calvin wanted it, and he attempted to change it, but he was not able to completely reverse that policy. By 1560, the elders were chosen by the Little Council. There were three councils in Geneva, three levels of church government. The Little Council was the more day-to-day operation. The Little Council chose the elders with the advice of the ministers, and their decision was subject to the approval of the people. So at least the congregation was able to have a word in the choosing of the elders by 1560.

Calvin wrote in a circular letter for several churches, "You have among you men who have been chosen and appointed to correct scandals, to warn those who are sinful, and to acknowledge those who conduct themselves honorably." I wanted to read that because I think that gives Calvin's emphasis on not only correcting but also promoting. Elders are to warn those who are sinful, correct scandals, and to acknowledge the work of those who conduct themselves honorably.

Next, let us discuss the deacons. Calvin has four permanent offices: pastor, elder, teacher, and deacon. During the Middle Ages, the New Testament office of deacon had deteriorated into a kind of liturgical adjunct. If you go through the polity of the Catholic Church, deacons of the Middle Ages are not anything like deacons in the New Testament. In the New Testament they had responsibility for the benevolences of the church. What Calvin does for the office of deacon is restore this office to the original function of caring for the sick and caring for the poor. Calvin calls this a highly honorable office. He also says that the deacons have the responsibility of the church's benevolence, the church's charity, and the church's outreach in practical ways, in compassion for the poor and needy. But he says deacons must also be "skilled in the Christian faith." Thus they are not just to be people with good business sense but also people who are skilled in the Christian faith. Calvin lists this as a requirement "since they will often have to give advice and comfort." Thus the deacons have the ministry of comforting and giving advice. That would mean spiritual advice as well as practical advice.

There are two categories, or two classes, of deacons. One is the class of financial officers who administer the church's benevolence. These are deacons who receive the gifts the church gives for the poor and needy, and then they distribute those gifts like the deacons in Acts. This was a pretty big undertaking in Geneva. Today, in the United States and in almost every country, we have all kinds of social programs, so the government does a great deal of what the church would have done back in the sixteenth century. In Geneva there was what was called the French fund. Money was collected. This fund was staffed by deacons of the Reformed church and served to provide for poor refugees from Catholic countries. It was to feed the poor, provide housing, care for the sick, pay school fees, and provide vocational training. All these things that are often provided by the social services of the state today were being done by the church of Geneva in the sixteenth century. Thus deacons had to be competent and work hard in order to do all of that. In the late 1550s, the French fund extended beyond the poor to become part of the missionary endeavor emanating from Geneva. So it took on not only a care for the poor and needy aspect, but it also became a fund that supported missionaries. What was particularly in view there was financial support given to men from France who would come to Geneva, train there with Calvin and others, and then they would be sent back to France. To return to their homeland of France meant great danger, and many of them died. But they went on to establish the French Reformed church, the Huguenot Church in France. That is one category of deacons: the administrative officers, leading to the development of the French fund.

The other category of deacons would be the people who actually take care of the poor, almost like social workers or welfare workers. This is the office, in Calvin's view, that women could fill. Thus Calvin does

have a place for women as deacons. But remember that he has two categories of deacons. This matters when we discuss whether women should be deacons or not. I will not go into that, but I do want to remind you of Calvin's view. Sometimes Calvin is quoted as favoring the office of deacons being open to women. This is true, but he had two categories, and it was the second category (the actual work that was done by people) that could include women. I think in some ways he saw this category as being especially filled by women to reach out personally and practically to people in need in the community and the church and to the refugees coming into the town. I will come back to the issue of women's roles in a moment, but I want to, first of all, say a word about bishops.

Those are the four permanent or ordinary offices. Calvin did not consider bishop to be a fifth permanent office, but he lists it separately. What does Calvin say about the role of bishops, and what does he say about the role of women in the church? Those are the two things we will pick up on next. Calvin is very clear on what I think is very clear. That is that the word "bishop" equals the word "elder." We have already seen that Calvin has two kinds of elders. He has the pastor, and he has the elder—to use the Presbyterian terminology, these are the teaching and the ruling elders. That is certainly present in Calvin. An elder, he says, is the same as a bishop. I do not think there is any debate about that. Even people who support the development of episcopacy as an appropriate church polity will say that in the New Testament there were no bishops, or to put it another way, all elders were bishops. Calvin puts a great stress on the parity of ministers, the parity of clergy as a Presbyterian theme. We certainly see that in Calvin. He says he stresses this "lest anyone should arrogate to himself the sole bishopry of Christ" (Book 4, chapter 2, section 6). There is a sense in which Christ is the bishop, the chief elder is one way to say it, and all His servants are equal. No one stands above another. In Calvin's commentary on 1 Corinthians 5:4, he says, "There is nothing in greater opposition to the discipline of Christ than tyranny, and the door is wide open to it if all the power is surrendered to one man." Thus Calvin opposes the emergence of monarchial bishops, leading eventually to papacy.

It is true, though, that Calvin has a kind of flexibility here that has not always marked people in the Reformed tradition. Calvin recognizes Paul's authority over Titus. He goes back to the New Testament period. The point he has made about the equality or the parity of all ministers is qualified by Paul's authority over Titus. In his commentary on Titus 1:5 he says, "We learn from this passage that there was not then such equality among the ministers that none had some authority and council above the others." Paul was able to tell Titus what to do, where to go, and how to carry on his ministry. That seems to be the role of a bishop. Calvin affirms the truth that Paul did have that authority. This is a point that those who favor episcopacy will make and those who favor Presbyterianism will often deny. We try to assert there was parity in the New Testament, but Calvin says there was not. There was certain special authority. But it is also true that Paul's position was rather unique in that he was an apostle. Calvin's comments on that can be found in his commentary on Titus 1:5. Also, there is certainly an authority that those with experience have to train up those with less experience. Paul is a pioneer who mentors these younger men. Of course he knows more, and they will defer to him.

As much as we talk about parity of the clergy in the Presbyterian system—we hold to that and think it is important—in one sense we do not have that because it is impossible. One man stands up at General Assembly and says something and everyone votes for him. Then someone else stands up and says something and no one pays much attention to him. This happens because some people are more persuasive, more powerful in their presentations, they serve big churches, or something like that. I think it is important to have the principle of parity of the clergy, but I think we should recognize that it is impossible for everyone to be exactly equal in influence and authority. There is a kind of authority that comes along with some people who carry a lot of weight. But they are still not bishops. I do not think this is something we need to be concerned about. It is just the way things are.

There were bishops in the early church. The situation we find in the New Testament shifts by the second century. By then there were monarchial bishop. We use that expression to mean a single bishop over a number of pastors, a single bishop over other bishops. Monarchial means one bishop. This is over against the New Testament of all bishops being elders and all elders being equal. Calvin says in Book 4, chapter 4, section 4, "The ancient bishops did not intend to fashion any other form of church rule than that which God has laid down in His word." Calvin suggests there were bishops that emerged, and you could say they were good bishops. They were bishops who did not lord it over the Lord's flock, demand authority, or create tyranny in the church. Calvin liked to find support in what he called the "consensus of the first five centuries." Now, he did not think the church always got everything right in the first five centuries. But Calvin saw things deteriorating, not right away, in the second century, but in about the fifth century. He looked to the first five centuries as a time in which the church basically was still on track. In the fifth century, the papacy became the papacy, and all the evils accrued after that. Calvin could also say that, for the sake of order, he would be willing to see a hierarchical government with archbishops and bishops. He did not do this in Geneva, but if it was necessary for it to be done elsewhere, he would be willing. He wrote to Christians in Poland who felt that was the way they wanted to structure their polity. He basically said to them that that was all right. You may remember that, when John Knox wrote his first book of church discipline in Scotland, he had a place for bishops. They were not bishops in the sense of dictatorial bishops, but they were administrative leaders in the church. Presbyterianism has generally been very opposed to bishops. Whenever we hear that word in the modern sense, many of us get upset. But Calvin is more flexible on that. His own preference is not to have bishops. But rather than destroy the church, he would say, if necessary, he could permit it.

We will spend the last few minutes here on the role of women in the church. We have seen that the office of deacon was open to women. This was based on the description of the work of the widows in 1 Timothy 5; that is where Calvin would find his scriptural support for this. Those women are not called deacons, but he felt they were doing the work of deacons. The widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy, Calvin says in Book 4, chapter 3, section 9, were doing the work of deacons. So you have the description of the work of the women in 1 Timothy 5. You also have the example of Phoebe. In his commentary on Romans 16:1, Calvin says, "[Phoebe] exercised a very honorable and holy ministry in the church." There she is called a deaconess. It is debated by people as to what exactly that means. Does it mean an office or simply a servant? The word "deacon" means "servant" literally. But Calvin did have a place under the category of deacons for women, as we have seen. A modern-day Calvin scholar, Elsie Anne McKee, who teaches at Princeton and is a friend of mine, wrote this: "The subordinate role Calvinists gave to women was typical of the age. It is notable, however, that John Calvin himself could in theory see women's exclusion from real leadership roles in the church as a matter of decency and order and thus subject to change when social customs change." I want to keep that in front of us and test it. But what Dr. McKee is saying is that Calvin certainly gives a subordinate role to women as was typical of the sixteenth century. But Calvin in theory could see that women could be included in "real leadership roles" (I suppose she means as pastors and as elders) when social customs changed. It would be possible for women to serve in these other offices.

Calvin does have some remarkable passages on women and the role of women. Let me read one or two of those. In his commentary on Mark 16:1 (just after the resurrection), he says, "Christ made a start with the women and not only let them see Him but gave them the message of the Gospel for the apostles, making them their teachers." Here, for a moment in time, the women are teaching the apostles. The women who go to the empty tomb teach the apostles about the resurrection. Calvin goes on to say, "Though the intention to anoint Christ was not free of censure (they were reckoning him still to be dead), He pardons their weakness and honors them with exceptional distinction, taking the apostolic

office away from the men for the moment and committing it to them. The apostles were to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ, and the apostles were not doing that. So at least temporarily, that office was removed from them and given to the women. It seems that Calvin does suggest there that when men do not do what they should do, then God could use women to do what men do not do. Deborah is the example he raised with John Knox when Knox wrote *The First Blast of the Trumpet*.

Another interesting passage on this is Calvin's comment in the *Institutes* about Paul's teaching concerning head coverings and women's silence in the church. These requirements were that women should all have hats on and should keep quiet in church—apparently for Calvin, these were "indifferent matters to be solved practically." He did not see these as permanent injunctions. This is what Calvin says about this in the *Institutes*: "Does religion consist in a woman's shawl so that it is unlawful for her to go out with a bare head? Is that decree of Paul concerning silence so holy that it cannot be broken without great offense?" He just asks some questions here, but he does not really give an answer. But he suggests an answer: "Is there in bending the knee or in bearing a corpse any holy rite that cannot be neglected without offense? Not at all. For if a woman needs such haste to help her neighbor that she cannot stop to cover her head, she does not offend if she runs to her with her head uncovered." It is not a big deal. If there is not time to put on your hat when you go out to do a good deed, then just do not worry about the hat. Then he says this: "And there is a place where it is no less proper for her to speak than elsewhere for her to remain silent" (Book 4, chapter 10, section 31) Calvin does not flesh that out, so we do not quite know what he is talking about. But he seems to say that there is a time and there is a place for women to speak in church. The injunctions that a woman's head must always be covered and that a woman must always keep quiet would be matters that are indifferent, to be resolved practically and not made a permanent rule.

Let us go back to Dr. McKee's comment, that when things change then Calvin would have been able to see women in more prominent leadership roles in the church. It seems to me that that is not true. It overstates the matter. Calvin's view of women in church offices other than deacon does not appear to be open to change when social customs change, as she said. We have in Book 4, chapter 15, sections 21 and 22 Calvin's argument that women are not permitted to baptize. In the Roman Catholic Church, a woman could baptize in an emergency. This was in part because of the Roman Catholic view that baptism was absolutely essential for regeneration. Thus if a midwife was delivering a baby who did not seem able to live and there was no priest there, then a woman could baptize. That was permissible. Calvin said no, women could not baptize. This was because the function of the sacraments is tied to the preaching of the Word. If women are not permitted to preach, then they are not permitted to administer the sacraments. It seems to me that in a passage like that, as well as his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:11-13 and 3:1-2 (Paul's statements about the role of women and the role of church officers)—it seems from these passages that Calvin would not have been open to change when social customs change. But, having said that, there is a theme that runs through Calvin's writings that is remarkable for the sixteenth century. That is a theme of appreciation for women, for their contribution to the church, for their role in the church. I suppose I cannot say absolutely, dogmatically, what Calvin would or would not have done or said if he were living today. That is always a risky sort of thing. But to go back to the sixteenth century, he does believe women should be in a subordinate role in the church. I think in that he was not influenced primarily by culture, but by Scripture. But he has certain flexibility there, it seems to me. There are some places and some times when women can speak in church appropriately. And there is at least the positive message that all God's children are a part of the church. We are all clergy in that we all belong to the Lord. And God has gifted us all in certain ways to serve each other and to serve Him in the church. Well, Calvin does not solve this issue for us, and it is one that we will still need to talk about long and hard in order to get a good understanding of what we should do.