

Rev. Theodore Noe

May 27, 1954

I feel especially sorry about this particular case, because Mr. Freeland is an outstanding man in many ways. His marks in Seminary show a high quality of work, considerably above the average of his class. He is a man of deep consecration, with great interest in reaching the lost for Christ. He is thoroughly devoted to all the major emphases of our Bible Presbyterian movement, and is in many ways as fine a candidate as has ever come before any of our presbyteries.

The subject of your letter is of extremely great importance to the whole cause and it is for this reason that I feel disposed to write you. I agree thoroughly with all that you are trying to accomplish by it, and feel that it is important that we think along these lines. At the same time it impressed me that there were certain phrases in it which quite naturally upset Mr. Freeland, and which in themselves might have a harmful influence on the church as a whole. Therefore I hope you will pardon me for expressing my opinion about these matters at some length.

I thoroughly agree with your objection to "spot-checking a candidate for licensure". There is nothing more important in church government than the proper selection of the men who are to be preachers and leaders of our churches. It is precisely at this point that Satan has been able to come in and to wreck so many great denominations. A tolerance which allows unbelief or apostasy to gain a foothold or which unnecessarily lowers the standards of the ministry is bound to result in great harm to the cause of Christ. It is surely wise to insist that a committee always spend a full measure of unhurried time examining candidates very thoroughly in private, and that a full theological examination be conducted on the floor of presbytery with opportunity for any questions that members may desire to raise on this or other points, so that presbytery may have no question that it is right in its selection of men for licensure and for ordination.

It has impressed me that even a full day of careful examination sometimes fails to give sufficient knowledge of a candidate for proper decision. In some instances far more can be gained by talking privately to those who have known the candidate over a period of years. Occasionally I have found it a bit irksome to spend a long time examining our own graduates whom I had already known for three years, and with whose qualities I was already far better acquainted than I could possibly become in any brief examination. Yet, I am always anxious that others who do not thus know them should take as much time as they feel necessary, in order that they may make their own independent judgment, as far as possible.

After expressing my full agreement with you on these vital matters I must, however, tell you I was very disappointed, for a number of reasons, with the wording of your statement of qualifications for licensure.

Perhaps the most important of these reasons was the fact that it might give a false impression as to what we consider most vital. You state that we should be absolutely sure that a man has been "called,