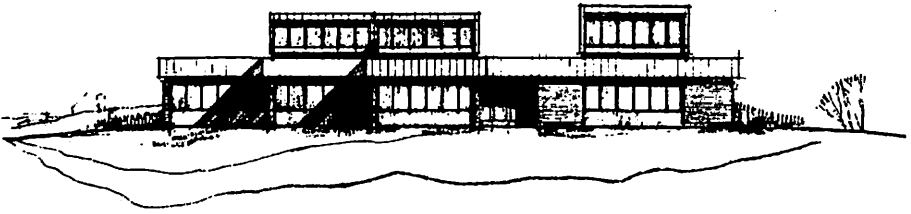


# **PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL**

NOVEMBER, 1982  
VOLUME XVI, NO. 1



**THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
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of the  
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# Editorial Notes

Our last issue of the *Journal*, which contained articles on textual criticism and Bible translations brought considerable correspondence. We still have several copies available of this issue; if you know of any who would be interested in a copy, send us the necessary addresses.



We continue in this issue Mr. T. Miersma's article on the views of the relation between church and state held by the Scottish Reformers. It might interest our readers to know that Mr. Miersma has since completed his studies in our Seminary, has accepted a call to the congregation of Edmonton, Canada, and is at this writing preparing to move there.

Prof. Hoeksema continues his discussion of the question of two wills in God and Prof. Decker continues with his article on the labors of the pastor. In this issue he writes of one element of pastoral care which is often overlooked or wrongly treated: the *object* of pastoral care, which is the elect sheep of God. How important this is becomes evident as Prof. Decker relates this to the work of an undershepherd of Jesus Christ.



With this issue we begin our sixteenth year of publishing. How swiftly the time has passed. It seems but a couple of years ago that Prof. Hoeksema and I sat down to discuss plans for such a publication. The Lord has abundantly blessed these efforts as we have seen our format change to its present attractive appearance, as the subscription list has grown to more than six times its original size, and as the contents have been welcomed by an increasingly large audience. May our God continue to bless these efforts.

# The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (8)

Professor H.C. Hoeksema

[In harmony with our intention announced in Volume XV, No. 1, we continue with our translation of Rev. Herman Hoeksema's polemic against Prof. W. Heyns entitled *The Gospel, The Most Recent Attack On the Truth of Sovereign Grace*. We continue first with the translation of the last part of Chapter IV, "God Does Not Will." ]

We were busy with texts which teach that there is in God not such a will that all men be saved. We shall still call attention to a few more such passages of Scripture.

And then I wish to point also now to Isaiah 6:9 ff., even as I did previously in the series of articles entitled "Grace Not An Offer." In that passage we read: "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

Now it makes no difference one way or the other for our controversy where you seek the final or even the immediate cause for this attitude of God over against the men of whom it is here said that God shall remove them far away. The fact is that Heyns teaches that God wills that all men shall be saved, that at least all who live under the gospel shall be saved. But fact is, too, that this passage of Scripture teaches exactly the opposite, makes it plain that there is not such a will in God. For notice that the following elements stand in the foreground in the text:

1. That Isaiah is here called to proclaim God's Word to Judah and Jerusalem of his time. The passage is therefore concerned with men who live under the

preaching of the Word, who hear the Gospel, those men of whom Heyns asserts that God wills that all shall be saved.

2. That this Word is also so proclaimed that they understand it very clearly. Seeing they must see, and hearing they must hear, that is, they must emphatically hear and see. There must remain for them no excuse.

3. That it nevertheless is not at all God's purpose that these men shall be saved, but, on the contrary, that through and under the preaching of the Word they shall be hardened. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." The Lord says this, and there is therefore no doubt but that this is indeed the Lord's purpose with the preaching of Isaiah with a view to the men here meant. Nor can Isaiah himself realize this purpose. He cannot make their heart fat and their ears heavy and shut their eyes. God, however, can indeed do this through the preaching of His Word by the mouth of Isaiah. As we have seen previously and as Scripture teaches in various places, there is through and under the preaching of the Word not only a revealing, drawing, saving operation of God, but also a hiding, hardening, and judging operation of the Spirit. We may not desire this, and then present it as though God is not God with respect to reprobation; but Scripture teaches that it is indeed thus, and that, too, with great emphasis. He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardeneth. He does this indeed while maintaining the rational, moral nature of man; but this does not change the fact that He does it, and that, too, with sovereign freedom and according to His sovereignly free decree.

4. That this hardening operation works to the very end, that is, until destruction shall have come upon the land, the cities, and the dwellings of Judah, and until the Lord shall have removed them far away. The preaching of Isaiah must therefore serve to ripen the chaff as chaff, in order that it be burned.

5. That the remnant shall be saved in the holy seed, and that this remnant is the guarantee of the development of the church in the future. God does not cast away His people, even though there remains only a tenth part.

Such is the explanation of this text, as Heyns shall have to admit. If he knows of an explanation which is essentially different, we gladly give him the opportunity to develop it in our magazine. But I am convinced that he will not do this. He would rather not touch Scripture passages such as these with so much as a finger. But he shall indeed have to answer the question how this word of Scripture can be harmonized with his view that there is in God a will according to which He wills that all men – and therefore also these men – should be saved. Do not confuse matters. The question is not whether God,

according to His ethical will, also demands of these men that they shall convert themselves and serve Him and thank Him and walk in the ways of His covenant; but the question is purely and simply whether God desires to save these men. And then the answer is: absolutely not, for He wills to harden them and remove them far away, and God certainly does not do the opposite of what He wills.

And this is the current teaching of Scripture. It is remarkable that we meet this word of Isaiah repeatedly in Holy Scripture, whether literally or whether as far as the thought is concerned. Thus, we hear from the mouth of the Savior Himself, when He furnishes the reason and the purpose of His teaching in parables. For we read in Mark 4:11, 12: "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." Also here we have clear language, as soon as we only are willing to accept the plain meaning of the words. Difficult these words become only for him who simply will not accept their obvious meaning. It is plain:

1. That the Savior here makes an absolute distinction between those who are without and those who are within, that is, the distinction is made from the viewpoint of God's counsel, as is plain from the fact that those who are without are presented as absolutely *remaining* without.
2. That of those who are within, He says that it is *given* to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. They do not do this by nature and of themselves. Then they also are blind, though they see. But it is given them through divine grace.
3. That, however, it is the purpose of the Savior's preaching with respect to those who are without: (a) That seeing they shall see and hearing they shall hear, so that with their natural understanding they shall apprehend well the things which give testimony concerning the kingdom of God. Also here this is the meaning of the emphatic: seeing see and hearing hear. (b) That, however, with all that they shall not spiritually understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but remain spiritually, ethically deaf and blind; therefore also continue to turn in the spiritual, ethical sense against the things of the kingdom of God, which with their natural understanding they clearly see and hear; so that they do not turn, although seeing they see and hearing they hear; and that their sins are not forgiven, but precisely in the clearest and sharpest light of God's judgment are exposed as sin.
4. And that the Savior therefore points in His preaching to the parables which *happen* before their eyes. For the things of the kingdom of God *happen*

through parables. The earthly is image of the heavenly, the natural of the spiritual, the temporal of the eternal. Therefore in the creation and on the plane of the earthy the things of the kingdom of God are enacted as in a spectacle, repeatedly and always again. Time after time a sower goes out to sow, and the seed falls in various kinds of ground with various results. Time after time the tares grow up among the wheat. Things happen in parables, and the Savior fixes the attention upon those parables, in order that also those who are without should see a continuing testimony and hear of the things of the kingdom of heaven.

Here also, therefore, it concerns men who live under the preaching of the Word. And also here Heyns stands again before the question how he can harmonize this with his presentation that God wills that all men be saved. Positive proof for this position he has not furnished. All God's doings in the history of salvation militate against that presentation. But also to these passages of Scripture Heyns cannot possibly do justice on his basis. For after all it is plain that the Lord does not will that these men shall be saved.

The same word of Scripture from Isaiah is also quoted by John in John 12:37-41: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." Also these words are abundantly plain. It concerns men who lived under the preaching of the Savior, who besides have seen many wonders and signs which the Savior did. And John gives an explanation of their unbelief from the viewpoint of God's sovereign will. From this viewpoint, John teaches us, they *could not* believe, for Isaiah had already spoken of them that they would not believe the preaching, and that, too, because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their heart. Only it may draw our attention that John so quotes the words from Isaiah 6:9 that it leaves no more doubt whether the meaning of that word is that *God* is the One Who works the blinding and hardening of heart, so that they do not convert and be healed. In the word as it occurs in Isaiah the prophet is presented as blinding the eyes and hardening the heart through his preaching; but in John the Holy Spirit quotes this word in such a way that it becomes plain that God is the sovereign worker of the hardening. It is therefore according to Scripture an incontrovertible fact that there is under and through the preaching of the Gospel also an operation of God



unto hardening proceeding upon those who are without. And once again we ask Prof. Heyns: how do you harmonize this operation with the will of God to save these men?

There is much more in Holy Scripture that serves as proof for our proposition that there is in God no will to save all men. For God's Word teaches that Christ is set for a fall, as well as a rising again, of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against, in order that the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed, Luke 2:34, 36; something that certainly points to the divine purpose of the revelation and preaching of the Christ in the midst of the world. In harmony with this testimony of old Simeon, Jesus also says of Himself that for judgment is He come into the world, in order that those who see not may see, and those who see may become blind, John 9:39; and Peter testifies that the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner, but also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, and that these are thereunto appointed, I Peter 2:7, 8. It is also written: "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," Romans 9:13. And what the latter means is plain from Malachi 1:3, 4: "And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever." The Scripture also says to Pharaoh: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Romans 9:17). And it concludes that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth (Romans 9:18). And if then our sinful and proud heart would want to answer against God, because we do not understand and acknowledge that He alone is God, and none beside Him, then the Scripture shuts our mouth with its "Who art thou that repliest against God?" and points us to the sovereign power of the supreme Potter to make of the piece of clay, even from the same lump, one vessel unto honor and another vessel unto dishonor, Romans 9:20-22. And nothing brings any change therein. This purpose of God is surely carried out. Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet only the remnant shall be saved. The consumption of all the rest, which do not belong to this remnant, is firmly decreed, overflowing with righteousness. "For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land" (Isaiah 10:22-24; Romans 9:27, 28). They have stumbled at the stone of stumbling which the Lord had laid in Zion, Romans 9:32, 33.

And so we could continue, for the Scripture speaks the same language everywhere. But we may consider it enough for the time being in order to prove that Heyns certainly deviates from Scripture with his proposition that there is a will in God to save all men. Especially is it sufficient with an eye to the fact that Heyns thought to be able to prove his position with a few texts of which his explanation was not in harmony with Scripture itself and which is repudiated by all Reformed men of name. The whole of Scripture testifies against the presentation of Heyns. And we may rightly expect that he himself will also see this and honorably acknowledge it. This could serve as a rich blessing for the churches: for a more insidious doctrine than that which posits two diametrically opposite wills in God is difficult to conceive. It is calculated to smuggle the entire cargo of Pelagian heresy into the churches under the Reformed flag.

## Chapter V

### GOD'S WILL AND PRAYER

More as an example than anything else, but then nevertheless to serve the purpose of making it clear that there are more such "mysteries" as the two wills in God, Heyns points also to the subject of prayer in connection with the counsel of God. And although this takes us away from our subject, nevertheless, because of the importance of the matter, we also wish to enter somewhat more deeply into this subject.

Heyns writes about it as follows:

"If that argument on this point would be of significance, even of conclusive significance, then it would also have to be that for other points which present us with the difficulty that we cannot harmonize the one with the other; and where would we land then?

"Take, for example, God's unchangeable decree and the hearing of prayer. The hearing of prayer in the sense that upon prayer there can be obtained from the Lord that which we would not have obtained without prayer. The hearing of prayer as the Apostle James speaks of it (James 5:16-18) when he refers to the example of Elijah as proof that the prayer of the righteous availeth much. Elijah prayed, and there came a drought of three years and six months long; Elijah prayed again, and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. That is speaking as though neither the one nor the other would have come if Elijah had not prayed, and that is real *bearing of prayer*. Can we harmonize such hearing of prayer with an eternal, unchangeable, and all-inclusive decree of God?

"According to a given explanation, the solution is to be found in the fact

that also the prayers are included in God's counsel. In itself, of course, that is perfectly true; but a satisfactory solution of the difficulty does not lie in that direction. The matter would then come down to this, that in God's counsel it was determined to chastize Israel for their sins with a fearful drought upon Elijah's prayer, that subsequently the Lord caused Elijah to pray according to His counsel, and thereupon sent drought according to His counsel. Thus also with the prayer of Elijah and the sending of rain three years and six months later. All true, but no solution of the difficulty: for no justice is done to the reality of the hearing of prayer. There would then be in this history no actual hearing of prayer, but only the appearance of it; and then one could not find any proof here that indeed the prayer of the righteous availeth much. Actually a choice is made between the two; and in order to maintain the unchangeability of God's counsel, real hearing of prayer is set aside or reduced to mere appearance.

"The words of the Apostle James give us to understand that God's unchangeable and all-inclusive counsel in no sense takes away God's complete freedom of action, also in the hearing of prayer. Therefore it is to be considered better, instead of praying, 'If it be in harmony with Thy counsel,' referring to God's unchangeable decree, to pray, 'If it be in harmony with Thy will,' referring to the perfectly free will of God, which is always wise and good, leaving to that will the giving or not giving of what we ask. 'Thy will be done,' thus the Savior Himself prayed in Gethsemane, and thus He taught us to pray in the perfect prayer.

"The given explanation can therefore not be the correct one. A better one, however, has not yet been found by anyone, and undoubtedly shall not be found by anyone. Also Scripture furnishes no solution. God's Word teaches us to acknowledge as realities both an unchangeable counsel and actual hearing of prayer, but for our understanding they stand unreconciled over against one another. If now it would be true that a general and well-meant offer of grace through the Gospel must be denied and rejected because our understanding cannot harmonize it with predestination, then it would be equally true that actual hearing of prayer must be denied and rejected because our understanding cannot harmonize such a hearing of prayer with God's unchangeable counsel. For the words of James we would then have to substitute, 'An effectual prayer may have the appearance that it avails much, but considered in the light of God's unchangeable counsel it avails nothing.' "

Now it may be remarked, first of all, that these words of the professor emeritus leave something to be desired as far as clarity is concerned. If it was his purpose to leave the impression that prayer in relation to the counsel of God is

an equally insoluble riddle as the two-wills doctrine, then it may be granted that he has succeeded. If with respect to prayer and its hearing we want to harmonize everything, thus the professor writes, where would we land then? And indeed he furnishes us an example of the fact that we land nowhere if, namely, we reason as the professor does. First he grants that it is perfectly true that also our prayers are included in the counsel of God. But then it seems that this is nevertheless not true; at least Heyns does not want to see in this a solution of the insoluble riddle. Then he presents as his own explanation that also in the case of prayer we must make a distinction between the counsel of God and the "perfectly free will of God, which is always wise and good." But then finally he seems unwilling even to maintain his own explanation: for after all "a better explanation (than that which seeks the solution in the inclusion of our prayers in the counsel of God) has not yet been found by anyone and shall also not be found by anyone." But also this best explanation nevertheless does not offer a solution, for then the hearing of prayer would after all be only appearance. And with this, then, Heyns has made it very clear that we land nowhere with him.

In the second place, we may certainly emphasize that we surely may not accept the explanation which Heyns offers. Also with respect to prayer he wants to distinguish between two wills in God. The one will is then God's counsel, the other is God's "perfectly free will." That distinction is very plain, but it is as impossible as it is plain. In the counsel of God the Almighty is then not free, such is the evident presupposition. God is bound by His counsel. Therefore it is also better not to pray, "if it be in harmony with Thy counsel." For after all what is decided in God's counsel most assuredly happens, whether we pray for it or not. And according to Heyns' view of prayer, there is really no place for prayer in relation to that counsel of God. But next to that counsel of God, to which God Himself is bound, wherein simply nothing can be changed, also not by the prayer of the righteous, there is also in God a perfectly free will, which is not fixed as far as the facts of history are concerned. And in that perfectly free will of God, which is always wise and good, our prayers can then also have a place. Upon that will of God we can exercise influence through our prayers. If, therefore, we say, "Thy will be done," then we do not mean, "Thy counsel be fulfilled," but: "Lord, if that which we pray is not sinful, or even foolish and wrong for us, then we would very much desire that Thou gavest us this, regardless of whether it is thus decreed in Thy counsel or not!" It does not need to be pointed out how thoroughly wrong such a view of God's will is. If here also you do not want to think of two Gods, for it finally comes down to this again, then the matter really stands thus, that there are gaps left in God's

counsel, room for play, in order to provide a place for the wholly perfect, free will of God. God has not fixed all things in His counsel, according to the professor. If He had indeed done this, there would be no place for the hearing of prayer. Now, however, it is different. There is also a free will of God. And that will decides then concerning the gaps in the counsel of God. And this decision then takes place with the cooperation of man, who in his prayer makes known to God how he would wish to see those gaps filled. Over against this view it must be maintained that God is one in His willing, that His eternal counsel in relation to that which shall take place in time is absolutely all-inclusive, so that nothing can or shall ever bring about change therein, and that yet in that counsel God is eternally and absolutely free and does all His good pleasure with complete divine freedom. God's perfectly free will in relation to all things is His eternal good pleasure. What Heyns also here wants to present as two is absolutely one, and also before our consciousness very plainly one, and not two.

In close connection with this stands the incorrect view of the professor with respect to prayer and its being heard. Repeatedly Heyns emphasizes that there cannot possibly be any hearing of prayer if that for which we pray is firmly established in God's counsel beforehand. For Heyns the hearing of prayer means that we receive something which we would not have received without prayer. But if that is to be possible, then it is plain that this something must not be in God's counsel, thus Heyns would reason: for if it were already decided in God's counsel then we would also receive it without prayer and without the hearing of prayer. Then the hearing of prayer is really nothing else than appearance. When then we also read that the prayer of the righteous availeth much, then this means, according to Heyns, that it can exercise much influence upon God, so that we move Him to bestow upon us what we very much desire. Now this is the completely Pelagian view (as was to be expected on Heyns' basis) applied to prayer. It presents the petitioner as a party over against God with a free will, a free judgment concerning things, which he then lays before God. It eliminates the petitioner and his prayer from God's counsel. And it separates the petitioner's prayer from the irresistible operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart whereby the prayer is wrought. And then it lies in the very nature of the case that if there is to be hearing of prayer, things must not first stand fast in God's counsel. There must be sufficient room left in that counsel to provide a place for the will and the judgment of this free and independent petitioner, who wants his will to apply and who through his prayer will exercise influence on the divine will. Thus, approximately, Heyns presents the matter of prayer and the hearing of prayer, entirely in harmony with his conception of two wills in God.

And it lies in the nature of the case that thus prayer comes to stand in irreconcilable conflict with the Scriptural, Reformed conception of the counsel of God, even as the one divine will in Heyns' presentation stands diametrically over against the other.

This brochure is not the place to discuss the subject of prayer at length. Nevertheless, we want to say something about it, especially with a view to the relation between our prayer and the counsel of the Lord our God. And then we must take our starting point in a proper conception of prayer. And such a proper conception does not lie in the direction of Heyns' presentation, as though prayer is an asking for something which we otherwise would not receive, but indeed in the conception of the Heidelberg Catechism, which proceeds from the correct presentation, that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. And this implies that in prayer God stands on the foreground. Prayer is concerned with God, not with the petitioner apart from God, nor with things. And in so far as the petitioner is concerned in prayer, the important thing for him in proper prayer is not things, but the favor of God, which is better than life and better than meat and drink. Indeed the Christian also prays for all spiritual and physical needs; but also his physical and spiritual needs bear an entirely different character, have an entirely different content than those of the ungodly. Prayer is in the highest sense of the word not an asking for something which the petitioner otherwise would not receive in the sense in which Heyns intends this; but it is the acknowledgment, the highest and most noble acknowledgment, that God is God, that He is good, that He is the highest, the only Good, that He alone is the overflowing Fountain of all good. That the ungodly exactly does not acknowledge. He may now and then, especially if he is in need, or if danger threatens that the desires of his flesh will not be fulfilled, imitate the man of prayer. He can sometimes even apparently excel in zeal for prayer, as indeed appears in our days of economic depression. Indeed he knows, and in such times he also shows that he knows, that God, Whom he does not want, is nevertheless God. And when then the wicked world in its wicked way brings the things of natural life into hopeless confusion, it still wants to use God in order to set things straight again. In such times the world can still speak of humiliation and confession of sins, all in order to receive something from God. But it will never acknowledge that God, Who is God, is truly the only good, that outside of Him there lies only death and misery, that His lovingkindness is better than life. That world is and remains God's enemy. Therefore, too, the Lord is far from the prayer of the wicked, and his sacrifice is an abomination to Him. But for the man of prayer, however, this is principally different. He has learned to know God, Who is really God (not merely an idol of the imagination) as the eternal

and only Good and the Source of all goodness. And in prayer he acknowledges this; it is a genuine life's need, too, for him to acknowledge this, even though he knows very well that all that he ever shall receive has been firmly and unchangeably decreed concerning him in God's counsel. It is not at all his purpose to influence the Lord through his prayer, to change His will. His very prayer would die upon his lips if he had even the very least notion that through his prayer God's will and counsel concerning him would change.

Hence, the great, all-dominating content of the Christian's prayer is then also the desire that this God, Whom he knows and delights in as the highest and only Good, may come to revelation as such, and as such may be acknowledged in heaven and on earth, by all that lives and breathes and exists. And to that one mighty, all-dominating desire, which has become the great need of his existence through grace, in his prayer he views as subordinate all things with respect to his personal life and existence, as well as the existence of church and family, of state and society; and he desires these things also only in that light and as subordinate to that one great and mighty desire of his heart, namely, that God may be acknowledged as the only Good. In that prayer he is also fully conscious of the fact that he is in harmony with the counsel of the Lord. For indeed, the universal acknowledgment that God is God and that He is good is also the purpose of God's counsel. There is, therefore, no conflict between the content of prayer as the chief part of thankfulness and the counsel of the Lord. He is also completely certain that this prayer shall be heard, precisely because it is in harmony with God's counsel. This is very plain from the Lord's Prayer. That prayer is concerned with God, and all the rest is completely subordinate to the desire that God may be acknowledged as God. That God's Name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, that His will may be done in heaven and on earth, that is the primary, the great, the all-dominating element in the perfect prayer. All the rest is fully in harmony with and subordinate to that. And let me also point out that thus it is with the prayer to which James points us in the fifth chapter of his powerful letter. This is already plain, in the first place, from the fact that he speaks of an *effectual* prayer of the *righteous man*. The power of a prayer does not consist in this, that we want to compel the Lord to bestow something, and that we simply continue to pray for something and never learn to see that our prayer is not according to God's will, that we want to impose our will upon God. For that is just exactly a very weak and miserable prayer. But the power of a prayer consists indeed in this, that we pray for something as *righteous*, and therefore in harmony with the will of God. And this is even clearer from the example which James cites, the prayer of Elijah. Notice that Elijah did not pray for prosperity, but for adversity, for fearful misery, for

drought and famine, for the languishing of man and beast. If someone would have the courage in our day to pray thus, and it should appear that his effectual prayer indeed availeth much, men would persecute him to the ends of the earth and tear his flesh from his body with red-hot tongs. And why did Elijah pray thus? Because in his name his entire appearance and person was expressed: *my God is Jehovah!* The prophet was concerned about God and about God alone. That not Baal, but Jehovah is God, that had to be revealed, and that had to be acknowledged by Israel. And to him it was better that the people in their Baal-worship would perish from misery, would pine away and suffer famine, than that they should forsake God and have prosperity. And only when that purpose is reached does he pray again and with the same purpose, and does there come rain from heaven. That is indeed an effectual prayer of the righteous, a prayer which is concerned with the acknowledgment of God as the only and highest good!

Therefore, too, in the third place, prayer is also a turning to that Source, to that overflowing Fountain of all good, in order to drink from that Source, with the acknowledgment that His favor strengthens more than meat and drink, that His lovingkindness is better than life. The petitioner has learned to experience and to acknowledge that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. He must have God's favor. Therefore by grace in prayer he opens his heart toward God, even as a flower opens its bud before the light of the sun, in order with and through every means to partake of the grace of God. In that sense what Heyns says is true, that in the way of prayer the petitioner receives what he would not and could not receive without prayer. When bread stands before him on a well-furnished table, the ungodly can very well eat, he indeed receives bread, and that bread will also feed his body; but he eats it under God's wrath, and the curse of Jehovah is in his house. He exactly receives no grace, although he has abundant bread. But the child of God has another need. He goes to the Source, in order through the means of bread in thankfulness to drink from the Source even grace for grace. In a word, the pious and sanctified petitioner is always concerned about God. And whereas God is also concerned about Himself, about the acknowledgment and glorification of Himself, there is certainly never any essential conflict between the effectual prayer of the righteous and God's counsel.

But there is something further.

We must also place ourselves before the question where prayer really has its origin, what really is the idea of prayer, and how it comes into existence. And then we may certainly remark, in the first place, that the connection



between the prayers of God's people and the things which happen in the world upon those prayers, is without any doubt fixed in the counsel of God. God's people are of God's party. They are the people of God's covenant. God blesses those who bless them, and He curses him who curses them. And they stand for God's covenant, for God's name and cause in the midst of the world. They do this also in their prayer. As God's covenant people, as of God's party, they pray for God's cause. And in this they put their trust in the living God alone. They look away from all else, in order to put their trust in Him alone. And they stand as priests of the Most High God in Christ Jesus in the midst of the world also in their prayers, entirely according to the counsel of God's will. God has willed that in the midst of the world they should come to manifestation as of His party. Therefore God has also willed, for the revelation of His glorious name, to put the things which shall take place in connection with the prayer of the righteous, in order that it should be revealed that He is their Friend and blesses them, and that they who put their trust in the living God are never put to shame. According to the counsel of His will, it pleases God to do many things in connection with and through the prayers of the saints. Exactly because of this the prayer of the righteous availeth much, exactly as much as it has pleased God to realize through them. Heyns is of the opinion that this is only hearing of prayer in appearance, but that comes about through the fact that he conceives of the relation of the petitioner to God in a Pelagian way. That may not be. It is always: God all in all. And also in and through the prayers of the saints God is His own party. The covenant is God's alone. If Heyns understood this, he would not write in such a strange and enigmatic matter about prayers in relation to the counsel of God.

Furthermore, it must here be kept in mind that the Lord God through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Author, the Worker of our prayers. That our prayers belong to the part of thankfulness, that they belong to good works and have among them the highest place, Heyns will certainly concede. That God has prepared all our good works, and thus also our prayers, from before the foundation of the world, in order that we should walk in them, Heyns will surely also concede, so that it is indeed established according to Scripture that our prayers in connection with their being heard have a place in God's counsel. But to this must be added that the Lord God is also the Worker in us of our good works, in order that we may walk in them, the Worker also of our prayers which we pray according to His will. He does this subjectively through the Spirit of Christ in our hearts, through Whom alone we will God's will, honor and acknowledge Him as the highest and only Good, and desire nothing higher than the realization of His honor. It is even true of the content of some prayers

that they are specifically inspired by the Spirit. It goes without saying that this is true of such mighty prayers as those of the prophet Elijah. And objectively God does this through His Word, whereby He instructs His own in the knowledge of His will, in order that they may be able to pray according to that will. Hence, the more God's people grow in the knowledge and grace of Christ Jesus, the more practiced they shall become in the high and holy art of prayer according to the will of God.

If we understand all this, it will certainly not be difficult to trace the relationship between God's counsel and the prayers of the saints. The dualism and the irreconcilable contradiction which Heyns thinks to see here fall completely away. There is the most beautiful harmony. In the first place, it may be noted that no child of God would ever think of praying for something contrary to the counsel of the Lord God. On the contrary, he very definitely desires that counsel. In his prayer he never desires anything else than that counsel of God. In a very real sense he also never prays for anything else than the realization of that counsel. And he knows, too, that only in so far as he prays according to that counsel shall his prayer also be heard. How nonsensical it is to say that the hearing of prayer is nothing more than appearance becomes plain as soon as we think in this connection of the prayer of the Mediator in heaven. He certainly prays in the very highest sense for nothing else than for God's counsel. He wills that where He is, there they whom the Father has given Him may also be with Him. Is it then nothing else than appearance, Prof. Heyns, when His prayer is heard?

But even so all has not been said. The child of God after all does not pray merely formally for the fulfillment of God's counsel, without anything more. Then, of course, he would never pray anything else than: Thy counsel be done, Lord! And this is not only in conflict with the reality of life, but is also contrary to Scripture and in conflict with the calling of God's covenant people in the world. Their prayer must also have content. They must also know the will of God, and the things of God's counsel must also become their need, do indeed become their needs. It is their life's need that God's name be hallowed, that God's will be done, and His kingdom come, that they receive their daily bread from God, with the forgiveness of sins and the deliverance from the Evil One. And therefore the child of God will apply himself to know the will of God, in order that also in his prayer he may will that will. In so far therefore as God has revealed His counsel to His people (and He has done that for the sake of His covenant) God's people can know that counsel and can also give content to their prayer.

Of course, the petitioner does not know the details of that counsel. In

general lines he understands the will and counsel of God, even to the very end of the world, in relation to all things. But in its details he does not know the way of God, and he also does not need to know it. Hence, there are many things with respect to which he does not know what he should pray. And yet it will be in his heart also to bring those things before God, to make known to God his desires and groanings, and to lay them before the face of the Lord. But with respect to those things let it be noted, in the first place, that we may never desire or pray anything that is not in harmony with the purity of God's holiness. Sinful desires, desires for earthly, worldly things, for the things of the flesh, desires which really do not have God as their highest object, must most certainly be fought against and not brought into the prayers of the saints. Our desires in relation to the things of which we do not know whether they are included in God's counsel must therefore be absolutely holy. Let our prayer always remain the prayer of the righteous. In the second place, with respect to those things of which the child of God does not know whether they are included in God's counsel the attitude of his prayer will always be expressed in the words: "Thy will be done!" And then he prays, after all, very really again for the fulfillment of the counsel of the Lord, subjecting his own desires to that counsel. And, in the third place, we must also not forget with respect to those same things, that when we know not what we should pray for, the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God!

# The History of the Free Offer Idea

Professor H. Hanko

## INTRODUCTION

While the doctrine of common grace was a central issue in the doctrinal controversies which led to the establishment of the Protestant Reformed Churches, imbedded in these issues concerning common grace was also the doctrine of the free offer of the gospel. In the first point of common grace, adopted by the Christian Reformed Church at the Synod of 1924, we find mention made of this idea, although in somewhat of a passing manner. The first point reads:

Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general and not only towards the elect, synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confession that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from the Scriptural passages quoted and from the Canons of Dordrecht, II, 5 and III, IV, 8 and 9, *which deal with the general offer of the Gospel*, while it also appears from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed theology that our Reformed writers from the past favored this view. (Italics ours to indicate the reference in this decision to the free offer.)

In the discussions which followed the adoption of this statement of doctrine, the reference to the free offer was often called, "het puntje van het eerste punt." (The main point of the first point.) While it is our intention to deal more specifically with this question at a later date, the point we wish to make now is that a denial of the free offer of the gospel is a part of the doctrinal confession of the Protestant Reformed Churches from their very beginning.

This denial of the free offer of the gospel by the Protestant Reformed Churches has set them apart from almost every ecclesiastical fellowship. It is difficult to find today a denomination, whether of Reformed or Presbyterian persuasion, which has not committed itself, either officially or unofficially to the idea of the free offer. The whole notion has not only been widely accepted,

but the charge of hyper-Calvinism has been hurled against those that deny it. The idea behind this charge is, of course, that true Calvinism includes in it the whole conception of the free offer of the gospel. Those who repudiate this conception are not faithful to the teachings of Calvin nor to the genius of Calvinism.

It is our purpose in this series of articles to trace the history of the idea of the free offer throughout the time of the New Testament church. Where did the idea come from? What is its historical development? How did such ideas creep into the church? Have they always stood in the mainstream of the development of the truth? Or is it rather true that they have been consistently and repeatedly repudiated by the church when it stood doctrinally the strongest? An investigation of these questions will shed some interesting light upon the whole question.

We are not now arguing that the history of the faith of the church is in any way decisive in determining the truth or falsity of the idea of the free offer. Scripture alone is our rule of faith and life. Regardless of what the church in former years may or may not have taught, this history of the doctrine may not determine for us whether we should accept as true the point in question. The final arbiter is always God's Holy Word. If all the church in the past has repudiated this idea, but Scripture teaches it, then we too must believe and confess it. But the opposite is also true. If all the church in the past has consistently held to this doctrine, and yet the Scriptures do not teach it, the testimony of Scripture stands above all else.

Yet a study of the question from the viewpoint of history is an important one. It is important because the Scriptures teach that Christ has promised the church the Spirit of Truth to lead the church into all truth (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). While it certainly is possible for the church to err and while indeed the church has erred many times in the past, the fact remains that the united testimony of the church is of some weight. If, e.g., it is true that the church from earliest New Testament times has confessed the truth of the divinity of Christ and this truth has never been called into question by the church, but that rather deniers of this truth have been consistently condemned, then we have a certain weight of history to consider. Believing the presence of the Spirit of Truth and finding that a given doctrine is confessed in every age by the church, at the very least this ought to give us pause if we are in some doubt whether or not the Scriptures teach this doctrine. Am I alone a possessor of the Spirit of Truth in this instance, while all the church before me lacked His presence? It is indeed a question which the child of God who earnestly seeks to know the truth seriously considers.

If it can be shown from history that not only has the church not confessed a given doctrine in most of her history, but rather has condemned it when it appeared in the teachings of various men within the church, that ought to make us hesitate to insist upon the fact that Scripture teaches this particular position. Once again, the question is: Do I want to place myself on the side of those who have been consistently repudiated by the church as teaching something contrary to Scripture? If Scripture itself requires this of me, then, of course, I do — regardless of the consequences. But the fact remains that I had better be very sure. To go against the testimony of the church of all ages is indeed a bold move. And one cannot be too certain that his position is firmly and unequivocally taught by Holy Writ. A study of history can be enlightening and helpful.

This is especially true of the doctrine of the free offer. While it is sometimes maintained that the doctrine of the free offer has the weight of history behind it, this is a false and empty claim. A study of the history of doctrine within the church will show that quite the contrary is true. Quite consistently the doctrine of the free offer has been held by heretics who were condemned by the church. Quite consistently the church has refused to adopt any such doctrine. The weight of history is surely behind those who deny that this is the teaching of Scripture. It is this assertion which we hope to prove in this and subsequent articles.

While it is impossible to avoid completely a Scriptural analysis of the idea of the free offer, it is not our intent in these articles to engage in any such exegetical study. Our purpose is primarily historical, and to the historical data we intend to limit ourselves as much as possible.<sup>1</sup> It is to the history of this doctrine then that we turn our attention.

## THE SEMI-PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY

We turn our attention first of all to the Semi-Pelagian controversy which occupied so much of the attention of the great church father, Augustine. A study of this controversy will soon show that, while the issue of the free offer of the gospel was not itself explicitly a point of controversy, nevertheless many of the doctrinal implications of the idea of the free offer were. Anyone who has any acquaintance with the teachings of the free offer will recognize that related issues were indeed issues back already in the middle of the fifth century when Augustine fought hard and long for the truth of sovereign grace.

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<sup>1</sup> The doctrinal and exegetical issues involved in this question have been often treated in Protestant Reformed literature, most recently ! Rev. D. Engelsma's excellent book, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*. This literature is available at the address printed in the front of this *Journal*. Engelsma's book also contains some historical material.

It is not our purpose here to deal in detail and at length with the whole question of Semi-Pelagianism, for this would take far too much of our time. But it is our purpose to demonstrate that those who adopted a Semi-Pelagian position and opposed, often bitterly and fiercely, the teachings of Augustine, taught also many of the same doctrines which are an integral part of free offer theology and which are held by those who make the free offer an essential part of their teaching.

As is generally known, the Semi-Pelagian controversy followed upon the Pelagian controversy which first occupied the attention of Augustine. And it is also rather well-known that the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius had as its starting point the idea of the free will of man. In a way it was not surprising that this should indeed be the starting point of Pelagius' error because the idea of free will had been, prior to this, rather generally accepted in the early church.

We must, however, understand exactly why this was so. Up to the time of Augustine the church had not really paid a great deal of attention to questions of soteriology. Preoccupied with the many and varied controversies concerning the doctrine of the trinity and the Person and natures of Christ, the church had neither the time nor the occasion to deal extensively with the teaching of Scripture on the doctrines of salvation by grace. Generally speaking, therefore, a certain idea of free will prevailed in the thinking of the early church. However, strangely enough, the church also held to the truth of salvation by grace alone. The two doctrines were held together and little or no thought was given to the question of how these two doctrines could be reconciled. The question simply was not closely examined nor extensively studied in the light of Holy Writ.

It was furthermore true that the church, already at this time, had committed itself to the idea of the meritorious character of good works, an idea which was finally to prevail in Roman Catholic thought and which was not banished from the thinking of the church until the time of the Protestant Reformation. But the idea of the meritorious character of good works is intimately connected with the idea of free will, for it is obvious that good works can have no merit unless, in some sense, they originate in the power of man to perform them. In fact, it was undoubtedly precisely this idea of merit which made it impossible for Augustinianism to prevail in the Roman Catholic Church after Augustine's death. The church was, in a certain sense, confronted with the question of whether it was to adopt a pure Augustinianism which would require that it abandon its commitment to the merit of good works, or hold to this idea of the merit of good works and turn its back on Augustine's teachings. As everyone knows, the latter course of action was followed by the Romish Church.

Pelagius had taught that the will is free in an absolute sense of the word. Even after the fall, the will of man possessed the same power for good (or evil) which the will of Adam possessed. That is, at any point in the life of a man, when confronted with the choice of good or evil, it was within man's capability to choose either the one or the other. It is true that man's ability to choose the good is somewhat weakened by sin; but sin is only a habit and in no way affects the nature of man. While indeed a habit may become somewhat ingrained in the man's way of life, the fact remains that the will is not essentially affected and the power to choose for the good remains intact and unimpaired.

It was against this heresy that Augustine carried on his polemic. The result of his work was that Pelagianism was officially condemned by the church as early as the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

But this was by no means the end of the matter. Opposition arose to Augustine's teachings in various parts of the church, especially in Southern Gaul. Over against Pelagius Augustine had taught the absolute inability of the human will of fallen and natural man to choose for the good. Man fell in Adam; and the result of the fall for the whole human race was that man lost completely any ability to do the good not only, but also to will it. His salvation was dependent, therefore, upon grace. While Pelagius had also spoken of grace, he had insisted that grace was little more than a help, a measure of divine assistance, and was by no means essential to salvation. Augustine, on the other hand, taught the absolute necessity of God's work of grace in salvation. If the question was asked Augustine, as it was, what was the determining factor in who received this gift of grace and who did not, his answer was, sovereign predestination according to which God sovereignly chooses His own elect from all eternity.

These doctrines of the sovereignty of grace and predestination were the subject of controversy. And it was in opposition to these views of Augustine that theological positions similar to those which are connected with the free offer were proposed.

One of the opponents of Augustine was Cassian. Cassian did not agree with the position of Pelagius that the will is free in an absolute sense of the word, but he did insist on maintaining that the will is free to a certain extent. Sin as it entered the human race through the fall of Adam did not rob man of a free will, but sin did weaken man's will so that it is difficult for man to choose for the good and he is in need of divine assistance.

Just as Augustine's teaching of the inability of the human will to choose for the good led him to the doctrine of sovereign predestination via the truth of sovereign grace, so also did Cassian proceed from the idea of a free will to the doctrine of a divine love which wills the salvation of all. It ought to be clear



how these two ideas stand connected: if salvation is ultimately dependent upon the choice of man's will and not upon the choice of God in sovereign predestination, then it is obvious that God on His part loves all and seeks the salvation of all. God's love, which is all-embrasive, extends to all men. Whether a man is ultimately saved depends upon his own choice of the overtures of love.

These views of Cassian were followed by Prosper.

There has always been some question whether Prosper in fact taught Semi-Pelagian views. This doubt arises from the fact that Prosper engaged in extensive correspondence with Augustine over these questions and was the chief means by which Augustine learned of the teachings of various theologians in Gaul. It is not always easy to tell from Prosper's correspondence whether he was expressing his own opinions or merely informing Augustine of what others taught and asking for more light on these matters.

However, it seems almost certain that he was not completely in agreement with the views of Augustine and that, especially towards the end of his life, he agreed substantially with the position which Cassian had taken. In fact, it is quite possible that he was responsible for advancing the views of Cassian in some respects. It is almost certain that Prosper is the one who introduced into the discussion the distinction in the will of God which posited one will which was universal and conditional, and an other will which was particular and unconditional. Wanting in some sense to maintain the sovereignty of God in the work of grace and in predestination, and yet committed to the idea of free will, he spoke of a will of God which was expressive of God's desire to save everyone, a will which was therefore, conditional, and a will which was particular and unconditional, limited therefore only to the elect and realized in the work of sovereign grace.

That Prosper was Semi-Pelagian in his views is substantiated by the contention of many that he is the author of a pamphlet which appeared at that time under the title: *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium*. This pamphlet dealt particularly with the aspect of grace as it related to the controversy. The author made a distinction between general grace and particular grace. General grace stands connected with general revelation in the sense that general revelation reveals this general grace of God to all. In fact, however, this general grace which comes through God's revelation in creation is also inwardly applied to the heart of every man so that it becomes in man the origin of all religion. Particular grace, on the other hand, is given only to some and is necessary to salvation. The general grace, which all receive, is expressive of God's will that all be saved.<sup>2</sup>

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2 This idea that particular grace is built upon general grace and that general grace

Now anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with the theology of the free offer recognizes immediately how all these ideas are an integral part of that concept. From the time that the idea of the free offer appeared in Reformed and Presbyterian thinking, it was inevitably discussed and developed in connection with the idea of a double will in God. And as often as not, the free offer stands also inseparably related to some notion of general grace. It is striking, therefore, to note that these views were held by the opponents of Augustine and repudiated by the great church father and valiant defender of the truth of sovereign, unconditional grace rooted in eternal election.

One more opponent of Augustine occupies our attention. He was Faustus, ordained bishop of 454. He too spoke of a general grace which precedes special grace and the use of which is essential to special grace. General grace, bestowed without distinction upon all men, becomes the means whereby the free will of man is preserved along with a certain religious and moral sense. Only when, by the use of this general grace, does man, with his free will, choose for the good, is special grace given to him by which he is actually saved. And so, for Faustus too, special grace was built upon general grace and salvation was dependent upon the will of man.

Although Augustine had outlined his basic position in the Pelagian controversy, the attacks of the so-called Semi-Pelagians forced him to define more sharply and defend more carefully his views. It was because of the attacks of the Semi-Pelagians that Augustine was brought back once again to Scripture to study the Scriptural passages involved and to re-evaluate his work in the light of the Word of God.

It is of considerable significance that, already in Augustine's day, the Semi-Pelagians quoted texts from Scripture which are still used today in the defense of the free offer. This is not to say that their arguments were always based on Scripture. In fact, many of the objections they raised against Augustine's position were identical to the objections which one hears today brought against the truth of sovereign grace and sovereign and eternal predestination. And Augustine often chides his opponents with being content with arguments from human reason rather than basing their position on the Word of God. But in so far as they did make use of Scripture, they appeal to such texts as Romans 2:4, I Timothy 2:4, and II Peter 3:9, all texts which have been repeatedly appealed to by defenders of the free offer.

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stands connected with general revelation is an idea not foreign to many theologians who have in more recent years adopted the idea of the free offer. Confer, e.g., H. Bavinck's, "Our Reasonable Faith," chapters 3 and 4; Masselink's, "General Revelation and Common Grace."

In his explanation of these passages Augustine insisted that they must be interpreted as applying only to the elect. And in defending this position on the basis of Scripture, he became increasingly convinced of the Biblical soundness of his position and of the wrongness of the position taken by his opponents. He reaffirmed and re-emphasized the truths of sovereign grace in all the work of salvation and of eternal and sovereign predestination.

His views, however, did not prevail in the church of his day. Although several condemned to some extent the views of the Semi-Pelagians, nevertheless none stood firmly for the doctrines of Augustine. As we suggested earlier in this essay, this was perhaps due to the fact that the church had already committed itself to some idea of free will in connection with its determination to preserve the merit of good works.

Whatever the case may be, the fact is that in 529, the Council of Orange spoke decisively on this question. While this Council condemned certain aspects of the teachings of the Semi-Pelagians, and while it also affirmed certain doctrines of Augustine, the fact is that the Council refused to adopt a pure Augustinianism. While it affirmed the doctrine of original sin and the unconditional necessity of grace, it left room for the notion of sin as an illness rather than as spiritual death and it was silent on such key doctrines as the absolute inability of the will to choose for the good, and sovereign and double predestination. It only saw fit to warn against the notion of a predestination to evil, something which Augustine did not teach. In effect, Semi-Pelagianism won the day.

What is our conclusion from this brief study?

In the first place, the idea of the offer of the gospel was not as such expressed during this controversy. In a way this was understandable. On the one hand, the whole truth concerning the preaching of the gospel had not received theological attention at this time and no Scriptural details of the doctrine had been set forth by the church. The question of the relation between these views of the Semi-Pelagians and the preaching was not, therefore, faced. On the other hand, Rome itself, with the development of the sacerdotal system, had already begun to de-emphasize the preaching in favor of an emphasis on the sacraments.

Nevertheless, several ideas which have throughout history been closely associated with the doctrine of the free offer and which, in fact, have been woven into the warp and woof of free offer theology were already taught in this period. We refer to such ideas as the freedom of the will, a double will in God which both desires the salvation of all men and which wills the salvation only of the elect, a general grace which all receive and a special grace which is conditionally granted upon the choice of the will, and a general love of God for all which is expressed in the desire of God to save all.

Against all these views Augustine stood firm in his defense of sovereign grace. And, while his views surely did not prevail in his time nor in subsequent centuries, nevertheless, they were once again made the confession of the church and developed at the time of the Reformation. To the Reformers we next turn our attention.

## The Scottish Reformers' View of the Magistrate in the Church-State Relationship (2)

Mr. T. Miersma

[Note: In the previous issue of our *Journal* Rev. Miersma showed that, because the Reformation in Scotland was accomplished primarily by the people and the lesser nobility, and in the face of opposition from the higher powers, one of the central issues in that Reformation was that of the biblical concept of the magistrate, and of the proper relationship between the subject and the ruler. Since John Knox was the key figure in the Scottish Reformation, Rev. Miersma referred us to his perspective on that issue, as Knox presented it in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*. Fundamental to Knox's conception of the magistrate is his distinction between the person and the office. He argued that the person who holds the office of magistrate abrogates the authority of that office when he transgresses its limits, as when, for example, he promotes idolatry or persecutes the church of God. What, then, is the calling of the people, and of the lower magistrates (who in Scotland supported the Reformation), over against those ungodly "powers that be"? When is refusal to submit to those powers legitimate? When is it sedition and rebellion? That was the question

which arose in the Scottish Reformation, and the question with which the former article concluded.]

The principle which developed in the Scottish Reformation was that it pertained as much to the lower nobility and magistrate as to the higher to fulfill the calling of the magistrate and to reform religion. In this connection they served notice to the Queen Regent that her power was limited by God's Word and that they felt it their calling as magistrates and as nobility of the realm, as well as citizens of the realm, to take up the sword, in the just defense of the innocent. They speak as follows:

Where that she says that it is no religion that we go about, but a plain usurpation of the Authority, God forbid that such impiety should enter into our hearts, that we should make his holy religion a cloak and coverture of our iniquity. From the beginning of this controversy, it is evidently known what have been our requests, which if the rest of the Nobility and community of Scotland will cause be performed unto us, if then any sign of rebellion appear in us, let us be reputed and punished as traitors. But while strangers are brought in to suppress us, our commonwealth, and posterity, while idolatry is maintained, and Christ Jesus his true religion despised, while idle bellies and bloody tyrants, the bishops, are maintained, and Christ's true messengers persecuted; while, finally, virtue is contemned, and vice extolled, while that we, a great part of the Nobility and commonalty of this realm, are most unjustly persecuted, what godly man can be offended that we shall seek reformation of these enormities (yea, even by force of arms, seeing that otherways it is denied unto us)? We are assured that neither God, neither nature, neither any just law, forbids us. God has made us councillors by birth of this realm; nature binds us to love our own country; and just laws command us to support our brethren unjustly persecuted. Yea, the oath that we have made, to be true to this commonwealth, compels us to hazard whatsoever God has given us, before that we see the miserable ruin of the same. If any think this is not religion which now we seek, we answer, that it is nothing else but the zeal of the true religion which moves us to this enterprise: For as the enemy does craftily foresee that idolatry cannot be universally maintained, unless that we be utterly suppressed, so do we consider that the true religion (the purity whereof we only require) cannot be universally erected, unless strangers be removed, and this poor realm purged of these pestilances which before have infected it. And therefore, in the name of the eternal God, and of his Son Christ Jesus, whose cause we sustain, we require all our brethren, natural Scotsmen,

prudently to consider our requests, and with judgment to discern betwix us and the Queen Regent and her faction, and not to suffer themselves to be abused by her craft and deceit, that either they shall lift their weapons against us their brethren, who seek nothing but God's glory, either yet that they extract from us their just and debtful support, seeing that we hazard our lives for preservation of them and us, and of our posterity to come. . .<sup>1</sup>

For the nobility and magistrates to allow murder and persecution to occur under them, would be to abrogate their own office, and that they might not do before God. As councillors of the realm they must enforce both tables of the law, even if that means opposition to the higher authority, by them who are lower magistrates. The culmination of this process was found in the deposition of the Regent from her office by the nobility because she had abrogated her office. The grounds for that deposition are as follows:

The whole Nobility, Barons, and Burghs, then present, were commanded to convene in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh the same 21 day of October for deliberation of these matters. Where the whole cause being expounded by the Lord Ruthven, the question was proponed, "Whether she that so contemptuously refused the most humble request of the born Councillors of the realm, being also but a Regent, whose pretences threatened the bondage of the whole commonwealth, ought to be suffered so tyrannously to empire above them?" And because that this question had not been before disputed in open assembly, it was thought expedient that the judgment of the Preachers should be required; who being called and instructed in the case, John Willock, who before had sustained the burden of the Church in Edinburgh, (being) commanded to speak, made discourse, as followeth, affirming:

"First, That albeit magistrates by God's ordinance, having of him power and authority, yet is not their power so largely extended but that (it) is bounded and limited by God in his word.

"And Secondly, That as subjects are commanded to obey their magistrates, so are magistrates commanded to give some duty to the subjects; so that God, by his word, has prescribed the office of the one and of the other.

"Thirdly, That albeit God hath appointed magistrates his lieutenants on earth, and has honoured them with his own title, calling them gods, that yet He did never so establish any but that, for just causes, they might have been deprived.

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1 Knox, Volume I, pp. 243-244.

"Fourthly, That in deposing of Princes, and those that had been in authority, God did not always use his immediate power; but sometimes He used other means which his wisdom thought good and justice approved, as by Asa He removed Maachah, his own mother, from honour and authority, which before she had brooked (editor's note: possessed); by Jehu He destroyed Jehoram, and the whole posterity of Ahab; and by divers others He had deposed from authority those whom before He had established by his own word." And hereupon concluded he, "That since the Queen Regent denied her chief duty to the subjects of this realm, which was to minister justice unto them indifferently, to preserve their liberties from invasion of strangers, and to suffer them have God's word freely and openly preached amongst them; seeing, moreover, that the Queen Regent was an open and obstinate idolatress, a vehement maintainer of all superstition and idolatry; and finally, that she utterly despised the counsel and requests of the Nobility and Barons of the realm, might not justly deprive her from all regiment and authority amongst them."

Hereafter was the judgment of John Knox required who, approving the sentence of his Brother, added,

"First, That the iniquity of the Queen Regent and (her) disorder ought in nowise to withdraw neither our hearts, neither yet the hearts of other subjects, from the obedience due unto our Sovereigns.

"Secondly, That and if we deposed the said Queen Regent rather of malice and private envy than for the preservation of the commonwealth, and for that her sins appeared incurable, that we should not escape God's just punishment, howsoever that she had deserved rejection from honours.

"And Thirdly, He required that no such sentence should be pronounced against her, but that (it should allow), upon her known and open repentance, and upon her conversion to the commonwealth, and submission to the Nobility, place should be granted unto her of regress to the same honours, from the which, for just causes, she justly might be deprived."

The votes of every man particularly by himself required, and every man commanded to speak, as he would answer to God, what his conscience judged in that matter, there was none found, amongst the whole number, who did not, by his own tongue, consent to her deprivation.<sup>1</sup>

Just as a minister, elder or deacon may be deposed from office by the church, through its officebearers, so the same principle was applied to the civil authority

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1 *Ibid.*, pp. 249-251.

by the Scottish reformers. Thus Mary of Guise was removed from office in the realm for her unrepentance, but with the provision for her restoration in the way of repentance.

In connection with the question of the role of the people in the suppression of idolatry, the reformers took the position that as idolatry was contrary to the law of God, it must be purged from the country, lest God's judgment come upon the nation. If the nobles refuse to do this, then the people must.

In his reasoning with Lethington in 1564, Knox does not hesitate to say that it was the bounden duty "of the people of God" to arise and destroy idolatry "sparing . . . neither man, woman, nor child. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

It is in this way that Knox faces the whole question of rebellion against the powers that be both by the lower magistrate and by the people. The person and office are to be distinguished. The person may be resisted and the ordinance of God not violated. In his debate with Lethington, Knox argues, when Lethington asks him,

"How will ye prove your division and difference," said Lethington, "and that the person placed in authority may be resisted, and God's ordinance not transgressed, seeing that the Apostle says, 'He that resists (the power), resisteth the ordinance of God.' "

"My Lord," said he, "the plain words of the Apostle make the difference; and the facts of many approved by God prove my affirmative. First, the Apostle affirms, that the powers are ordained of God, for the preservation of quiet and peaceable men, and for the punishment of malefactors; whereof it is plain, That the ordinance of God, and the power given unto man, is one thing, and the person clad with the power or with the authority, is another; for God's ordinance is the conservation of mankind, the punishment of vice, the maintaining of virtue, which is in itself holy, just, constant, stable and perpetual. But men clad with the authority, are commonly profane and unjust; yea, they are mutable and transitory, and subject to corruption, as God threateneth them by his Prophet David, saying, 'I have said, Ye are gods, and every one of you the sons of the Most Highest; but ye shall die as men, and the Princes shall fall like others.' Here I am assured, that persons, the soul and body of wicked princes, are threatened with death. I think that such ye will not affirm is the authority, the ordinance and the power, wherewith God has endued such persons; for as I have said, as

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1 William Croft Dickinson, editor, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Introduction, Volume I, p. liii.



it is holy, so it is the permanent will of God. And now, my Lord, that the Prince may be resisted, and yet the ordinance of God not violated, it is evident; for the people resisted Saul, when he had sworn by the living God that Jonathan should die. The people (I say), swore in the contrary, and delivered Jonathan, so that one hair of his head fell not. Now, Saul was the anointed King, and they were his subjects, and yet they so resisted him that they made him no better than mansworn."

"I doubt," said Lethington, "if in so doing the people did well."

"The Spirit of God," said the other, "accuses them not of any crime, but rather praises them, and damns the King, as well for his foolish vow and law made without God, as for his cruel mind that so severely would have punished an innocent man. But herein I shall not stand: this that follows shall confirm the former. This same Saul commanded Ahimelech and the Priests of the Lord to be slain, because they had committed treason, as he alleged, for intercommuning with David. His guard and principal servants would not obey his unjust commandment; but Doeg the flatterer put the King's cruelty to execution. I will not ask your judgment, Whether that the servants of the King, in not obeying his commandment, resisted God or not? Or whether Doeg, in murdering the Priests, gave obedience to a just authority? For I have the Spirit of God, speaking by the mouth of David, to assure me of the one as well as of the other; for he, in his 52nd Psalm, damns that fact as a most cruel murder, and affirms that God would punish, not only the commander, but the merciless executor. And therefore, I conclude, that they who gainstood his commandment, resisted not the ordinance of God.

"And now, my Lord, to answer to the place of the Apostle who affirms, 'That such as resists the power, resists the ordinance of God'; I say, that the power in that place is not to be understood of the unjust commandment of men, but of the just power wherewith God has armed his Magistrates and Lieutenants to punish sin and maintain virtue. As if any man should enterprise to take from the hands of a lawful judge a murderer, an adulterer, or any other malefactor that by God's law deserved death, this same man resisted God's ordinance, and procured to himself vengeance and damnation, because that he stayed God's sword to strike. But so it is not, if that men in the fear of God oppose themselves to the fury and blind rage of princes; for so they resist not God, but the Devil, who abuses the sword and authority of God,"<sup>1</sup>

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1 Knox, Volume II, pp. 117-118.

The question of the mass in particular became a focal point for this issue as it was a matter of conscience for the Reformed party in Scotland. In the first place they were faced with the question as to whether they could participate or submit themselves to those sacraments, and secondly, with the question as to their calling as Christian magistrates and citizens. Thus we read of the Barons of Scotland as follows:

While that the Queen Regent practised with the Prelates how that Christ Jesus his blessed Evangel might utterly be suppressed within Scotland, God so blessed the labors of his weak servants, that no small part of the Barons of this Realm began to abhor the tyranny of the Bishops: God did so open their eyes by the light of his word, that they could clearly discern betwix idolatry and the true honouring of God. Yea, men almost universally began to doubt whether that they might (God not offended) give their bodily presence to the Mass, or yet offer their children to the papistical baptism. To the which doubts, when the most godly and the most learned in Europe had answered, both by word and writ, affirming, "That neither of both we might do, without the extreme peril of our souls," we began to be more troubled; for then also began men of estimation and that bare rule among us, to examine themselves concerning their duties, as well towards Reformation of Religion, as towards the just defence of their brethren most cruelly persecuted. And so began divers questions to be moved, to wit, "If that with safe conscience such as were judges, lords, and rulers of the people, might serve the upper powers in maintaining idolatry, in persecuting their brethren, and in suppressing Christ's truth?" Or, "Whether they, to whom God in some cases had committed the sword of justice, might suffer the blood of their brethren to be shed in their presence, without any declaration that such tyranny displeased them?" By the plain Scriptures it was found, "That a lively faith required a plain confession, when Christ's truth is oppugned; that not only are they guilty that do evil, but also they that assent to evil." And plain it is, that they assent to evil who, seeing iniquity openly committed, by their silence seem to justify and allow whatsoever is done.<sup>1</sup>

Knox's position on the resistance to the higher powers and the duties of Christian citizens shows a certain variation from the views of the other reformers on this subject. In his debate with Lethington, Lethington reads to Knox the judgments of the most famous men of Europe regarding the question of submission to the magistrate. Knox describes the incident and his response:

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1 Knox, Volume I, p. 147.

And with that he called for his papers, which produced by Mr. Robert Maitland, he began to read with great gravity the judgments of Luther, Melancthon, (and) the minds of Bucer, Musculus, and Calvin, how Christians should behave themselves in time of persecution; yea, the Book of Baruch was not omitted with this conclusion. "The gathering of these things," said he, "has cost more travail than I took these seven years in reading of any commentaries."

"The more pity," said the other, "and yet, what ye have profited your own cause, let others judge. But as for my argument, I am assured, ye have infirmed it nothing; for your first two witnesses speak against the Anabaptists, who deny that Christians should be subject to magistrates, or yet that (it) is lawful for a Christian to be a magistrate; which opinion I no less abhor than ye do, or any other that lives do. The others speak of Christians, subject unto tyrants and infidels, so dispersed that they have no other force but only to sob to God for deliverance. That such indeed should hazard any further than these godly men will them, I cannot hastily be of counsel. But my argument has another ground; for I speak of the people assembled together in one body of a Commonwealth, unto whom God has given sufficient force, not only to resist, but also to suppress all kind of open idolatry: and such a people yet again I affirm, are bound to keep their land clean and unpolluted. And that this my division shall not appear strange unto you, ye shall understand that God required one thing of Abraham and of his seed when he and they were strangers and pilgrims in Egypt and Canaan; and another thing required he of them when they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and the possession of the land of Canaan (was) granted unto them. At the first, and during all the time of their bondage, God craved no more but that Abraham should not defile himself with idolatry. Neither was he, nor yet his posterity commanded to destroy the idols that were in Canaan or in Egypt. But when God gave unto them the possession of the land, he gave unto them this strait commandment, "Beware that you make league or confederacy with the inhabitants of this land: give not thy sons unto their daughters, nor yet give thy daughters unto their sons. But this shall ye do unto them, cut down their groves, destroy their images, break down their altars, and leave thou no kind of remembrance of those abominations which the inhabitants of the land used before: for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. Defile not thyself, therefore, with their gods."

"To this same commandment, I say, are ye, my Lords, and all such as have professed the Lord Jesus within this realm, bound. For God has wrought no less miracle upon you, both

spiritual and corporal, than he did unto the carnal seed of Abraham. For in what estate your bodies and this poor Realm were, within these seven years, yourselves cannot be ignorant. . .<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is also evident that Knox's conception of the magistrate was intimately connected with his Old Testament hermeneutic. Knox proceeded from a particular exegetical viewpoint, which not only identified Israel and the church, but identified the kingdom of Israel with the kingdom of Scotland. His arguments for the conduct of the nobility and for the resistance of citizens against the unjust acts of rulers, were largely developed from Old Testament examples, and were applied directly to the state in the new dispensation. With regard to the apostles and prophets on the subject of submission to the magistrate, Knox and Lethington had the following exchange:

Lethington said, "In that point we will never agree; and where find ye, I pray you, that ever any of the Prophets or of the Apostles taught such a doctrine that the people should be plagued for the idolatry of the Prince; or yet, that the subjects might suppress the idolatry of their rulers, or punish them for the same?"

"What was the commission given to the Apostles," said he, "my Lord, we know: it was to preach and plant the Evangel of Jesus Christ, where darkness afore have dominion; and therefore it behoved them, first to let them see the light before that they should will them to put to their hands to suppress idolatry. What precepts the Apostles gave unto the faithful in particular, other than that they commanded all to flee from idolatry, I will not affirm: But I find two things which the faithful did: the one was, they assisted their preachers, even against the rulers and magistrates; the other was, they suppressed idolatry where-soever God gave unto them force, asking no leave at the Emperor, nor of his deputies. Read the ecclesiastical history, and ye shall find example sufficient. And as to the doctrine of the Prophets, we know were interpreters of the law of God; and we know they spake as well to the kings as to the people. I read that neither of both would hear them; and therefore came the plague of God upon both. But that they more flattered kings than that they did the people, I cannot be persuaded. Now, God's laws pronounce death, as before I have said, to idolaters without exception of any person. Now, how the Prophets could rightly interpret the law, and how the causes of God's judgments, which ever they threatened should follow idolatry, and

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1 Knox, Volume II, pp. 121-122.

(the) rest of (the) abominations that accompany it (for it is never alone; but still corrupt religion brings with it a filthy and corrupt life), how, I say, the Prophets could reprove the vices, and not show the people their duty, I understand not. And therefore I constantly believe that the doctrine of the Prophets was so sensible, that the kings understood their own abominations, and the people understood what they ought to have done, in punishing and repressing them. But because that the most part of the people were no less rebellious unto God than were their princes, therefore the one and the other convened against God and against his servants. And yet, my Lord, the facts of some Prophets are so evident, that thereof we may collect what doctrine they taught; for it were no small absurdity to affirm that their facts should repugn to their doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

Knox then proceeded to argue with Lethington from the examples of the prophets and the anointing of Jehu. He argues from the binding character of Old Testament Scripture, from the conspiracy against Amaziah in connection with Joash, from Uzziah's attempt to offer sacrifice in the temple and the priests withstanding him. Earlier Knox had cited the incident of Saul's oath and Jonathan's eating of honey in which the people resisted Saul, and in connection with Saul's command to kill Ahimelech and the priests for aiding David, as well as the history of Jeremiah. Knox's conclusion of the matter he expressed thus to Lethington:

"Albeit ye cannot. . .yet I am assured what I have proven, to wit:

"1. That subjects have delivered an innocent from the hands of their king, and therein offended not God.

"2. That subjects have refused to strike innocents when a king commanded, and in so doing denied no just obedience.

"3. That such as struck at the commandment of the king, before God were reputed murderers.

"4. That God has not only of a subject made a king, but also has armed subjects against their natural kings, and commanded them to take vengeance upon them according to his law.

"And last, That God's people have executed God's law against their king, having no further regard to him in that behalf than if he had been the most simple subject within this Realm.

"And therefore, albeit ye will not understand what should be concluded, yet I am assured that not only God's people may, but also that they are bound to do the same where the like

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1 *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

crimes are committed, and when he gives unto them the like power.”<sup>1</sup>

Knox's basis for his position is exegetical. It is this same perspective which shaped his conception of his calling as a minister of the word. It is important to note this moreover because many writers on this subject seem to miss this point. Thus one writer, in commenting on Knox's background, states:

At the University of Glasgow...he (Knox) had among his teachers John Mair, or Major, who had been in the University of Paris, and had brought home with him the Gallican theory of church government, together with radical opinions upon the right of revolution, and the derivation of kingly authority from popular consent. Major had also imbibed the opinion of the ancients that tyrannicide is a virtue. He was not an able man; yet he may have contributed somewhat to the development of kindred opinions in the mind of Knox.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of the evidence presented and Knox's consistent biblical argumentation, this conjecture must be considered doubtful. Another writer, describing the interviews between Mary Queen of Scots and Knox, writes:

What makes these interviews stand forth in history is that they exhibit the first clash of autocratic kingship and the hitherto unknown power of the people. . . “What have ye to do” said she, “with my marriage? Or what are ye within this Commounwealth?” “A subject borne within the same,” said he, “Madam. And albeit I neather be Erle, Lord, nor Barroun within it, yitt hes God maid me (How abject that ever I be in your eyes) a profitable member within the same.”

Modern democracy came into being in that answer. It is curious to see how this conflict between autocratic power and the civil and religious rights of the people runs through all the interviews between Mary and Knox, and was, in truth, the question of questions between them.<sup>3</sup>

This understanding of Knox's position is not correct, as Knox proceeded to make plain to the Queen in the interview in question. To the Queen's question, “What have ye to do with my marriage?” Knox responded as indicated above, but he also said,

“Yea, Madam, to me it appertains no less to forewarn of such things as may hurt it, if I foresee them, than it does to any of

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

2. George P. Fisher, *The Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1873), p. 354, quoting McCrie's *Life of Knox* 6th edition, 1839, p. 30.

3 Thomas M. Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, Volume II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), pp. 313-314.

the Nobility; for both my vocation and conscience crave plainness of me. And therefore, Madam, to yourself I say that which I speak in public place: Whensoever that the Nobility of this Realm shall consent that ye be subject to an unfaithful husband, they do as much as in them lieth to renounce Christ, to banish his truth from them, to betray the freedom of this realm, and perchance shall in the end do small comfort to yourself.”<sup>1</sup>

The point at issue in the discussion was not John Knox’s place as a citizen, but the fact that he was a minister of the gospel, and was called as a minister to warn and admonish. The church has a certain calling in relationship to the state. Knox conceived of that calling as including in the office of minister, the obligation not only to pray for the magistrate, and to exhort the people to be obedient to the magistrate, but also to be, to exhort the magistrate as to his duty before God. The marriage which was being proposed was that of Mary Queen of Scots to the King of Spain, a Roman Catholic. The concern of Knox was that, in the first place, a wife must be in subjection to her husband, and secondly, that the potential husband in question would be an idolater, and would therefore bring the nation and the church into bondage to the papacy again. The perspective of Burleigh is more correct:

It would be an anachronism to interpret this as the voice of democracy. It was the voice of the preacher conscious of his vocation “to speak plainly and to flatter no flesh.”<sup>2</sup>

As is that of Henderson, in the *Burning Bush*, a collection of essays on Scottish church history.

He (Knox) had not himself much respect for mobs, and was no democrat in any modern sense of the word; but both in his later writings and in his speeches to Mary Queen of Scots he made clear his conviction that a monarch who proves unworthy may be deposed, and that rulers should be open to censure for their sins like anyone else.<sup>3</sup>

Knox conceived of his ministerial office in the following terms which he declared to Queen Mary:

“If it please your Majesty,” said he, “patiently to hear me, I shall show the truth in plain words. I grant your Grace offered unto me more than ever I required; but my answer was then, as it is now, that God hath not sent me to await upon the courts

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1 Knox, Volume II, p. 83.

2 J.H.S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 185.

3 G.D. Henderson, *The Burning Bush* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1957), p. 120.

of Princesses, nor upon the chambers of Ladies; but I am sent to preach the Evangel of Jesus Christ to such as please to hear it; and it hath two parts, Repentance and Faith. And now, Madam, in preaching repentance, of necessity it is that the sins of men be so noted that they may know wherein they offend; but so it is that the most part of your Nobility are so addicted to your affections, that neither God's word, nor yet their Commonwealth, are rightly regarded. And therefore it becomes me so to speak, that they may know their duty.<sup>1</sup>

Knox conceived of the minister's calling to be like that of the Old Testament prophets. He was a prophet. As such he must, like the prophets of old, admonish those in authority. He, in several places, cites the examples of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets, to prove his point. And again, we see Knox's Old Testament idea influencing the way in which he shaped his calling as a prophet.

This leads to the question of the broader relation of the church and the state which stood as a contributing factor to the problem of the magistrate and which was partly shaped by the foregoing, the two factors interacting upon each other. The precise relation between the church and state during the time of Knox took on the character of two separate spheres, each with duties and responsibilities to the other. The state must promote the true religion and suppress idolatry. And the church must support the state, admonish subjects to be in subjection to the powers that be, in so far as that does not violate God's law, but it must also admonish rulers as to their duties and calling in the office of magistrate, and that publicly and from the pulpit. Thus the nobility who sat in church must have the word of God applied to them. Both the church and state are subject to the law of God. The exact relationship between church and state was not precisely defined. Speaking of the Confession of Faith, one writer comments,

But indeed not only were the relations of the civil magistrate *to the Church* in Scotland postponed and subordinated to the more immediate claims and more absolute authority of "truth"...but at this early stage these relations were almost wholly ignored, even in the Confession itself, while the magistrate's relation *to truth* is made more emphatic and express.<sup>2</sup>

Gordon Donaldson, in commenting on the relation of church and state, writes,

But the circumstances and the outlook of the sixteenth century

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1 Knox, Volume II, pp. 82-83.

2 A. Taylor Innes, *The Law of Creeds in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1902), p. 11.



were quite different. Church and nation were then co-terminous: each consisted of the same people, each was co-extensive with the whole population, church and state were but different aspects of one and the same society. From this identity it was a logical inference that the magistracy which exercised authority in the state should exercise authority in the church as well. . . . Leaving theory aside, it was only with the help of the crown that papal authority could be abrogated and the papacy superseded, and only with the help of the crown could the existing bishops and other holders of church property and offices be brought either to accept the reformation or to relinquish their benefices to those who would. . . . It is hard to find any writer of the period who would have restricted the magistrate to this negative activity and denied to him the further, positive duty of maintaining the church reformed constraining his subjects to submit to its discipline and exercising a general oversight of its life.<sup>1</sup>

This is true within certain limits. The reason for the overlapping in authority of the church and state was primarily to be found in the question of the temporal needs of the church. The church must have freedom to worship and assemble. The ministers must be supported. It is particularly in the question of the temporal support of the ministers that much conflict arose between the Queen and the church. The reformers felt that it was the state's calling to provide the financial support for the ministers. This went back to the practice of the middle ages in which prelates and bishops possessed lands over which they exercised civil dominion, and from which they received income. Those lands, Queen Mary appropriated to herself upon her return from France and bestowed them upon her Roman Catholic favorites. As these lands and benefices were for the purpose of supporting the clergy, the reformers objected to this on two grounds: the first was that the people holding these benefices claimed to themselves the title of bishop, and upon that title based their right to hold those lands, but in fact, they were not pastors of God's flock. They fulfilled nothing of the office of a bishop. They did no work of the ministry. The reformers therefore argued that the money which was intended to support the ministers should not go to Mary's favorites, but to those who properly fulfilled the calling of a minister. The second objection made was that this money was also being used to finance the crown, and that the crown was using it for its own entertainment, in the way of worldly amusements, particularly dancing and parties. Further it was the duty of the crown to care for the poor, which calling was

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1 Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 131-132.

being neglected. Repeatedly the assemblies of the church sent protests and petitions to the crown concerning this matter with little or no result. Further, adding insult to injury, the crown nominated people to these holdings who were unfit for office. These unfit persons were not tolerated by the church nor were they allowed to function in any office in the church. The result was an impasse, which was never resolved during the reign of Mary. Thus one author writes,

Thus even parochial benefices, benefices traditionally involving the care of souls, were being distributed, (by the crown) mainly to lay titulars without any ecclesiastical control over appointment. Crown action in this particular showed hardly any indication that the existence of the reformed church was so much as acknowledged.

This trend towards secularisation did not go without challenge from the general assembly. In 1562 it petitioned that "persons to be nominated to kirks" were not to be admitted without the "nomination of the people and due examination and admission of the superintendent." . . . But the assembly's requests were not acceptable to the crown, and it remained the law that, while superintendents could admit to pastoral charges, they had no authority to give collation to benefices. There was, indeed, something of an impasse: . . . while the patron could have his nominee put into possession of the fruits of a benefice, he could not have him invested with the spiritual responsibilities properly pertaining to the office.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, while it is true to some extent, that ultimately Presbyterianism was established as the state religion in Scotland, nevertheless, the authority of the magistrate over the church, was largely limited to temporal matters in the time of Knox, such as financing and benefices, and to the suppression of idolatry. Within its own sphere, the church of Scotland developed its own discipline, even deposing a minister for adultery in one instance.

Another factor influencing the situation was that, while the Confession of Faith had been approved by Parliament the Book of Discipline, that is, the church order, had not.

But with this the very first General Assembly and its work, commenced the long and fated question of Church independence. By it the Book of Discipline of the Church was "examined, allowed, and approved," and then, like the doctrinal confession a few months before, presented to the nobility, but with a different result. The Council from the first refused to sanction it; and when the queen returned shortly after it

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1 Donaldson, pp. 150-151.

became hopeless to expect that this could be obtained.

The result was remarkable, and throws the strongest light upon the interesting period between 1560 and 1567, when there was a creed of Scotland established but no Church of Scotland established. The Book of Discipline being rejected by the State, the Church itself approved, . . . this scheme of its polity; and it instantly proceeded to carry it into execution, so far as all matters within its own control were concerned. The General Assembly continued to meet by the authority of the Church itself, and year by year laid the deep foundations of the social and religious future of Scotland. . . . During all this time the records of the first fifteen General Assemblies, preserved in the book of the Universal Kirk show abundantly that the Church did not shrink from exercising all judicial and administrative and legislative – in short, all conceivable – functions of a Church; while for all civil objects and results that her unaided powers, . . . failed to attain, she constantly and clamorously appealed to the State, which for the time refused to hear.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of this situation in Scotland was that to a large extent, the reformed church that took root there, did so apart from the state, though not disconnected from it altogether. The result is that while a state church can be said to have developed in Scotland, the internal ecclesiastical control of the life of the church was, during the reign of Mary, firmly rooted in the hands of the ministers, the General Assembly, and the superintendents. Thus, while the General Assembly did indeed include laymen and nobles, nevertheless, the nobles did not totally dominate. Furthermore, while the church in Scotland acknowledged the temporal powers' authority in things ecclesiastical and temporal, yet because of the conflict with the rulers, that authority neither developed to the point of, nor took on the character of, that of England.

Thus it was particularly the question of the place and authority of the magistrate in relation to the church and the calling of Christian citizens and magistrates, which shaped the Scottish Reformation and gave it its peculiar character.

The issues which are raised by it concerning the magistrate are of abiding significance. Our own Belgic Confession takes the view that the magistrate is an office ordained by God and circumscribed by His Word. It is also evident from Article 36 of that confession and the footnote attached to it that it is the Reformed view that the magistrate in his own sphere has a duty both to the first as well as the second table of the law.

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1 Innes, pp. 19-21.

There are however certain features of Knox's approach which are worthy of evaluation. This is particularly true of his conception of the relation between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Scotland. Knox in his use of the Old Testament fails to clearly distinguish between the Old and New Testament economies. The Old Testament was the time of types and shadows. Though Israel and the church form an organic unity, yet due to the administration of the Old Testament economy, Israel is also typical. This means that the civil legislation was the expression first of all of a spiritual principle, and may not be imported directly into the new dispensation and applied to the state.

The law concerning idolatry may serve as a case in point. In the Old Testament the idolater was to be put to death. By his death he was removed from the people of God and the kingdom of Israel; he was cut off from Canaan, the land of the living. Thus in a concrete way God revealed that such a person was cut off from the heavenly land of Canaan, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Putting the idolater to death was therefore, under the Old Testament economy, an exercise of the keys of the kingdom. Its counterpart in the New Testament economy is excommunication and the use of the key power in the church. Its New Testament application is first of all to the church and to the spiritual kingdom of God, and not to the state.

It is in harmony also with the typical character of the Old Testament economy that we are to understand God's chastisements and judgments upon the nation of Israel. They were accompanied by the Word of God through direct revelation. Knox fails to carefully distinguish between this and God's temporal judgments and chastisements in the new dispensation. In the Old Testament they had a typical dimension, were revelatory in character and purpose and were connected with the revelation and realization of the wonder of grace in Christ.

That Knox fails to make a clear distinction between the Old and New Testament economies lies partly in the historical circumstances under which he labored. Church and state were so intertwined at the time of the Reformation that it was difficult and often impossible to draw a clear distinction between them. Moreover, while the civil legislation of Israel may not be carried over directly to the state in the new dispensation, but speaks first of all spiritually to the church, nevertheless, imbedded in that legislation are certain sound principles which have application to the proper conduct of the state and the exercise of the office of magistrate.

Nor may Knox's examples from the Old Testament concerning lawful resistance to "the powers that be" be rejected out of hand as irrelevant to the situation in Scotland. Behind most of them lies the Biblical principle of obeying

God rather than men. The same thing is true concerning his distinction between the person and the office. The ordinance of God is good and the office of the magistrate is designed for the temporal welfare of the church, that the people of God may live quiet and peaceable lives. The office of magistrate is therefore good, not only in the absolute sense that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," but also from the viewpoint of God's design that the welfare of the church of Christ might be promoted. In this sense Knox is correct that when wicked men occupy that office, they abuse it, and pervert it in the service of sin so that in some sense, the person who holds the office and the office as such must be distinguished. Yet at times Knox carries this distinction too far so that the principle of submission to the higher authority is somewhat neutralized. In Knox's defense, one must remember that the whole problem of submission versus resistance to the higher power must be placed in the context of the particular problems of the Scottish Reformation, of the duties and relation of the higher and lower magistrates. Both higher and lower magistrates had essentially the same calling and the wicked purposes of the one often stood in conflict with the calling of the other.

The problem thus becomes a question of when submission to evil rulers becomes participation in their evil deeds. And, when is one called to resist out of the principle of obeying God rather than men? The confusion between the Old and New Testament economies and the identification of the kingdom of Israel sometimes with the church of Scotland and sometimes with the kingdom of Scotland, add to the complexity, particularly as there was at the time of the Reformation no clear distinction between church and state.

Thus the Scottish Reformation gives a clear historical example of the difficulties involved in applying the Reformed principle that the state has duties towards both tables of the law. It further illustrates the problem of determining what the limits of the power given to the state in connection with the relation of church and state are. And, moreover, it confronts us with the question of how and when the principle of obeying God rather than men may be invoked, with the question of what is lawful submission to the powers that be, and what is not, and with the question of what constitutes sinful rebellion.

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## Pastoral Care

Professor Robert D. Decker

In our previous contributions (November, 1981 issue) we discussed the pastor from the point of view of the spiritual gifts which are required of him. We saw that the pastor must be characterized by: Spirituality or genuine piety, knowledge of the Word of God, understanding or wisdom, patience, veracity, faithfulness and courage, prudence. We concluded that discussion with comments on the personal life of the pastor as well as some practical suggestions.

As we continue our study of pastoral care we turn our attention to the object of pastoral care. The term, "object," is only utilitarian. What we mean by it is "those to whom pastoral labor is directed, or those upon whom pastoral care is bestowed." Although this material is not always treated in the study of the principles of pastoral care it should be for it logically follows the treatment of the subject in pastoral care. It is as important as the subject too. To no little degree it determines the nature of pastoral care. Before pastoral work can be performed, the pastor simply must know the object. We shall, of course, return to the object in pastoral care when we study the more practical aspects of pastoral care. There we shall deal with various individual types of object: the sick, the sorrowing, those with emotional-mental problems, etc. At this

point we treat the object only from the principal point of view. We wish to discover who the object is and what he is in pastoral care from a principal point of view.

The object is not lifeless as the term itself would suggest. The members of the living body of Christ make up the object in pastoral care. In this connection we must take care that we do not conceive of the object individualistically. The individual member of the flock is the object in pastoral care, but always as he stands in relation to the body of Jesus Christ and in the fellowship of the communion of the saints.

### THE NATURE OF THE OBJECT

The answer to the question, "What is the nature of the object in pastoral care?" is determinative of the nature of the work or care of that object. The question comes down to this: with whom is the pastor dealing when he shepherds his congregation? Are these members of the congregation all children of God? Are they likely subjects to be evangelized? How must they be handled and what approach ought the pastor take? How does he care for them?

The object is not a mere "bunch" of people, just a crowd made up of all kinds of different individuals. Rather the object belongs to the "flock of God which is among you" (1 Peter 5:2). And, that flock of God is very precious in God's sight for it is "purchased with His own blood." That, the pastor must always bear in mind in all his work among the members of the congregation. The congregation in which he is called to serve as undershepherd of the Good Shepherd is one manifestation of the entire flock of God chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundations of the world and washed in the blood of His cross. The pastor does not have to do with the whole flock of God, but with one manifestation of it in a specific place, time, and situation. (Even those latter play a significant role in determining the pastor's work.) This local manifestation of the flock of God is *organically* the body of Jesus Christ. By this is meant that not every member of a local church is necessarily an elect. Most often this is not the case. But in the organic sense the congregation represents the body of Christ. This implies: 1) that the pastor takes the positive approach. He always proceeds on the assumption that he is caring for the saints in Christ Jesus. He must not approach his members wondering whether they are genuine saints or hypocrites. He deals with his people as with saints. 2) But, at the same time, he must be aware always of the fact that outwardly there is always a two-fold seed in the church. Not all are sheep, someone once said, "that have white wool and baa!" The pastor must be fully conscious of this and know too, that the fruit of his pastoral care may very well be that the "goats" are exposed. He must not

be surprised and he must not be disappointed when this actually happens as a fruit of his work.

Further, the object of pastoral care is never *simply* the individual, but the individual in a spiritual communion (organism). Scripture is never individualistic. Both Pelagianism and its terrible offspring, Arminianism, are individualistic in their view of sin and grace, but the Bible is not and neither is the Reformed view. In fact, in the Scriptures neither reprobate nor elect man is simply an individual, but is part of the fallen race of mankind in Adam or the church of Christ. A person may never be viewed in isolation. God, of course, graces individual men, but he saves a church “chosen to everlasting life in Christ and agreeing in true faith” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day XXI). That church is a fellowship of which all the members share in the anointing of Christ. Only as they share together in the life and blessing of Christ do they fellowship with one another. The pastor, therefore, deals not with so many individuals, but with so many members of the one body of Christ who all have the same Spirit, the same calling, the same hope, faith, Lord, baptism, God and Father (Ephesians 4:4, 5). These individuals all belong to the unity (“oneness”) of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3). And these individual members of the body of Christ are totally interdependent. That is, they need each other and cannot exist and function apart from the others. This is the clear teaching of Scripture in many passages, especially I Corinthians 12:12-31.

This factor has several serious implications. The pastor works not merely with a view to the individual’s personal salvation. (This *contra* the frenzy to fundamentalism to “win souls for Christ.”) In his work with the individuals of the congregations the pastor works towards the member’s living in the fellowship of the body of Christ, i.e., in the communion of saints all of whom find their life in Jesus. That communion is a closed one. There is no place there for anyone who is outside of Jesus Christ. And, that communion is an antithetical one (cf. II Corinthians 6:14, 15). Practically this in turn means that the pastor must be willing to allow his work to be both inclusive and exclusive: inclusive of all who belong to Christ, exclusive of all who do not belong to Him. The pastor is ultimately always caring for the flock of God even when he cares for individuals in a private setting.

## THE FAMILY

The family, obviously, is very significant from the perspective of the Reformed, covenantal view. The Scriptures teach that God saves not a crowd composed of an indefinite number of members but an organism or body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and Life. Within that organism God saves families



and realizes His eternal covenant in the lines of generations. In fact, one can trace the "seed of the woman" (elect) all the way from Seth through Abraham to Jesus Christ and all who are in him through faith by the grace of God (cf. Galatians 3). From the negative point of view the same truth may be observed. God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. That the churches of the Reformed tradition recognized this fact is evident from the long standing custom of family visitation (a custom, incidentally, found exclusively with the Reformed tradition). In this light the family as object of pastoral care assumed tremendous significance.

This whole matter demands our careful attention from a practical point of view as well in the context of the clearly evident disintegration of the family and family life in our day. Family fellowship and family living are strictly becoming phenomena of the hoary past. This trend is becoming more and more obvious within the church too. Evidence of this is seen in that for many families it is a rare occurrence that all the members share a meal together. It is obvious too, in the increasing number of divorces and marital difficulties with which pastors and consistories are called upon to deal. There are perhaps, many reasons for this sad state of affairs. While this is not the place to consider the matter in detail, certainly one reason must be the varied, busy, fast paced life of today. Modern transportation readily accessible makes for a busy and mobile society and this to no little degree affects the *modus vivendi* of God's children. Parents "have no time" to be with their children. Youth "have no time" to be with their parents. Consequently there is little spiritual concourse within the family unit. The art of family living is more and more being lost. And this will continue to have devastating effects on the life of the saints individually and on the life of the church as a whole.

The pastor must be fully aware of this tragedy and do all in his power to reverse the trend. There is a perilous waning of the intimate spiritual life of the Christian family. Parents, for example, let their children go by sheer neglect and inattention to their needs and problems. They lose touch with them and in a sense do not "know their own children." The pastor must stimulate the full fellowship of the body of Christ first in the family. A discussion of the ways in which this can and ought to be done will be presented in a future article on the practical aspects of pastoral care.

## THE INDIVIDUAL

The Biblical and confessional grounds for pastoral work with individuals has been presented. The point is that God has saved a definite number of

individual saints. The questions at this point are: 1) who is the individual? 2) what is the nature of the individual? 3) what in the light of the answers to 1) and 2) must be the pastor's approach in the care of the individual?

In answer to the question, who is the individual, it must be remembered that he is a *saved human being*. The member of the church with whom the pastor labors is neither simply a human being created in the image of God nor merely a fallen human being. He is a saved human being. Obviously we must recognize that not all objects of pastoral care are elect children of God. There are hypocrites in the church. But even that is different from having a fallen human being as the object of pastoral care. The individual may very well be a reprobate, masquerading as a pious child of God. But the mere fact that he is outwardly a member of the church (even though he must ultimately be exposed and cast out) distinguishes him from the worldly ungodly. Positively, however, the individual object is a regenerated, called, converted, justified, etc., child of God. At the same time, that individual has but a small beginning of the new obedience and always carries with him the old man of sin, the flesh. This means according to the Scriptures that there is always a constant battle going on within him between the old man and the new. His life is characterized by that never-ending tension between the principle of the life of Christ which longs for the perfection of God's kingdom and the flesh which would drag him down to the level of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. This principally is the nature of the individual object in pastoral care, a saved human being.

How does this fact affect the approach of the pastor? As has been said earlier in these articles, the pastor must not approach his flock in a doubting state of mind. He must not question whether the members of his congregation are elect or reprobate. (In this connection the question sometimes at family visitation, "Are you a child of God?" is wrong.) That the member of the church is a child of God must be presupposed. Even though the pastor knows that election and reprobation cut right through the church he assumes that the individual with whom he labors is an elect. The pastor believes the confession of that member given *per se* by his membership in the institute of the church. He takes his members at their word, whether in fact they be children of God or reprobate. God by means of His Word, brought also through pastoral care, inscribes His judgment in the conscience of every man. The Word is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)! Even with the child of God, while he is temporarily in a wicked way, God gives him the consciousness that in this way he is on the way to Hell. The principle therefore, that the pastor must assume his sheep to be the children of God must guide him in his approach to them.

That approach, however, must needs vary according to individual circumstances and needs. One's approach with children will differ from his approach with adults. With children one labors on the ground of the truth that God establishes His covenant with believers and their children. But, the pastor knows very well that the two-fold seed will become manifest in the church as the children come "to years of discretion." Sometimes, perhaps even often, this comes to expression much earlier. In the development of the spiritual life of a child early adolescence is often the point in which negative spirituality appears (usually in the form of cold indifference). Positive spirituality usually reveals itself later in the development of the child. The negative precedes the positive in overt development and demonstration. At any rate, it must always be remembered that the pastor meets with a concrete, individual saint. He does not meet simply with a human being, nor even with a Christian in general. The objects of pastoral care are as varied as the individual members. And there are a host of differences: children, youth, adults, parents, widows and widowers, young married couples, male, female, etc. Besides these there are differences of calling and profession. A pastor cannot labor with all these in precisely the same way. An adolescent is also that spiritually, an adult is an adult spiritually. Still more, not all of God's people have the same measure of grace. The point very simply is this: every Christian is unique. Also among the saints there are no two alike.

One difference, because it is so fundamental and because it is the object of so much discussion, deserves separate treatment. We mean the difference between the sexes. This difference is stressed by Wurth and many other writers in the field of pastoral care. This ought not be overlooked. A woman must be approached differently than a man. She is more intuitive and must be dealt with as such. A word of caution, however, is also in order. Probably because of the wide-spread influence of Freud, *et. al.*, far too much is made of this. Somehow we are led to believe everything must be explained in terms of the sexual. This belongs too, to the age in which we live. As sin develops the lustful passions of men and women run wild. Everything cannot and must not be explained in terms of sexuality.

Sometimes the pastor (in fact most of the time) must deal with individuals privately. Many matters may not be treated in the presence of others. Matters, for example, arising on family visitation are of such a nature sometimes that they must be dealt with later in a private setting. It simply is not proper to rebuke a parent in the presence of his children. Marital problems may not be discussed before the entire family. For this reason the pastor ought to make himself available for private consultations. And he ought to take care to insure

the privacy of the individual. Finally, he must maintain the confidential nature of the discussion.

One final word in this connection is in order. The pastor must beware of considering only those to be object of pastoral care who have special problems. Obviously, the sick, the sorrowing, and those in trouble of one sort or another must receive the compassionate care of Christ. But so must the "normal sheep" of the flock. These too, need the care of Christ and the pastor must seize every opportunity to bring a fitting word from the Scriptures for the spiritual well-being of the members of the church.

#### THE CONTACT BETWEEN SUBJECT (pastor) AND OBJECT (sheep) IN PASTORAL CARE

By contact is not meant the mere physical meeting of pastor and sheep. This is assumed. Contact is the meeting of mind with mind and heart with heart. This contact does not always happen when a pastor visits individuals of the congregation. Nor is it always controllable. While this may very well be the fault of the pastor, it may also be the fault of the member. But it is essential that real contact take place. If it does not happen pastoral labor fails. In that case the pastor will be talking *at* but not *to* the child of God. If the lack of contact be caused by the individual it is often because he fails to "open up" and freely speak of his need or problem. This can be a miserable experience (unhappily this happens frequently on family visitation). But even if this be the case it is not always the result of a spiritual problem nor is it always the result of a lack of contact. Some of God's people are simply reticent. They find it difficult to talk about spiritual matters when these matters involve themselves personally. In this event the pastor must be patient and not immediately conclude that that member is carnal. At the same time it often proves necessary to prick the bubble of piety so as to penetrate to the heart.

The main contact is not, however, between the pastor and the people of God. The contact is between the people of God and the God of their salvation in Jesus Christ. This is the contact in the preaching of the Word. By means of preaching God in Christ speaks to His people and fellowships with them. So it is through the means of pastoral care of God's people. And only God, not we, can establish this contact. But God establishes this contact only through the means of the office of Christ, the pastoral office in the church. Because God will establish the contact through this means the pastor may go about his pastoral work optimistically in the faith that God will speak to the need of His people through him as pastor.

Obviously this implies that the pastor is strictly limited to the Word of

God as the means of this contact. God's contact with His people is always *in* Jesus Christ. This means that God comes to His children in the sphere of the Word of Christ, the Holy Scriptures. Apart from this the visit becomes merely a social call. The pastor must always come with the Word. If he fails in this he must never expect that the child of God will meet his Lord through his visit. This does not necessarily mean that all the pastor may do is read or quote this or that appropriate text or passage of the Bible. Nonetheless the Scriptures must be the center of any pastoral visit. Still more, those Scriptures must be explained and applied to the specific need of the individual. As much as possible the pastor must allow the Word of God to speak to the needs of the saints.

The significance of this point can never be over-estimated. Especially in our times when the Scriptures are subjected to so very much unbelieving criticism within the modern church it must be understood that Scripture *is* adapted to the needs of God's people. This is true in every circumstance, every need, in every age, and in every society. This remains forever the case because of the nature of the Scriptures themselves. The Bible is not a book of dogmatics, or a mere narration of some dry facts of history; rather, it is the written (inspired and therefore infallible) record of the Word of God, the revelation of God in Christ to His redeemed as the God of their salvation. When, therefore, God's ordained servants faithfully expound and apply the Word the sheep of God hear the voice of their Good Shepherd. To bring the Word is the only possibility of success in pastoral labor.

Surely this must be done appropriately. It would not do, for example, to read one of the genealogies on family visitation. One cannot take the same text to a funeral as to a wedding. Passages which speak to the specific need involved must be chosen and these passages must then be expounded and applied.

Closely related to this principle is another, namely, the use of prayer. Prayer ought to occupy a large place in *all* pastoral work. This is true for the actual meeting itself. Prayer is direct communion with God and through this means God's people are brought into the presence of God. Thus every contact with his parishioners should begin with the pastor leading in prayer. This puts the visit in the right direction. It also impresses upon the consciousness of both pastor and parishioner their dependence upon the grace of God. It is equally important that the pastor engage in prayer long before any actual meeting takes place. His prayer ought to concern specific members of the congregation, specific needs, and specific situations. The faithful pastor cannot prepare for his pastoral labor among the people of God apart from prayer.

As to the *occasion* of the contact the most ideal situation is to meet the

members in their homes. One meets the "real people" here, in the concrete life situation. This has its limitations. The parishioners still tend to concoct an artificial atmosphere (putting the "best foot forward," this happens especially on family visitation). The result of this is that the pastor must make the member feel at home in his own home! The pastor ought to strive after familiarity and seek to foster trustworthiness among his members. For individual meetings it often proves more beneficial to meet in the pastor's study or church office. There must be privacy. In the case of individual meetings with God's people it is extremely important that the pastor not betray a lack of time or interest. He ought to take and give plenty of time. He ought too, to take the needs of his congregation seriously. They are serious as far as the individual involved is concerned.

There is a final word which needs emphasis in this connection. While it is certainly ideal to leave the initiative to the individual concerned, the pastor must never ignore a needy child of God. To do so is to be an unfaithful shepherd. When there is a sheep in need who for one reason or another is hesitant to call upon the pastor for help the pastor must himself initiate the contact. This means that sometimes the pastor must go to an individual or family when he is unwelcome. He may very well be rejected and criticized and his help refused. The faithful representative of Christ will run that risk! The faithful shepherd will not hesitate either to say what needs saying even when he knows it may very well provoke the hostility of the member or members involved. Christ, the chief Shepherd, never shrank from this. His under-shepherd must do likewise even to the point of being willing to lay down his life for God's people. The pastor who remembers the remark of Van Oosterzee cited above: "The flock does not exist for the pastor but the pastor for the flock," will so labor among God's people. And such faithful pastoral care carries God's blessing.