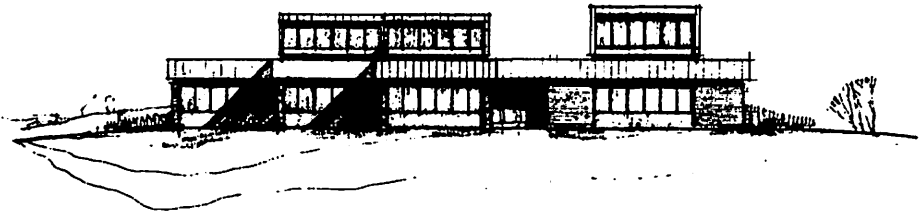


PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

APRIL, 1980

VOLUME XIII, NO. 2



**THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
GRANDVILLE, MICHIGAN**

APRIL, 1980

VOLUME XIII, NO. 2

This Journal is published and distributed in limited quantities, at no charge, by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested persons desiring to have their names on the mailing list should address the Editor, Prof. H. Hanko, at the address of the school:

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
of the
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
Grandville, Michigan

CONTENTS:

	Page
Pastoral Care — Its Biblical Ground	
Prof. Robert D. Decker.	3
The Reformed Doctrine of Infant Baptism (6)	
Prof. Herman Hanko	15
The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (6)	
Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema.	38
Book Review	49

EDITORIAL NOTES

There are three articles in this issue of the *Journal*, all of which ought to prove of interest to our readers. Prof. Hoeksema continues his series, interrupted last time, on the free offer of the gospel and the simplicity of God's will. The question of the will of God is an integral part of the controversy surrounding the free offer, and we believe that Prof. Hoeksema's treatment of the question will shed light on the whole problem.

Prof. Decker begins a new series of articles on the pastoral role of the minister. He is eminently qualified to treat this subject partly because of his pastoral experience while a minister and partly because he teaches pastoral theology in our Seminary.

Prof. Hanko continues his series on infant baptism. In a way this article is an interruption of the series, for it is an answer to a letter of John Zens which was written in response to the author's lecture on the covenant of grace in Houston, Texas. Nevertheless, it is related to the series for the whole question of the covenant forms an important part of the doctrine of infant baptism.

* * * * *

We have made significant progress on the preparation of the manuscript of Turretin. It is our hope that this work will be completed in a few months and that the bound volumes will be ready for those of our readers who have ordered them. If you have already written for your copy, do not write again, for we have kept your names on file. However, if you have moved since you last wrote, please let us know so that your copy is not sent to the wrong address. Those who have ordered hard cover copies will probably have to wait a bit longer since binding in hard cover has to be done professionally. Those of you who have not yet written, but would like a copy should send in soon since our supply will, necessarily, be limited. We have not yet been able to set the final cost, although we will not charge above our own cost. You will be billed with your copy.

Pastoral Care — Its Biblical Ground

— Prof. Robert D. Decker —

Having considered preaching as the chief task of the minister it is our purpose in this and succeeding issues of the *Journal* to examine the subject of the pastoral care of the members of God's church. There have been and are today many books and articles published on this whole subject. Some of these (notably the works of Dr. Jay Adams, "nouthetic counseling") have made valuable contributions; many unfortunately have not. Justification for our adding to the already impressive list of books and articles lies in the fact that we intend to view this subject from a strictly Reformed perspective. It is our purpose in this initial article to examine the Biblical ground for Pastoral care. This is necessarily first for if the Bible does not demand it, pastoral care has no place in the work of the ministry of the Word.

Pastoral care may be defined as the art of official, spiritual, individual care of the members of the congregation of Jesus Christ; as the sheep of Christ, in relation to each other and to the whole congregation, with the purpose in view of the edification (building up) and growth of both the individual members and the congregation as a whole.

In general let it be understood at the outset that being a pastor is a spiritual *art*. In a very real sense of the word a pastor is born, not made. He is gifted with the abilities to function pastorally by God Himself through Jesus Christ and His Spirit or he is not a pastor. No course of study in the principles of pastoral care can produce a pastor. Nonetheless having understood this fundamental point, it must also be kept in mind that the study of pastoral care not only, but also the practice of the principles of pastoral care are extremely important. The danger is invariably that the minister neglects his pastoral work. This may be for many reasons: it is time consuming, the minister lacks confidence in his competence to deal effectively with the many situations and solution-defying problems encountered in pastoral labor, etc. If this be the case the effectiveness of that minister's work in the congregation is greatly diminished to the detriment of the congregation. A pastor who neglects his pastoral duties will be unable to preach effectively to the concrete needs of his congregation. We state that categorically. Pastoral work among the members of the congregation goes hand in hand with the official preaching and teaching of the Word of God. It is the specific *application* to individual needs of the more

general proclamation of the gospel from the pulpit. Without the pulpit there can be no pastoral labor, but without pastoral care there can be no effective pulpit. J. J. Van Oosterzee put it well when he wrote:

For the pastor properly speaking exists for the flock, and not the flock for the pastor . . . In connection too, with other parts of the "Practica," Pastoral Theology is seen to be not only in the highest degree important, but also absolutely indispensable. *Even the most excellent Homilete runs the risk of making but a fleeting impression by his word, if he stands in no pastoral relation whatever to his hearers.* If the Liturgist must in public worship be the mouthpiece of the congregation to God in prayer and thanksgiving, and presently extend to it in the name of God the sacred emblems, only pastoral work renders him more than superficially acquainted with the congregation's spiritual wants. *It is this which brings to the Catechete at least a part of his scholars, and leads them to remain in a hallowed relation towards him, even when presently the lambs of the flock have become full-grown sheep.* The man, who while pursuing with zeal the other parts of Practical Theology, should neglect diligently to make himself at home in the domain of Pastoral Science, would assuredly later regret it.

(*Practical Theology*, p. 511, emphasis mine, RDD.)

While we certainly are in hearty agreement with Van Oosterzee's plea for the study of the science of pastoral care it ought to be borne in mind that no such study will produce pastors. It would be impossible, for example, to produce a detailed handbook (and there are many of these today!) to cover every conceivable situation a pastor may encounter in his ministry. Life is much richer and more varied than that. The most the study of the science of pastoral care can afford is to train and form one who already has been endowed with the gift of the spiritual art. That gift of the pastor must be first. And certainly it must be remembered that there must be the grace of God and the guidance of the Spirit of Jesus Christ before one can engage in pastoral labors.

This is not to deny a place and legitimate function to the study of pastoral care. That study can serve to define the character and purpose of pastoral care. It can set forth the fundamental principles which underlie all pastoral labor. And, it can lay down general directives and suggestions relative to the work of the pastor. In these ways a pastor can certainly be trained, or better, molded.

Pastoral care we defined as being the art of the *official* care of the members of the congregation. The nourishment and oversight of the church by Christ, the chief Shepherd, through the office of the ministry of the Word is meant. Pastoral care most emphatically belongs to the *office* of the minister. There is a double significance to this fact. For the pastor this means he must care for the sheep of Christ in the consciousness that he is first of all a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. The pastor functions by the grace of Christ, for the sake of Christ, and in the service of Christ. The Apostles were deeply conscious of this. The Apostle Paul, especially in the salutations of his epistles, often refers to himself as the servant or "slave" δούλος of Jesus Christ. (Cf. also James 1:1, *et. al.*) The sheep, on the other hand, must be aware of the fact that the pastor cares for them as the representative of Jesus Christ. The pastor must take great care to foster that awareness in the congregation. That is terribly important today when there is so much casual and even blatant disregard for the authority of Christ vested in the ministerial office. The pastor must never conduct himself in such a way as to bring disrespect or shame to the office of Christ. It is at this point too, that the pastor must be encouraged in his pastoral work. This aspect of the ministry, as any experienced pastor can testify, is often toilsome, discouraging, and grievous labor with little evidence of immediate fruit. But the pastor must never, never feel unequal to the task. He must labor with his sheep in the awareness that Christ is pleased to feed and nourish His blood-bought sheep through the office of the ministry of the Word. Christ is the Chief Shepherd. He both calls and qualifies pastors as under-shepherds for His Church. By virtue then of his being called of Christ and given by Christ to the Church: "... for the work of the ministry ..." (Ephesians 4:11, 12), the pastor is *competent* to function in the care of the members of God's Church.

Pastoral care is also a *spiritual* art. By this we mean to distinguish pastoral care from the material care of the flock through the office of deacon and from the authoritative care through the office of elder. Obviously there is an overlapping at this point and an inter-relation between these aspects. It belongs, for example, to the office of the deacon that he speak: "comfortable words from Scripture" to the poor (cf. Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons); and, there is certainly a spiritual dimension to the authoritative care of the church through the elders. But these must be distinguished. Pastoral care centers in the Word, the Word of God in Jesus Christ according to the infallible Scriptures. This is essential! The success or failure of the visiting of the members of the church does not depend upon the personality or the sociability of the pastor, but upon whether or not he comes as the pastor with the Word of God.

From the practical point of view this means that in all his pastoral work, when he visits the sick, conducts family visiting, comforts the sorrowing, or deals with any of a host of special problems, the pastor must always bring the Word of God. Nothing less, nothing more! In all his pastoral work the pastor must say: "Thus saith the Lord."

The fourth key element of the definition is that pastoral care concerns the care of the *individual members* of the congregation. Pastoral care is not *cura animarum generalis*, but *cura animarum specialis*. This is not to say that pastoral care is individualistic. The one for whom the pastor must care is the individual member of the flock to be sure, but the individual in all the various relationships of life: in the congregation, in the family, and in life generally. The purpose of this care of the individual is his own upbuilding in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, but always with a view to the general edification of the congregation as a whole.

The Biblical Ground

The assumption is, as emphasized in the definition of pastoral care, that this work belongs to the *official* task of the ministry. That this assumption is valid is abundantly evident from the Scriptures. Consider the following passages:

1) Already in the Old Testament Scriptures we find examples, many of them in fact, of the prophets being sent to minister to the need of individuals. One of the more familiar of these is that of the prophet Nathan rebuking David privately for his sin (I Samuel 12). Another of these examples is that of Hezekiah being ministered unto during his sickness unto death by Isaiah (Isaiah 38).

2) From a negative point of view, Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34) is called to pronounce the judgments of God upon the unfaithful shepherds of Israel who fed themselves rather than God's flock! To these faithless shepherds the Lord says:

Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea my flock was scattered upon the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. (vss. 3-6)

It is obvious from this and similar passages (cf. for example, Jeremiah 23:1-4) that the task of these spiritual leaders in Israel included in addition to the prophetic, public proclamation of the Word of God caring for the sick, admonishing the wayward and wandering, comfort of the sorrowing and rule of the flock of God. The Lord charges them with unfaithfulness to their official task and calling because they failed to do these things. And the evil result was that God's sheep were scattered.

3) Our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10), the "Chief Shepherd" (I Peter 5:4), and "that Great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20). In addition to His public preaching, the Gospel narratives record numerous instances of the Savior dealing pastorally with individuals: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Zacchaeus, Martha and Mary in connection with the raising of Lazarus. In addition the Lord spent countless hours alone with His disciples instructing them and preparing them for their great task as apostles. These are but a few of the many examples which could be cited.

4) Christ when He was: "moved with compassion on them (the multitudes), because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36), sent out the disciples two by two, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10). As well as publicly preaching the gospel of the Kingdom the disciples were to care for individual sheep for Christ instructed them to: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils . . ." (vss. 6-8). Besides entering cities they were to "come into houses" (vss. 12-15).

5) Christ commissions Peter to: "feed my sheep" and "feed my lambs" (John 21:15-17). This was subsequent to the resurrection when Christ restored Peter who had denied Him. Noteworthy is the fact that Jesus uses two terms for "feed" in this passage: βόσκειω and ποιμαίνω. The former is the narrower and means: "to feed or graze," i.e., to nourish God's people; while the latter is the wider and includes the idea of spiritual oversight or rule of God's people.

6) There are numerous examples of the apostles and their assistants dealing pastorally with individuals and families. Philip is sent to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), Peter is sent to Cornelius and his house (Acts 10), and the Apostle Paul addressed several of the Epistles to individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon), and that same apostle describes his ministry in Ephesus as: ". . . teaching publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

7) Ephesians 4:11-16 teaches that the exalted Christ gives "pastors and teachers" to the church for the "perfecting of the saints, for the work of the

ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . .” This certainly implies pastoral labor in addition to the public preaching of the Word.

8) I Peter 5:1-4 is a classic passage in this regard:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

According to this passage the elders (both teaching and ruling) are to feed (literally, “shepherd,” the verb is, ποιμαίνω) the flock of God. That certainly includes pastoral care of the sick, the wayward, etc. All this belongs to “taking the oversight thereof.”

9) God’s people are to call the elders of the Church (this includes the pastor) when they are sick and unable to pray. And elders must pray over them anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord and “the prayer of faith shall save the sick” (James 5:14, 15).

In the light of the above there can be no doubt that the Word of God places pastoral labor within the sphere of the official work of those whom God calls to the ministry of the gospel.

The Reformed Confessions, both “major” and “minor,” speak eloquently of this truth of Scripture. With Article XXX (Concerning the Government and Offices of the Church) of the *Belgic or Netherlands Confession of Faith*, the Church declares:

We believe, that this true church must be governed by that spiritual policy which our Lord taught us in his Word; namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church: that the true doctrine everywhere propagated, and likewise transgressors punished and restrained by spiritual means: also that the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted according to their necessities. By these means everything will be carried on in the church with good

order and decency, when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy.

It is true that the creed does not distinguish the separate offices of elder, deacon, and pastor; and their respective duties. Nonetheless, the essential idea, namely, that pastoral labor such as the care and comfort of the distressed, belongs to the official task of the minister is asserted.

The *Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word* (Liturgical section of the *Psalter*, pp. 67ff.) describes the task of the minister in these terms:

What this holy office enjoins, may be easily gathered from the very name itself; for as it is the duty of a common shepherd, to feed, guide, protect and rule the flock committed to his charge: so it is with regard to these spiritual shepherds, who are set over the church, which God calleth unto salvation, and counts as sheep of His pasture. The pasture, with which these sheep are fed, is nothing else but the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with prayer, and the administration of the holy sacraments; the same Word of God is likewise the staff with which the flock is guided and ruled, consequently it is evident, that the office of pastors and ministers is,

First, that they faithfully explain to their flock, the Word of the Lord, revealed by the writings of the prophets and apostles; and apply the same as well in general *as in particular*, to the edification of the hearers; instructing, admonishing, comforting, and reproving, according to everyone's need . . . (emphasis mine, RDD).

The pastor's calling is to explain the Word of God publicly ("in general") but also privately ("in particular") for the edification of the hearers.

Both Biblically and Confessionally it is correct to maintain that pastoral labor, therefore, belongs to the office of the minister of the Word. So strongly did the late Professor George M. Ophoff (Professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, 1924-1959) believe this that he wrote in his mimeographed syllabus on "Poimenics," p. 2:

The minister of the gospel, then, has authority to preach because he is called; and it is the *Word of Christ* that he must preach. Only in so far as the pastor identifies himself with the Word of Christ, does he actually

in the sight of Christ rule the church, lead, supervise, and teach and admonish and exhort and feed the flock — in a word, shepherd the flock. It is this, not the pastor, but the Word of Christ that rules and feeds. *Individual soul-care is nothing else than preaching the Word to the individual sheep of Christ.* He visits the sick to bring the Word of God. House visitation is done solely by the preaching of the Word (emphasis mine, RDD).

The implications of this truth are critically important for both the pastor and the congregation he serves.

1) For the congregation this means that the pastor comes as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. He is Christ's representative when he cares for the people of God pastorally just as really as when he occupies the pulpit. He is an under shepherd of the Chief Shepherd. When the pastor calls on members of the congregation he is not coming as one brother to another; nor is he simply "socializing" with friends. Rather he comes as the "shepherd of the sheep," vested with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is charged (together with the ruling elders and the deacons) with the care, the rule, and the oversight of the church. Neither he nor the congregation may ignore that.

2) But the fact that the pastor comes with the authority of Jesus Christ means that he is a *servant* of the King of the Church: "Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28). This means, as we have already emphasized, that the pastor is responsible to Jesus Christ in all his care of the congregation. He need not answer to any man. He stands before the face of Christ and to Christ he must give an account of all his labors. But this also means that the pastor must take great care in the handling of the flock of God! That the pastor is a servant (δούλος) slave of Jesus Christ certainly means that: "... the pastor properly speaking exists for the flock, not the flock for the pastor" (J.J. Van Oosterzee, *Practical Theology*, p. 511). The pastor has the oversight of the flock of God, to be sure, but never as a "lord over God's heritage" (I Peter 5:1-4). Always he is the servant of Jesus Christ sent to minister to the precious flock which Christ has purchased with His own blood. This involves the pastor's all! He must live for the congregation to the extent even that he is willing to lay down his life for the sake of the church.

3) This implies obviously that the pastor must only and always come with the Word of God. Christ cares for His flock by means of His Word and by no other means. There is the pastor's authority as ambassador of Jesus Christ. He has the right to care for Christ's flock because he comes with the Word of God. The pastor may never demand compliance with his own word, but he must demand obedience to the Word of Jesus Christ. And, it is the Word of God

which must encourage, comfort, instruct, guide, and admonish God's people.

4) Finally, that the pastor is the official representative of Christ implies that he must depend upon Christ in all his pastoral labor in the congregation. From a purely practical point of view this is highly necessary. As we have said, this work is often grievous and toilsome and with little immediate fruit. For example one may work with a depressed member of the church for weeks or months with only a very small improvement. The pastor may work with a husband and wife who are having problems in their marriage for a long time before there is evidence of change. Besides it is work which must be kept strictly confidential for the most part. What we are saying is that the pastor bears the burden of the congregation: the trials and struggles, the fears and doubts, the trouble and sorrow. He goes to bed at night with that burden and wakes up with it in the morning, sometimes after a very restless night. He carries that burden with him into his study as he prepares his sermons. He carries that burden wherever he goes. The pastor cannot bear that burden alone. He needs Christ. And that means he must pray. The pastor's entire life must be a life of prayer. In the consciousness that he needs the sustaining grace of God in Christ the pastor must, "pray without ceasing."

We shall return to these points in greater detail in subsequent articles when we discuss the pastor and the congregation for whom he cares. For the moment let it be clearly understood that pastoral care belongs to the official work of the ministry of the Word.

The Relationship of Pastoral Care to the Pastor's Other Labors

At this point the question which must be answered is: what is the relationship of pastoral care to the other aspects of the official task of the church? It is our firm conviction that Scripture and the Reformed Confessions teach that pastoral care is an integral, i.e., essential, constituent part of the whole of the task of the church. Without it the church suffers. This is precisely the difficulty experienced by "vacant" congregations even though the pulpits of these congregations may be supplied without interruption. But, the question is: in what way is pastoral care related to the other aspects of the work of the church; and, how is pastoral care to be distinguished from these?

Pastoral labor is to be distinguished from the official preaching of the Word. In preaching the emphasis is on the *prophetic* aspect of the ministry; while in pastoral care the emphasis is on the *priestly* aspect. This is not to deny that preaching certainly has a pastoral aspect. It does or it is not true preaching. But preaching in the very nature of the case is more general, while pastoral care is more specific. Preaching comes to congregations; pastoral care has to do

with individual members of congregations. Preaching is the *public* proclamation of the Word; pastoral care is the *private* application of the Word. Bearing these distinctions in mind one can readily see the relationship between the two. A minister's pastoral work greatly enhances the effectiveness of his preaching and teaching. It is through his pastoral contacts with the members of the church that a pastor gets to know, "the face of his sheep" (cf. Van Oosterzee, p. 516). This enables the pastor to adapt his preaching to the peculiar needs of the congregation. On the other hand, pastoral labor is the specific application of the preaching of the Word. In a very real sense, pastoral care brings the pulpit into the homes and private lives of God's people. The pastor who neglects this work does the congregation and himself great harm.

There is also a close relationship between the pastoral aspects of the preacher's task and the liturgical aspects. This is especially true of the congregational prayer in the worship service. The pastor must pray in such a way that the congregation prays with him and says, "Amen" to the prayer. This is only possible when the pastor knows the needs of the flock and he cannot know this unless he is busy as a pastor.

There is, in the third place, a close relationship between pastoral work and church discipline (government). Discipline is the key power and belongs to the kingly aspect of the office of the ministry. It aims at keeping the Church and covenant of God pure. But discipline without pastoral admonitions is rigoristic and severe. Besides, even in discipline the aim is always the salvation of the erring member. Excommunication in the Reformed tradition is considered to be the "last remedy."

Finally, there is a reciprocal relation between pastoral care and the task of the office of Deacon. The function of the deacons has a decidedly priestly aspect in that the deacons are not only to collect and dispense the alms but also must, "speak comfortable words to those in need" (Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons). At the same time there is the "diaconal" aspect to pastoral care. The pastor cannot be ignorant of or insensitive to the material and physical needs of those for whom he cares. This becomes obvious often in sick visiting. Major surgery, for example, can present a tremendous and unexpected financial expense which often adds to the burden of the suffering one and his family. The difference between the two labors is one of emphasis. The deacon must deal primarily with the concrete, material, physical needs of the congregation; while the primary aim of the pastor must be to penetrate through the material need in order to bring the Word of God to bear upon the spiritual needs of the congregation.

The Task of Pastoral Care

The task of pastoral care is, in one word, to *feed* the sheep. This is literally the terminology of the Scriptures (cf. the passages cited above). In the Hebrew of the Old Testament we find the term, **רָעָה**. This verb means “to feed or tend a flock of sheep” and it embraces the whole idea of ruling or governing sheep: literally everything a shepherd must do in the care of sheep. The noun derivative is used in Psalm 23:1, “Jehovah is my shepherd . . .” The New Testament uses basically two terms, the first of which is **βόσχω**. This verb means “to feed,” the idea being to promote the spiritual health and welfare of God’s people by nourishing them in the Word of God. **πολιτεύω** the other term found in the New Testament, is broader in scope than **βόσχω** and means “to feed,” but also, “to take the oversight of the flock.” The Septuagint uses this term as the translation of the Hebrew, **רָעָה**.

From this terminology it is not difficult to determine the pastoral task. It involves nourishing and governing God’s people. The task is to instruct, guide, protect, comfort, and correct the people of God according to their individual needs. Hence it belongs to the task of the pastor to visit the sick, comfort the sorrowing, admonish the wayward, and instruct the people of God in their need.

The Necessity of Pastoral Care

Out of this the necessity of pastoral care follows quite naturally. Pastoral care is sometimes, and increasingly in our times, questioned. Family visitation, for example, is regarded with increasing disfavor and is in some instances in Reformed circles even disregarded entirely (cf. *Taking Heed To the Flock*, P.Y. DeJong, Baker). Prof. Jay Adams makes repeated reference in his writings to the fact that pastors are generally failing in their calling to counsel their members who suffer from emotional problems or what is called mental illness (cf. especially, *Competent to Counsel* and *The Big Umbrella*, Presbyterian and Reformed and Baker). In this connection it ought to be noted that a good many in our day find no place for the pastor in dealing with these sorts of problems. A pastor may fill a “supportive” role for the family of the mentally ill in that trying time, but beyond referring the patient to a good mental hospital and/or psychiatrist the pastor has no business dealing with these things (cf. chapter 13 of *Counseling*, Lars I. Granberg, *et. al.*, Baker). Then too, some pastors tend to neglect and minimize the pastoral side of their labors. The result of this is that all contact with the members of the congregation is left to informal, chance meetings often on the purely social level.

All of this is bad, very bad! It is wrong to neglect pastoral care even when

the minister is busy in his study. He simply must take the time to bring the Word of God to the individual members in need. Because the ground of pastoral care lies in the Word of God and belongs to the *official* task of the minister of the Word as we have already emphasized, it may not be minimized or ignored. The pastor who does so is simply being disobedient to His Lord Who says: "Feed my sheep." And, such disobedience is bound to yield damaging results in the church. Still more, not only is the pastor called to care for the flock pastorally by Christ, he is also qualified (competent) to do so by Christ. About this we shall have more, D.V., as we continue this series.

The Reformed Doctrine of Infant Baptism (6)

Prof. Herman Hanko

Last Fall, at the gracious request of the Consistory of the Houston Protestant Reformed Church, I lectured on the idea of the covenant of grace at a public lecture in that Church auditorium. In this lecture I took issue with some of the arguments raised against the idea of the covenant of grace by "Reformed Baptists," and, particularly, with some of the views expressed by Jon Zens in his paper, "Baptist Reformation Review," and in public lectures on this subject the tapes of which I heard. Rev. Bekkering, the pastor of the Houston congregation, sent a copy of this lecture to Mr. Zens and Mr. Zens was gracious enough to take note of this lecture and prepare his answer to it in a document which has been distributed in Reformed Baptist circles. He sent to me a copy of his reply, and the points which are brought up in his reply are of sufficient importance to warrant a rebuttal. I am aware of the fact that this sort of a thing can go on and on with rebuttal piled on rebuttal; but perhaps there is also a good side to this. Jon Zens answered in a gracious spirit and made his answer an address to the issues involved. If, therefore, additional rebuttals will be, finally, an exchange of ideas on these important questions, then nothing but spiritual profit can come from replies and counter-replies. The truth of the covenant of grace is an important enough truth of Scripture to discuss at length with those who hold to other positions. And, especially because this truth stands at the heart of the debate between those who hold to the position of believers' baptism and those who maintain that Scripture teaches the truth of infant baptism, it is possible that a greater understanding of our mutual positions may result from such an exchange. Here follows the letter of Mr. Zens:

January 8, 1980

Dear Prof. Hanko,

Two messages which you gave in Houston were sent to me by Pastor Bekkering. "The Idea of the Covenant of Grace" brings me to make a response. I appreciated your gracious spirit in your approach to my messages and writings. I trust you will give my comments which follow your careful attention, as it is my opinion that your negative reactions to what I have said is, in crucial ways, very shallow; and your own positive presentation fails to deal with the issues I have raised in challenging the "Covenant of Grace" as a theological construct.

1. You said, the "doctrine of the covenant plays a significant role in the ongoing discussion of the subjects of baptism." This coincides with what most

covenant theologians state (cf. "Editorial Postscript," *BRR*, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 48). This is why it is of such critical importance that covenant theologians *Biblically* establish their theological construct: if it is errant, the pillar of their defense for infant baptism falls down. The "Covenant of Grace," as *theologically* employed by covenant theologians stands as a (dubious) *inferential construct*, not as an *exegetical reality* (cf. "Crucial Thoughts," *BRR*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 15). You traced the covenant concept ("a bond of friendship") in Scripture, but you nowhere exegetically validated that there is *one* post-lapsarian, supra-historical covenant, of which the historical covenants are administrations. Where *precisely*, Prof. Hanko, is *this one covenant* found in Scripture?

2. You say, "while Jon Zens takes the position that there is no covenant of grace at all." I do not believe that the Scriptural data *reveals* the post-lapsarian, yet a-historical "Covenant of Grace." I have, however, stated repeatedly that I believe in *one* "purpose" of grace in Jesus Christ (cf. *BRR*, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 44).

3. You faulted me for not defining the "kind of covenant" I reject in the three messages I delivered in Houston. I was then pursuing certain lines of *textual* evidence in those messages; why should I define what "covenant" I reject in messages which were not dealing with that subject? That's like requiring eggs from a sewing machine! I have, however, defined what "covenant" I reject in the Vol. 6, No. 3, *BRR*, from which you quoted. The point is clear: covenant theologians have difficulty defining exactly what the "Covenant of Grace" is. For example, a WTS professor asked a sectional class of about 14 students to define the "Covenant of Grace." When they convened the next week, none of the students could come up with a definition. The Dr. encouraged them to try again. The next week they had 14 different definitions of what it was! I've not found *any* uniformity among covenant theologians as to what it is — let alone any Scriptural articulation of what it is. It is certainly strange that one of the "two major covenants" in Scripture is so elusive and non-perspicuous (cf. Dr. Fennema's words, *BRR*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 15). I believe it is *clear* in "Is There A 'Covenant of Grace'?" what it is that I am questioning and challenging. There I let the covenant theologians state their view (which is essentially the position you espouse on the tape), and I indicated why I feel it was inadequate. And I challenge you, Prof. Hanko, to *exegetically* demonstrate that there is *one* covenant which is commenced *after* the fall, but which is *separate* from the historical covenants of promise. Where does the Scripture reveal a concept of covenant which is not "cut" in space and time (cf. *BRR*, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 45)?

4. You say, the "definition of the covenant [*what covenant?*]" is this: God's covenant of grace is a bond of friendship and fellowship between God and His elect people in Christ." Here you emphasized that the idea of agreement (mutual compact) is ruled out. I will point out a few crucial areas where I believe your concept fails to do justice to the Bible. First, your definition relates only to *promise* covenants, and does not allow for the law-covenant. The latter can be "broken," while the former *cannot* (Jer. 31:32; Gal. 3:17). "Agreement" was *part and parcel* of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. 19:4-8; Gal. 3:12), yet it was founded on the gracious "bond" established in the Abrahamic covenant

(Gen. 15:13-16). Thus, your definition *flattens* (or *levels*) redemptive history, and cannot account for the discontinuity between the *legal foundations* of the historical Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants ("the just shall live by faith" *vs.* "do this and live"; cf. Gal. 3:12; Rom. 10:5-6).

Secondly, your definition creates confusion when applied to God's relationship with Israel. Was the Sinaitic covenant, being (as you see it) another administration of the "Covenant of Grace," "a bond of friendship between God and His elect people in Christ"? While you mention the *typical* nature of the Mosaic era, your definition sets up an *equation* of God/Israel with Christ/church, which must ultimately lead to serious misunderstandings. The typical nature of this era obviously surfaces in the accouterments of the ark, etc.; but the typical relationship between God/Israel and Christ/church must be *qualified*. The "bond" of the Old Covenant was "*broken*" by the nation as a whole (Jer. 31:32); the "bond" established in the New Covenant can *never be broken* (Jer. 32:40).

I will seek to illustrate the confusion you create by looking at one area. Covenant theology has posited that God's promises have *always* been to "believer's and their seed" (cf. *BRR*, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 51). But in the typical theocracy, *belief was never a prerequisite for circumcising the child; every physical descendant of Abraham was obliged to circumcise their children or be "cut off."* Thus, even when Israel was predominantly *unbelieving*, circumcision was still mandatory and practiced. To carry over a "believers and their seed" principle into the New Covenant from the Old Covenant is, therefore, altogether inaccurate. I believe the N.T. makes it clear that the essential difference between the Old and New Covenants is this: the Old Covenant *failed* to secure a lasting spiritual bond between God and the nation Israel ("do this and live"); the New Covenant, on the other hand, *secures* the lasting response of its subjects, that is, they "all know the Lord from the least to the greatest" (compare Jer. 2:8, 4:22, 9:3 with Jer. 31:34). Your position (and of covenant theology at large) carries over into the N.T. specific national/physical elements which have become invalid in the era of a Spiritual nation composed of living *stones*. The "seed" of Abraham having appeared in history (Gal. 3:16) means that the "children of Abraham" cannot now be established by physical birth (i.e., *WCF*24:2 — "marriage was ordained . . . for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue, and the Church with an holy seed"), but only in those from among all nations who are "*of faith*" (Gal. 3:9, 22, 28-29). The N.T. is clear: no one who lacks a visible life-style of faith has any claim to belong to Christ (Gal. 3:26-29; 5:6). Living faith in Christ is the mark of New Covenant membership, not physical relationship to Christian parents.

5. You say, there is "no fundamental difference between the Old and New Covenants." If you meant that the just have *always* lived by faith in all ages, then you would be correct. But you mean more than that. You mean that the *covenants themselves* are parallel, and this is manifestly incorrect. The *way of salvation* has always been "by faith"; the *legal foundation* of the Old and New covenants, however, is vitally different (Gal. 3:12) — a fact which your theological system has ruled out. And if it is, indeed, a Scriptural *fact*, then a vital part of the fabric of your theological system is challenged.

6. You pointed out that I employed the implications of the Transfiguration for what I had to say in my messages. You then spent much time in trying to show that my use of the Greek word *exodus* in Luke 9:31 is a "fundamental error." You felt my assertion that a "new exodus" can be seen in the passion, death and resurrection of Christ "cannot be substantiated on the basis of sound exegesis," and was "a play on words." I submit that your approach to this is very shallow, and the fact that you would employ such a reason to discredit all else I had to say regarding the centrality of Christ's law in ethics is disconcerting.

The *exodus* pattern is clear, and is not something I have imposed on the text. Can you not see the exodus-pattern emerge among the events of Christ's life, whereby He is manifested as the Servant Israel (Matt. 1:1), is brought out of Egypt (Matt. 2:15), is brought into the wilderness (Matt. 4:1), is successful as the Last Adam (Matt. 4:11), and is law-giver (like Moses) on a mountain (Matt. 5:1-7:29)?

Can you not see the exodus-pattern in Eph. 2:6 and 4:8, whereby the victorious Christ leads His people out of sin-bondage into redemption? And along with this victory comes spiritual bounty which was typified when Israel took the spoils with them out of Egypt.

May I quote from some other men who have seen this obvious parallel?

F.F. Bruce: Jesus' contemporaries freely identified Him as a second Moses — the expectation of a second Moses played an important part in popular eschatology at the time — and with the expectation of a second Moses went very naturally the expectation of a second Exodus (*The N.T. Development of O.T. Themes*, p. 49).

Robert D. Brinsmead: Israel not only commemorated the Exodus. They looked forward to its recapitulation at the end of the age. The O.T. is an unfinished book because the real exodus was still to come (*Verdict*, 2/79, p. 32).

R.D.B.: In the O.T. God's saving act took place in the Exodus-Sinai event, which becomes the type of God's great saving act in the death-resurrection event (*Verdict*, 11/79, p. 18; cf. p. 21).

Felix H. Daniel: [After noting that Christ's *eisodos* (Acts 13:24) refers to the beginning of His ministry, Daniel points out that the *exodus*] would mean Jesus' exit from His ministry, which cannot mean His death, since Luke 24 demonstrates Jesus still functioning in His role of ministry. Only the ascension terminates Jesus' earthly ministry. [He then goes on to say that *exodus* cannot refer to the ascension *only*, but to the events clustering around the end of His earthly ministry] (*The Transfiguration*, Ph. D. Thesis, Vanderbilt Univ., 1966, pp. 176-177).

May I refer you to two relevant works? (1) D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible*; and (2) J. Manek, "The New Exodus in the Books of Luke,"

Novum Testamentum, II-III (1957-59, pp. 8-23).

I believe: (1) that your presentation did not exegetically establish the most crucial tenet in your system: covenants are administrations of *one* covenant that stands *above* history. You never addressed this matter, yet it is the most crucial link in your system. To me, you spoke *around* the issue, not *to* the crystal-clear question of 'Where is the covenant of grace *revealed in Scripture?*' (2) Your presentation failed to grapple with the centrality of Christ's words as our ethical starting-point. Just as the first Exodus brought with it the ethical demands revealed in Exod. 20, so the New Exodus (John 15:12-13) brought with it a "new commandment" revealed in John 13:34-35. Jesus did not come as *anti*-Moses, but as the Prophet of Whom Moses wrote, and to Whose words Moses bid us to heed (Deut. 15:15, 18).

Thank you for considering my points, and I hope you will receive them in the spirit of Eph. 4:15.

Your Servant,
Jon Zens

Because the original lecture was distributed only on tape and because many who received the reply of Mr. Zens and will read this essay have no access to the original tape, it is important, I think, to keep the central issues clearly before our minds and to address ourselves only to them. In order to accomplish this, it is best to clear away a bit of the "underbrush" and dispose of peripheral issues. This I shall try to do first of all.

In his answer, Mr. Zens speaks at some length of my comments concerning the use of the word "exodus" (ἐξοδος) which appears in Luke 9:31. I would not, in my original lecture, have made any point of this at all except for the fact that Mr. Zens claimed that Jesus' "departure" of which He spoke on the Mount of Transfiguration was a type and fulfillment of the "exodus" of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. He further emphasized, at the very beginning of his lecture on this matter, that this was crucial and that, indeed, all that he had to say in the remainder of his lecture and in subsequent lectures was based upon this one point. I disputed the fact that his exegesis was correct at this point, and I still maintain that.

It is true that the life of Christ here upon earth as well as His death, resurrection and ascension were all fulfillments of the types and shadows of the Old Dispensational economy. It is further true that there were certain elements in the life of the nation of Israel from the time they were led out of Egypt to the end of their history as a nation which were typical of Christ's work. Scripture makes this abundantly clear. All of this I do not dispute. I do dispute, however, that in Israel's history from Egypt to Canaan there is a "pre-figure" of the life of Christ here on earth and that there is plain for all to see an

“exodus-pattern emerging among the events of Christ’s life.” There are especially two issues at stake here. One is the rule of the interpretation of Scripture which has come down to us from the Reformers that “Scripture interprets Scripture.” As this rule is applied to the whole idea of types and shadows, it means that we have no right to make anything in Scripture a type which Scripture does not itself make a type. We may not impose types upon Scripture at our discretion. Such treatment of Scripture will result in allegorical interpretation to which there is no end. We may not, therefore, make Israel’s life in the wilderness of Sinai typical of Christ’s forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. There is no Scriptural warrant for this and an attempt to do this will result in confusion. Israel was sentenced to forty years wandering in the wilderness because of her refusal to enter Canaan by faith (see Numbers 13, 14; Hebrews 3:16-19, 4:1-3). Was this also true of Christ? Israel was brought from Egypt to the wilderness and Mount Sinai to receive the law. Was this also true of Christ? But I sense that Mr. Zens and I have a different conception of what a type is and means.

In the second place, regardless of this point, this is not the meaning of the event on the Mount of Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah spoke with Christ concerning His “departure” which He would accomplish in Jerusalem. Christ was facing the prospect of returning to Jerusalem in the full knowledge of the fact that there He would be crucified. His whole being shrunk from this horror because He knew the full agony of the cross and of dying under God’s wrath for the sins of His people. While praying on the Mount, God transfigured Him so that “the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.” Peter tells us in his second epistle, chapter 1, that this was a foretaste of “the power and coming” of Christ, that the disciples who were with Him on the mount were eyewitnesses of his majesty and that Christ “received from God the Father honour and glory” (vss. 16, 17). Moses and Elijah appeared to him because they represented the “law and the prophets,” i.e., the Old Testament Scriptures. In discussing with Christ His “departure which he would accomplish in Jerusalem,” they pointed out to Christ that, only in the way of His suffering and death would Christ receive the glory of His exaltation of the power and glory of His second coming. They did this by showing Christ the divine program for redemption which God had laid down in the Old Testament Scriptures. These Scriptures He had come to fulfill, and that is why His departure was something He would “accomplish” in Jerusalem.

That this “departure” is called an “exodus” therefore, is only because that happens to be the Greek word for “departure.” And because that happens to be the Greek word for “departure,” it is also the name given to the second

book of the Bible, not by Moses, but by others many centuries later. But to draw an analogy between Christ's ascension by way of His cross and the resurrection and the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt is not warranted by the text. Nowhere in the Old Testament is Israel's deliverance called an "exodus." This is indeed an unwarranted "play on words." But the point is peripheral and not directly related to the main issue.

The second point which needs to be made is that Zens fails to escape the errors of Dispensationalism. I know that he will not accept this judgment, but it remains a fact for all that. Some have called the position of Zens and Kingdon, *cum sociis*, a neo-dispensationalism. Perhaps it is that. But that Zens has not escaped this is evident from the fact that he objects to the equation which I set up of "God/Israel and Christ/church." Now, as a matter of fact, this is not the equation which I do set up. I do insist that the nation of Israel was typical of the Church. This entire matter I went into in detail in a *Journal* article and I will not enter into it here. (The interested reader can read these articles in Vol. XI, No. 2 and Vol. XII, No. 2.) A few points however, can be briefly mentioned. It is true that Mr. Zens maintains that "the way of salvation has always been 'by faith.'" Nevertheless, he makes sharp distinctions between the Old and the New Dispensations. He speaks of different covenants because there are essential differences between the Old and New Covenants for "the Old Covenant *failed* to secure a lasting spiritual bond between God and the nation Israel ('do this and live'); the New Covenant, on the other hand, secures the lasting response of its subjects." In the Old Testament God dealt with the nation of Israel in its entirety even though "Israel was predominantly unbelieving," while in the New Testament God deals only with believers. The Old Covenant had to do with "national/physical elements" while the new covenant has to do only with spiritual realities. The "legal foundation" of the two "is vitally different." Thus the two covenants are entirely different from each other and there is no fundamental correspondence or similarity between them. There is no possibility of escaping Dispensationalism in this way. If there are two covenants, then there are also two purposes for the covenant. And, while the purpose of the covenant in the New Dispensation is surely salvation, this was not its purpose in the Old. Thus God had a different purpose with Israel than He has with the Church. There is then no one eternal and immutable purpose of God according to which He accomplishes all that He has determined to do. The covenant in the Old Dispensation is of no significance and value unless God's ultimate purpose also is to deal with Israel throughout the ages in a different way than He deals with the Church. And this is Dispensationalism.

The third point to be made is Mr. Zens' use of the terms, "supra-historical,"

“a-historical,” and “one covenant which is commenced *after* the fall, but which is *separate* from the historical covenants of promise.” Now, I am not sure what Mr. Zens means by these expressions. He imputes these ideas to me, and it is quite possible that he means by all these expressions the same idea. But I never used them, and they seem to me to suggest an idea which is foreign to my thinking.

It is true that I believe that God is, in Himself as the triune God, a covenant God. This is implicit in the very idea of the trinity. That He is three in person and one in essence surely means that He lives a life of covenant fellowship with Himself in which He is forever the Blessed One. It is also true that God never reveals Himself in any other way than He is within His own being. Reformed theologians in the past have always expressed this by saying that God never reveals Himself *ad extra* except by revealing what He is *ad intra*. That is, because God reveals Himself as a covenant God Who establishes His covenant with His people, He is in Himself also a covenant God. This is implicit in *revelation*. In revelation God tells us what He is within His own covenant life. But this is not, I think, what Mr. Zens has in mind; nor did I speak of this in the lecture to which he refers.

It is also true that I believe that God first of all establishes His covenant with Christ as the Head of the covenant. That is, the triune God establishes His covenant with Christ through the way of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. On the cross Christ atoned for sin because He bore the full burden of God's wrath against sin. In bearing this burden of God's wrath, Christ endured the suffering of hell. This suffering of hell was the utter forsakenness of hell when all He experienced was God's wrath against sin. Hence His agonizing cry: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But through the resurrection from the dead, a resurrection which was God's seal upon His perfect work, Christ was restored again to the blessedness of fellowship with God. This is why Paul tells the people in Antioch of Pisidia that Psalm 2 (“Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee”) was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Acts 13:33). But I do not think that Mr. Zens refers to this either.

Let it be clearly stated, however, that I do not believe in a covenant which God establishes with His people through Christ which is “supra-historical,” “a-historical” and “a covenant which is separate from the historical covenants of promise.” The covenant which God establishes with His people in Christ is one historical covenant which embraces all the elect from the beginning to the end of history and which reaches its culmination in the perfection of God's covenant at the end of time.

What then is my position on this matter?

Mr. Zens and I would agree, I think, that the purpose of God of which he speaks in his article is God's sovereign and eternal determination which He made in His counsel to save His people in Christ. Where we disagree is in identifying salvation with the covenant. He writes, "I have, however, stated repeatedly that I believe in *one* 'purpose' of grace in Jesus Christ." Now there is a problem here which I fail to understand. That Zens does believe in a covenant in some sense of the word is evident when he writes: "The New Covenant, on the other hand, secures the lasting response of its subjects." Now, one of two things must be true. If Mr. Zens believes that the covenant and the purpose of God in salvation are one and the same thing, how can he say that God's purpose is one throughout all the ages, yet that there are fundamental differences between the old covenant and the new covenant? If salvation and the covenant are identical in meaning and the purpose of God is one, then the covenant is also one. If, on the other hand, Zens wants to distinguish between the covenant and salvation, then what significance does the new covenant have? Does God do something other than save His people when He secures their lasting response? How does this differ from salvation itself?

The point is that the Scriptures teach that God's one purpose in Christ is to save His elect people in Christ. The very essence of this salvation is that He, through Christ the Head of the covenant, takes His people into His own covenant fellowship. This is why the final salvation of glory for the Church is described in Revelation 21:3 in covenant terms: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men (for the tabernacle and the covenant of the Old Testament were types and shadows of the perfect covenant between God and His people in Christ Who is the true temple of God, John 2:18-22) and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." God determined from all eternity to save His people through Christ. This sovereign and eternal determination was the purpose of His counsel and will. This purpose of God was to save His people by establishing His covenant with them and taking them into His own covenant fellowship. All this is accomplished through Jesus Christ the Head of the covenant. This covenant is established in time when, in fact, through the perfect work of our Lord Jesus Christ, God takes His people into His own covenant fellowship. And it reaches its full perfection when Christ comes again and the tabernacle of God is with men.

I am not interested in entering into a debate over the various views of the covenant which may or may not be held among "covenant theologians." The question of great importance to me is: what do the Scriptures teach concerning the idea of the covenant? In the tapes to which reference is made, I spoke of

the covenant as a bond of friendship and fellowship between God and His people in Christ. I developed a line of proof from Scripture which clearly showed that this was the idea which Scripture presents concerning the covenant. I do not intend to repeat that line of proof here — although the subject is of sufficient importance to be treated in more detail in future *Journal* articles. But Mr. Zens has not refuted this Scriptural line of proof. Let him show that my analysis of the pertinent Scriptural passages is incorrect.

Mr. Zens “challenges” me to “*exegetically* demonstrate that there is *one* covenant which is commenced *after* the fall, but which is *separate* from the historical covenants of promise.” This I cannot do. I cannot demonstrate exegetically that there is one covenant which *commenced after the fall*, for the covenant did not commence there. I cannot demonstrate that this one covenant is separate from the historical covenants of promise because it is not. Nor did I ever say these things.

The fact is that Adam already was created in such a way that he lived in a covenant relation to God. This was not a covenant of works as is so often maintained. It is true that Scripture makes no mention of such a covenant. But the very fact that Adam was created in God’s image as prophet, priest and king in this earthly creation, as friend-servant under God, implies that He was created in such a way that he could and did live in a covenant relation to God. He dwelt with God in a relation of friendship and fellowship which is the essence of the covenant.

But it was not God’s purpose to realize His covenant fully and perfectly with the first Adam. Adam in Paradise was but a figure of Him Who is to come (Romans 5:14). It was through the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, that God determined to realize perfectly His covenant. The riches of His own triune covenant life were to be revealed in the highest possible way and in the greatest blessedness through Christ and in Christ through the salvation of Christ’s Church. In this sense of the word, the covenant is not even post-lapsarian. It is true that the covenant with Adam was not a covenant of grace, at least not in the sense in which we speak of the covenant of grace after the fall; but it is also true that the essence of the covenant with Adam is no different from the essence of the covenant in all ages.

Nor is it true that this one covenant is *separate from the historical covenants of promise*. There is only one covenant, and that one covenant is the one historical covenant of promise which God established with His people in every age.

Nevertheless, the *administration* of that covenant was different in the Old and in the New Dispensation. Quite naturally this would be the case for the

covenant is centrally established with Christ and through Christ with the elect. But Christ did not come until some 4000 years after the fall. And so, in that period before the coming of Christ, the covenant was administered in a typical way.

I shall try to make clear what this means.

There are several points here which must be considered.

In the first place, the idea of "promise" and the idea of "covenant" ought not to be confused. That they are closely connected with each other is beyond doubt. But they are not the same thing. The promise of God, according to Hebrews 6:13-18, is an oath which God swears by Himself because He can swear by none greater, that He will bless His people in Christ. It is clear from a comparison of Genesis 22:15-18 (to which the passage in Hebrews 6 refers) and Genesis 17:7, 8 that the salvation which God promised to Abraham and his seed was essentially the covenant of grace. Thus, the promise is the *formal* oath of God while the covenant is the *content* of that promise. Because the covenant is the central idea of salvation, that covenant includes all the blessings of salvation which are promised by God and which are given to the elect in Christ. It is because there are so many blessings implied that Scripture often speaks of "promises" in the plural as well as "promise" in the singular.

In the second place, that promise was of an *everlasting* covenant. It is true that the Hebrew word עוֹלָם does not always mean "everlasting" in the Old Testament. But this does not mean that עוֹלָם never has the meaning of "everlasting." No one would, for example, deny that the word עוֹלָם has the meaning of "everlasting" in Psalm 90:2: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Whether עוֹלָם means, in a given passage, "everlasting" or, "for a long time," has to be determined by exegetical considerations. But the many times in Scripture that the word "everlasting" (עוֹלָם) appears with the word "covenant" surely proves beyond doubt that "everlasting" is meant, and not merely, "a long time." In Young's *Concordance* עוֹלָם is rendered "everlasting" at least 59 times, and of these, 14 uses of עוֹלָם are applied to God's covenant. Consider the following passages. Isaiah 55:3: "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." This is a significant passage for more than one reason. The passage recorded here is spoken by Isaiah from the prophetic perspective of the captivity of the children of Judah. The nature of the "everlasting covenant" is "the sure mercies of David," a clear reference to Psalm 89. That this covenant which Isaiah speaks of never referred to the nation of Judah is evident from the fact that Judah, even after the return

from captivity, never restored the throne of David of which David spoke and sang in Psalm 89. The clear reference is, therefore, to the covenant established and fulfilled with and in Christ. The same is true of Isaiah 61:8, 9: "For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Here, very clearly, God speaks of an everlasting covenant which has as its characteristic that "their seed shall be known among the Gentiles." It is impossible to make this refer to national Israel and to speak of a covenant established for a long time in the Old Dispensation only. Another interesting passage is found in Ezekiel 37:26, 27: "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." How clearly this refers to the full realization of God's covenant spoken of in Revelation 21:3: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." It cannot possibly be denied that reference is made in Ezekiel to the very same covenant of which Revelation 21 speaks as fulfilled at the coming of our Lord when all things shall be made new. But then also the covenant spoken of is indeed an "everlasting covenant." It requires considerable exegetical nerve therefore, to insist that the "everlasting covenant" spoken of in Genesis 17:7 is a covenant which shall only endure "for a long time," that is, for the period of the Old Dispensation. This is indeed impossible when we consider the fact that Paul makes specific reference to this very passage in Galatians 3:16, where the text specifically states that the covenant which was established with "Abraham and his seed" is a covenant established with Christ, for Christ is the seed of Abraham. If that covenant is established with Christ, then surely it is an everlasting covenant, and not a covenant which endures only for the period of the Old Dispensation.

In the third place, it is not, therefore, true that I "flatten (or level) redemptive history, and cannot account for the discontinuity between the legal foundations of the historical and Abrahamic covenants."

I cannot go into this whole matter in this article, for it is too detailed and extensive a subject. But let it be sufficient for our present purposes to point out the fact that the promise which God gave to His people in the Old Testament was revealed to them in a way which gradually and organically unfolded

the riches of that promise as it would be fulfilled some day in Christ. That promise was first made to Adam in Paradise (Genesis 3:15). That was already the promise of the Christ Who would crush the head of the serpent. Throughout the Old Dispensation, the time of types and shadows, God caused more and more light to be shed upon that one promise of the covenant. At the time of the flood He told His people that that promise included the destruction of this present world of sin and death and the establishment of a new creation. The covenant would be established with all creatures, for all this creation would be renewed (see Genesis 9:8-17, I Peter 3:20, 21; II Peter 3:1-13; Romans 8:22-24). When God established His covenant with Abraham, God, among other things, showed to the heirs of the promise that His promise, the promise of His covenant, was for Abraham *and his seed*, and that that seed was centrally Christ, born, as Isaac was, by the power of the promise (see Genesis 17:7; Galatians 3:16 and other passages to which we have referred to before). When God delivered Israel out of Egypt and led them to Sinai He, by giving them the law, showed that the promise of His covenant was the promise of the salvation of an elect nation in whom He would fulfill His own law by writing it upon the tables of their hearts, that He would lead His people out of the bondage of sin and death, preserve them in the wilderness of this life, and finally take them into the heavenly Canaan (see such passages, of which there are a host, as Hebrews 11:16; Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Hebrews 8:10). And so we could go on. God fought for Israel through the leadership of Joshua, the Old Testament Jesus (Hebrews 4:8) and showed that His promise included the defeat of all the enemies of His people. God set David upon the throne and pointed out that the throne of David and Solomon pointed to the everlasting throne of Christ and that one facet of His covenant was the establishment of an everlasting kingdom of peace (see II Samuel 7:4-16; Psalm 89:20-37; Luke 1:32, 33; and many such passages).

The whole point is that the promise as first given to Adam was like the bud of a beautiful rose which continued, throughout all the ages of the Old Dispensation, to unfold until it was at its full maturity with the coming of Christ. Then, in Christ, all the beauties of that promise were shown in all their reality. But the organic development of the history of the promise is a rich and beautiful unfolding of the one truth of the promise of the covenant. Or, to use another figure, God gave to Adam one page of a beautiful picture book in which were all the pictures of the everlasting covenant of grace which He would realize in Christ. Throughout the years and centuries of the Old Dispensation God added page after page to that book. There were in that book all kinds of pictures all pointing ahead to and giving in greater detail the riches of Christ Jesus our

Lord. But they were pictures — types and shadows. And when the reality came in Christ, then the time of the picture book was over and it was taken away. The picture book had served its purpose and was not needed any more. Christ is the reality.

In the fourth place, the question can be asked: what role did the law play in all this? This question is especially important because Mr. Zens himself brings that up repeatedly in his article. He writes, e.g., “First, your definition relates only to *promise* covenants, and does not allow for the law-covenant. The latter can be ‘broken,’ while the former *cannot* (Jer. 31:32; Gal. 3:17). ‘Agreement’ was *part and parcel* of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. 19:4-8; Gal. 3:12), yet it was founded on the gracious ‘bond’ established in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:13-16).” And again: “The *way of salvation* has always been ‘by faith’; the *legal foundation* of the Old and New covenants, however, is vitally different (Gal. 3:12) — a fact which your theological system has ruled out.”

There are several comments which have to be made about this position. The position which Mr. Zens advocates here is erroneous. He takes the position, if I understand him correctly, that because there are two “foundations” viz., the law and the promise, there are also two covenants. That is, because God had two different ways of dealing with His people in the Old and the New Dispensations, viz., the way of law in the Old and the way of promise in the New, therefore there are also two covenants. The old covenant of the Old Dispensation was based upon the legal foundation of law, the principle of which is, “Do this and thou shalt live.” This old covenant, because of its different foundation, belonged to the *nation* of Israel exclusively. It had a national character, was limited to earthly promises which concentrated in the earthly land of Canaan, had as its sign circumcision, and embraced all those who belonged to the nation whether believers or unbelievers. The new covenant, on the other hand, came into being because the old covenant was broken. It has as its central features elements which are very different from the old covenant. Its way of realization was the way of faith. Its essence was salvation. It is established with believers only, and these from every nation and tribe and tongue. It has no earthly Canaan; no earthly promises, no physical accouterments, but is spiritual in every way. Hence, there is not one covenant of grace which embraces both the people of God in the Old Dispensation and in the New; there is not one sign of that covenant; there is, therefore, also no ground for extending the promise of the covenant to believers and their seed. Hence, while circumcision was administered to all those who belonged to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, baptism ought to be administered only to believers in the New Dispensation. So goes, I think, the argument.

Now, let it be observed first of all, as I have pointed out before, that this carrying out of the argument brings clearly forward the basic Dispensationalism of those who take this position. If there are so many different features between the Old and the New Dispensation, there is almost nothing left which is similar. Mr. Zens may make the point that "the *way of salvation* has always been 'by faith'," but the fact remains that, except for this one matter of faith, the Dispensations are dissimilar in every respect. This is, at least, Dispensationalism in every area of theology except for one isolated area of soteriology, the one matter of faith. And, in fact, before Mr. Zens can even retain this one similarity between the Dispensations, it would seem necessary to show how this one matter of faith stands related to all the other different aspects of the old covenant which are so markedly different from the new. E.g., he will have to show clearly, and that from the Scriptures, how the faith of the people of God in the old covenant stands related to the fact that the nation of Israel, with the believers as a part of that nation, "broke" the covenant. He will have to show how, while "faith" is the "way" of the new covenant in the New Dispensationalism, it was not, in any sense of the word, the "way" in the old covenant of the Old Dispensation. And so on. Many such like questions can be asked.

But the point that needs especially to be treated here is this matter of the law. Was the law, in fact, the "legal foundation" of the old covenant? If it can be shown that it was not, then Mr. Zens' argument falls away. Or, to phrase the question a bit differently, what relation did the law have to the one covenant of grace which God establishes with His elect people in every age? That is the question which needs answering. And we need not grope around in the dark for an answer to that question. The Scriptures speak directly to this issue, and speak in unmistakable language.

The whole subject which is brought up here is treated extensively by the apostle Paul in Galatians 3. It ought to be remembered, in considering this chapter, that the apostle wrote his epistle to the Galatians with a view to the threat which the Judaizers posed in those congregations. After Paul had established these congregations on his first missionary journey, certain Judaizers came into the congregation and promoted the doctrine of salvation by law. Their immediate point was that circumcision was necessary in order to be saved. Circumcision was necessary, so they reasoned, because only one who was truly an Israelite could inherit salvation. Now this did not preclude the possibility of Gentiles being saved, for, after all, Gentiles had also been saved in the Old Dispensation. But the only way a Gentile could be saved was by becoming a part of the nation of Israel, and that took place through the rite of circumcision. Now Paul points out in the epistle that to make circumcision a requirement for salvation is really to make the keeping of the law in its entirety a prerequisite

for salvation: "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Galatians 5:3). But, and this is the point which Paul is making in chapter 3, all this is based on a sad misunderstanding of the law itself. It is really based on the misunderstanding that the law was the legal foundation of the Old Dispensational covenant. And this is wrong. It is this which he sets forth to correct in chapter 3. The argument is clear.

Let us take a look at the argument.

Verses 6-9 read: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Now there are several points which Paul is making here. He says, first of all, that the principle of salvation in the Old Dispensation already was the principle of faith, not the keeping of the law. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. God's purpose already in the Old Testament was the purpose of salvation through faith. It was not then even the principle of law-keeping. It was always the one purpose of salvation through faith.

Secondly, according to vs. 7, this faith always marked the children of Abraham. Even in the Old Testament times, the only children of Abraham were those which were "of faith." Never was it any different. Never were the children of Abraham all his natural seed. Never did the children of Abraham include all his natural descendants or all those who belonged to the nation of Israel. God never worked that way. Always the principle of faith remained the one principle of the salvation which God had eternally prepared in Christ. This is an important point. I developed this whole idea in detail in an article in the *Journal*, but the point remains that Scripture insists that the children of Abraham, both then and now, are those who are "of faith."

But God foresaw that He would justify the heathen as well as the Israelite. And, foreseeing this, God already preached the gospel to Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That is, God's purpose was never to limit salvation by faith to the Israelite. It was His purpose, realized in the New Dispensation, to gather His church from all the nations of the earth. He told Abraham this already when He established His covenant with Abraham. But the point is: *In thee* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. That is, in *Abraham* would God do this. Abraham is the father of *all* believers. He is the father of all believers in the Old as well as in the New Dispensation. But he

is the father *only* of them and of no one else — not even the natural Israelite which proceeded from him in the natural line of descent.

The result is that the rule holds for all time: “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Whether we are speaking of the Old Dispensation or the New, the one rule holds: Only those of faith are the blessed, and they are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Now what about the law? that law which the Judaizers so steadfastly maintained was necessary to salvation? Vss. 10-14 read: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

There is no way, in this article, that we can begin to treat all the rich and beautiful concepts which are found in this passage of Galatians 3. But the main line of the argument of the apostle is clear.

There are, says the apostle, basically two ways of salvation being proposed: the one is that proposed by the Judaizers; the other is that proposed by Scripture itself. The one proposed by the Judaizers is the way of the law; the one Scripture speaks of is the way of faith. These two are mutually exclusive. They cannot both be the way of salvation. The one or the other is true, but not both. And they are mutually exclusive because of the fact that their fundamental principles are different. What is the principle of the law? The principle of the law is always this: “The man that doeth them shall live in them.” That was the principle of the law from the very beginning of time. Always the law said: “Keep me, and thou shalt live.” Never could the law say anything else. The law said this to Adam in Paradise; the law continues to say this throughout all ages.

Nevertheless, no one, after the fall, can keep the law. The fall, in its very nature, made the keeping of the law forever impossible for man. It was impossible for Adam after the fall; it was impossible for Israel; it is impossible for us. Hence, the law not only said: “Do this and live;” but the law also said: “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (vs. 10). Hence, every one who remains under the law is under the curse: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (vs. 10). So all the law can do is curse. That is the extent of its power.

Paul speaks of this same truth in Romans 8 when he writes: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (vss. 3, 4).

But the principle of faith is quite different. And that principle of faith is also an abiding principle: "The just shall live by faith." That is, righteousness comes only in the way of faith. There is no other way. And the way of faith is diametrically opposed to the way of the works of the law. This was true in the Old Testament; it is true now.

How is this possible? How is it possible that faith is the way of salvation when the law dates back all the way to creation? How is it possible when the abiding principle of the law is: Do this and live; and accursed art thou if thou continuest not in all the works of the law to do them? The answer is: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Christ came and assumed full responsibility for all the curses of the law which are rightly ours. Christ hung upon a tree, and the word of God in that tree, that cross, is: "Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree" (vs. 13; Deut. 21:23). So, because Christ bore the curse of the law for us, the curse of the law can no longer come upon us even though we do not keep that law. That was not only true in this Dispensation; it was also true in the Old Dispensation. Always that was true.

Hence, faith in Christ was the way. "The blessing of Abraham (comes) on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (vs. 14). So Abraham's blessing which he received already in the Old Testament (and the blessings which all the children, the true children, of Abraham received) come now also upon the Gentiles in the New.

But what has all this to do with the covenant? Verses 15-18 answer this: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise."

Remember, Paul is speaking here of the relationship between all that he has said about the law and about faith and the covenant of grace which God established with Abraham. And he makes some astonishing statements about

that relationship. He uses first of all, the figure of an earthly covenant. And he asserts, about even an earthly covenant, that once it has been made, it cannot be rendered null and void. That covenant, even between men, stands. If this is true of covenants between men, how much more is it not true of God's covenant which He established with Abraham? Nothing at all can render it null and void. That surely means, among other things, that that one covenant which God made with Abraham is an everlasting covenant which is never rendered ineffectual by anything whatsoever which happened in the future.

With whom was that covenant made? To whom were the promises of that covenant given? According to vs. 16, that promise of the covenant was made to Abraham *and his seed*. In connection with these last three words, the apostle makes an important argument. Swinging the argument on the use of the singular of seed in Genesis 17:7 rather than the plural, seeds, the apostle says that that promise of the covenant was made to *Christ*. "And he saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Now the clear implication here is that when God said to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy *seed* after thee . . ." God was referring by the word "seed" to Christ. The promise of the covenant was made to Christ. God established His covenant with Christ. And He did this with Christ as the *Head* of the covenant. That is why Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. That is why Christ is the Head of the covenant in both the Old and the New Dispensations. Never did God intend anything else by this. He did not intend that the word "seed" be interpreted to mean, "the natural seed of Abraham," "the nation of Israel in its entirety." It was with Christ alone that that covenant was established: "I will establish my covenant with . . . *thy seed*."

So that covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ. That covenant remains inviolable and unbreakable. Nothing whatsoever can annul it and make it ineffective. Not even the *law*: "The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul (it), that it should make the promise of none effect."

Here then is the relationship in which the law stood to the covenant defined in a negative way. The covenant stands. The covenant which God established with Abraham continues in effect because it was established principally with Christ. The law can do nothing to that covenant. It remains intact. When God gave the law to Israel four hundred and thirty years after He established His covenant He never intended that the law would disannul that covenant. This could not happen. Even a covenant with men is inviolable; how much more the covenant which God established. It continues everlastingly. God did not even intend that from henceforth the inheritance would come through the law: "For

if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.' That is, the promise of the inheritance which God gave to Abraham was an inheritance which came by promise, never by law. Notice: God is speaking here of the inheritance which God promised to Abraham and his seed. That is clear from Genesis 17: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." That land of Canaan, then, was the inheritance. How did Abraham and his seed receive it? By law? Paul says, this is exactly not true. He received it by promise. It cannot be by law and promise both, for: "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise." And by promise he received it.

If you ask how it is possible that Abraham received the land of Canaan for his inheritance by promise, then you must remember, as we pointed out before in this paper, that the land of Canaan was but an earthly symbol of the heavenly Canaan, and it was this heavenly Canaan which Abraham sought: "By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And, notice, this passage comes immediately after a verse which reads: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8-10). This was, then, his inheritance: the earthly Canaan as a type of the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. And that heavenly city he sought because he knew that was his inheritance and that was what God had promised him.

So the law had nothing at all to do with all this. But then the question naturally arises: what purpose did the law serve? The answer is found in Gal. 3:19-25: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

Once again, we cannot enter into all the details of this beautiful and significant passage. But the main line of the argument is clear.

It would seem that the law served no purpose at all if the law could not disannul the promise; and so the apostle faces the question of the purpose of the law. Does he, in any way, hint that the law was the "legal foundation" of the old covenant — as Mr. Zens maintains? Exactly the opposite is true. It was added because of transgressions until Christ should come. That was its purpose. That is, sin was in the world and, because of sin, the law could not save. It lacked that power. And it lacked that power because the principle of the law is always: Do this and live. The law served a temporary purpose until the seed should come. Indeed, if it were possible for a law to be given which had the power to save the sinner, then this is what would have happened (vs. 21). Righteousness would have been by the law. But no law can ever do this.

Nevertheless, the law is not against the promises. Rather, the law served the promises. This purpose of the law is defined in vs. 24: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The question is: What is a schoolmaster? The schoolmaster (or, pedagogue) to which Paul refers here was a slave who worked in the house of his master and who was entrusted with the specific responsibility to see to it that the son of the master, the heir, learned his lessons in school. He did not actually do the teaching, but he saw to it that the son got to school on time and did his homework. Paul compares such a pedagogue with the law. This is the purpose which the law served in the Old Testament. It was entrusted with the responsibility of seeing to it that the believers in Israel learned their lessons well. What were those lessons? That the just shall live by faith! How did the law do that? The law did that by coming with prescriptions for all Israel's life which rigidly controlled all the Israelite did. The law told the Israelite what clothes he could wear, what he could plant in his field, what he could eat, how he had to wash his dishes, how he had to make sacrifices, etc., etc. But the principle of the law was always: Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength. And the law said, for that was all it could say, "Do this and thou shalt live; but accursed art thou if thou dost not continue in all the words of the law to do them." But the Israelite could not keep that law. And the Israelite could not keep that law because he was wicked. And so the law rained its curses upon the head of the Israelite just as a pedagogue beat the son when he did not learn his lessons. And so, by these beatings of the curses of the law, the believing Israelites fled for refuge to Christ. They laid hold on the promise that some day God would send Christ who would bear all the curses of the law for them so that they would live in Christ and receive the promise of the covenant through

faith. This is the lesson which they were taught. The just shall live by faith. Salvation is to be found only in Christ. The promise which God gave to Abraham has been fulfilled in Christ. The inheritance is only in Him. The law can never bring it. The law can only curse. And so the law taught these lessons and forced believing Israel to learn them. They learned the lesson that salvation can never come through the keeping of the law. It can come only by faith in Christ.

Is the law then a "legal foundation" for the old covenant? Nothing of the kind. This is Dispensationalism. The law was a pedagogue which brings the believer to Christ. "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master." Christ has come and the need for such a pedagogue is past.

So then, the children of Abraham in every age are those who are of faith. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (vss. 26-29).

What a powerful and beautiful argument. How clearly Paul sets forth the whole truth of the relation between the law and the covenant. If Christ is the seed, centrally, of Abraham, then it is also true that all those who belong to Christ are also the seed of Abraham whether they be Jew or Greek, whether they live in the Old Dispensation or the New. And, belonging to Christ, they are all heirs according to the promise."

One question remains. How is it then that the covenant was established with believers *and their seed*? The answer to this question is now clear. Because Abraham received the promise of the covenant for himself and his seed, all his seed had to bear the Old Testament sign of that covenant — the sign of circumcision. But because the covenant is the same, the promises are the same, the way of salvation is the same, everything is the same; so also in the new covenant, all the children of believers must bear the New Dispensational sign of that covenant.

And if you object and say: but all the seed of believers are not elect and, in fact, saved: then I answer: yes, but all the children of Abraham were not by any means saved either. But all who were born within the historical dispensation of the covenant both then and now must bear that sign.

And if you proceed with your questioning and ask: But why does God will that all believers and their seed bear the sign of the covenant? then the answer is that God establishes his covenant organically. Just as, in John 15, all the branches who are part of the vine and who are "in Christ" are called "the vine and its branches," even though there are many branches which, according to Jesus' own words, do not bring forth fruit and are cut out, so also are all

who are born within the lines of the covenant considered, organically, a part of the historical realization of that covenant and go under the name of "Israel" in the Old Testament and under the name of "Church" in the New. But I cannot go into that question here in greater detail. I refer you to my last article in the *Journal* where this question was dealt with extensively.

And so I come to the end of the argument. I beg of all you who attempt to maintain a position that God's way of dealing with Israel was different from the way in which God deals with His people in this dispensation to consider carefully the clear and unmistakable teaching of Scripture on this point. Your determination to hold to the truths of sovereign grace bring you close to us who love these same doctrines. Would that you would see that the very doctrines of sovereign grace are inseparably connected to the truths concerning God's everlasting covenant. Let us stand together in the cause of sovereign grace opposing with one voice the rampant Arminianism which has its stranglehold on the church of our day!

The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (6)

Homer C. Hoeksema

At the conclusion of the preceding installment of this series we mentioned that Calvin has much more to say on this subject and promised to call attention to this material. We are doing this, remember, in the context of Prof. John Murray's expressed disagreement with Calvin on the subject of the simplicity of the will of God, a disagreement which Murray expressed as follows: "The present writer is not persuaded that we may speak of God's will as 'simple,' after the pattern of Calvin's statement. There is the undeniable fact that, in regard to sin, God *decretively* wills what He *perceptively* does not will. There is the contradiction. We must maintain that it is perfectly consistent with God's perfection that this contradiction should obtain. But it does not appear to be any resolution to say that God's will is 'simple,' even in the sense of the Latin term *simplex*."

We must also remind the reader that Prof. Murray's remarks (cited earlier in this series) were in the context of a reference to Calvin's explanation of Ezekiel 18:23 (and, of course, Ezek. 33:11). Prof. Murray finds in these passages an expression of "God's will to the salvation of all," and thus also Scriptural support for his theory of the free or well-meant offer of salvation to all men. Calvin does not understand Ezekiel 18:23 as teaching a potentially universal salvation, but a particular salvation, as we have shown by quoting Calvin's complete comments on this passage and on the similar passage of Ezekiel 33:11. We mention this not to belabor the latter point, but to make clear that the issue is not merely the issue of the relation between the decretive will and the preceptive will "in regard to sin." The latter is involved, indeed. But the broader issue is that of the "free offer" or the alleged well-meant offer of salvation, upon condition of faith and repentance, on the part of God to all to whom the gospel is preached. The real contradiction, therefore, which Prof. Murray and other adherents of the "free offer" try to defend and maintain is stated in these two obviously contradictory propositions:

- 1) God *wills* the salvation of all who hear the gospel preached.
- 2) God *does not will* the salvation of all who hear the gospel preached.

It is with regard to these two propositions, at bottom, that the late Prof. Murray wanted to maintain that God preceptively willed what He decretively did not will. It is in connection with them that the contradiction is obvious. To this

writer it is simply astounding to try to maintain that “it is perfectly consistent with God’s perfection that this contradiction should obtain.” But it is even more astounding that one will sacrifice the truth of God’s simplicity of will in order to maintain the contradiction. Apart now from the question of Scriptural and exegetical grounds, one would think that elementary theology would move one to maintain the truth of the simplicity of God’s will and to conclude that the contradictory propositions constitute bad, false theology. But evidently Prof. Murray was willing to sacrifice the truth of God’s simplicity in order to embrace a self-admitted contradiction. Moreover, no human soul is capable of embracing such a contradiction; it is altogether irrational. And one may assert that “it is perfectly consistent with God’s perfection that this contradiction should obtain.” But that is tantamount to saying that perfection — divine perfection, mind you— embraces contradictions. This is even more difficult to accept than the theory that the two parallel theological tracks of particular salvation and universal salvation finally meet somewhere in the infinity of the God’s mind, so that the contradiction between them is resolved.

Meanwhile, we must not lose from sight another factor in this discussion. Rather commonly those who hold to the idea of a general and gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all who hear the preaching of the gospel refer this offer to the realm of the will of God’s command. It is rather obvious, of course, that to refer both the decree of reprobation and the alleged general offer of salvation to the will of God’s decree results in a flat contradiction, namely:

- 1) God has decreed to save the reprobate (or: non-elect).
- 2) God has decreed not to save the reprobate.

To assign both, reprobation and the offer of salvation, to the realm of the will of God’s decree is too much for anyone to accept, of course. Hence, refuge is sought in the distinction between the decretive will and the preceptive will. Reprobation belongs in the sphere of the decretive will, then; and the offer of the gospel belongs in the sphere of God’s preceptive will. As has been noted, this leads to the problem of the simplicity of the will of God; and, with some theologians, it has led to an admission (if not a forthright assertion) that the will of God is not simple. But there is another factor involved. Rather facetiously some speak of the offer of the gospel in terms of God’s *preceptive* will. But there is an assumption in such usage, namely, that an offer belongs in the realm of a precept. And this assumption is surely incorrect. It is perfectly correct to assign the *demand* or *command* of faith and repentance to the realm of God’s preceptive will. This demand, which is always paired with the preaching of the promise of the gospel (Canons II, A, 5), and which through the proclamation

of the gospel comes to all who hear, without distinction, is obligatory. It is a divine command. It is a precept. But there is a vast difference between an offer and a demand. And that difference consists precisely in the fact that *an offer is not obligatory*. As soon as it would be given an obligatory character it would no longer be an offer. Yet, as we have said, it is very common to assign the general offer of salvation to the realm of God's preceptive will. And to say the very least, one certainly has to stretch the concept "preceptive will" very far if it is to cover the notion of an offer.

But now let us turn to Calvin again. Calvin speaks at length on the subject of the relation between the will of God and sin. He does so especially in his treatise on "The Eternal Predestination of God" and in his treatise on "The Secret Providence of God." All of the following quotations are from these treatises, both of which are found in the volume entitled *Calvin's Calvinism*, Henry Cole, Translator, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950). The treatise on predestination extends from page 13 to page 206, and that on providence from page 207 to page 350.

First, let us notice that Calvin stoutly maintains the truth of the simplicity of the will of God in the most direct and literal terms. On page 253 he writes:

And hereby is refuted either the ignorance or the wickedness of those who deny that the nature of the will of God can be one and simple, if there be any other will ascribed to Him than that which is plainly and manifestly revealed by Him in His own law. Some also ask in derision, "If there be any will of God which is not revealed in His law, by what name is that will called?" But those men must be deprived of their senses, in whose opinion all those Scriptures signify nothing which speak with so much wonder and admiration of the profound "depth" of the judgments of God!

Fully to appreciate this position of Calvin, however, we should read it in its context, beginning on page 252 and extending to page 255. For Calvin not only maintains the principle, but he also explains how this principle can be maintained with application to specific instances from Scripture. Notice:

And here the admonition of Augustine may be listened to with profit: "In point of oneness or agreement, there is sometimes a mighty difference between men and God in the matters of His righteous acts and judgments. As when, for instance, God wills righteously

that which men will evilly, and when God righteously willeth not that which men evilly will not. And so again, in point of difference or contrariety, God and men do not ill agree. As when men will well that which God righteously doth not will, and when, also men righteously do not will that which God righteously doth will; for example, the son may wish for the death of his father, that he may rush upon the inheritance. God also may will that this same father should die. God willed that Jerusalem should be utterly destroyed, that the temple should be profaned and demolished, and that the Jews should suffer every extreme of torment. The Idumeans were all the while longing for the same. In order that the same measure might be measured to a dire and ruthless man, who had spared no one, God wills that no help whatever should be brought to him, when pressed to destruction on every side, by inevitable necessity. His own son shall refuse him every duty of affection, nor shall he have the least desire to aid him in his desperate need. God willed that the sons of Eli should not listen to the counsels of their father, because He had determined to destroy them. The sons, on their part also, would not hear father. Now there appears herein, at first sight, a certain kind of harmony and agreement; but when we consider abstractedly the evil and the good involved, there is as much disagreement and contrariety as between fire and water. A husband shall wish for a longer life of a beloved wife whom God calls out of this world. Christ shuddered at, and prayed against, that death, which was a sacrifice of the sweetest odour unto God. Now the will of each, both of the husband and of Christ, although diverse from the will of God, at first appearance, was equally without blame. Wherefore, far be it from any man to drag God into a participation of sin, or guilt, or blame, whenever any apparent similitude between the plainly depraved passions of men and His secret counsel may present itself. Let that sentiment of Augustine be ever present to our minds: "Wherefore, by the mighty and marvellous working of God (which is so exquisitely perfect in the accomplishment of every purpose and bent of His will), that, in a wonderful and ineffable way, is not done without His will which is even done contrary to His will, because it could not have been done had He not permitted it to be done; and yet, He did not permit it without His will, but according to His will."

And hereby is refuted either the ignorance or the wickedness of those who deny that the nature of the will of God can be one and simple, if there be any other will ascribed to Him than that which is plainly and manifestly revealed by Him in His own law. Some also ask in derision, "If there be any will of God which is not revealed in His law, by what name is that will called?" But those men must be deprived of their senses, in whose opinion all those Scriptures signify nothing which speak with so much wonder and admiration of the profound "depth" of the judgments of God! When Paul exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments!" he most certainly teaches us, in all plainness, that the judgment of God was something more and deeper, than that which is expressed by the simple words of Christ in that memorable ejaculation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not" (Matt. xxiii. 37). And whereas God willed that the sons of Eli should not be obedient to their father, that Divine will differed, in appearance, from the precept of the law, which commands children to obey their parents. In a word, wherever the apostle sets forth the wonderful judgments of God, and the depth of His thoughts and ways, which are "past finding out," he is not speaking at all of the works of the law, which stand always plain before our eyes; he is rather magnifying that inaccessible light in which is hidden *God's secret counsel*, which being exalted far above the utmost stretch of the human mind, we are compelled to gaze upon with uplift eyes and to adore!

Someone will perhaps say, "If that light is inaccessible, why do you approach it?" I do not so approach it as to wish, by an insolent curiosity, to search into those things which God wills to keep deeply hidden in Himself: but that which the Scripture openly declares, I embrace with a sure faith and look upon with reverence. But you will say, "How can it be that God, who is ever consistent with Himself, and unchangeable even in the shadow of a turn, should yet will that which is contrary to that which He seems to be?" I reply, It is no matter of wonder that God, when speaking with men, should accommodate Himself to the limits of their comprehension. Who will affirm that God ever appeared to His servants, even in visions, such as He really is? For

the brightness of His glory is such, that the sight of Him as He is, by our naked vision, would absorb and overwhelm all our senses in a moment. He has, therefore, ever so revealed Himself as men were able to bear the revelation. But whether God talks with us in the language of a child, or whether He conceals that which He knows to be beyond our comprehension—that there is anything in what He pleased to say, feigned or dissembled, I solemnly deny. Most true is that which the Psalm affirms, “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psalm v. 5). Nor, indeed, does God there testify, by the mouth of David, anything else than that which He exemplifies in reality every day when He punishes men for their transgressions. Nor would He punish their sins if He did not hate those sins. You here see, then, that God is an *avenger*, from which we are fully assured that He is not an *approver*. But many are deceived in these sacred matters, not rightly considering that God willeth righteously those things which men do wickedly. “How will you explain this?” you may say. I reply, God abominates all adulterous and incestuous intercourse. Absalom defiles his father’s concubines in the sight of the people. Was this done, in every sense, contrary to the will of God? No! God had predicted, by His servant Nathan, that Absalom should do this (2 Sam. xii. 11, 12): “I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”

If you analyze what Calvin has to say on this matter above, you will discover that he finds the harmony of God’s decretive will and His preceptive will in God’s infinitely perfect holiness. This becomes plain from the following, pp. 255, 256:

The Scripture is replete with examples of the same nature and tendency. Shall we, then, on that account either impute the cause or fault of sin to God, or represent Him as having a double or twofold will, and thus make Him inconsistent with Himself? But as I have already shown that He wills the same thing in certain cases, as the wicked and profane, but in a different manner; so we must, on the other hand, hold that He wills in the same manner with the wicked and prostrate

that which is in appearance different; so that, in those things which are presented to our minds, the apparent diversity is tempered with the utmost oneness and harmony. Thus, inasmuch as Absalom's monstrous impiety towards his father was a perfidious violation of the law of marriage and a gross profanation of the order of nature, it is most certain that his atrocious wickedness was highly offensive to God, who can be pleased with nothing but honesty, modesty, fidelity and chastity, and who wills that the lawful order which He has established among men should be preserved sacred and inviolate. And yet, it pleased Him to punish in this manner the adultery of David. And thus He wills in the same manner with men things which seem to us quite diverse. For that will of God by which He commands what shall be done, and by which He punishes all transgressions of His law, is one and simple.

On page 305 we find Calumny VII. This calumny falsely imputes to Calvin the following position: "Whatsoever men do when and while they sin, they do according to the will of God, seeing that the will of God often conflicts with His precept."

On pp. 305, 306 we find the following "Observations and Statements" of Calvin's opponent concerning the above false charge:

On this SEVENTH ARTICLE your opponents ask you this question: If the will of God is often at variance with His precept, in what way can it be known when God wills, and when He does not will, that which He commands? For (say they) if Calvin asserts that what God commands ought always to be done, whether God wills it or does not will it, it will follow that God wills in order that His will might sometimes be resisted. For if God commands me not to commit adultery, and yet wills that I should commit adultery, and yet I ought not to commit adultery, it follows that I ought to do that which is contrary to His will. For when God commands the people of Israel generally, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" does He mean that none of them should commit adultery, or that some should commit adultery, but that others should not? On this point, Calvin, your adversaries ask of you some direct answer. If you reply that God wills that some should commit adultery, but that He at the same time wills that others

should not, you will make God inconsistent with Himself in the one same precept.

If you reply to these arguments of your adversaries by asserting that God has a twofold will—the one open and manifest, the other secret—they next inquire: Who was it, then, that made this secret will known to Calvin? For if Calvin and his followers know this secret will, it cannot be secret; and if they know it not, how dare they affirm that which they know not?

Your opponents again inquire whether God commands according to His will when He enjoins His people to pray, "Thy will be done;" and where Christ also saith, "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother" (Mark iii. 35)? There is also that passage of Paul, "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and approvest that which is excellent, and art a teacher of the law" (Rom. ii. 17). Surely we have here the will of God, and that which is commanded in the law, which will, if it be good (which it certainly is), it must necessarily follow that that which is contrary thereto is evil; for whatsoever is contrary to good must be evil. There is, moreover, that memorable ejaculation of Christ, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . but thou wouldest not." Christ most certainly speaks here of the open or manifest will of God, namely, that will which He (Christ) Himself had explained in so many ways. Now, if Christ had in His mind another will of God contrary to this will, His whole life must have been a contradiction.

Calvin's reply is very interesting and significant. In the first place, notice that this calumny directly accuses Calvin of teaching conflict in the will of God. Calvin, however, bluntly repudiates this charge, maintains that God's will is "simple and uniform, and one." And he challenges his opponent to produce proof to the contrary. In the second place, Calvin insists that he has always maintained that there is perfect harmony between the secret or hidden counsel of God and the openly revealed voice of His doctrine. And, in the third place, he explains that Augustine taught the same doctrine, although he did indeed speak of a "twofold will" of God.

I am utterly unconcerned to make to this SEVENTH ARTICLE any reply at all. Produce me the

place in my writings where I have asserted that "the will of God is frequently at variance with, or conflicts with, His precept." Such an idea never entered my mind; no, not even as a dream. Nay, on the entire contrary, among many other kindred explanations, I have faithfully expounded and set forth how simple and uniform, and one, the will of God is; although, between the *secret counsel* of God and His *general doctrine*, there is, to ignorant and inexperienced persons, at first sight, a certain appearance of difference. But whosoever modestly and soberly and reverently submits and commits himself to God and His teaching will, in a moment, see and acknowledge (as far as the human mind's capacity can see and acknowledge it) how it is that God, who forbids adultery and fornication, punishes by the incestuous intercourse of Absalom with the wives of David, David's sin of adultery with the wife of Uriah. God ever wills one and the same thing, but frequently in different forms. Wherefore, that the foulness of your lies may not cast any filth on me or my doctrine, let my readers receive in one word this solemn declaration: that that which you cast in my teeth, as promulgated by me concerning the two wills of God, is an entire fiction of your own. For, as to myself, I have ever proclaimed that there is between the secret or hidden counsel of God and the openly revealed voice of His doctrine, the most perfect, divine and consummate harmony.

Augustine did, indeed, by way of concession and explanation to his adversaries, make mention of a twofold will, or of different wills of God—a secret will, and an open or revealed will—but he so represented that twofold will as to show that they are in such consummate harmony with each other, that the "last day" will make it most gloriously manifest that there never was, nor is, in this multiform way of God's workings and doings, the least variance, conflict or contradiction, but the most divine and infinite harmony and oneness.

A second characteristic of Calvin's position is the fact that he rejects the concept of divine "permission" as a possible way out of any difficulties presented by the question of the relation between God's counsel and sin, a matter which at bottom involves the relation between God's decree and God's precept. There are passages in his treatise on "The Eternal Predestination of God" in which Calvin discusses this subject at length. The beauty of these passages is that again and again Calvin proves his position by simply appealing directly to

Scripture. Space does not permit us to quote these passages at length. On all of these subjects one can quote almost at random from these two treatises and produce pertinent material. In fact, these two treatises of Calvin alone furnish the reader a virtually complete theological education in this area of theology. Anyone who would understand Calvin's position must by all means imbibe what the great reformer teaches in them.

But permit me, in conclusion, to quote just a few lines which show plainly Calvin's rejection of the "permission" concept. On pages 200 and 201 we read the following:

The worthless being afterwards adds, "That he can answer every argument which we may bring against him in two ways. By showing, first, that all those passages which seem to attribute the cause of evil to God, do not intend His effectual will, but His permitting or His leaving a thing to be done." But away with that calumny altogether, which is built upon the terms good and evil, when used in discussing God's eternal will and decrees. For we well know that nothing is more contrary to the nature of God than sin. But men act from their own proper wickedness when they sin, so that the whole fault rests with themselves. But to turn all those passages of the Scripture (wherein the affection of the mind, in the act, is distinctly described) into a mere permission on the part of God is a frivolous subterfuge, and a vain attempt at escape from the mighty truth! The fathers, however, did interpret these passages by the term permission; for finding that the apparent asperity of the more direct terms gave offence to some at first hearing, they became anxious to mitigate them by milder expressions. In their too great anxiety, however, thus to mitigate, and in their study to avoid giving any such offence, they relaxed something of that fixedness of attention which was due to the great truth itself.

Calvin then proceeds to call attention to various specific examples from Scripture, such as Joseph, Job, Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrians, the Medes, etc., in order to demonstrate that the concept of a mere divine permission is inadequate.

On page 244 Calvin writes as follows:

From all that has been said, we can at once gather how vain and fluctuating is that flimsy defence of the

Divine justice which desires to make it appear that the evil things that are done, are so done, not by the will of God, but by His permission only. As far, indeed, as those evil things which men perpetrate with an evil mind are, in themselves, evil, I willingly confess (as I will immediately more fully explain) that they by no means please God. But for men to represent God as sitting unconcerned, and merely permitting those things to be done which the Scripture plainly declares to be done, not only by His will, but by His authority, is a mere way of escape from the truth, utterly frivolous and vain. Augustine did, indeed, sometimes give way to this popular method of speaking; but where he devotes himself more closely to the consideration of the matter, and examines it more thoroughly, he by no means suffers the permission to be substituted for the act of God.

These quotations will, I trust, serve to point the direction of Calvin's thinking on this subject. However, as I said above, one would do well to read the two treatises from which these quotations have been taken in their entirety.

Book Review

THE ELDERS HANDBOOK, A Practical Guide for Church Leaders; by Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster; Christian's Library Press, 1979; 303 pp., \$12.95.

Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko

Gerard Berghoef is a furniture manufacturing executive who also served as elder in the Christian Reformed Church for twelve years; Lester De Koster is at present the editor of *The Banner*. These two have collaborated to prepare a book which can serve as a guide to ministers and elders in the work which Christ places upon them in the congregation.

The book is written from the viewpoint of Paul's last admonitions to the elders in the Church of Ephesus which are found in Acts 20:28-31. It has six main sections to it: these sections cover the idea of the eldership, the calling of elders in relationship to each other, the calling of elders in relation to the church both on the local level and on the level of the broader ecclesiastical assemblies, the calling of elders with respect to particular problems such as divorce and re-marriage, etc., and the calling of elders with respect to the future. There are many worthwhile aspects to the book some of which ought to be mentioned. Generally speaking, the book is written from a conservative and Biblical viewpoint and can be used by elders within our own Churches. It has many excellent practical ideas in it for particular aspects of the work of elders and much practical advice which is helpful in the many problems which elders confront. I have no doubt about it but that the book can be read and studied with profit by anyone who is determined to perform the work of his office in harmony with the Scriptures. It has also a rather lengthy section which deals with particular texts which can be used by elders in different problems which they meet and in different aspects of their work. This section alone is very worthwhile.

Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the book. I do not dwell on these weaknesses to leave the impression that the book is not worth getting; but rather to serve as a guide to those who make use of it so that they may know for what to beware.

While the book is intended to be a *practical* guide to the work of elders and while there is some material in the book concerning the idea of the office, we nevertheless consider the book deficient in this respect. I suppose it is difficult to say how much on this subject is too much when the book aims to be practical. But the fact remains that a clear understanding of the office as to its Scriptural idea is important for an understanding of the work which elders must perform. That the book lacks this becomes also apparent in places. Some

of the advice given to elders would apply equally well to a busy executive in charge of a large manufacturing plant.

The book is written with too broad a purpose in mind. I mean that the book is intended to serve all elders regardless of their church affiliation and regardless of the type of church polity embraced in their particular denomination. It is therefore not always specific with respect to Reformed Church Polity and does not take a definite stand on particular doctrinal issues.

There are serious mistakes in the book. I mention three of the outstanding ones. In the first place, the book does not have a correct view of the relationship between the autonomy of the local congregation and the authority of the broader assemblies. While this subject is not treated in detail, the authors state:

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches locate authority, derived from Christ, in the congregation's eldership. Broader assemblies derive their authority, by delegation, from the local council or consistory or session. The classis, presbytery, conference, and again, the synod, general assembly, general conference can act for the local unity because they are presumed to be but extensions of it. It is out of this context that this handbook is written, allowing for such denominational adaptation as required (p. 38).

In the second place, the book takes a wrong view of divorce and remarriage. It allows for those who are divorced and remarried to be members of the Church. This is contrary to the Scriptures, although well within the position of the Christian Reformed Church.

In the third place, the book openly advocates financial help from social agencies and government funds for the poor and, in fact, speaks of a broad function of the Church in social work. There is a promise in the book that another volume will appear on the work of the deacons, and, presumably, these questions will be treated more fully in that volume. But this viewpoint is nevertheless wrong.

Nevertheless, we recommend this book to those who are elders for it has much in it which can be of good use to them in their work.

These tapes are available from the Protestant Reformed Seminary library at the cost of \$3 each.

Please send Check or Money Order to:

Librarian
Protestant Reformed Seminary
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Prof. R. Decker

The Mystery of Lawlessness

The Women's Place in the Church

Pentecostalism

The Foolishness of Preaching

Rev. D. Engelsma

Examining Pentecostalism

Reprobation. . .Is it Reformed?

Remembering the Lord's Day

The Christian Marriage and the Problem of Divorce

Key '73. . .What Must We Say About It?

Evangelism and the Reformed Faith

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Children of the Reformation

Reformation. . .Option or Mandate?

A Divine Foundation—The Infallible Scriptures

450 Years—And Then?

The Heartbeat of the Reformation

Genesis and Science

Holy Scripture. . .Wholly Divine

The Word of God and the Reformation

Limited Atonement

The Creation Record. . .

Literal or Not?

God's Sovereign Love of the World

Prof. H. Hanks

The Scriptures Chained Anew

Unconditional Election

A.A.C.S and the Kingdom

Total Depravity

Ecumenicity

The Reformation and the Understanding
of the Scripture

The Pleasures of Babylon in Jerusalem

Interpreting Scripture

Rev. M. Joostens

Honoring Marriage

Rev. J. Kortering

The Mystery of Lawlessness

Rev. G. VanBaren

Shall There Be Reformation No More?

The Perseverance of the Saints

Separation from the World

The Return of the Glorified Lord

Irresistible Grace