

Theological & Bible Overview & Examination

Intro, Bible, Theology, & BCO

Introduction & Procedures

I. REQUIREMENTS. According to the Book of Church Order (BCO 24-1), Ruling Elder candidates “shall receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. Each nominee shall then be examined in:

- a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
- b. his knowledge of Bible content,
- c. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America
- d. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
- e. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination (BCO 24-5).”

II. INSTRUCTION & EXAMS. To fulfill these requirements, you have already been asked to fill out a personal qualifications Questionnaire, be interviewed by the Session, and attend the training class. Additionally, *you will need to take the following three written exams contained in this packet:*

- 1. Bible (Knowledge of Bible Content)**
- 2. Theology (System of Doctrine in the Westminster Standards)**
- 3. Government & Discipline (Book of Church Order)**

III. VOWS. Furthermore, you should reflect upon the following vows which you will be asked to take if/when you are ordained as a Ruling Elder (BCO 24-6):

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
4. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?
5. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
6. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?

I. BIBLE EXAM
Knowledge of Bible Content

General Instructions: This exam is open book. You should feel free to use any books or sources (including a reference Bible) when you take this examination. There is no time limit to this exam, but please try to make your answers succinct, yet as clear as possible.

I. OVERVIEW

1. Identify the traditional subdivisions of the English Bible.
2. Outline the Gospel as you would present it to a non-Christian, citing scripture references and summarizing their contents in your own words (i.e., as you would to a non-Christian).
3. Are you prepared to affirm, with a clear conscience before God and the Session, the following vow, which you will be asked to affirm if/when you are ordained: "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?" (BCO 24-6)

II. PARTICULAR BOOKS. For each of the following books of the Bible, describe (1) the key theme(s) or argument of the book, (2) the way in which the message is organized (basic structure or outline), and (3) ways one or two themes of the book could be helpful for shepherding/counseling an individual. Please do this in only a few sentences, but with enough specificity that the well-informed reader could identify the book in question with no more than the information you provide.

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. 1-2 Samuel
4. any two Psalms
5. Amos
6. John
7. 1 Corinthians
8. Galatians
9. Ephesians
10. James

III. PEOPLE & EVENTS. List the where in the Bible (book & chapter) one can find the following people or events:

1. Elijah and the prophets of Baal
2. Peter's Confession of Christ
3. The temptation of Jesus
4. The Exodus
5. Samuel and Eli
6. Paul's sermon on Mars Hill
7. Abraham's offering of Isaac
8. John's vision of Christ on Patmos
9. The prophet and the valley of dry bones
10. Peter's sermon at Pentecost
11. The Ten Commandments (two places)
12. The "transfiguration" of Jesus
13. God's covenant with Noah
14. The fall of mankind and the entrance of sin in the world
15. The Last Supper
16. The lion's den and the prophet
17. God's covenant with Abraham
18. Conversion of Saul
19. The Sermon on the Mount

IV. TEACHING ON PARTICULAR TOPICS. Cite one biblical passage that addresses the issues/topics listed below, and give a 1-2 sentence explanation of how the passage addresses the question.

1. "Isn't the Bible written by human beings? I don't need to listen to everything it says, do I?"

Monday, February 28, 2022

2. "The Christian idea of the Trinity sounds weird to me. Where do you see that in the Bible?"
3. "Wasn't Jesus just a human being like the rest of us?"
4. "What did Jesus come to do?"
5. "Why would God allow my family to suffer so much?"
6. "Where does the Bible talk about 'election'?"
7. "I don't think I *really* 'sin'. What's the big deal anyway?"
8. "Does God really tells us to give our money to the church?"
9. "Jesus makes us acceptable and righteous before God? Where does the Bible say that?"
10. "My life is crazy right now. It doesn't feel like God is in control of this world or my life."
11. "Sure, God forgives my sins, but he could never love me as his Child."
12. "Is there such thing as Hell?"
13. "What is thing you call 'grace'?"
14. "Is the Church just a religious organization? What is the Church?"
15. "What's the purpose of marriage?"
16. "How should I pray?"
17. "You're an elder? What is an elder?"
18. "The idea of 'church discipline' scares me. It feels contrary to the Bible's teaching on grace."
19. "What's this thing we do at the end of our service? The Lord's Supper?"

II. THEOLOGY EXAM
System of Doctrine Contained in the Constitution of the PCA

General Instructions: This exam is open book. You should feel free to use any copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter and Larger Catechisms, in addition to any other books or sources, when you take this examination. There is no time limit to this exam, but please try to make your answers succinct yet as clear as possible. Try to respond to each question in your own words, but feel free to quote from the actual language of the Standards if it clarifies your meaning.

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

1. Have you studied the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and are you prepared to affirm, with a clear conscience before God and the Session, the following vow, which you will be asked to affirm if/when you are ordained: “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?” (BCO 24-6)
2. Are you doubtful about, or in disagreement with, the biblical fidelity of any of the doctrines, concepts, phrases or wording of these doctrinal standards? In each case, state in detail your views.
3. In your own words, what is the relation of these doctrinal standards to (a) Scripture, and (b) your own conscience? (see BCO Preface-III, WCF XX.1)

II. THE SHORTER CATECHISM. Answer each question in your own words, in such a way as to evidence your familiarity with the Shorter Catechism. Also, provide at least one Bible reference upon which the Catechism’s answer is based (see footnotes); you don’t need to write out the verse, but please at least read it.

1. What is the chief end of man? (Q. 1.)
2. What are the decrees of God? (Q. 7.)
3. How did God create man? (Q. 10.)
4. What are God’s works of providence? (Q. 11.)
5. What is sin? (Q. 14.)
6. Did all mankind fall in Adam’s first transgression? (Q. 16.)
7. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? (Q. 20.)
8. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man? (Q. 22.)
9. How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet? of a priest? of a king? (Q. 24-26.)
10. What is justification? (Q. 33.)
11. What is adoption? (Q. 34.)
12. What is sanctification? (Q. 35.)
13. What is required and forbidden in commandments 1, 2, 5, 7, 9? (Q. 46-47; 50-51; 64-65; 71-72; 77-78.)
15. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous? (Q. 83.)
16. What is faith in Jesus Christ? (Q. 86.)
17. What is repentance unto life? (Q. 87.)
18. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of
19. redemption? (Q. 88.)
20. What is a sacrament? (Q. 92.)
21. To whom is Baptism to be administered? (Q. 95.)

III. THE LARGER CATECHISM. Answer each question in your own words, in such a way as to evidence your familiarity with the Larger Catechism. Also, provide at least one Bible reference upon which the Catechism’s answer is based (see footnotes); you don’t need to write out the verse, but please at least read it.

1. How doth it appear that there is a God? (Q. 2.)
2. How doth it appear that the scriptures are the word of God? (Q. 4.)
3. Can they who have never heard the gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their living according to the light of nature? (Q. 60.)
4. Are all they saved who hear the gospel, and live in the church? (Q. 61.)
5. What is the visible church? (Q. 62.)
6. What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments? (Q. 99)

IV. THE CONFESSION OF FAITH. Answer each question in your own words, in such a way as to evidence your familiarity with the Confession. Also, provide at least one Bible reference upon which the Confession's answer is based (see footnotes); you don't need to write out the verse, but please at least read it.

1. What is the difference between what can be known about God from nature and what can be known of Him from Scripture alone (1.1)
2. State the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity. (2.3)
3. What are the qualifications to the assertion that God ordains "whatsoever comes to pass"? (3.1)
4. Should the doctrine of predestination be preached, and if so, how and for what purpose? (3.8)
5. What do you understand by the "six days" of creation? (4.1)
6. What is the relation of "means" to the providence of God? (5.3)
7. What is the extent of the effect of sin upon a person? (6.2)
8. What is the covenant of works? of grace? (7.2-3)
9. Describe the union of the two natures of the incarnate Son of God. (8.2)
10. What did the obedient life and sacrificial death of Christ achieve? (8.5)
11. In what sense is the will of the sinner bound, and in what sense free? (9.1, 3)
12. What always accompanies the faith that justifies? (11.2)
13. Is sanctification ever perfect in this life; why, or why not? (13.2)
14. What are the motives and purposes of good works in the life of the believer? (16.2)
15. What is the usefulness and the deficiency of the works of non-Christians? (16.7)
16. Upon what does the certainty of the perseverance of the saints depend? (17.2)
17. How can one be assured of his or her salvation? (18.2-4)
18. In what sense are the judicial laws of Israel obligatory today? (19.4)
19. What role does the moral law have in the lives of believers? (19.6)
20. What is the exclusive rule prescribing the acceptable way of worship? (21.1)
21. What is the Lord's Day, and how is it to be kept by Christians? (21.6)
22. Under what conditions is divorce and remarriage permitted? (24.5-6)
23. What is the purpose of the Church's ministry? (25.3)
24. What are the duties of Christian fellowship? (26.2)
25. Why are Church censures necessary? (30.3)
26. May church synods and councils deal with civil affairs (e.g., public policy), and if so, under what conditions? (31.4)
27. What happens to people upon their death (33.1)?

III. GOVERNMENT & DISCIPLINE EXAM
The Book of Church Order (BCO)

General Instructions: This exam is open book. You should feel free to use the PCA Book of Church Order, including any other books or sources, when you take this examination. There is no time limit to this exam, but please try to make your answers succinct yet as clear as possible. Try to respond to each question in your own words, but feel free to quote from the actual language of the BCO if it clarifies your meaning.

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Have you reviewed *The Book of Church Order*, and are you prepared to affirm, with a clear conscience before God and the Session, the following vow, which you will be asked to affirm if/when you are ordained: "Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?" (BCO 24-6)
2. Are there any matters contained in the BCO with which you differ? If so, please specify.
3. What are the four parts of the BCO?

II. PREFACE

1. What is the relationship between Christ and the Church (I)?
2. What is the relation of church and state (II-1)?
3. What is the nature of church authority (II-7, II-8; cf. 3-2, 3-4)?
4. What is the Constitution of the PCA (III)?

III. GOVERNMENT

1. What is the purpose of the Church? (1-2)
2. Who are the officers of the Church? (1-4)
3. Who are the members of the visible Church? (2-1)
4. What denominations are to be recognized as true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ? (2-2)
5. In what body does the power which Christ has committed to His Church rest? (3-1)
6. What is a particular church? (4-1)
7. What are the ordinances of the Church? (4-4)
8. What are communing members of the church? Non-communing? (6-1, 6-2)
9. Do the "extraordinary officers" and "extraordinary gifts" continue in the church today? (7-1)
10. What are the duties of elders? (8-3) Of deacons? (9-2)
11. What is the length of service for an elder or deacon, and how may one be released from office or service? (24-6, 24-8, 24-9)
12. What is the relationship between the elders and the deacons? (9-2)
13. What are the duties of the Session? (12-5)
14. What are the courts of the church and what are their respective jurisdictions? (10-2, 11-4)

IV. DISCIPLINE

1. What are the two senses of discipline? (27-1)
2. Who are the subjects of discipline? (27-2)
3. What are the purposes of discipline? (27-3)
4. What are the proper stages of discipline? (27-5)
5. What is an offense? (29-1)
6. What is the "court of original jurisdiction" for a church member; a Ruling Elder; a Teaching Elder? (33-1; 34-1)

V. WORSHIP

1. What chapters of the Directory for Worship have constitutional authority? (47-intro)

Monday, February 28, 2022

2. What is the end [goal or purpose] of public worship? (47-3)
3. Who supervises the administration of the Sacraments? (56-2; 58-4)
4. By whom and when are covenant children to be admitted to the Lord's Supper? (57-2)
5. How are persons admitted into membership from others churches? (57-6)
6. Who is to be invited to the Lord's Table? (58-4)