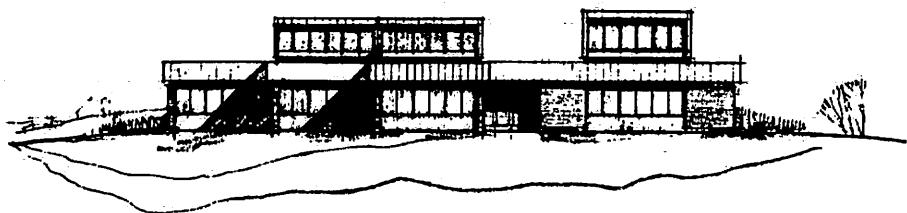


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4949 Ivanrest Avenue
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Theological School
of the
Protestant Reformed Churches
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Editorial Notes

This issue of the *Journal* continues three articles which were begun in previous *Journals*. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema continues his translation of "The Simplicity of God's Will and the 'Free Offer.'" Prof. R. D. Decker continues his discussion of the pastoral work of the ministry, giving particular attention to the pastoral care of married persons. Prof. H. Hanko continues his discussion of the history of the free offer of the gospel. These articles have been well received; many have asked for reprints of past articles, and many have asked to be put on the *Journal* list to receive future articles on these subjects.



Speaking of reprints, we have adopted a policy in connection with them which our readers ought to know. We have, I think, announced this policy before, but apparently some (perhaps primarily those who are making their first acquaintance with the *Journal*) are apparently unaware of it. When the *Journal* is printed, a number of extra copies are also printed which are held in reserve and which are mailed out to those who ask for it on a first come, first served basis. It usually does not take long for this supply to be depleted. We offer a reprint service of articles which our readers request, but for this service we must charge. Our charge barely covers the cost of reprinting, however. The charge is as follows: if only one article is requested, the cost is five cents per sheet, plus postage. If an entire issue of the *Journal* is requested, the charge is \$2.50 per issue. We request that you send your money along with the order to facilitate handling and save time in bookkeeping.



The first part of Bavinck's *Biblical and Religious Psychology* has been available from the seminary for several years. The translation of the second part, dealing with religious psychology, has just recently been completed. Anyone wishing to obtain this second part, or the entire work, can do so by ordering from the

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4949 Ivanrest
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We appreciate our readers who are now throughout the world, and we ask for your prayers as we continue this venture. Without the blessing of the God Who alone gathers, defends, and preserves His church, all our labors are in vain. ■ ■

The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (13)

Prof. 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, or, The Most Recent Attack on the Truth of Sovereign Grace. We continue here with the translation of Chapter XI.]

Chapter XI

Heyns' Appeal To Scripture

(continued)

Although Professor Heyns thinks that the two texts which we discussed in the previous chapter may really be considered decisive for the whole issue, he nevertheless refers to many texts which, according to him, teach a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. We shall discuss the most important of these.

And then we may mention, first of all, Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Under discussion here is especially the first verse of this section. Heyns thinks that we may not here limit "ye that labor and are heavy laden," but that this refers to all men without distinction. And thus the professor thinks that he is finished with the proof for a general offer in this text.

Now we may remark, first of all, that even though we would concede to Heyns that the laboring and heavy laden mentioned in the text are all men, he would still be not one step farther with his proof for a general offer. The case is simply this, that also here we have no offer. Heyns reads an offer in every text. But if he looks carefully and studies the text somewhat, then he himself will discern that there is in this text not only no general offer, but no offer whatsoever. What we have also here — this is so plain that the simplest can see this immediately — is a calling and a promise; and the promise is not to all without distinction, but only to those who heed and obey the calling. The calling is: "Come unto me!"

The promise is: "I will give you rest." If therefore we cast the text in the form of a dogmatic declaration, then we get this: Christ promises all who come to Him rest of soul. Thus the Canons have it also, III-IV, 8. Well. But now Heyns shall also discern for himself that this is, in the first place, no offer: and that, in the second place, there is no general element in it. What Heyns sees as an offer is a calling and a promise. And what Heyns asserts to be general is precisely very particular: the promise pertains only to those who come to Christ. And this coming to Christ is an act of faith. Coming to Jesus is by no means as simple as it is presented to be in many Methodistic revival meetings and in street preaching, or as it is presented to be in many corrupt hymns. It implies, in the first place, that he who comes to Jesus has knowledge, spiritual knowledge, of his own sin and misery, and has come to acknowledge before the Lord that all his righteousnesses are filthy rags, so that his own works cannot serve as righteousness before God. He is lost in himself. He is a poor sinner. He is empty. There is in him no righteousness and holiness, no wisdom and no knowledge; nothing but guilt and sin and corruption, nothing but foolishness and darkness and enmity against God. It implies, in the second place, that he has learned to know Christ in all the fulness of His salvation, of righteousness and holiness, of wisdom and knowledge of God, and complete redemption: has learned to know not merely in the sense of knowing about Him, but in the spiritual sense, which becomes manifest in the longing to possess Him, in order that His fulness may fill his own emptiness. All that is of Christ has become altogether desirable. This coming to Jesus includes, in the third place, that one completely casts away his own work, in order to cast himself at the feet of the Savior, trusting only in His suffering and death and resurrection, with the plea, "Be merciful to me, a sinner!" And it implies, in the fourth place, finally, that a man embraces Him through faith, becomes conscious that he belongs to Him, and now is a partaker of all His benefits.

Now to those who thus come to Jesus, in order to abandon themselves upon Him alone, the Savior promises rest: rest of soul, consisting in this, that the soul enters into the finished work that has come to light through the resurrection of Christ and the everlasting rest that remaineth for the people of God. And thus understood, Heyns also will no longer maintain that we have here a general offer of grace and salvation, but discern that we have to do with a very particular promise. This will become plain to the professor especially if in this connection he keeps in mind that the Savior Himself very plainly teaches us that those who come are the elect. For: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And also: "Therefore said I

unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:37, 65). And again: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," verse 34. Heyns also knows these texts. He also, with me, wants to explain Scripture in its own light. Well, then, let Heyns then simply bring these words of the Savior in connection with Matthew 11:28, and he will see that his assertion that we have in the latter passage a general offer of grace and salvation is not valid. The Savior promises rest. To whom? To those who come to Him. Who are those who come to Him? They who are given Him by the Father, they who are drawn by the Father. And who are drawn by the Father? The elect. There is no escaping it. Also Matthew 11:28 is thoroughly particular. And the particular character of the text does not for a moment depend upon a certain explanation of "laboring and heavy laden," as Heyns thought.

Furthermore, we do not concede, even though the particular character of the text does not depend on this, that "laboring and heavy laden" are all men. And we also deem it important that the text should not be explained in that general sense, because precisely those to whom the promise pertains would lose the comfort and encouragement which is in this word for them, through such an explanation. And this may not be. The bread of the children may not be cast before the dogs. Also Heyns must see himself placed before the unavoidable question, if he wants to explain the text: in what sense does the Savior mean laboring and heavy laden here? Someone can be weary and heavy laden in the physical sense of the word, and Heyns will grant me that these can be excluded here. Men can also be weary of soul in the natural sense of the word. They can be bowed down under the burdens of life, burdens of every sort. And also such men are not meant by the Savior. About this there is no dispute. No, this weariness belongs to the same category as the rest which the Savior promises. And therefore it must be understood in the spiritual sense. There are men who are weary because they seek after righteousness, but can find nothing else but sin. Men who say of their sins that as a heavy burden they are too heavy to them. And this can simply not be said of all men. Although therefore we freely concede that there are all sorts of burdens borne, also all sorts of weariness in the world and that apart from the text under discussion it certainly can be said that all men are weary and heavy laden, nevertheless we maintain that they are not weary and heavy laden in the sense in which the Savior promises them rest, that is, in the true spiritual sense of the word. Although therefore this call of the Savior indeed comes to all who hear the Gospel, nevertheless every hearer of this call demonstrates by coming or not coming whether he is weary of

sin or whether he loves sin. Through the calling separation comes about. And through the calling the Savior mentions His own by name. They come and receive the rest which remains for the people of God.

Finally, this altogether particular character of the text is very plainly confirmed by both the broader and the immediate context. In the broader context the Savior speaks of two sorts of men from the viewpoint of their attitude over against the preaching of the kingdom of heaven. The one class is the violent, who since the days of John the Baptist already take the kingdom of heaven by force. It makes no difference to them who proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. They certainly enter in. They have waited long for that kingdom. And now John proclaims that it is at hand, and as it were through his preaching sets the door of that kingdom ajar, and they press to enter in. And also when Jesus comes and proclaims the same Gospel, they manifest themselves as the same violent who are desirous to enter in. But over against that spiritually strong generation there is also another generation which the Savior compares with children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." They always stand wrong over against the kingdom of heaven and never enter in. They always find an excuse for their refusal to enter in. In the case of John they piped, and wanted him to dance; but John the Baptist was a Nazarite and could not dance. He came neither eating nor drinking. And when John did not dance to their piping, they said of him that he had a devil. Who can endure it in the desert, with locusts and wild honey? But then came Jesus, Who was no Nazarite, Who could not be conquered by the world, but came in order to overcome the world, Who therefore came eating and drinking. But when He came, they mourned unto Him and wanted Him to lament. And when Jesus continued to eat and to drink, they said of Him that He was a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. Meanwhile, neither upon the preaching of John, nor at that of Jesus, did they enter in. And then follows the pronouncement of judgment upon that miserable generation as it came to manifestation especially under the preaching of Jesus and under His many works at Capernaum, at Chorazin, and at Bethsaida. And as far as the immediate context is concerned, there the Savior resumes as it were that twofold effect of His preaching, revealing and hiding, and with it turns in thanksgiving to the Father, to Whom He ascribes that twofold fruit. It is all according to the good pleasure of the Father: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." In the light of this context, Heyns

will grant me, the very possibility of suddenly thinking in verse 28 of a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation fails.

In Isaiah 55:1, 2, to which the professor also refers, we have to do with a text similar to Matthew 11:28. Hence, we do not consider it necessary to discuss this passage in depth.

As far as II Corinthians 5:20 is concerned, we have already pointed out earlier that the English translation is undoubtedly preferable: "Be ye reconciled to God." In the first place, this is in harmony with the form of the original word here used: but, in the second place, it also adheres more closely to the idea of reconciliation. The Dutch "*laat u met God verzoenen*" leaves the impression as though reconciliation is really a work which comes about through both God and man. There are then two parties who reconcile with one another, just as is the case among men. Now that God is already reconciled, you must now also be reconciled with God, even as God has reconciled Himself with you, and reconciliation is an accomplished fact. As long as you do not become reconciled, reconciliation is finished only from one side; then it is not complete. But if you become reconciled with God, peace is accomplished. Or, if they do not present it thus, they nevertheless come with the presentation that God is indeed willing to reconcile you; if now you also let yourself be reconciled, something to which God then prays you through the Gospel, you are actually reconciled with the Most High. But neither of these presentations is according to Scripture. *In reconciliation God is His own party.* Thus it is also with God's covenant in general. There is no covenant concluded between God and man. God is GOD! Man is never a party over against God. God's covenant is solely God's. And He establishes His covenant with whom He will. It is no different with reconciliation. God and man do not reconcile with one another. Whoever would say that would thereby reveal that he understood nothing of it, would especially show that he does not understand that God is GOD. God reconciles. And He reconciles not Himself, but the sinner, His people. And that reconciliation is the blotting out of guilt through satisfaction of the justice of God over against sin in the blood of the cross. It is then also an accomplished fact through the death and resurrection of Christ. Whether anyone is reconciled with God does not depend on him, but only on his being in Christ Who died for us and is raised again. And on the ground of that objective fact of reconciliation God now comes, not with an offer of reconciliation to all men, but with the serious calling, with the prayer to His people: "Be ye reconciled to Me! Reconciliation is an accomplished fact, for I have reconciled you in Christ; believe now My word of reconciliation which I have laid in the apostles, and through faith enter into that

reconciled relationship also before your own consciousness and with your entire life! Let that reconciliation rule your entire life, so that you no longer live unto yourself, but unto Him Who died for you and is raised again! For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all is become new.”

If Professor Heyns carefully reads the context of this text, he shall have to agree with this explanation. For the apostle writes here to the church. This may not be overlooked. In the context this even stands emphatically on the foreground. The context is precisely concerned with the light in which the apostle views the congregation and according to which he judges her. It is the judgment which is determined by the love of Christ toward His church. That love constrains Him unto this judgment, that if one died for all, then are all dead. That *all* is the elect (verse 15). Heyns will grant me this if he does not want to embrace entirely the error of a *Christus pro omnibus*. Well, then: He has died for all in order that they should no more live to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and is raised again. Therefore the apostle judges that the congregation must be considered as the gathering of new creatures; the old is passed away, all is become new. That this does not hold for all, head for head, who belong to the church on earth, makes no difference as far as this judgment concerning the congregation is concerned. The apostle knows no man after the flesh. Now then, all these new things are of God and find their basis in reconciliation. For God was in Christ reconciling the world (here, the elect world out of all nations) unto Himself (not Himself with the world), not imputing their trespasses unto them. Reconciliation, which is the firm basis of the preaching, is an accomplished fact. And because He has committed the word of reconciliation unto the apostles, therefore the apostles must preach that reconciliation and on the ground of it come to the congregation and to all whom the Lord will call thereto, with the lovely prayer: “Be ye reconciled with God!” Also according to the context, therefore, you have here a very particular basis in reconciliation, a very particular call of God to His church on the ground of that reconciliation, and a very particular outcome: the elect enter into that reconciliation by divine grace through faith and become new creatures.

This does not mean, of course, that the preaching of reconciliation and the prayer of God to enter into that reconciliation is not heard by others than the elect. The preaching of particular reconciliation, the demand of God unto repentance, is general, or at least common. This hearing of the general proclamation of reconciliation also compels an answer. And the negative answer of the natural man, “I will not be reconciled with God!” also aggravates his judgment. For it brings to manifestation the dreadful

character of sin as enmity against God. But this does not change the fact that you do not have here a general offer, well-meant on God's part, in which He offers to all men to reconcile them with Himself, but the proclamation of a very particular reconciliation, on the ground of which the church enters into salvation.

Chapter XII
Heyns' Appeal To Scripture
(continued)

Though everything should have warned him that an appeal to Proverbs 9:1-6 would end in disappointment, Heyns nevertheless also turns to this passage of Scripture to find support for his contention that God wills that all men shall be saved and that the Gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation on God's part to all men.

What should have restrained him is, first of all, the character and the content of the book of Proverbs. For that character is thoroughly spiritual-ethical. Proverbs deals throughout with spiritual-ethical values. It speaks of wisdom and prudence, of knowledge and understanding, of righteousness and purity, of truth and justice, of beneficence and mercy, of humility and valor, of diligence and skill, of correction and moderation. And it presents all of these as arising out of the deep principle of the fear of the Lord. It is not simply an external life according to the law that Proverbs has in view; no humanistic worldly wisdom is proclaimed in this book; but the book assumes throughout the absolute position that there is no knowledge and understanding, no wisdom and prudence, no righteousness and purity, etc., apart from the fear of the Lord. This explains the fact, too, that the book of Proverbs is so stringently antithetical. Over against wisdom, etc., stand foolishness, lewdness, stupidity, filthiness, lying, unrighteousness, unfaithfulness, gluttony, injustice and oppression, cruelty which even in its mercy is still cruel; and all these are rooted in the principle of ungodliness; they are present where the fear of the Lord is missing. Already this spiritual-ethical character of the book should have restrained the professor from seeking comfort from this passage of Scripture. For all that has to do with spiritual-ethical values runs along a very strict line, does not allow for delusion, cannot be twisted, and also cannot be generalized. You simply cannot hawk the wares of wisdom and of righteousness on the path of folly and wickedness. You cannot sweetly offer to everyone the blessedness which can only be known and tasted in the way of the fear of the Lord. In the sphere of the spiritual-ethical everything is inexorable. You can proclaim woe to the ungodly if he does not forsake the way of wickedness. You can promise blessing and

salvation to all who forsake the way of wickedness and who turn to the Lord. But you cannot distort things. And the deep cause of this lies again in this, that God is GOD. It always comes down to this. Heyns has a wrong conception of God. He has a God Who loves also the wicked *as such*, Who is filled with pity toward him, Who in mercy seeks his good even in the way of wickedness. And that God is no God. If Heyns would understand that this can never be, that God cannot love the sinner *quatalis* even for the smallest conceivable moment, then he would as a matter of course arrive at that God Who in sovereign love has so known and willed His people from before the foundation of the world that He sees in them no transgression. Then he would always and again arrive at election. Then he would always have to acknowledge that God loves the people whom He sees in Christ from eternity. And that is the God of the Scriptures!

In the second place, also the context following upon Proverbs 9:1-6 should have restrained Heyns from appealing to this passage for a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. I can hardly imagine that Heyns did not read that context. If one reads verses 1-6, can he simply stop reading at that point? And if Heyns did indeed read the following verses, then I do not understand how he nevertheless persisted in his intention to hold the first six verses of this chapter before us and to appeal to them for the doctrine of a general offer. For in the verses which follow it becomes as clear as can be that Wisdom simply does not approach all and does not intend to cast her pearls before the swine, neither intends that her "maidens" shall do this. Let us read these verses in their context: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding." [Translator's note. In the edition of the Dutch Authorized Version (*Statenvertaling*) in use when this was written, verse 4 reads: "Wie is slecht? hij keere zich herwaarts! tot den verstandelooze zegt zij. . . ." This is in English: "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him. . . ." The argument in this section turns on the meaning of the Dutch word *slecht*, which does not even appear in later Dutch editions, and which is translated "simple" in the KJV, and correctly so. The reader should keep this in mind when he reads this segment. Incidentally — and this is something to which the author does not call attention — Prof. Heyns in this instance evidently failed also to work from the original

Hebrew; if he had done so, he would not have made this erroneous argument based on a misapprehension of the Dutch term *slecht*. HCH] Thus far runs the passage, verses 1-6, to which Heyns appeals. But Wisdom continues and says: "He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." If Heyns will take the trouble to pay attention to these latter words and to read the preceding verses in their context, then he will, with me, have to come to the following explanation. Wisdom does not turn here to the scorners and to the wicked. The scorner and the wicked are the same. A wicked man is basically always a scorner, or mocker. He mocks wisdom and despises correction. Therefore he who rebukes and corrects the wicked gets to himself shame. To him, therefore, Wisdom does not turn. It would be casting pearls before the swine. He turns to the wise and he instructs the righteous. Also the righteous, or just, and the wise man are the same. The righteous is the wise, and he alone. For wisdom in the book of Proverbs is not an intellectual but a thoroughly spiritual and ethical concept. Through instruction a wise man will become still wiser and the righteous man will increase in doctrine. Heyns will grant me this. But then still more will become plain to him. If Wisdom so emphatically refuses to instruct the scorner and the wicked man and to cast her pearls before the swine, then it will also be clear that she does not do this in verse 4: "Whoso is simple (Here, remember, is the word *slecht* in the older Dutch version. HCH), let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." It is foolish to suppose that in verse 4 Wisdom goes flatly contrary to her own admonition of verse 8. There is then but one conclusion possible: the simple (Dutch: *slechten*) and those wanting understanding of verse 4 are *not* the *scorners* and *wicked* of verses 7 and 8, but the *wise* and *just* of verse 9. And do not say now that this is impossible, because a wise man cannot be lacking in understanding and a righteous man cannot be *slecht*, for then you would only make it impossible to understand Scripture here. [I purposely use the Dutch word *slecht* ("simple" in the KJV) because here that Dutch term is crucial to the argumentation. In modern Dutch it means "bad, evil," and this is the way Heyns mistakenly took it. HCH] *Slecht* here does not have the meaning of evil or wicked, but of *simple*, and refers to those who are not yet far advanced in the knowledge of wisdom, who therefore are in the midst of the world easily exposed to the lusts of temptation. This is the meaning of the original word. Thus it is also

translated in the English version: "whoso is simple." This is also the meaning of the same word in Psalm 19:8, "...den slechten wijsheid gevende." [Translator's note: Here you have the same differences of rendering. The more recent Dutch version has, "...den eenvoudigende wijsheid gevende." And this is similar to the English of the KJV in this verse: "...making wise the simple." HCH] And thus everyone among us who is somewhat acquainted with the Dutch language knows the word "slecht." But thus there is nothing inconsistent about speaking of een "slechten rechtvaardige" (a "simple righteous man"). Such an one is simply a righteous man who is still inexperienced in the way of righteousness in the midst of a world which is in darkness. Merely instruct him, and he will increase in understanding. And it is no different with the connection between a man who "wanteth understanding" and a "wise man." In the original you find for the word which is rendered in our English (or Dutch) Bible by "wanteth understanding" (Dutch: *verstandeloze*) a combination of two words which mean literally "lacking in heart." And since the heart is the seat of knowledge, therefore the term means "someone lacking in knowledge." And if now you keep in mind that in the book of Proverbs "the wise" is an ethical concept, denotes someone who has the fear of the Lord in his heart and therefore wants to walk in the way of true wisdom and righteousness, then there is nothing inconsistent in connecting "one who wanteth understanding" and "a wise man." You simply have the idea, then, that there is a wise man who is lacking in knowledge and who must be instructed by Wisdom. I am certain that if Heyns investigates the text carefully, he will grant me that this is indeed the meaning of the words and that Wisdom therefore is here calling and inviting the wise and the just who are lacking in knowledge and experience, and who therefore will allow themselves to be instructed by Her. And with this Heyns's entire proof, in so far as he would find it in this passage, fails.

Finally, there is in the first six verses of Proverbs 9 no general offer of salvation whatsoever, even though you should read verses 4-6 in such a way that they include all men. Then you still have nothing other than a *calling*, with a *promise* for those *who heed the calling*. "Let him turn in hither! Come! Forsake the foolish!" That is the calling. And the promise is: "Eat, drink, and live!" The furnished table of Wisdom is after all only for those who forsake the foolish, who walk in the way of understanding, who come in response to the calling of Wisdom. And the wicked and scorners surely do not do this. He who rebukes the wicked only getteth a blot, and he who reproves the scorners is hated by him. The wise and the just man hears and comes upon the calling of Wisdom.

The furnished table is for him. There is simply no escaping this. You cannot make these things general. ■ ■

Pastoral Care of Married Persons (3)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

The Calling of Husbands

Even the world of unbelief and sin is concerned these days with the tremendous increase of marriages which terminate in divorce. That there is increasing divorce in the world is not strange. There is disregard for the true significance of the marriage bond. The world, and in particular North America and Europe, are reaping a very bitter fruit indeed from the "new morality" and "sexual revolution" of the sixties and seventies. Immorality of the worst sort is common. Pornography, child pornography, sexual abuse of adults and children, homosexuality and lesbianism are openly manifest in our world. Pre-marital sex and divorce are part of this bitter fruit. So it is not a strange phenomenon. There is, after all, no love of God in the hearts of the ungodly. Hence, in our sex-crazy world of immorality marital problems, broken homes, and divorce are to be expected.

What is so tragic, however, is the fact that we find a marked increase in marriage problems and divorce among the members of God's church. Seminars on marriage, life enrichment series, films, hundreds of books and magazine articles on the subject of family living and marriage abound. But the problems persist. In our own Protestant Reformed Churches, a tiny (twenty-three congregations) conservative denomination, pastors and elders are spending more and more time with these and related problems. Even twenty years ago when this writer began his ministry these problems were quite rare. This is not the case today. And these are agonizingly difficult problems. The problems, more often than not, are complicated by the fact that many couples wait too long before seeking the help of the church. By the time they do seek the pastor's help or that of the elders, so much distrust, animosity, and bitterness have built up and the problem has become so complex that there is little or no hope of reconciliation. This is so tragic.

But the real tragedy of all this is that there is no reason for this sad

state of affairs. There is no reason why a believing couple, members of God's church, cannot have a blessed and happy married life! God promises that. And God's promises are sure. God does not renege on His promises. There is no reason why believers cannot have happy marriages *except* sin. When either or both husband and wife fail in their respective callings towards each other in the marriage bond and before the face of God there is trouble in that marriage. In obedience to the will of God for married persons there is the blessing of God. God's will is clearly revealed in Holy Scripture. God's Word must govern husbands and wives in the marriage bond. Pastors must care for married persons by directing them to God's Word.

It is crucial that pastors and the congregations entrusted to their care understand this and obey this Word of God. Ephesians 5:22-24 as well as several other passages of Holy Scripture call wives to submit themselves to their own husbands as to the Lord. In everything wives are to be subject to their husbands even as the church is subject to Christ. The reason for this is that the husband is placed by God as the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church. Verses twenty-five and following of Ephesians five speak of the calling of husbands: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:25-33).

This passage clearly commands husbands to "love their wives." If we are to understand what this means and implies and how this truth determines the way a pastor must care for married persons, we must answer the question: "what is love?" We mean, obviously, what is love according to the teaching of the Word of God? We can best begin by stating what love is not. Love is not mere sentimental attachment. It is not just a feeling for another. Love is not merely emotion or affection. To be sure, love involves our feelings and emotions, but it is much more than that. Nor is love that which the world of unbelief calls love. The ungodly world

cannot love simply because “the carnal mind (mind of the flesh, i.e., the mind apart from God’s grace in Christ, RDD) is enmity (hatred, RDD) against God and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). The ungodly, therefore, cannot love! His mind is hatred against God. And, not only is that mind of the ungodly not subject to the law of God, it lacks the ability to be subject to the law of God. Apart from the grace of God in Christ, no one is able to love. Do not forget that that law of God to which the carnal mind cannot be subject requires that one love God with all his heart and the neighbor as himself. Hence, the ungodly cannot love! At best, one finds only a certain natural affection in the world. But even that the Scriptures inform us is “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” This is all that one finds in the world of sin and death (cf. I John 2:15ff.). What the world calls love, the Bible calls adultery, fornication, uncleanness, etc. If we are to be obedient to the Scriptures we must call it that too. The truth of this is all too obvious in the world of today. This explains the horrible immorality so rampant in our times. The evils of prostitution, homosexuality, couples living together, bringing children into the world even though they are not married, abortion, sex among teenagers, all these corruptions and more are the bitter fruits of the world’s hatred against God. This gross immorality is a phenomenon which has left its mark upon the church. Even “church people” have become rather insensitive to things which would have made our parents and grandparents blush.

Positively, God’s Word speaks of the love of God. Husbands are called to love their wives in the love of God. They must manifest God’s love to their wives. Love is a key virtue of God’s Being. This is evident from the fact that the Bible declares: “God is love” (cf. I John 4:7-21). This is a very striking statement. We do not read this concerning the other virtues of God. Scripture teaches that God is the God of all grace, that God is merciful and kind, full of compassion, etc. But only of love does Scripture say, “God is love.” This means love is God! This must mean that love belongs to the very essence of God’s Being. This is why too there can be no love outside of God and the sphere of His sovereign grace in Christ Jesus. Love is always of God. No matter in what sense we speak of love – the love a husband and wife must have for each other, the love of parents for their children, or of children for their parents, the love the saints must have for one another in the church – those are all manifestations of God’s love in our hearts.

The passage speaks, therefore, of the love of God when it commands husbands to love their wives. It is the love in which God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son before the foundation of the

world (cf. Ephesians 1:1ff.). The text means God's love with which He loves us in Christ, the love which He commended to us in the death of Christ (cf. Romans 5:8), the love in which God saved us from sin and death, the love which God has shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 5:5). Because God has set His love upon us in Christ we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and we love the neighbor as ourselves.

But what is the love of God? What is the character of God's love? A key text in this connection is Colossians 3:14: "And above all these things put on charity (love, *agapee* which always refers to God's love in the New Testament, RDD), which is the bond of perfectness." In the preceding context the saints are commanded to "put on" bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; they are told to be forgiving of one another. But above all these things the elect must "put on love." This certainly points to the fact that love is the key virtue of God which must be manifest in the lives of the "holy and beloved" of God. Notice, the text teaches that God's love is a bond. This means love unites. This is true first of all in God. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in the perfect bond of divine love. In that same bond of love the saints in Christ are united as one. In the second place, God's love is a bond of *perfectness*. This must be understood in a moral or ethical sense. The love of God is a bond of moral perfectness; it is characterized by moral perfectness. This certainly means that God's love can only flourish in the sphere of God's righteousness and holiness. God's love can never flourish in the darkness of sin. This is another reason why the love of God can never be found in the world of sin and unbelief. Positively this means too that only a regenerated, godly husband can love his wife. Finally, according to Scripture, God's love never seeks to hurt or destroy, but always seeks the salvation of its object. This is the emphasis of one of the most familiar and most misunderstood verses in the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17). This is the love of God! God loved us to such an extent that He gave His only begotten Son to the horrors of hellish agony in order that we might be saved. God in His love gave, so to speak, all that He had for our salvation. In that same love God preserves us and cares for us day by day. That love must be reflected among the saints in all their relationships as members of Christ's body. They must love one another in the love of God. They must always give. They must always seek one another's eternal welfare.

When, therefore, the Scriptures exhort husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25ff.) the meaning is: husbands must manifest the love of God (the bond of perfectness) to their wives. Husbands must live with their wives in the bond of perfectness. They must always seek the salvation of their wives.

This fundamental truth must guide Christ's servants who are called to shepherd God's people. The love of God is the foundation of Christian marriage. Where there is trouble between a husband and his wife the love of God is lacking on the part of either or both. The deepest root of every problem in marriage is lack of God's love. Pastors must be aware of this. They must point troubled parishioners to this key truth and principle. Pastors must admonish husbands to love their wives in the love of God and wives to submit to their own husbands in that same love of God. There may be all kinds of things wrong in a given relationship: lack of trust, jealousy, self-seeking pride, selfishness, lack of honest communication. These must be dealt with to be sure. But pastors must penetrate through these to the root of the problem. All these evils are but symptoms or manifestations of the great evil, lack of the love of God. God's people must be guided by their pastors to see this. Where husbands and wives live together in God's love there is not a problem in the world which cannot be resolved. That marriage is a happy and blessed union, a reflection of the great mystery of Christ and His bride, the church. The fruit of God's love is compassion, trust, honest communication, genuine care and concern for one another, sympathy, kindness, etc. Once more, let it be understood, this is where pastoral care of married persons must begin, continue, and end.

That husbands are commanded to love their wives implies that the husband must assume his place as the head of his wife. The husband loves his wife precisely by assuming responsibility for her before God and men. As Christ is the head of the church and loves the church the husband is the head of his wife and loves her. This must not be taken lightly. The denial of the "headship" principle on the part of unbelievers and the rejection of this principle on the part of many in the church is a very serious matter indeed! This will yield dire consequences in the lives of husbands and wives. Whatever men may say and however the "experts" with their new hermeneutics may twist the Scriptures, the fact remains, God holds the husband accountable for his wife. Every husband will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account also in this respect. God commands: "Husbands love your wives; be the head of your wives."

This calling means that husbands must rule their wives as well. Never must the husband do this as a ruthless tyrant. Always the godly husband will rule his wife in the love of God. The husband who loves his wife will

lead her in the way of the Word of God. Together they will bow before that Word in all of their married life. Under the husband's leadership they will seek the Lord's will in all their life. God's inspired and infallible Word will be the foundation and guide in their marriage. All of their decisions will be made in the light of God's Word. Their mutual prayer as husband and wife will daily be, "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do." The answer to that prayer is found only and always in the Word of God. In this way the husband loves his wife. Ruling her by word and by example of life in the way of God's will as revealed in His Word, the husband truly seeks his wife's eternal welfare and salvation. He loves his wife.

Loving his wife the husband must provide all her earthly need. He must feed and clothe her, provide shelter and all the necessities of life in this world. This, contrary to what the world says, and contrary to the prevailing life style of our day, is not the wife's calling. It belongs to the God-ordained task of the husband to provide for the need of his wife and family. It belongs to the God-ordained task of the wife to help and assist her husband in his calling. Thus God created the woman as a help meet (fit) for Adam in the beginning (cf. Genesis 2:18ff.). A husband who refuses to assume this responsibility or who fails in this task simply does not love his wife. The husband must also provide for his wife in the spiritual sense. This is closely related to his task to rule his wife. The husband must teach his wife God's Word. This means the husband will pray for and pray with his wife. He will open the Scriptures for her and their children. He will lead her under the preaching of the Word. And in his life he will show her by example the way of godliness and obedience. Husbands, the Scripture enjoins, love your wives. Provide for them, govern them according to the Word of God.

In this way the husband and wife live together in the bond of marriage in the love of God. The husband loves his wife and she submits to him in the love of God. Because the husband loves his wife he is worthy of her submission. Together they rejoice in the bond of perfectness which is God's love. In this way the husband and his wife reflect in their earthly marriage *the* marriage, the Great Mystery of Christ and His bride the church (cf. Ephesians 5:32).

To these great principles and truths of the Bible concerning the respective callings of husbands and wives pastors must call attention. Pastors must do this from time to time in their preaching and teaching. They must do this when they are called upon to care for those couples who are experiencing trouble in their marriages. Unfaithfulness to their callings as husbands and wives, callings plainly set forth in Holy Scripture, is the root of all marriage problems. Let it be repeated, those are not really marriage

problems but *sin* problems. The only solution to sin problems is the cross of Christ, faith and repentance, the sanctifying grace and work of the Holy Spirit by means of the Word of God in the hearts of God's people. Let pastors get back to these sound Biblical principles in all their care of married persons. God will give the increase!

Ephesians 5:25 also teaches husbands how they are to love their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, *even as* Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (emphasis mine, RDD). How must husbands love their wives? "Even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." This is powerful! Christ loved the church: this refers especially to the cross. That it refers to the cross is plain from the explanatory clause: ". . . and gave himself for it." Christ gave Himself for the church. This means that Christ died in the place of the church, as the substitute for the church. Thus Christ brought before God the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the church and obtained eternal redemption for the church. In this same way husbands must love their wives. Christ is the pattern for husbands to follow. The point of comparison is this: Christ, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation. He humbled Himself and became a man, He became like us in every respect except sin, He humbled Himself to the suffering of the agonies of hell under the wrath of God at the cross. Christ made the supreme sacrifice. He gave Himself for the church. This is the love of God in Jesus Christ. We will never fathom that! We can only be humbly thankful for it. Christ in giving Himself for the church is the pattern for husbands to follow in loving their wives. Christ is also the power. He is more than an example. By the sacrifice of Himself Christ also provides the grace for husbands to love their wives.

This means husbands must love their wives with that same self-sacrificing love of Christ. From a very practical point of view this means that in the love of Christ husbands must put themselves last and their wives first. Verses twenty-two through twenty-four of Ephesians five emphasize that wives must submit themselves to their own husbands. Wives live to serve their husbands in everything. This is submission. But, this is not a "one-way street." Husbands must love their wives to the extent that they give themselves for them. This certainly implies that the husband must be concerned always with the well-being of his wife. He cares for her and her happiness. He sacrifices for her. The husband works at his job for his wife's sake. Literally the husband who loves his wife lives all of his life not for himself, but for his wife. Always his first consideration is his wife. Then he is never harsh or bitter towards her, but he is tender and kind just as Christ is kind to His church. Always the husband

is the strength and comfort of his wife. He strives to be understanding. Sometimes, to be sure, that requires correction. Certainly it requires this if the husband is concerned for the salvation of his wife. But even when he must correct his wife the husband gently leads her in the way of the Word of God.

The love of God in Jesus Christ excludes all harsh tyranny! There are some husbands like that even in the church. It would appear that they have little or no feeling at all for their wives. They rule their wives with "an iron hand." Some husbands expect to be waited on "hand and foot" by their wives and they are quite upset when they are not. Wives of these husbands are almost afraid of them and have to be very careful to please them lest there be an uproar in the house. These husbands do as they please with little or no regard for their wives and children. They are selfish and live for themselves and no one else. We ought to understand that this is not merely "not nice," being unkind, or even merely being cruel and inconsiderate. It is all of these. But it is much more than all these. The husband who lives in this fashion with his wife is just plain wicked. This is sin. It is sin because it is the very antithesis of the love of God in Jesus Christ which the husband must manifest to his wife. Husbands who live this way with their wives must be admonished from the Word of God to repent by their pastors. Pastors must not hesitate to do this. In many cases the physical and emotional well-being of the wife is dependent upon the pastor's intervention. Such is the pastor's calling. He must direct the husband to his calling to love his wife even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Christ died for the church and He nourishes and cares for the church (cf. verse 29). The church has all of the love of Christ. He provides for her every need and cherishes the church as His most precious, blood-bought possession. In this way the husband must love his wife. He must nourish her in the love of Christ. He too must cherish her as his most precious possession. Loving her he will gladly not only put up with some weaknesses or bad character traits, or annoying habits, but because he loves her so much the husband will gladly lay down his life for his wife. If need be he will die for her! The husband who loves his wife will live with her according to the knowledge of God. He will give honor to his wife in the realization that she is the weaker vessel. He will remember that she with him is the heir of the grace of everlasting life. The prayers of husband and wife in this marriage will never be hindered (cf. 1 Peter 3:7).

Blessed is that husband and wife. This marriage reflects Christ and the church. This is a blessed and joyful union. In this marriage the husband and his wife grow together in the love of God. They do so precisely in the

way of obedience to God's Word. They experience God's favor all their days and they may look forward in hope to joining the real marriage, that of Christ and His church in the perfection of the new heavens and earth. Then their joy shall be complete.

This too is the end of all strife, conflict, trouble in marriage. Let it be said once more, trouble comes when either or both (and often it is both) husband and wife fail in their respective callings. When either of them puts self first and the spouse last, when they cease living for each other in God's love and begin to live selfishly and sinfully for self, problems begin and multiply. Pastors must know this and care for their congregations accordingly. They must instruct husbands and wives to confess their faults one to another in order that they may be healed (cf. James 5:16). Pastors must instruct them to confess those faults and sins before God. This is absolutely necessary! There are bound to be difficulties in marriage. Marriage is not like courtship or one grand, continuous honeymoon. Marriage is not easy. Two different personalities must become one. The husband and wife must meld their interests, their likes and dislikes and the rest. A couple learns much about each other in the first few years of their marriage, much that they never knew before. Annoying little quirks and habits surface. Suddenly the young woman is not so ideal and the prince has lost some of his charm. But what is more, two *sinners* must become one, two who have but a small beginning of the new obedience, two who must strive every day against their sinful flesh. The husband will not always love his wife perfectly and the wife will not always submit to her husband as she should. The question is, what to do about this? The answer is this: they must confess those sins to each other and before God and they must be willing to forgive each other till seventy times seven. Confession of sin and forgiveness are the keys to happy marriages. This is what Christ does with His bride, the church. He forgives again and again.

All of this is possible too, by God's grace and in the way of prayer. Pastors must admonish married persons to pray for each other and with each other. They ought to pray together daily. Daily too ought husband and wife to search the Scriptures. When husbands and wives live in obedience to their callings by God's grace they have a blessed marriage relationship. Obedient husbands and wives have the sure promise of God as expressed in Psalm 128: "Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that

feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." ■ ■

The History of the Free Offer of the Gospel (6)

Prof. H. Hanko

[In our last article in the Journal on the subject of the free offer of the gospel we discussed the Marrow Controversy, which troubled the Presbyterian Church in Scotland in the last half of the seventeenth century. In this article we propose to discuss recent developments in this doctrine within Presbyterian circles.]

A completely worked out system of the theology of the free offer of the gospel did not appear within Presbyterian Churches for many years; and when it did finally appear and was officially adopted as dogma within the church, this was in only a part of Presbyterianism. Many Presbyterian thinkers discussed the offer and even adopted the language of the offer, but in important instances opposed the theology of the offer or were extremely ambiguous in what precisely they meant by it.

We cannot discuss every Presbyterian thinker in these articles; we choose, therefore, to discuss only some representative thinkers, of more recent times, who influenced modern Presbyterian thought in no little way.

This does not mean, however, that the subject of the free offer never came up in the official discussions of Presbyterian Churches. An interesting example of such a case has recently been discussed by Maurice Roberts in an article entitled, "Dr. John Kennedy – A Memorial Sketch." This article appeared in the August-September, 1984 issue of *The Banner of Truth*.

The article discusses, among many other things, the role which Rev. Dr. John Kennedy played in the union negotiations between the Free Church and the United Presbyterians in the middle of the nineteenth century. (Dr. Kennedy lived from 1819-1884.) Two points of difference especially were discussed in connection with these negotiations: the relation of the civil magistrate to the church of Christ, and the extent of the atonement of Christ. In connection with this latter, the subject

of the offer was discussed. The article states:

The current in which much U.P. thinking about the question of the extent of the atonement was running can be fairly estimated from these quotations from some of their spokesmen:

(1) "It is impossible for any man to preach the gospel who preaches a limited atonement."

(2) "The work of Christ has provided salvation for all men indiscriminately."

(3) "The universal offer of the Gospel has its basis in the general reference of the work of Christ,"

(4) "Christ's death made all men salvable."

(5) "The grace of God is manifested to sinners indiscriminately in the provision and offer of the gospel."

The gist of the U.P. Synod's attitude was summed up in these two propositions:

(1) That the love of God, as expressed in the gift and death of the Son, was not love to the elect exclusively;

(2) That Christ died for all men, according to a divine intention, as, in some sense, their substitute, and with a view to procuring salvability, if not salvation, for them.

To these views not only did Dr. Kennedy object, but with him such outstanding men as Robert Smith Candlish, Robert Haldane, and Dr. William Cunningham. They appealed to a decision of the Secession Church's Associate Synod of 1804 which had stated:

Christ died for the elect, and for them only. The death of Christ, possessing infinite merit, is, indeed, in itself sufficient for the redemption of all mankind. But in respect of the Father's assignation, and his own intention, He died only for the elect. . . . All for whom Christ died shall be infallibly saved. . . . We therefore condemn, and testify against the following error. . . that Christ died in some sense of all men.

It is interesting to observe in this connection that Dr. Kennedy accused the U.P. Church of Amyrauldianism; and, more interesting yet, he firmly believed that this Amyrauldianism was present in the church because of the teachings of the Marrow men particularly with respect to faith. He wrote in one of his pamphlets, as quoted in the article mentioned above:

I believe that, in the Marrow definition of faith, there was the germ of all the errors which have been developed in the Amyrauldianism, which. . . is the fashion of the United Presbyterian theology.

That definition implied that the sinner, before believing, had a certain right of property in the Gospel salvation, because of a "deed of gift and grant" from God. This mistaken idea is the most marked thing of all they retain of inherited theology. It is the search for a basis, for this pre-believing right, that has carried them to the universal reference of the atonement, and to their dreamings of universal grace.

Candlish also wrote concerning this:

In Scottish theology, for example, any departure from the strict view of the extent of the atonement is to be seriously dreaded, because it almost uniformly indicates a lurking tendency to call in question the sovereignty of divine grace altogether. Here it is invariably found to open a door for the influx of the entire tide of the Pelagian theory of human ability, in the train of that Arminian notion of the divine decrees which is apt to be its precursor.

It is clear from this that Presbyterianism struggled time and again with these central issues. It is also clear that the doctrines of the extent of the atonement and the free offer of the gospel were inseparably linked. Where the free offer was taught, a universality of the atonement inevitably went along with it. And as Candlish writes, this was always interwoven with Pelagian and Arminian heresy. It is sad that Presbyterianism of modern times has failed to see this.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest theologians in modern Presbyterianism was Charles Hodge, whose work in *Systematic Theology* has had as much influence on present day Presbyterian thought as any other work.¹

In his writing on the effectual calling, Hodge is not entirely clear on what precisely he means by the offer. On the one hand, he seems, in the clearest possible way, to reject the theology of the offer, especially the idea that it is God's intention, desire or purpose to save all who hear the gospel. In all he has to say on the subject of the calling, he never speaks of this concept. Furthermore, he seems to limit the idea of the offer of the gospel to the command of the gospel, especially when he states that the unrestricted call of the gospel is not inconsistent with God's decree of predestination.² But his opposition to an idea of the offer which expresses a universal desire on God's part to save all comes out most clearly in his repudiation of the position of Lutheranism.³ He correctly defines the Lutheran⁴ position as including a call of the gospel as an expression of God's desire and intent to save all who hear, which is also the purpose and end God has in view. This Lutheran notion lies at the very heart of the idea of the offer and has been accepted in recent times by almost all who hold to an offer. But Hodge will have none of this. He offers a lengthy refutation of this view and makes the following points: 1) God's

1 The edition which I have used is the 1946 edition published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. It is especially in Volume II, pp. 641 ff., where Hodge discusses the effectual calling, that his views on the offer are developed.

2 p. 642.

3 pp. 649-652.

4 See our article in the series on the Lutheran Reformation, especially the references made in that article to the *Formula of Concord*.

intentions must always come to pass. If this were not so, it would be inconsistent with the divine being. 2) God's purpose cannot fail or be resisted. Hence, if it were God's intention or purpose to save all, all would be saved. 3) The Lutheran view denies that the ultimate reason for refusing the gospel is God's eternal and unchangeable purpose. The Lutheran view, therefore, ultimately denies reprobation. 4) This position of the Lutherans has no support in Scripture. And here Hodge refers to a number of Scriptural passages which are often quoted in support of the offer, but which Hodge shows do not teach the offer at all.⁵

From all this one would conclude that Hodge is an enemy of the whole notion of the free offer and rejects it as heresy. But there are other elements in his treatment of the effectual calling which make one wonder. Sometimes it seems as if Hodge decides that he wants some kind of offer after all; at other times it seems as if he is really too unclear on the matter to come to any definite conclusions. When, e.g., he discusses the external call of the gospel, Hodge interprets this call to include a command, exhortation, invitation to accept offered mercy and an exhibition of the reasons why men ought to come to Christ. While it is true that this could conceivably be interpreted in such a way that it stands in harmony with other statements condemning the theology of the offer, he puts such hopes to rest when he interprets I Timothy 2:3, 4 as meaning that God intends or purposes that all should be saved because God delights in the happiness of His creatures. The same is true when Hodge discusses the whole idea of common grace.⁶ After defining common grace as, "that influence of the Spirit, which in a greater or lesser measure, is granted to all who hear the truth," he goes on to speak of a sufficient grace which is the Spirit's influence sufficient to repentance, and of preventing grace, which is the Spirit's influence on the mind, which precedes and excites its efforts to return to God. By these graces the Spirit works in the hearts of all who hear the gospel to convict of sin, to resist evil in the heart, to strive and warn, to convict of the truth.

Now, while it is true that Hodge does not directly connect these ideas of common grace with the free offer of the gospel, nevertheless, historically that has been the case. We noticed this in some detail in our article on the Marrow controversy; and the same was true of subsequent thought both in Presbyterian and Reformed continental theology. The connection

5 It would be profitable for the defenders of the free offer, who often appeal to the same texts to which Hodge refers, to read carefully Hodge's analysis of these passages.

6 pp. 654 ff.

is this. It is not only by this general grace which is given to all who hear the gospel that God shows His willingness and desire to save all; but it is also by this very common grace that all receive the necessary spiritual strength to accept or reject the Christ offered in the gospel. These two ideas belong so closely together that it is impossible to separate them.

In the light of this, it is difficult to judge with certainty Hodge's thinking on this matter. Perhaps the best we can say is that, while he emphatically repudiates the offer, he nevertheless seems to want to retain some idea of it in some sense of the word. But to harmonize these two aspects of his thought seems impossible.

What is true of Charles Hodge, is also true of A. A. Hodge. We need not say very much about his work, for he followed, for the most part C. Hodge, even on the matter of common grace. It is, however, interesting to note that in his book on "The Atonement" he makes the rather astounding and unwarranted statement that *everyone* believes in a universal offer.⁷ In his "Outlines of Theology,"⁸ he writes: "(The gospel) is addressed to the non-elect equally with the elect, because it is equally their duty and interest to accept the gospel, because the provisions of salvation are equally suited to their case, and abundantly sufficient for all, and because *God intends* (underscoring ours, HH) that its benefits shall actually accrue to everyone who accepts it."

The idea of the free offer, however, comes to fuller expression in the writings of John Murray. In a rather lengthy article in Murray's "Collected Writings,"⁹ Murray discusses, "The Atonement and the Free Offer." As far as the idea of the offer itself is concerned, he speaks of the fact that, "The universality of the demand for repentance implies a universal overture of grace."¹⁰ This "is the full and unrestricted offer of the gospel to all men."¹¹ Yet this in itself is not very clear. Does Murray mean that the universal overture of grace and the full and unrestricted offer of the gospel is nothing else but the command to all to repent of sin and believe in Christ? It is not clear.

But when he comes to his discussion of the relation between the offer and the atonement, his ideas become somewhat clearer. He insists that a universal offer must of necessity imply a certain universality

7 pp. 371, 372.

8 Hodder & Stoughton, New York, 1878, p. 446.

9 Vol. 1, chapter IX, *Banner of Truth*, 1976, pp. 59 ff.

10 p. 60.

11 p. 60.

in redemption.¹² And he defines this universal aspect of redemption in terms of the many benefits which come to the non-elect and which are merited on the cross by our Lord Jesus Christ, among which blessings is also the blessing of the gospel.

There are many questions which one could ask at this point. Is it not obvious that Murray means more by an unrestricted offer than merely the command to repent and believe in Christ? After all, there is no need for the redemptive work of Christ to serve as a basis for the demand of the gospel to repent and believe. But another question which arises is: How is it possible for the redeeming and atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross to merit blessings for the non-elect, which blessings are non-saving? It would seem that the sacrifice of Christ was actually non-redeeming and non-saving. Does it not follow then that Christ died for His people, but not to save them? Or, are there two works of Christ performed on the cross — one redeeming and saving, and another non-redeeming and non-saving? The Arminians have answered this impossible question by asserting that the death of Christ on the cross is only a sacrifice which makes salvation available to all. And this is the usual end when the well-meant offer is taught and connected with the atonement. And just as importantly, where in all Scripture is there one statement which so much as suggests that Christ died to merit blessings for the non-elect, which in fact are not actually saved?¹³

But as Murray develops this notion, it becomes clear that he means more by it. This redeeming power of the cross which does not actually save, but which merits blessings for the non-elect in turn implies a love of God for the non-elect. And this love of God for all is the source of many blessings and is a love most highly expressed in “the entreaties, overtures, and demands of the gospel proclamation.”¹⁴ And, while this love is to be distinguished from saving love, the love offered in the gospel is indeed a saving love for all that.¹⁵

12 p. 62.

13 It is interesting to note in this connection that in the controversy in 1924 concerning common grace and the well-meant offer, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church also spoke of blessings which came to all men. Repeatedly the question was put to them: What is the ground of these blessings? The Synod refused to answer them, undoubtedly because it feared ascribing a certain universality to the cross of Christ. Only in the sixties did Prof. Harold Dekker make this explicit by insisting that the doctrine of common grace necessarily implied a certain universality in Christ's redemptive work.

14 p. 68.

15 p. 83.

In connection with the faith which the gospel demands, Murray makes a distinction between belief of people that God loves *them* and faith as a commitment to Christ. In this latter sense the gospel cannot declare indiscriminately that Christ died for every man. Nevertheless, there is an indiscriminate warrant of faith which every sinner possesses. This warrant is not any personal assurance that Christ has saved him, but it is a warrant in the all-sufficiency of the Savior and the suitability of His atoning sacrifice.

It ought to be evident that Murray is not very clear in all this. He emphatically insists on an offer, but shies away from many of the implications of the offer. He tends somewhat towards the Marrow position when he speaks of the warrant of faith, but does not seem to go as far as the Marrow men went. He wants a universal overture of grace and an unrestricted offer to all, but never offers a clear and precise definition of these terms. He teaches a universality in the atonement rooted in a universal love of God for all, but also insists that we may never say that Christ loves all or died for all — at least in the saving sense of those words. And what is meant by a non-saving love and a non-saving atonement we do not know. He certainly, in this essay, never speaks of God's desire, intention, or purpose to save all; he never mentions a distinction between the will of God's decree and God's perceptive will — two key doctrines in the theology of the offer; but his language suggests strongly such a universal desire of God, and his views immediately bring to mind the question whether he believes in a double will of God or whether he rejects that notion.

It is all confusing and unsatisfactory.

But if his essay is confusing and unsatisfactory and leaves many questions unanswered, his views are very clearly set forth in a pamphlet authored by him and Ned B. Stonehouse which has become the official position of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

This pamphlet, entitled, "The Free Offer of the Gospel" and published separately as such, is in fact only a part of the decision of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on a broader issue. In the 1940s, a complaint was lodged against the licensure and ordination of Dr. Gordon H. Clark by the Presbytery of Philadelphia with the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The Twelfth General Assembly appointed a committee to investigate the doctrinal implications of the Complaint. The report of that committee was presented to the Thirteenth General Assembly which met in May, 1946. On that committee were John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse. This pamphlet on the free offer was a part of the committee report.

We are not concerned here with all the aspects of this case, nor with all the decisions which were taken at that time.¹⁶ What is of concern to us is the fact that, among other things, Dr. Clark was accused of denying the well-meaning offer of salvation to the reprobate. The committee included in its report and in defense of the doctrine of the well-meant offer the following:

Such passages as Ezekiel 18:23 and 33:11 indicate that God not only delights in the repentance of the actually penitent but also has that benevolence towards the wicked whereby He is pleased that they should repent. God not only delights in the penitent but is also moved by the riches of His goodness and mercy to desire the repentance and salvation of the impenitent and reprobate. To put this negatively, God does not take delight or pleasure in the death of the wicked. On the contrary, His delight is in mercy. God desires that the reprobate exercise that repentance which they will never exercise and desires for them the enjoyment of good they will never enjoy. And not only so, He desires the exercise of that which they are foreordained not to exercise and He desires for them the enjoyment of good they are foreordained not to enjoy.

...The question was: how can God make an offer of salvation to those that are foreordained to damnation? It does not explain the mystery of co-existence of the full and free offer of salvation and foreordination to damnation to make the obviously necessary distinction between the outward and inward call. For even after full recognition is given to the truth that God effectually calls only the elect the mystery of God's will in the offer of salvation to the reprobate still remains.

The Committee has no zeal for the word "paradox." But the Committee believes that great mystery surrounds this matter. Even the reprobate are the objects of divine benevolence, compassion and loving kindness, not only in gifts of this present life such as rain and sunshine, food and raiment, but also in the full and free overtures of God's grace in the gospel. . . .

This matter and other matters were given to another committee which was instructed to report to the Fourteenth General Assembly. This was done and the Fourteenth General Assembly substantially adopted what the committee quoted above originally proposed.

The whole concept of the free offer is clearly set forth here without ambiguity and equivocation. The following elements concerning the free offer of the gospel have, therefore, been officially adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. 1) In God's providence God reveals a general attitude of mercy, benevolence and grace towards all men which is an expression of God's universal love. 2) While this general benevolence and

¹⁶ Material on the entire "Clark Case" can be found in a number of articles in Volume XXII of *The Standard Bearer*, written by Rev. H. Hoeksema, who analyzed thoroughly the whole case including the idea of the well-meant offer.

favor is especially revealed in providence, it comes to special expression in the preaching of the gospel in which God expressly states His desire to save all who hear the gospel. 3) Because God expresses an ardent desire for things He has not decreed, this involves a distinction between the decretive and preceptive will of God and a contradiction which cannot be harmonized, but the resolution of which lies in the depths of God's own eternal thought.

It is interesting that nothing was ever said in this connection concerning the relation between the free offer of the gospel and the atonement of Christ. While later this was discussed by Murray in the essay referred to above, (the article quoted from his Collected Writings was written after this decision was taken), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church never officially entered into this question.

There is probably an historical reason for this. Although we will have opportunity to discuss in a future article the decisions of the Christian Reformed Church made concerning the free offer in 1924, it is interesting to note that these decisions were indeed made over twenty years before the decisions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. No doubt, the whole question of the free offer arose in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church because of the influence in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christian Reformed men who went to Westminster Seminary to teach – men such as C. Van Til, R. B. Kuiper and Ned B. Stonehouse. They were the men who brought the free offer into the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and were instrumental in getting the matter adopted by the General Assembly. This is why the issue of the relation between the free offer and the atonement of Christ was not specifically faced. It was not faced in the common grace controversy in the Christian Reformed Church; and it was only after questions were repeatedly asked of the Christian Reformed Church men concerning this relation, that this question finally attracted the attention of theologians in both denominations. In the Christian Reformed Church this received official attention in the sixties when Prof. Harold Dekker, in defense of the free offer of the gospel and common grace, insisted that the atonement of Christ has to be general and for all, except in its efficacy. We need say nothing more about this matter here, for we will have opportunity to discuss it at a later date.

This doctrine of the well-meant offer has also received official sanction in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (Covenanters) when it was made a part of their new Testimony. In this document both common grace and the well-meant offer have received official and credal status. We quote from the addition to Chapter 10 of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the effectual call:

Preaching the gospel consists in the offer of salvation through Christ to sinners, accompanied with such an explanation of the various parts of God's Word as may help to persuade men to receive Christ as Saviour, and to live and walk in him. 2 Cor. 5:20; Matt. 28:20; Isa. 55:1-3.

The elect are effectually called by means of the gospel offer. This offer is not a declaration to any sinner that his name is in the Book of Life. It is founded upon God's command to offer Christ and all his benefits to sinners. There is no inconsistency between the biblical doctrine of particular redemption and the command to offer the gospel to all men. Deut. 29:29; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; 2 Tim. 2:19.

We reject the teaching that the gospel offer of salvation is freely and truly offered only to the elect. *We reject* the teaching that particular redemption is to be so understood and presented that Christ as ransom and propitiation is not preached or offered to all men indiscriminately.

And the doctrine itself, without always official decisions, has become all-pervasive within Presbyterian denominations. This does not mean that there are not men in the various denominations who still oppose it; but the fact remains that it is not only a part of the preaching and teaching, but that many of these churches have moved beyond it to outright Arminianism — a heresy which is an inevitable result.