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## Authority in Christian Higher Education

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# AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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I have been asked by means of this article to articulate some thoughts concerning authority in Christian higher education.

In order to understand the nature and proper exercise of authority in Christian higher education, we must begin with a consideration of the sovereignty of the social spheres. Sphere sovereignty and authority are closely related concepts. H. Van Riessen makes this clear when he writes: "By 'sovereignty' he (Kuyper) understood an authority that includes the right, the duty, and the power to break and to avenge any resistance it encounters."<sup>1</sup>

## The Sovereignty of the Social Spheres

When God brought forth the creation He did so in orderly fashion. He gave to each part of the creation its own nature; and He subjected each and every part to His law so that the various parts of creation might serve Him. God also created man. As part of God's creation, man was also made subject to God's law for the creation. But, in distinction from the rest of creation, man was made in the image of God, and mandated to serve God by developing and unfolding the potentialities of creation according to God's laws for the various parts of His handiwork. In this way, man and

the rest of creation through the activity of man, was to serve God and show forth His glory.

In fulfilling his task before God, man was not to live and work in isolation. He was to do so in relationship with other men as part of a human community. And, just as they structured every other part of creation (including man), the laws of God were to structure man's societal, community life. It must not be thought, however, that man's societal relationships and the laws governing them were to be vague and indefinite. They were relationships in which man was to work in developing the creation order. Therefore, the structure which each relationship evidenced was to depend upon the work, the activity to be performed within that particular community.

Initially the human community was undifferentiated, and many spheres which we now recognize as such were subsumed under the family. But, in the course of history, as man performed his task of developing and unfolding the creation, differentiation occurred. Different associations of society developed, according to the laws of God, and these associations became independent according to their respective natures and functions. Thus there is today a "wide variety of distinct, though related spheres which arise out of the complex

life of mankind, each having its own task to perform, its own mandate entrusted to it by God."<sup>2</sup> These spheres are not only the result of man's communal cultural activity, but within each of these spheres (societal relationships) we find a human community working with a certain aspect of the created order.

As already indicated, man was commissioned by God to work within the creation in service to God and for His glory. Doing so, man was to obey God and His law. But he disobeyed and fell into sin. He continued to live and work, and everything he did, in spite of his sinful nature, was done within and directed by the law-structures of the creation. But, instead of working developmentally within the creation to the glory of God, man "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is God blessed forever" (Romans 1:25). As a result man, and all of the creation, was brought under the wrath and the condemnation of God.

But God sent His Son, by whom all things were created (John 1:3), to redeem His people and to restore His creation as that arena where His people could and would serve and glorify Him. Through His redemptive work Jesus Christ, the last Adam, fulfilled the will of His Father. Therefore Paul writes:

For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unrepvable before him. (Colossians 1:19-22)

As a reward for His redemptive work, Christ was appointed by the Father as Sovereign over all. Thus, prior to His ascension and coronation, Christ declared to His redeemed servants: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and

make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Therefore, while the unredeemed continue to work in opposition to God, the redeemed are charged to work under and according to the will of their Sovereign, Jesus Christ. For we hear in these words of Christ a renewed mandate to the new humanity to work in His renewed creation according to His law and unto His glory. Which is to say that the charge given to man at creation has been republished to us by Christ through the Scriptures. Thus just as man, created in the image of God, was to work communally in the various spheres according to the law of God and for His glory, so we, recreated in the image of God, must work as members of His body in the various spheres according to the will of Christ and unto His praise (1 Peter 2:9).

Now that we have spoken of the various spheres which developed in the course of history, we must ask the question: What is meant when we speak of the sovereignty of the social spheres? H. Van Riessen answers this question as follows: "Generally speaking, in our case sphere-sovereignty expresses the mutual independence of the social units or lasting relationships of society. And it expresses in particular the mutual independence of the authority inherent in units of a different nature."<sup>3</sup> Later Van Riessen makes two statements which appear as qualifiers of what he has said concerning the "independence of the social units." "Each sphere of authority is limited by its own societal relationship."<sup>4</sup> "Societal relationships properly stand in a coordinate relation to each other, not in a preferred or subordinate position."<sup>5</sup>

It appears that there are at least three "laws" operative in the one principle of sphere-sovereignty.

First, there is the "law" of independence. Each social sphere has its own nature, its own laws according to which it must operate, and its own function which it is to perform. This, each sphere, has by virtue of the charge given it by Christ, to whom God has given all power

and authority in heaven and on earth. In this sense each sphere has "sovereign rights within its own domain."

Second, there is the "law" of limitation. Because each sphere has "sovereign rights within its own domain," no sphere may seek to dominate or usurp another. To do so would be, not only a violation of the independence of the spheres, but also a usurpation of the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

Third, and closely related to the others, there is the "law" of coordination. "The social relationships exist together on a basis of equality; the one is not subordinate to the authority and control of the other." This is not to say that all spheres are of equal importance. According to the order established in creation, there is an obvious difference in value between the various spheres. But recognition of a difference in value does not imply a hierarchy of spheres with the lower receiving authority from the higher and being dominated by it. The authority of one sphere is not derived from the authority of another. All authority is from Christ, who alone is sovereign (Ephesians 1:21). Thus, instead of the lower being subordinate to the higher, all spheres are subordinate to Christ and exist in a coordinate relationship to one another within the totality of the created order.

(2) The law of limitation. The very nature, laws, and function which give education its independence also limit the authority of the sphere of education. Just as it may not allow itself to be dominated by another sphere, so also it may not dominate or usurp the authority of another sphere.

(3) The law of coordination. Instead of submitting to a sphere of "greater value" or dominating a sphere of "lesser value," the sphere of education should seek to work in a coordinate relationship with other spheres. In this way all of the kingdom spheres will be free to give harmonious and obedient response to the commands of the King.

### The Biblical Concept of Office (and Authority)

Up to this point we have spoken primarily about the authority of the various spheres as they stand in relationship to one another. Before we consider the exercise of authority within the sphere of education, we must inquire concerning the biblical concept of office.

A further comment should be made before proceeding. We recognize that, as both the redeemed and unredeemed function within the various life spheres, so also both the redeemed

"According to the order established in creation, there is an obvious difference in value between the various spheres. But recognition of a difference in value does not imply a hierarchy of spheres with the lower receiving authority from the higher and being dominated by it."

If we take the preceding and apply it to the sphere of education, it becomes clear that we must acknowledge that in education there are:

(1) The law of independence. To the extent that education has its own nature, laws, and function it is independent from other spheres and may not (either in whole or in part) be dominated by them. It must be allowed the "freedom" or the "right" to exercise the God-given authority necessary unto the performance of its God-given task.

and the unredeemed are in office and exercise authority. The redeemed occupy their office and exercise authority obediently, while the unredeemed do so disobediently. However, for the sake of brevity and because our primary concern is with Christian higher education, we wish from this point on to concern ourselves primarily with office and authority within the redeemed community.

The 1972 Agenda for Synod of the Christian Reformed Church contains a report entitled "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination."

Although it addresses itself almost solely to ecclesiastical office, it does make clear that if we come to Scripture seeking a readymade definition of office we are going to be disappointed. "In fact, it may safely be said that the writers of the Old Testament had no word for office as we understand it."<sup>7</sup>

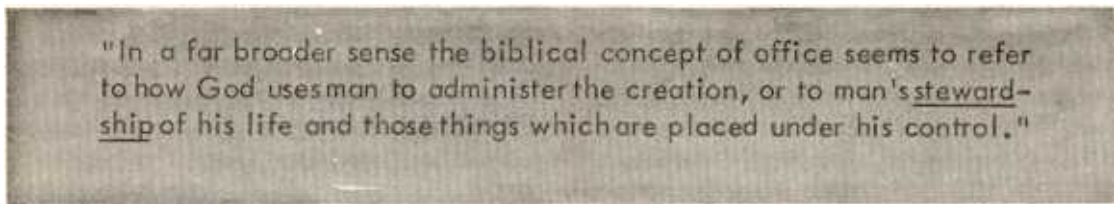
The report goes on to state: "As a general term for what we call office (namely, a certain type of the sense of precedence, ruling, being at the head) or timee (office in service within the church), the word diakonia (service) is commonly used by the writers of the New Testament."<sup>8</sup> What Report 40 says about diakonia is, in a sense, quite true. However, it would appear from a further study of the Bible that diakonia is but one aspect of office. In a far broader sense the biblical concept of office seems to refer to how God uses man to administer the creation, or to man's stewardship of his life and those things which are placed under his control.

In I Corinthians 4:1 Paul speaks of himself and the other apostles as "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." In Titus 1:7 he speaks the same way about bishops: "For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward." Nor is the idea of stewardship limited to apostles and bishops. Peter, in I Peter 4:10, 11, applies this concept to every member of the body of Christ: "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God: if any man speaketh, speaking

The Bible states that God placed man over the creation to rule or administer the creation in obedience to the will and the law of the Creator (Genesis 1:28). The creation belongs to the Creator (Psalm 24:1, 2). But man, created in the image of God, is "to have dominion" over the creation (Psalm 8:3-9). Man is to manage the creation on behalf of and as a representative of God. Man is God's vicegerent. Man is God's steward.

The writer of the book of Hebrews picks up both the theme and the words of Psalm 2 in Hebrews 2:6-8. But, in doing so, he points out that man failed in his office, in his task as steward of God. Therefore, the writer of Hebrews turns away from man. To angels? No, he turns to Christ through whom the worlds were made (Hebrews 1:2). He turns to Christ, who, "when he had made purification of sins" (Hebrews 1:3), finished the work God had given Him to do (John 14:4). He turns to Christ who, as a reward for His finished work was made to sit down "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). He points to Christ, crowned with glory and honor, as the One to whom God has subjected the administration of the creation.

Thus, as God worked in the creation before the Fall through one man, Adam, so now He works in the restored creation through one man, Jesus Christ. Christ is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). It is the purpose of God, "unto a dispensation (stewardship) of the fulness of times, to sum up all



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as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

This concept of office (stewardship) finds its origin in the Genesis account of creation.

things in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10). Christ is put into office. He is made the Servant of God. But, because He takes over where man has failed, Christ is made God's Suffering Servant. He is born into a humanity cut off from God and a world cursed by God. As God's Suffering Servant He humbles Himself, "becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the

cross" (Philippians 2:8). By His death ("the blood of the cross") Christ makes peace and reconciles all things on earth and in heaven to the Father (Colossians 1:20). The curse is lifted and, through Christ, that which was cut off from God is restored to Him again. And thus Christ finishes His work as Suffering Servant.

But Christ continues in His office. Having completed His task as Suffering Servant, Christ is made Servant in glory (Philippians 2:9-11). He is made King of kings (I Timothy 6:15). He is given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18) in order that He may administer the affairs of the restored creation according to the will of the Father and unto His glory. And some day He will also complete this work. One day all things will be put under His feet. And then, as a faithful steward, Christ will render account of what He has done by presenting the perfected Kingdom to the Father, "that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:28).

Scripture further indicates that Christ administers the affairs of the restored creation through the agency of restored, redeemed man. God, in Christ, has foreknown and foreordained certain ones to "be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Being conformed to the image of Christ, redeemed man not only reflects the glory of God (II Corinthians 3:18) but is also restored to office. Christ, to whom all authority has been given, assigns to the redeemed person a task. As God, before the Fall, assigned to man the task of administering the creation (Genesis 1:26-28), so Christ assigns to redeemed man the task of administering the affairs of the restored creation (Matthew 28:18-20). Redeemed man is to recognize that he holds this office in dependence upon Christ (John 15:5) and according to the will or under the law of Christ (I Corinthians 9:21). In other words, the redeemed person occupies the office of "steward." He administers as a servant of Christ, and he serves as an administrator over the restored creation, the Kingdom of his Lord Jesus Christ.

We must be careful not to suppose that the redeemed, the people of God can be divided into those who have an office and those who do not. All the redeemed are taken into that body of which Christ is the Head (Romans 12:5). While

there are indeed differences of gifts and abilities, all the redeemed share the same Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 12:4). As "partakers of His anointing" (Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 32), all Christians are in office. All Christians have a place to fill and a task to perform. Individually and collectively all the saved are called to administer the affairs of the restored creation in the Name of and according to the law of Jesus Christ. It was in recognition of this truth that the Protestant Reformation proclaimed the universal office of believers.

As we have already noted, all authority was given to Christ in order that He might fill His office as God's Servant in glory. This means that Christ was "authorized" to do that which was necessary to rule and bring to completion the Kingdom according to the Father's will and unto His praise. He was given whatever "rights," whatever "powers" were needed to administer the affairs of the restored creation on behalf of the Father.

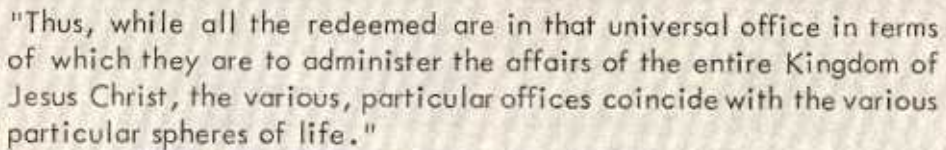
Now, when Christ restores the redeemed to office, He gives to them the authority, rights and powers necessary for the performance of their office or task. The biblical meaning of office is authoritative service. This authority does not come from man. "There is no authority but of God" (Romans 13:1). The origin of this authority is God in Christ, who gives it to those who work for Him in His world. And, because this authority comes from Christ, it is to be exercised according to the will and the law of Christ. But, trusting Christ and obeying the law of Christ, the redeemed have from Christ the authority necessary to fulfill their office as Christ's stewards. They are "authorized" by Christ to administer, in His Name, the affairs of His Kingdom as that Kingdom comes to expression in its various spheres.

We have emphasized the unity and equality of the redeemed in Christ. All of the redeemed are in Christ; all are restored to office; all have received the authority to carry out their task. This does not mean, however, that all members of Christ's body are the same. There is also diversity and inequality within the body of Christ, which result in particular offices. Diversity and inequality do not destroy the unity of the body; they enrich the body and

make clear in which way the members of the body are dependent upon one another.

Diversity within the body of Christ comes to initial expression in different abilities and qualifications, which are gifts of God's grace, to be used in His service (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:10, 11). Thus some are able to teach. Others are able to preach. Still others are able to rule, and so forth. This diversity of abilities qualifies the members of the Christian community for a variety of tasks.

It must not be supposed, however, that ability or qualification is the sole basis for particular offices. There must be "recognition" or "acknowledgement" on the part of the Christian community that a person does possess a certain ability before that person can be regarded as occupying a particular office. This "acknowledgement" can occur in many ways. Some office bearers are appointed, some are elected, and some are simply recognized as such. In any case, as God gives differing abilities to the members of the body of Christ, so He appoints by leading the Christian community to "acknowledge" these abilities. (Acts 6:1-7 serves as a good example.) And by this two-fold means (appointment and qualification, if you will) He places men in particular offices.



"Thus, while all the redeemed are in that universal office in terms of which they are to administer the affairs of the entire Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the various, particular offices coincide with the various particular spheres of life."

The result is inequality within the body, the Christian community. By putting men into particular offices, God establishes within the various spheres of the Kingdom the relationship of higher and lower. There are those who rule and those who are ruled. There are those who are responsible for and those who are accountable to others.

The various, particular offices coincide with the various spheres within the restored creation, the Kingdom of God. In fact, it was through the exercise of particular offices that the different spheres were given form. This does not mean that the spheres within the Kingdom are the creations of man. They are based

upon and reflections of the laws, ordinances of God. But they are given historical formation through the instrumentality of man exercising a particular office.

Thus, while all the redeemed are in that universal office in terms of which they are to administer the affairs of the entire Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the various, particular offices coincide with the various, particular spheres of life. Each office has its own sphere within which it is to function--parents within the family, teachers within the school, elders within the church, rulers within the state, etc. Each office has a task to perform, a task defined by the nature of the sphere within which it functions. And each office carries with it the authority necessary for the performance of its task, an authority limited to a particular sphere of operation. In other words, every particular office has its own specific task, law, responsibility, and authority defined by its particular sphere. But, and this is the burden of this paper, each office does receive authority from Christ necessary for the performance of its task.

Nor should we fail to recognize that a measure of diversification also takes place within the several life spheres. Again, this

diversification is not a result of man's planning. God carries out His design. But He realizes His will through the work of men. And, as men work within the various spheres, a process of specialization takes place. Eventually the point is reached where no one can administer all the affairs of one sphere. The result is that also within the various spheres various specialized offices emerge. Paul takes note of this process of development within the church, "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). These specialized offices also carry their own specialized task, laws, responsibilities, and authority.

## Office and Authority Within the Sphere of Education

One of the spheres which has emerged as a result of the development of the creation order is the sphere of education. In the beginning man performed his common task within the context of the family. But as that task became more complex, the offices of men became specialized. Thus the office of teacher emerged alongside the office of parents, and the sphere of education alongside the sphere of the family. Further, within the sphere of education a process of specialization occurred, so that we find special offices charged with different aspects of the one educational task. Thus we find within the Kingdom today the sphere of education; and within the sphere of education particular offices, such as board member, teacher, administrator, etc.

"The redeemed community endeavors to prepare its members for cultural life and activity which will be pleasing to God and by means of which they can function as qualified citizens and officebearers in His Kingdom."

To understand how the affairs of this sphere are ordered, we return to what was said before concerning the universal office of believers. All believers are in Christ and, as members of His body, occupy the office of stewards. Together they are to administer the affairs of the Kingdom of Christ. They have a communal task to perform relative to the entire Kingdom and within every sphere of the Kingdom, including the sphere of education. The task of the believing community in the sphere of education is to prepare the members of the community for the performance of their cultural responsibilities (offices) by leading them, according to the Word of God, to a deeper understanding of the creation and its history.

The apostate community seeks to prepare its members for cultural life and activity apart from and in opposition to God. The redeemed community endeavors to prepare its members for cultural life and activity which will be pleasing to God and by means of which they can function as qualified citizens and officebearers in His

Kingdom. This is the task which God has assigned to the redeemed community and has authorized them to perform in the sphere of education.

Now, while it is true that all believers are qualified and authorized by God to fill the office of believer, not every believer is equally qualified to fill every particular office in every sphere within the Kingdom. As the tasks of man and the various social relationships which man sustains become more and more complex, no one can administer the affairs of all the life spheres. In fact, no one can even administer all the affairs of one sphere. This is the case in all spheres, but especially in education.

Therefore, the Christian community must seek out and appoint those who can fulfill for them their responsibility and task within the sphere of education. In doing so they must seriously consider at what point in history they

stand. They cannot make decisions solely on the basis of what has been done in the past. They must carefully and prayerfully decide what tasks must be performed and what offices must be filled to carry out their educational responsibility before the Lord.

It would seem that today it is incumbent upon the Christian community at least to appoint men to the offices of teacher, board member and administrator. Anything less would make it most difficult to carry on the work of education effectively. Further, though some may differ, we could define the offices mentioned as follows:

(1) The office of the teacher is to study, to understand, and, in harmony with the school's religious direction, to lead his students into a deeper understanding of the creation (or an aspect thereof) and its history.

(2) The office of a board member is to articulate the basic religious direction of the school; to see to the provision of the necessary facilities for carrying on the educational enterprise; and to select and make provision for those



qualified for teaching and administering the affairs of the school.

(3) The office of the administrator is to supervise, to manage, and to direct the various aspects and affairs of the school, such as academic affairs, student life, finances, facilities, etc., according to the policies established by the board.

How many kinds of appointments are to be

student. This does not mean, however, that he holds authority over the student as an end in itself. The teacher has authority in order that he may prepare the student for the performance of his or her cultural responsibilities, by leading him or her to a deeper understanding of the creation and its history. In this sense the teacher is responsible for the student and the student is accountable to the teacher.

"It is important to understand, first of all, that those appointed to the office of teacher must be qualified to teach. Further when recognition is given to those qualifications by means of an appointment, the person appointed must be regarded as occupying the particular office of teacher."

made and what the precise nature of each office is, is not of great importance here. These matters must be decided according to principles applied to time and circumstance.

In order to illustrate the significance of office and authority within the sphere of education, we will concentrate on the office of teacher since the teacher is most directly involved in the fundamental task of the educational sphere.

It is important to understand, first of all, that those appointed to the office of teacher must be qualified to teach. Further, when "recognition" is given to those qualifications by means of an appointment, the person appointed must be regarded as occupying the particular office of teacher. And what if the teacher proves to lack certain qualifications for his office? This must concern the Christian community, because lack of qualification results in mis-management of the office. But until the community, through the action of the board of trustees, removes such a person from office, he must be regarded as occupying that particular office, with all that that means.

It is important to acknowledge, secondly, that those occupying the office of teacher possess the authority necessary for the performance of their teaching task, such as, presenting lectures, making assignments of books to be read and papers to be written, marking, etc. Possessing authority, the teacher is placed over the

It must also be emphasized that the office and authority of the teacher do not ultimately depend upon the person and qualifications of the teacher. Authority is "localized" in the person of the teacher, but, at the same time, it must be distinguished from the person of the teacher. Van Riessen makes this clear when he writes:

But to be effective, leadership ought to have power. Only if power is derived from a constitution can such leadership be called authority. The personal aspect is of course not irrelevant in the obedience to parents, the government, or a supervisor, but this obedience depends fundamentally upon the constitution by which authority is established as a delegation from the authority of Christ.

Even if such constituted leadership is not effective due to a serious lack of personal power or wisdom, e.g. in a factory, other, and in that case informal leadership will emerge and take over. Such leadership and, in general, leadership without a constitution, will depend solely upon personal qualities. It has no real authority, although it may be of use.<sup>9</sup>

Van Riessen's reference to a "constitution" is very much to the point. We are talking about authority within a school, an institution within

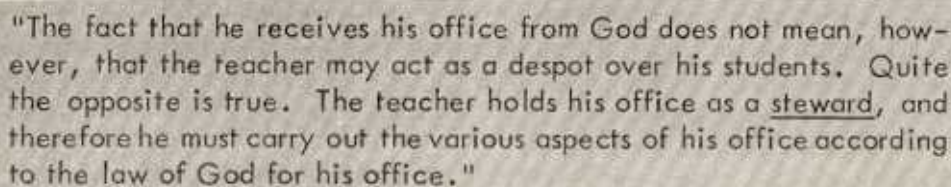
the kingdom sphere of education. Fundamental to an educational institution is its constitution "by which authority is established as a delegation from the authority of Christ."

It is important to recognize, thirdly, that the teacher receives his office, including the qualifications and the authority, he exercises from God. The Lord endows him with authority.

The fact that he receives his office from God does not mean, however, that the teacher may act as a despot over his students. Quite the opposite is true. The teacher holds his office as a steward, and, therefore, he must carry out the various aspects of his office according to the law of God for his office. As a steward, the teacher is accountable to God for what he does with his office. And as a steward, the teacher must fulfill the purpose of God in the performance of his office and must seek to bring his students to the point where they can fulfill their function and calling before the Lord.

indicated that this understanding is necessary in order that the spheres may function in independence, in recognition of their limitations, and coordinately. For basically the same reason it is important to clearly define the office of the teacher. Especially in higher education, the teacher works in relationship to other bearers of a particular office - board members, administrators, teacher in the same and other departments. Thus the office of teacher must be defined in such a clear manner that the teacher may carry out his work freely, without dominating others, and yet in communal coordination.

Before bringing our consideration of authority to an end, and acknowledging that our study has in no way been exhaustive, we must consider the place of the student in the sphere of education. Very often we hear people speak of "the office of a student," "student authority," and "student power." Is it legitimate to speak of student office, authority, or power?



"The fact that he receives his office from God does not mean, however, that the teacher may act as a despot over his students. Quite the opposite is true. The teacher holds his office as a steward, and therefore he must carry out the various aspects of his office according to the law of God for his office."

This truth--that the teacher received his office and authority from God through Christ--leaves the teacher free to perform his task. At the same time it keeps him from misusing his office; for he is under the law of God, accountable to God, and bound to fulfill the will of God in his office. And what if the teacher does sinfully misuse his office? Again, as noted before, it would become the duty of the Christian community through those responsible to God for overseeing the office of teacher to correct the situation or remove the teacher from his office.

The fourth matter which must be emphasized is the necessity of making a clear definition of the task the teacher is to perform within the larger sphere of education. Such definition of task must make clear the extent and the limits of the authority which the teacher is to exercise.

Earlier we noted the importance of a clear understanding of the nature, laws, and functions of the various spheres within the Kingdom. We

No one would deny that Christian students are members of the body of Christ and, as such, share with other members of that body in the universal office of believers. It is clear from Scripture that all the redeemed are in Christ, are members of His body, and share in His anointing. Nor can anyone deny that students are essential to the sphere of education. Obviously, no school can exist without students any more than a family can exist without children. But, the student's membership in the body of Christ and his importance within the educational sphere, do not speak to or resolve the matter of student office and authority.

Fact is, we find no biblical basis for speaking of the particular office of student, student authority, or student power. The task of the Christian community in the sphere of education is "to prepare the members of that community for the performance of their cultural responsibilities (offices) by leading them to a deeper

understanding of the creation and its history" (see earlier definition). How can a student hold a particular office in that sphere in which he is the very person who is being prepared for the performance of his cultural responsibilities, his own particular office? The one who holds a particular office in the sphere of education must have qualifications for leading others. How can a student be regarded as having qualifications for leading in that very sphere in which he himself is being led? The one who holds office in an educational institution must have an appointment to office. How can we speak of a student as being under appointment? The one holding a particular office in education is given authority, which places him over others. How can we speak of students as being in authority over others? It seems to us that we must answer these questions by acknowledging that the student does not have office, qualifications, appointment, and authority in the educational sphere or in an educational institution.

This does not mean that the student should not be allowed to engage in investigation of the creation order, or express himself, or pass judgment upon his education and evaluate various aspects of the school of which he is a part. The student should not only be allowed, but also be encouraged to do such things. But it should be clearly understood that, while he is a student, he does these things under authority. What we have said does not mean either that the student may not be involved in discussion and making decisions concerning certain campus matters. Especially in higher education (on the college level) a student may be allowed participation in discussion and decision making. But he should be allowed to do so only to the extent determined by the institution, for, to the extent that he is involved in discussing and making decisions relative to campus life, he is under authority, and the authority he does exercise is delegated only for certain specific and pre-determined purposes.

This may appear to be very authoritarian and designed to establish a structure in which a domineering board, administration, and faculty are capable of and encouraged to squelch all student incentive and motivation. Such indeed would be the case if we were describing a secu-

lar, cut-off-from and opposed-to-God situation. If we were describing a secular institution, we probably would be forced to consider a concept of "shared authority" in order to seek a compromise whereby we could avoid domination by the college administration on the one hand and total revolution by the student body on the other hand. (In our opinion much of the discussion concerning student authority and student power has been in terms of problems and solutions taken over from the secular situation and perspective.) But we have been speaking of the biblical concept of office and authority, and its expression in Christian higher education. We have been speaking of office and authority as they come from God, are exercised according to His will, and for the benefit of the members of Christ's body. If we, as the redeemed of the Lord, live and work according to that biblical perspective we will see the formation of a truly Christian academic community in which the administration and faculty need not be "troubled" by a rebellious student body, and in which the student body need not feel "threatened" or "hindered" by an authoritarian administration and faculty. In such a community every member will know the meaning of living and working in humble obedience to the Lord.

1. H. Van Riessen, The Society of the Future (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 70, 71.

2. H. H. Meeter, Calvinism (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 159.

3. Van Riessen, The Society of the Future, p. 70.

4. Ibid., p. 71.

5. Ibid., p. 71.

6. Ibid., p. 71

7. A. A. Hoekema, et al, "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination," Agenda for Synod, Christian Reformed Church, 1972, p. 299.

8. Ibid., p. 299.

9. Van Riessen, The Society of the Future, p. 79.