

Rev. Theodore Noe

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way in which you expressed the first four of your five qualifications. We want to maintain high standards but not impossible ones. I doubt if anyone who has ever come into the ministry of the Bible Presbyterian Church could even approach the levels you have described. Take, for instance, your first qualification. I am sure that I myself do not have "the entire contents of the English Bible obviously under control, with no weak spots whatever". Although I have been studying the English Bible for many years, I know that I have still much to learn about it, and that there are many of its sections with which I am sadly unfamiliar.

I have taught a two-year course in Church History three times, but I would still come very far short of being able to fill your second requirement. I certainly could not truthfully say that I am "perfectly acquainted with the problems, trials, discussions of two thousand years of the existence of the Christian church". I have learned a good bit about it, but I would come very far short of such a standard as your letter has described and I doubt if many of our graduates know one-tenth as much in this field as I do.

Your third point is somewhat more generally expressed than the previous two, but it does seem to me that it also is expressed a little too strongly. I am not sure that I have ever known a graduate of the Seminary of whom I would say that he is able "to cope with all the major theological problems". It would need ten years of careful study of theology alone before we could expect a man to reach a standard such as your words seem to imply. I believe that all our graduates could preach on a good many minor doctrines "with a fully systematic theology background", but in order to do so, they would need to spend two or three days on special study of the materials with which we try to familiarize them in Seminary. They certainly could not do it on short notice.

I do not like the wording of your fourth qualification at all. I am sure that I would not be "able to deal death blows to the modernist through ability to handle the Hebrew and Greek texts". I do not quite see how the Hebrew and Greek texts will deal death blows to the modernists anyway, although, of course, they may be of great importance in any discussion with them. Their primary importance, it seems to me, is not so much for argument with modernists as for help in the interpretation of the Bible, in order that Christians may grow thereby. I wish that every one of our graduates was so familiar with Hebrew and Greek that he could read any passage in Old or New Testament at sight, but I fear that we will never reach this point. It would take much more than a three year course to attain it, even with the highest ranking students.

I fear that these four requirements that you have described would be impossible of attainment, even if the seminary course were fifteen years, instead of three. I agree thoroughly with the desire to hold our standards extremely high, yet I feel that we must be careful not to express them in such a way as simply to discourage people by making the standards impossible of attainment.

Perhaps almost as important as any of these qualifications is the ability to preach in a manner that will keep people awake, hold their interest, and win their enthusiasm.