

1 **OVERTURE 20** from Northwest Georgia Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 16 by Adding Paragraph 16-4 on Qualifications for Ordination”
3

4 **Whereas**, the Westminster Standards make a categorical distinction between the “state of sin”
5 and the “state of grace” (*WCF* 9.3-4); and
6

7 **Whereas**, ever since the Fall, man is naturally in the “state of sin” in which he has lost all
8 ability to will and to do any spiritual good and is a slave to the penalty, guilt, and
9 power of sin (*WCF* 9.3); and
10

11 **Whereas**, in the state of sin, his sin defines who he is, and he must rightly conceive of himself
12 and label himself as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, effeminate, homosexual, thief,
13 drunkard, reviler, and swindler (1 Cor. 6:9-10); in this state of sin, that is how he is to
14 consider himself and identify himself because he is a slave to sin; and
15

16 **Whereas**, when the Holy Spirit works faith in man, uniting him to Christ in his effectual
17 calling, he is translated into the “state of grace” (*WCF* 9.4; *WSC* 30) and partakes of
18 the benefits of justification, adoption, and sanctification (*WSC* 30-32); and
19

20 **Whereas**, in this state, while he does not perfectly or only will that which is good but also
21 that which is evil (due to his remaining corruption), he is freed from bondage to sin
22 and by grace is enabled freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good (*WCF*
23 9.4); and
24

25 **Whereas**, the conversion from the state of sin to the state of grace is so dramatic and the
26 distinction between the two so vast that the Christian is no longer to conceive of
27 himself and label himself as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, effeminate, homosexual,
28 thief, drunkard, reviler, and swindler; Scripture says such will not inherit the kingdom
29 of God, “and such *were* some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11); in the state of grace, the believer
30 is no longer to identify that way (e.g. as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, etc.) for “you
31 were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus
32 Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11); because of his union with Christ,
33 his specific sins no longer define who he is; and
34

35 **Whereas**, due to remaining corruption, the Christian can still speak of himself as a sinner in
36 the present tense (1 Tim. 1:12-16) as one who continues to experience and battle with
37 the presence and pollution of sin (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14-25) and even at times feel as
38 though he is enslaved to sin (Rom. 7:14); however, the truth is that the believer is no
39 longer a slave to sin, having been freed from slavery to its guilt (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7),
40 its penalty (Gal. 3:13), and its power (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rom. 6:6); and
41

42 **Whereas**, while of course the Christian is (and can *say* he is) a sinner (1 Tim. 1:12-16), he is
43 no longer to identify himself with his specific sins; as Paul says, “Such *were* some of
44 you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11), and “Though *formerly* I *was* a blasphemer, persecutor, and
45 insolent opponent...I received mercy...in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:13-14); and

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

Whereas, instead of considering himself as a drunkard or an adulterer or a homosexual, the Christian is commanded to have a different self-conception: “You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11); and

Whereas, the Christian may continue to struggle with the same sins all his life long; such a believer should not *consider* himself a drunkard or an adulterer or a homosexual but rather a Christian who struggles with the temptation to drunkenness, adultery, or homosexuality; and who is repentant if or when he succumbs to such temptations; and

Whereas, *BCO* 16-1 reads, “Ordinary vocation to office in the Church is the calling of God by the Spirit, through the inward testimony of a good conscience, the manifest approbation of God’s people, and the concurring judgment of a lawful court of the Church;” and

Whereas, *BCO* 16-2 reads, “The government of the Church is by officers gifted to represent Christ, and the right of God’s people to recognize by election to office those so gifted is inalienable. Therefore no man can be placed over a church in any office without the election, or at least the consent of that church;” and

Whereas, *BCO* 16-3 reads, “Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church He bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. And it is indispensable that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, every one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life be according to godliness. Wherefore every candidate for office is to be approved by the court by which he is to be ordained;” and

Therefore, be it resolved that *BCO* 16 be amended by adding 16-4 as a new paragraph with the following wording (underlining for new wording):

16-4. Those whom God calls to bear office in His Church shall demonstrate maturity of faith and growing conformity to Jesus Christ. While these office bearers will see spiritual perfection only in glory, they will continue in this life doing battle with and confessing remaining sins. Thus, those who identify or describe themselves according to their specific sins, or who teach that it is acceptable for Christians to identify or describe in such a manner, shall not be approved for service by any court of Christ’s Church.

Adopted by Northwest Georgia Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 5, 2022
Attested by /s/ TE David E. Gilbert, stated clerk