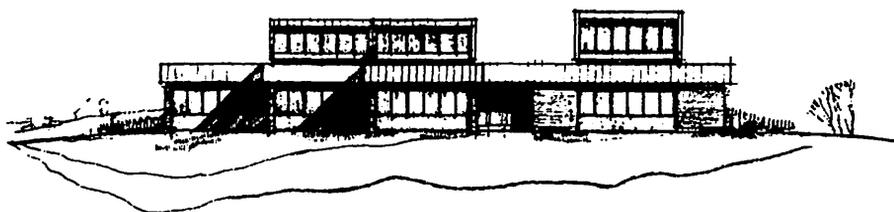


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**THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
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EDITORIAL NOTES:

You will find in this issue of the *Journal* a continuation of the three series which have run in previous issues. We are thankful that so many of you have written and expressed your appreciation for these articles and for the information they contain on subjects of current interest.

Prof. Hoeksema continues his translation of Rev. H. Hoeksema's work, "The Gospel, or, The Most Recent Attack on the Truth of Sovereign Grace." This was originally written against the theology of Prof. W. Heyns, professor in Calvin College and Seminary at the beginning of the century. It was Prof. Heyns who, in defense of the free offer of the gospel, proposed the idea (actually very old) of two wills in God. This question is still important because it is still adduced in support of the free offer. Rev. Hoeksema shows, in this important work, that this theology is contrary to the teachings of Scripture and the Reformed fathers. And let there be no misunderstanding about it: with the collapse of the theory of two wills in God, the whole concept of the free offer is without foundation and crumbles of its own weight.

Prof. Decker continues his series on the pastoral work of the minister. In this issue he deals with some practical aspects of the pastor's work in marital counselling; i.e., how, from a practical point of view, the pastor can work with those who have marital problems which threaten to disrupt a marriage. In the next issue, the Lord willing, he will conclude his series with a discussion of the place of children in the home, a subject which includes many other sub-subjects such as the importance of authority and obedience in the home, the application of Biblical discipline, etc.

Prof. Hanko continues his series on the history of the idea of the free offer. The discussion centers on Dutch (or continental) Reformed theology. It points out that the idea of the free offer was foreign to the thinking of early Dutch theologians, and explains how this notion crept into Dutch thinking in the 18th century. This history is important, for it demonstrates unquestionably that the free offer is not in the main line of Reformed (or Presbyterian) thinking, but is an innovation that has damaged severely Reformed thought.

We commend this issue of the *Journal* to our readers with the prayer that God will, in His mercy, be pleased to use it to the instruction of many.

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The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (14)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

[In harmony with our intention announced in Volume XV, Number 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 XII.]

Chapter XII Heyns' Appeal To Scripture (continued)

In this connection we may also refer to the parable of the king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. Heyns also appeals to this parable in the defense of his "general offer." And this is done more often, also by others. Now one should grasp well the difference between us and those who want to see a well-meant offer in this passage of Scripture. That difference does not lie in this, that Heyns and others explain that according to this parable many are called who do not enter into the wedding feast, while we deny this. This is very plain, and that not only from this parable but also from many other passages of Holy Scripture, as well from reality. Not all who live under the Gospel are saved. Nor does the difference lie in this, that they maintain that this calling, also for those who do not enter into the wedding feast, was serious and well-meant, while we would deny this. Also this is completely clear to us, and we do not think of denying it. In the third place, the difference also does not lie in this, that they would here maintain the responsibility of those who are called and emphasize their guilt when they refuse to come, while we would deny this. But this difference lies in this, that Heyns wants to view the voice that goes forth to those who are bidden as an *offer*, while we see in it a very serious *calling*. Heyns presents it as though in the parable it really concerns causing those who are invited to enjoy eating and drinking once. To them a delicious meal is offered. The feast is ready; the oxen and fatlings are slain; now let the people come and eat! But those people had no hunger. Perhaps they also had enough to eat and to drink at home. They were also

busy with their fields and with their merchandise. Hence, they simply did not accept the offer to eat with the king. Such is the presentation of Heyns. It concerns that eating! And it is well-meaningly offered to all to come and feast deliciously! However, to stay with the parable for the moment, if now it really concerned that, was it then such a great sin of those people not to come? One would say then: the offer is well enough intended, and those people were indeed greatly honored by the king; but it remained their right not to come. And if then they were not hungry and were simply not attracted by a delicious feast, who then could take that ill of them? An offer is after all an offer! And if someone does not accept my offer, then I certainly do not become angry at him. Or, to remain with the parable, if someone does not accept the offer of a king, then the king surely does not put him to death for this! And yet this is the viewpoint from which Heyns considers this parable. Read it for yourself:

What else is the invitation to the Great Supper (Luke 14:16-24), or to the Royal Wedding feast (Matt. 22:2-10), with the words: "Come, for all things are now ready," than an offer of all of the dishes which the host had prepared to those who were invited, whereby a right was given to them to the oxen and the fatlings which he had slain, in order to take of them and to eat to satisfaction? And that a general and well-meant offer for all. A general offer, for the servants must bring the invitation to all whom they would find along the highways, and according to that mandate they invited and brought in both evil and good. And a well-meant offer for all, for the host gave his servants the mandate to compel those whom they should find to come in, in order that his house should be full.

Now our difference lies precisely at this point. To remain with the parable, it did not concern the eating of a delicious meal, but the honor of the king who had prepared the wedding for his son. And indeed those who were bidden could depend on it that they would be well entertained by the king, but no offer of a delicious meal was extended to them, but they were *called* by the king to the wedding. The parable therefore is precisely not at all concerned with the question which men had a right to fatlings. On the contrary, it concerns an *obligation* of those who were called to the wedding. That solemn obligation was to come. When the king called, they had *no right* any longer to stay away. That the king would royally entertain them indeed made it all the worse, indeed deprived them the more of every excuse, but it is the calling of the king which is here decisive. Not to come was not simply a friendly decline of an invitation or the rejection of an offer with sincere thanks. It was, in the first place, disobedience to the king's call; and, in the second place, a trampling of the king's honor, a refusal to acknowledge him and his son.

That Heyns has not grasped the viewpoint of the parable; that it is not

an offer of fatlings, but a serious calling, which the called were obligated to heed, appears from everything. In the first place, from the emphasis upon the word *call* in the entire parable. Even the word which we translate by "invited," or "bidden," still means in the original "called." In the second place, this appears from the attitude of those who were called. They did not politely decline the invitation, but they would not come, they did not respect the calling of the king, they continued to go their own way, and they intreated the servants of the king who called them spitefully and slew them. It is very plain that what is involved is something entirely other than the eating of a delicious meal. It concerns the king and his son. And this appears, finally, also from the attitude of the king over against these subjects who refused. He became very angry. He sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Such is presentation of the parable.

And thus it was in reality, and that with much more seriousness than it ever could be with an earthly king and his subjects. For after all, that king is God. That son is Jesus Christ. That wedding is the Kingdom of Heaven. And the calling to enter into that wedding is not simply an *offer* of salvation, but a very serious *calling* of God to forsake all the ways of sin, unrighteousness, and self-righteousness, and to enter into the communion of all the spiritual, ethical blessings of salvation prepared by God in Christ. In that kingdom it concerns God in Christ. And indeed, he who enters into the wedding of the Son shall inherit salvation, for only in that kingdom is salvation, peace, and happiness, and eternal life. But this comes about precisely through the fact that *God alone is good*. He who forsakes Him has nothing but sorrow upon sorrow to fear. He who turns to Him finds in Him the highest blessedness. When that God, therefore, calls us to the wedding of His Son, then that is not an offer which men can accept or reject, but a deeply serious calling, whereby God addresses man in the depth of his rational, moral existence; a calling the refusal of which is deeply sinful. Thus it was also in reality. For those who are bidden or called are the ungodly Jews of the old dispensation. They were called, called time after time, through the servants sent to them, the prophets. They are children of wickedness. They kill the prophets. They rebel against the Most High. They do not want His covenant. They choose their own ways. And when all things are ready and the fatlings are slain, they do not enter in. Their city is burned up, and they are destroyed.

When Heyns discerns this, he will surely also concede that there is in the parable of the Great Supper or of the king who had prepared a wedding for his son no comfort and no support for the doctrine of an offer. On our part we have nothing against the external calling which also

comes to others than to the elect, but we are indeed opposed to the presentation that salvation in Christ and the grace of God are the object of an offer which on God's part comes to all men well-meaningly. For the latter is Arminianism of whole cloth.

With this I consider the chief passages of Scripture to which Heyns appeals sufficiently discussed. It is certainly not necessary to treat in depth all that Heyns adduces as proof for his view. Thus, Heyns sees a general offer in John 7:37, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." It is really so little necessary to demonstrate that here there is surely no general offer of grace and salvation that it might much rather produce wonderment that Heyns detects an offer here. What you have here is a calling of the thirsty, not of all men. Even the form of the text already presupposes that not all men are thirsty: *if any man thirst*. Still less is it to be understood how Heyns can read a general offer in Ephesians 2:17: "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." I understand very well that Heyns wants to read "offered" for "preached" here, but in conflict with the text and very much at the cost of the meaning of the words. In fact, the whole meaning is violated by this. If God has peace preached, then this means that He has made peace. The peace is an accomplished fact in the blood of the cross. That that peace shall come into existence does not depend on man. If, however, God offers peace, then the peace first comes into existence if the offer is accepted. Then the realization of that peace depends in last instance upon man. Besides, the text here also does not speak to and about all men, but about "them that were nigh" and to "you which were afar off;" hence, it speaks of and to the Church from Jew and Gentile. And thus it is also with Revelation 22:17: "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Even a child in catechism would answer every Arminian who would come with this text (and it is always the Arminian who comes with such texts) that not all men thirst after the water of life, and that also the will to come and to take that water is already the fruit of divine grace!

We shall therefore end our discussion of the Scriptural proof which Heyns thinks to have at this point. We believe we have discussed it sufficiently to demonstrate that not we depart from Holy Scripture, but that it is precisely Heyns who in various ways must do violence to Scripture in order to read in it a general offer of grace and salvation. If only he would be convinced and would retract his error on this point!

Chapter XIII

Practical Objections

Besides his supposed Scriptural proof, Professor Heyns also has some practical considerations over against those who reject a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. In his opinion the error of the denial of the offer-doctrine is a very serious one, so serious that it must be contested and rejected with all that is in us, at least as serious as the error of Arminianism. We shall therefore also pay attention to the practical considerations on which the professor bases this judgment, in order to conclude with the mention of some practical objections which we, on our part, have against the presentation of the general offer.

The first objection which Heyns raises is indeed that, strictly speaking, on the standpoint of those who deny a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation one must also deny the well-meant and binding character of God's commandments. In order to make it especially clear where such a denial would have to lead us, the professor calls the attention of his readers to the example of a murderer. Someone has committed a murder. He committed that murder in harmony with the counsel of God. God willed, therefore, that man committed a murder. But now proceed from the logical consequence that God cannot at the same time will some thing and also not will it, and you hold simply to the one fact of God's unchangeable counsel and say: God willed that that man committed a murder; it is therefore impossible that He can also not have willed it; thus the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," did not hold for that man and does not hold for any murderer, is valid really only for those who never murder. Therefore the logically consistent position of those who deny that there are two wills in God also leads to the denial of the general binding character of God's commandments. If there are no two wills in God, then there is no general offer; that Heyns has grasped well. But, if there are no two wills in the Most High, then there is also no generally binding law of God.

When I read this, I thought that this was rather cleverly conceived by the professor; such a horrible presentation of our view is indeed intended to frighten the "inexperienced." Imagine, people will say, that Rev. Hoeksema of Grand Rapids also teaches now that God wills that men shall murder! That is a proof of what a terrible error the denial of common grace is! Indeed, men ought to shun such an error like the plague! Meanwhile one can also lay it on too thick. And although there are perhaps also people who are foolish enough to accept all this as genuine coin, everyone who thinks a little for himself will immediately come to the conclusion

that the professor is here certainly engaged in exaggeration. We trust that the professor himself is also friendly enough to acknowledge that *we* do not carry our logic through so far. But, if we from our position would reason through consistently, we would have to arrive indeed at such a monstrous view as that which Heyns wants to shove in our shoes!

The reader has, of course, already grasped that we not only do not carry our logic so far, but that the logic of the professor is also not ours. The professor has somewhere in his articles asserted that our logic has been affected by sin, so that we can no longer trust it. When I read the above reasoning of the professor, I almost begin to believe it. The situation is that the professor is not to be trusted to draw conclusions from our basic principle. He gives a handy turn to the course of the reasoning by which it has all the appearance that he is right and that his "consequenzmacherei" is actually our logic. But who ever considers it carefully for a moment will soon observe that there is sophistry at play here. The reasoning of Heyns runs approximately as in the well-known syllogism: 1. Is that your dog? Yes. 2. Is that dog a mother? Yes. 3. Then that dog is your mother! Or, as the enemies of the grace of God imputed already to the Apostle Paul: 1. We are justified freely, without works. 2. The more we sin, therefore, the greater the grace. 3. Let us then sin, in order that grace may abound! The method of Heyns therefore is a little low down. [Note: In the original Dutch there is a play on words in this sentence which cannot very well be reproduced in English. For those who can understand the Dutch we will quote it here: "De methode van Heyns is dus een beetje gemeen (ge moogt *gemeen* hier nemen in denzelfden zin als in *gemeene gratie*)." HCH]

Now where does the error lie in the reasoning of Heyns? When we on our part deny Heyns' two-wills doctrine, then we deny the doctrine that God *in the same sense and with relation to the same objects can will precisely the opposite*. That is the doctrine of Heyns. He says: 1. God wills that all men shall be saved. 2. God does not will that all men shall be saved. As these two propositions stand, they simply embody the greatest nonsense. I even assert that no man can accept both of those propositions. There is no faith that can embrace them. I do not hesitate to say that Heyns himself also does not believe them. If he says that he believes that first proposition, then he has thereby already asserted that he does not believe the second. In order to make these contradictory propositions, however, somewhat acceptable, Heyns has explained the first will, whereby God wills that all men shall be saved, in the sense of *longing* or *desiring*; the second he has explained as *decree*. God desires that all men shall be saved; but, because something from without, which hinders that desire,

has intervened, God has decreed to save only the elect. And thereby Heyns has *annihilated God*. Heyns has no God left! But what does Heyns now do? He asserts: if you deny two wills in God, then you must also deny the binding character of God's commandments. And what is his error? This, that he, intentionally or unintentionally, loses from view the distinction between God's decreeing and His ethical will. The reasoning that Heyns ascribes to us runs as follows: 1. God wills (according to His decree) that someone commit a murder. 2. God therefore wills (ethically) a murder. 3. God cannot intend the sixth commandment seriously. Now we have never taught that. No Reformed man has ever gotten anything like this in his head. Besides, this is no logic, but sophistry. The error is that Heyns inserts *his own* dualistic dividing of the will of God in that which he presents as *our* reasoning and then wants to impute *his* crooked conclusion to *us*.

But we do not reason thus. On the contrary, we reason as follows:

1. God has eternally, sovereignly willed (God's counsel) that that which He hates (ethically) should be there and should happen (the sinner and his sin); and that, too, in order that His righteousness and holiness as hatred against sin should become revealed. God's counsel is not dualistic, but antithetical. As God therefore has eternally known and knows His own with a sovereign love, so He has also eternally known the reprobate with a sovereign hatred of His good pleasure and knows them eternally. In His counsel the elect *are* known, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. In His counsel the reprobate *are* rejected, fallen, lost, cast out into outer darkness. What takes place in time God has eternally before Him and with Him. He has eternally loved Jacob; He eternally hates Esau. God therefore, hates the wicked and their doings eternally! For, and that Heyns always and again forgets, God is GOD!

2. When, therefore, the ungodly, in the accomplishment of his sin in time, *carries out God's counsel*, then he, as a rational, moral, willing, and conscious creature, does that *which God hates*. That they carry out God's counsel has nothing to do with the fact that they in the carrying out of His counsel do that which is in conflict with God's will and that which He hates, so that they become the objects of His avenging justice. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture. When the wicked Jews crucified Jesus, then they accomplish according to God's counsel that which He hates. Thus also Pharaoh stands completely according to God's counsel in order loudly to say "No" against God. As he stands there in Egypt, thus he stands eternally in God's counsel, and that, too, in order that God might show in him His power. And as God hates him there in Egypt in all his wicked rebellion against the Most High, so God hates him eternally, with

a sovereign hatred of His good pleasure in His counsel.

3. When the ungodly carry out God's counsel in time in the doing of that which God hates, then God maintains Himself over against him and shows him that He hates him in his wicked doings, even as He has hated him in His counsel, and He therefore continues to demand of that ungodly man: "Thou shalt love Me and keep My commandments." Over against that demand of God's law, in which God maintains Himself as the Eternal Good, that ungodly man stands also in God's eternal counsel. Over against that demand he stands also in time. *Everything* indeed stands firm in the sovereign good pleasure of God, Who is really GOD.

In the logic of the above Heyns will not be able to discover any error. He will also grant me that in this manner, without a two-wills dualism, we nevertheless maintain the binding character of God's law for all men. Heyns might be able to retort that in this manner we get an altogether terrible presentation of God. But that is no objection, but a proof of the veracity of my presentation. For note carefully, God *is* altogether terrible! Or has Heyns never thoughtfully sung the words of Psalm 68?

How great, how terrible art Thou!
From out Thy high and holy place,
Oh Thou exalted Majesty!

[Note: The above lines are a rather free translation of a few lines of the last verse of the rhymed version of Psalm 68 in the Dutch *Psalter*. HCH]

And if the "fear of the Lord" is ever again to thrill the souls of God's people of our watered-down age, then we must not form for ourselves any goody-goody two-wills idol, after our own imagination, who sweetly offers us some fatted oxen; but then we must again know that God and live before the face of Him before Whom even the seraphim tremblingly hide their faces! Oh, if only our Reformed people will turn to that living God! Turn ye! For why should the Reformed Church die?

We can treat the remaining practical objections of Heyns against our presentation of the truth more briefly. He asserts that we attack God's honor. We do that, first of all, according to the professor, because we place our own reason above the Word of God. That Word teaches plainly a general offer; and we deny it, because it is not consistent with our reason. We do not now have to enter into that objection again. In the preceding we have, we believe, shown clearly enough: 1. That this accusation is not true and that we reason from Scripture; 2. That Prof. Heyns himself makes himself guilty again and again of the method which he wants to impute to us; he reasons frequently simply at random, without bothering about the meaning of Scripture; think only of his description of the Gospel; 3. That God's Word, provided it is correctly explained, pre-

cisely teaches no general offer whatsoever, and does not even present the matter of grace and salvation as an offer. Further, we attack the honor of God, according to Heyns, because we deny God's virtues. Thus, we deny, for example, God's veracity and present matters as though God is false. For according to our presentation God offers something to men while He does not will that they shall accept it. The offer is for most men not well-meant. To this we reply that this accusation is precisely not applicable to us, but is indeed the presentation of Heyns. It does not apply against our view, for we do not teach that God offers something to men without meaning it. We just exactly do not teach at all that He offers something to men. We teach that grace is no offer, but an irresistible work of God. We do not teach that God in the Gospel proclaims that He wills that everyone shall be saved, nor that He promises salvation to all who hear the Gospel. We teach indeed that God promises salvation to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He also works this faith in the hearts of the elect. He therefore does not proclaim a general, but a particular Gospel. And in this God is true. We also proclaim that God wills that the sinner shall turn and that He demands this of him righteously, maintaining Himself over against the sinner as the Only and Eternal Good. But we do not proclaim that the sinner can contribute anything to his own conversion, nor do we proclaim that God wills to convert all men. And also in this God is true. We do not, therefore, attack God's veracity. But Heyns indeed does that. For he teaches that God also offers salvation to them whom He has from eternity rejected, whom He certainly will not save, who also can have no part in accepting salvation. God offers salvation to altogether impotent men, who only then, when it pleases God to bestow grace upon them, can accept the proffered salvation; but grace God does not bestow upon them. And that is mocking with the sinner. To act thus among men would indeed be termed false.

Further, Heyns raises the objection that the Gospel, in the manner in which we present it, is unbelievable and unacceptable! Here the Arminianism of the professor again raises its ugly head. He has felt this himself, for he tries in the remainder of the article in which this appears to make it good, but without result, as was to be expected. Through the consistent presentation of the Reformed truth the gospel becomes unbelievable and unacceptable! If we do not preach that God is willing to save and well-meaningly offers salvation to all who hear, no one will ever be able to believe. Heyns makes a double mistake here. In the first place, he overlooks, or he denies that the Gospel is indeed unacceptable and unbelievable for every natural man. And, in the second place, this position is a denial of the Reformed truth that God works faith in the hearts of the elect, and

that, after God works this faith in the hearts of the elect and has effectually called the hearer, it is impossible that he should not believingly embrace the Gospel. For Heyns, however, the possibility of believing the gospel rests upon this reasoning: 1. God offers salvation to all men well-meaningly; 2. I belong to all men; 3. Therefore I may accept the gospel. But this is precisely quicksand. He who builds his salvation on the ground which Heyns here presents, who has nothing else than this reason-faith, certainly goes lost. That is the insidiousness of the presentation of Heyns.

Of a similar nature is the further objection of Heyns that our presentation makes men passive. Man, says Heyns, must do something in order to be saved. You cannot simply say to him: you need do absolutely nothing! No, he must believe and repent! Doing that, he shall be saved. Now about this we are surely agreed. We are even not in agreement with Heyns when he asserts that little children are not saved through faith. Certainly, in the way of faith and repentance man is saved. But we are not in agreement with him when he maintains that an offer of salvation puts man to work. He wants to say that if we proclaim no general, well-meaning offer of grace, man simply sits down passively and waits upon God as a stock and block. However, Heyns again overlooks two things, because he simply does not think in a Reformed way. He overlooks the fact that no offer of grace will ever put man to work. And he also overlooks the fact that almighty grace precisely does this undeniably. There is absolutely no danger that he who has been drawn by the grace of God becomes a stock and a block, even as there is no danger that the ungodly will posit himself as a stock and block over against the Gospel. No, under sound Reformed preaching everyone comes to stand before the face of the living God. The ungodly is pricked in his conscience and is condemned when he says always and again, "No, I do not want God!" And he who is touched by God's grace can never fail to cry: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!" And God is justified in the conscience of both when He judges.

How thoroughly Arminian the presentation of Heyns is may finally become plain from his explanation of that which he calls the "grace-demand." Heyns wants to make distinction between a "demand of God's justice" and a "grace-demand." After he has attempted to make plain what he understands by the former, he continues to say concerning the "grace-demand" the following:

This however does not hold for the grace-demands of God, which do not have for their purpose the maintenance of God's justice, which has been satisfied by Christ, but the salvation of men. Such a demand to a sinner who is in himself all together unable to perform it must include that God at the same time with His demand gives the ability and the power to do what He com-

mands the sinner to do. Otherwise it could not be a grace-demand, a command unto the sinner's salvation, a demand in which God intends the good of the sinner, as He intends good with the sinner in His Gospel. Disobedience to the gospel is then for him to whom the demand of faith and repentance comes not a matter of *not being able* but of *not willing*. Those who go lost under the Gospel go lost because they *did not will*. In the fact that God commands him, the impotent, to believe and repent in order to save him, and therefore out of grace, there lies for the sinner the assurance of divine enablement unto this end. Obeying, he will perceive that he can obey, that he indeed received that enablement. Not to obey such a command, such a plea, is the manifestation of not being willing.

I need not add much here. Heyns writes clear language here. All who hear the Gospel receive of God also the grace which enables them to accept it or. . . to reject it! He to whom the demand of faith and repentance comes *can* also accept the Gospel. For him disobedience to the Gospel is not a matter of *inability*, but simply of *unwillingness*. We esteem the fact in Heyns that he is in any event consistent. He has the courage of his convictions. He continues in the line of his basic position. He has grasped well that with the doctrine of the general, well-meant offer of the gospel that of the total inability of man does not fit. And he indeed does not deny the natural inability of man, but he teaches that all the hearers of the Gospel receive of God power to be able to accept it if they will. How such a thing is possible from a spiritual, ethical point of view we leave out of the discussion at present. The fact is that the acceptance of the Gospel is left to the free will of the hearers, a free will which they also all receive with and under the "grace-demand!" And with this the Arminian presentation of Heyns is complete, be it then that it wants to fly under the Reformed flag!

And with the latter I have also given expression to that which I will call my chief practical objection to the entire presentation of Heyns. Principally my chief objection is that Heyns does not leave God GOD. Repeatedly I have referred to this. Practically speaking, my chief objection is that with the presentation of Heyns one *is* Arminian but *pretends* to be Reformed.

And that is false!

It is the doctrine with two faces.

Officially one is Reformed. One subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity without conscientious objection. That one does this without conscientious objection finds its cause in this, that one has learned that it is purely Reformed to maintain that God wills to save the elect alone, and next to this, that God wills that all men shall be saved. One believes that grace is particular, but also that the same grace is general; that the matter

of salvation is a matter that depends upon irresistible grace, but also that it is also a general offer; that man is totally unable to accept salvation, but also that he is not totally unable. And one *continues* thus to confess this without conscientious objection because one does not take the trouble independently to investigate the truth. Of basic searching of the Scriptures there is not much. The Three Forms of Unity most people do not know, and many do not even know them by name. And much of what I here write is true not only of ordinary church members, but also of preachers. That this is the situation, men in the Christian Reformed Churches know as well as I.

But it is a foregone conclusion that no one, especially not a teacher of the people, can in practice continue to occupy this ambiguous position. It simply does not work to follow the lines of the two-wills doctrine consistently. Through this it comes about, in the first place, that as far as the development of the Reformed truth is concerned, men are on dead center. They can make no progress. They want to explain Scripture along two lines, but God's Word is one. Hence, on the basis of the dualistic position of the two-wills doctrine one can retain indeed an appearance of Scripturalness as long as he remains superficial, but the riches of Scripture can never be understood with such a position. At best, one then chews over in a traditional, but thoroughly lifeless and dry manner what has been chewed and rechewed already a hundred times. That, however, is not the worst, although it is bad enough. Worse is the fact that the dualistic position in practice is untenable and that the necessity of logic finally more and more compels one to forsake the one side of the dilemma which he has imagined. And it lies also in the nature of the case that the line which one forsakes is that of predestination. Reprobation he has already long silenced to death. Election soon follows. Thus it is with the preaching in actual practice. And thus it is also with the instruction. One of the most recent proofs of this I find in the catechism book published not long ago by Dr. Y.P. DeJong under the title, *Primer of Reformed Doctrine*. In it predestination, with election and reprobation, is not only not developed, but it is not even so much as mentioned! It is almost unbelievable that a Reformed minister would publish a booklet to serve as a guide in instruction in Reformed doctrine and would forget predestination, or purposely pass it by! That is the issue. That is the reason why so many of the Christian Reformed Church go everywhere and especially follow someone easily who still has some warmth in his preaching, but is thoroughly Arminian.

Finally, the presentation which Heyns offers of the truth is insidious because it is basically devoid of deep, spiritual, ethical, life-and-death

seriousness which characterizes Scripture and the Reformed truth. The concern in the view of Heyns is not God, but the sinner. His view is concerned with the salvation of the sinner; and that salvation then really consists in this, that at his death he goes to heaven. This is offered him. The concern is about oxen and fatlings. Out of the motive of becoming a partaker of that carnally conceived salvation, it is urged upon the sinner to repent and to believe. From many a Reformed pulpit, as well as the corners of the street, one can hear "Accept Christ today, for tomorrow it could be too late!" That it concerns the living God and the acknowledgement that He is the eternal and only Good; that our misery consists in this, that we turn from that living God; and that our salvation consists in this, that by eternal and sovereign grace we are delivered out of that misery, in order to participate in the heavenly perfection of God's covenant – oh, men no longer understand this! What they proclaim is really a caricature of all true religion!

And therefore I end with the earnest plea to the Christian Reformed Churches that they return to the old and proven paths of the Reformed truth; that they repeal and make confession of the sin committed in 1924, when the view of Heyns triumphed at the Synod of those Churches and when they ousted Reformed officebearers; and that they with us then stand on the only true basis, that God is GOD, and that His grace is particular.

Then only is there hope for the future!

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Pastoral Care of Married Persons (4)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

In previous articles on this subject we have discussed the origin and institution of marriage; its significance as a picture of *the* marriage of Christ and His Bride, the Church; the calling of wives to be in subjection to their own husbands; the calling of husbands to be the head of their wives as Christ is the head of the church, to love and to cherish them as Christ loves and cherishes the church. In this article we propose to discuss how pastors and elders ought to care for those husbands and wives in their congregations who are experiencing difficulties of one sort or another in their marriages.

At least three facts must be borne in mind in this discussion: 1. We are dealing with Christians, not unbelievers, i.e., with members of God's Church who experience problems in their marriages. 2. There are problems in every Christian marriage. All Christian husbands and wives precisely because they are sinners, imperfect saints, must work hard and prayerfully at making their marriages what God according to His Word intends them to be. It must be understood that there are no perfect marriages in this life. The perfect marriage, that of Christ and His Bride, the Church, of which our marriages are a picture, will be consummated in the new heaven and earth. 3. The problems experienced in our marriages are not really marriage problems but *sin* problems. The only cure for sin is the forgiving, sanctifying grace of God through the cross of Jesus Christ. This means, most emphatically, that the answers to these problems are to be found in God's holy, inspired, and infallible Word. Contemporary psychology, unless it be based upon and directed by the Truth of Holy Scripture, does not have the answers to these sin problems. The pastors and elders of God's Church must know and *believe* this. They must not suppose that they lack the competence and expertise to deal with these problems because they have no formal training in psychology or marriage counselling. In the confidence that Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the Sheep is pleased to preserve and care for His sheep through His servants, the pastors and elders of the church must bring the Word of God to bear on all problems in the church including those of husbands and wives sinning against each other and God.

We propose to discuss this subject under two headings: 1. What I would call Preventive Care, and 2. Dealing with Specific Problems.

PREVENTIVE CARE

The key to effective pastoral care is good, sound, expository preaching. The preaching of the Word is the chief means of grace. By means of the preaching the voice of Christ is heard by His Sheep (cf. John 10, Rom. 10, I Cor. 1, *et al.*). The pastor, therefore, must concentrate on his preaching. He must be at pains to bring the Word of God faithfully from Lord's Day to Lord's Day. His preaching ought to be comprehensive of the whole of God's Word. The concepts and doctrines of God's Word must be carefully and fully explained. God's people must know and understand the truth of God's Word as that truth applies to all of life's experiences. God's people must know their calling to live in obedience to the will of God wherever God has placed them and in all the various relationships of life. Likewise the children and youth of the church must be thoroughly trained in the truth of God's Word. They must be pointed to their obligation to

“confess with their mouths the Lord Jesus and believe in their hearts that God has raised him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9). The fruit of sound preaching is that God’s people have the grace to deal with many of the problems of life on their own rather than running to the pastor with all kinds of difficulties. Good preaching provides the spiritual environment in which effective pastoral care flourishes.

Still more, the preaching of the Word must be specific and sharp. It must clearly draw the lines between faith and unbelief, between obedience to God’s will and disobedience. In his preaching the pastor can and ought from time to time address the subject of marriage. This can be done when, for example, the pastor preaches on the seventh commandment. A series of sermons on the subject of marriage can also be preached. Upon these occasions the preacher ought to instruct God’s people on the calling of husbands, wives, and children. God’s Word, after all, clearly speaks to these subjects. Husbands and wives ought to hear what Christ has to say concerning marriage and their respective callings. And, they ought to hear this from the pulpit. Such preaching becomes all the more necessary in the age in which we live. Through the media, television, books, and magazines God’s people are bombarded every day with all kinds of perversions of the holy bond of marriage. It is becoming increasingly difficult in our sex-mad world of lust for the people of God to live chaste, sanctified lives both within and outside of the bond of marriage. Preachers must be aware of this. They must feed the flock of God with the pure, unadulterated milk of the Word also as it applies to marriage.

There are various other means which pastors and elders can employ as preventive care for married persons. A class can be provided for post high school youth. Four or five or even more sessions on the subject of marriage can be held. If such is done the pastor ought to expound the pertinent passages of Scripture concerning the origin and institution of marriage, the significance of marriage, the respective callings of husbands and wives, the Bible’s teaching on sex and child-bearing. Several Protestant Reformed congregations in the West Michigan area combined their resources and provided a marriage seminar for couples planning to marry within the next year and for those married two or less years. These seminars were beneficial and well received and, I might add, well attended. These seminars were led by the pastors and included the subjects of the institution of marriage, the calling of husbands, the calling of wives, family devotions, sex and child-bearing, and stewardship. A local medical doctor specializing in obstetrics and gynecology who is a member of the Protestant Reformed churches assisted the pastor in conducting the session on Christian stewardship. In these sessions the teaching of God’s Word con-

cerning marriage was set forth and applied. Ample opportunity (at least one hour) for discussion and questions was provided for the twenty to thirty couples who attended.

Most congregations, if not all, have several Bible study groups meeting on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule. The subject of marriage could profitably be discussed at any or all of these Bible study groups. Different aspects of the subject could be discussed depending on the age of the group. Dating would be a good subject for a youth group. The Mr. and Mrs. Society might profitably discuss the callings of husbands and wives or the calling of fathers and mothers. Younger members might very well benefit from the experiences and wisdom of older members of the church.

The pastor ought also to have a few private sessions with each couple planning to marry. This affords the pastor the opportunity to instruct the couple from the Bible in what they ought to know concerning the holy bond of marriage.

These are just some of the means which may be employed. They are designed as preventive care. Their purpose is to strengthen God's people in the faith especially in that aspect of the faith which concerns the marriage state. Again, let it be emphasized, all of this must take place within the context of a good, strong pulpit. By these means God's people will grow in the grace of God and in sanctification. More and more their marriages will reflect the Great Mystery of Christ and His Bride, the church. A practical effect of all this is that the pastor will find that he is able to spend more time preparing for the pulpit. He will be spending less time dealing with specific problems and individual couples experiencing difficulties in their marriages.

DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

Repeatedly we have noted that marital problems are on the increase within the church. This is true not only of the church generally but of orthodox, Reformed, and Presbyterian denominations and churches. This is true also of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, the denomination served by the Seminary which publishes this *Journal*. It is simply a fact that pastors of the Protestant Reformed Churches are meeting more and more of these problems. There is a growing concern among Protestant Reformed clergy and elders for promoting the Biblical truth regarding the holy bond of marriage. This is true as well of other conservative, Reformed, and Presbyterian churches. At its 1985 Synod, for example, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America heard a paper on the subject of family life among its membership. Concerning this paper the *Covenantal Witness* (that denomination's monthly church paper) reported:

One paper expressed concern over the break up of marriages in our churches and among our pastors. A special committee was appointed to poll the delegation on the subject of marriage stability and family life. While the poll showed that generally the marriages represented were very good or excellent, still about 8% of the delegates felt that they need marriage counseling at the present time. About half of the delegates would go to their pastor for counseling, but only about one in ten would go to their session (the elders, R.D.D.). About one in twenty thought their wives would go to the session for marriage counseling.

Respondents said they spend a "lot of time" in marriage counseling. Listening and the use of Scripture were the most helpful in that counseling, and training and additional resources were viewed as a need.

When asked what were the three most common reasons for the disruption of marriages in the pastoral ministry, respondents listed misplaced priorities, inadequate income or financial problems, and family neglect at the top of the list. Consistent feeding on the subject of marriage and family through the preaching and teaching of the church was seen as the most important thing which can be done to strengthen marriages and home life in the RPCNA. The committee recommended that "God's people establish priorities in order to provide time to care for spouse and children and that elders make family issues a regular purpose of their preaching and teaching." In addition, the Synod rose in prayer pleading with God to protect and bless the marriages and families of our denomination. (*Covenantal Witness*, Aug. 1985, pp. 6, 7)

A poll among Protestant Reformed people would undoubtedly yield similar results.

One reason for this increase in marriage difficulties is the adverse influence of the evil world in which we live. Approximately fifty percent of all marriages in the United States terminate in divorce. But, whatever may be the reasons, the fact remains, these problems are on the increase. Pastors and elders must deal with them. The question is, how? How ought we deal with these problems.

With but one exception, divorce or separation must never be considered as the solution to a bad marriage relationship. The only ground for divorce is adultery. When a spouse commits the sin of adultery and after repeated admonitions by the church remains impenitent, the innocent partner may divorce him or her. With this one exception, marriage is for life or as the marriage form puts it: "until death do us part." The Scriptures are perfectly clear on this score. That this is true is obvious from the origin and institution of marriage. In Genesis 2:21-24 Scripture says: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was

taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Adam recognized the woman, his wife, as "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." This is true because the woman was taken by God out of the man. For this reason the man's calling is to leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife. They, the husband and his wife are one flesh. Our Savior makes precisely this point when the Pharisees tempted Him with the question concerning divorce: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: But from the beginning it was not so. And, I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of man: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:3-12). From these words of Jesus it is clear that fornication is the only ground for divorce. "From the beginning" God ordained that husband and wife are to be one flesh. Anyone who puts away his or her spouse except it be for fornication commits adultery. And who ever marries the one put away commits adultery. The Epistles echo the same truth. In that beautiful passage where the apostle Paul speaks at some length concerning the callings of husbands and wives, he speaks of marriage as a picture of "a great mystery, Christ and the church" (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).

This after all is the heart of the matter. Marriage among God's people pictures the real marriage, that of Christ and His Bride, the church. The church that walks in disobedience, the church which departs from the truth of Holy Scripture, commits spiritual whoredom and adultery (cf. the prophecy of Hosea). In that terrifying picture of the apostate, false

church presented in Revelation 17 and 18 the name given to the false church is: "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17:5). The nations of the earth and the kings of the earth are said to have committed fornication with the false church (cf. Rev. 18:3). God's faithful people, the true church, the Bride of Christ are called to "come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). The church, therefore, is the Bride of Christ. The real marriage is that of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:6-10). God in Christ does not divorce His church. God saves His elect church from all her sin and death. God says to His church, "And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hosea 2:19-23). Or again Jehovah says to His church, "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. 54:4-10). The Lord says through the prophet Jeremiah, "Turn, O backsliding children, . . .for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass,

when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jer. 4:14-18). God in Christ is married to the church forever. Never does He forsake His bride. Pastors and elders must remember these words of Jesus: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). All pastoral care of married persons must be based upon and proceed from this fundamental truth of God's Word. Divorce upon any ground other than adultery just does not meet the test of Holy Scripture and is, therefore, sin. There may be all kinds of sins lying at the root of a couple's troubled marriage. Some of these may be: conflicting personalities; annoying bad habits; incompatibility; habitual drunkenness; lack of good, open, honest communication; spouse abuse; differing ideas or opinions on child rearing; and more. None of these is legitimate ground for divorce. Divorce "saving for the cause of fornication" is simply not an option. Couples who divorce on any other ground must be 1) admonished pastorally in the love of God, and 2) disciplined by the elders of the church and if they remain impenitent they must be excommunicated from the church and kingdom of God. Admittedly, this is a difficult stand to take and even more difficult to maintain in today's world. It is, however, the Biblical stand. It can be maintained too, but only by the grace of God. Christians must with much prayer, in the way of the confession of their sins, and with the help of faithful pastors and elders work through their problems. They must strive to strengthen their marriages and improve their relationship in marriage in order that their marriages may increasingly reflect the great mystery of Christ and His bride, the church.

All of this brings us to the question, how does a pastor care for a couple who comes to him for help? In all likelihood, although not always, the pastor will be approached by either the husband or the wife. What must the pastor do? How does he deal with this? The pastor ought to meet with the spouse coming to him with the problem. After this initial meeting, the pastor ought to arrange a session with both husband and wife. It is crucially important that the pastor *listen* carefully as each of the married persons expresses his/her grievances. The pastor often will find it

necessary to ask leading, probing questions in order to learn the nature of the specific problem (sin) or problems causing the friction in the marriage. The pastor must encourage them to speak openly, freely, and honestly about what troubles their marriage. He must assure them that God promises them a joyful and blessed marriage and that by His grace and through His Word and Spirit they can resolve their difficulties. From the outset the pastor must determine whether there is a "third party" involved. By this we mean, has the husband or wife, and are they now having an "affair" with another? More often than not this is the case. If this is true, the offending, guilty party must be admonished to repent of this sin and leave it. If such is the outcome, the innocent party must be admonished to forgive and receive the husband or wife again. Whether the consistory needs to be involved and discipline exercised depends on the nature of the individual case. In the event the guilty party remains impenitent, the consistory must needs be informed so that discipline may be exercised in the hope and prayer that God will use it as a means to bring the sinner to repentance.

If the pastor learns that there is no third party involved, he must determine the sin or sins which one or both of them are committing against each other. This may take on a variety of forms. There may be a lack of trust, poor communication, annoying habits, too little or too much money. Husbands and wives, often without even realizing what they are doing, "play games" with each other. The husband, for example, may say certain things or do certain things in order to gain a certain response from his wife. The wife, on the other hand, may interpret what her husband says or does in an entirely different way. The result is, the husband does not achieve his desired response. This continues and as it does, the frustrations and friction in the marriage build until they reach an intolerable level. And, more often than not, the "game playing" becomes more complex and the marriage becomes more and more troubled. The pastor must discern these things and with sympathetic understanding, and gentle firmness expose them. The sin or sins must be identified and the sinners must be led to see those sins, confess them, and be reconciled to each other as husband and wife and together be reconciled to God.

One method which the undersigned has found beneficial both for the pastor and the couple involved is to assign each to write at least three essays. Both husband and wife should be assigned the topics: "What I think a Christian husband ought to be," "What I think a Christian wife ought to be," and "What I think is wrong with our marriage." They must write these independently of the other so that neither knows what the other is writing. These should be given to the pastor a day or two before

the next scheduled session. At the next session, the pastor ought to read these essays in the presence of both. They ought to be thoroughly discussed in the light of the Biblical teachings concerning marriage. Often the sin problem or problems will emerge from such essays and discussions. These then can be dealt with in the light of the Scriptures.

The pastor will find it necessary to give the couple positive guidance from God's Word in order to help them re-build their marriage on the foundation of God's Word. Husbands and wives must learn not only what they must not do or say but what they must do or say in order to live chastely and obediently within the bond of holy marriage. Each must be compelled to face the question, what must I and can I by God's grace do to improve the marriage? This is in harmony with the principle of God's love, the bond of perfectness in which Christians must live as husband and wife. God's love in Jesus Christ must be reflected in marriage. And God's love is totally and perfectly unselfish. God's love always gives and never receives. Jesus told Nicodemus: "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" (Jh. 3:16). Husbands and wives living together in the unselfish, self-denying, always-giving love of God will find that they receive blessings a hundredfold! The pastor must instruct husbands and wives concerning the love of God in Jesus Christ. They must be admonished from God's Word to live together in that love. This certainly means that when they sin against each other they must learn to confess those faults to each other and to God and then they must forgive and forget!

In this connection there is another crucial area in which married couples need both instruction and often admonition. We refer to the matter of family devotions. A long-standing tradition (and it's a good one) among Dutch Reformed Christians, is devotions at meal times. The father as head of the wife and family (the wife in his absence) leads in prayer before each meal. When the meal is finished, the father reads a portion of Scripture and then closes the meal with prayer. In our fast-paced world this custom is suffering. Rarely is the family together. This is especially true of families with teenage and older children. This custom ought not be lost among God's people. There ought to be a set time during the course of the day or evening when the entire family prays, reads, and studies and discusses Holy Scripture, and sings psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in praise to God. In the world today where sin, evil, temptations assume gigantic proportions and where the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, God's people need a time to spend together with God and His Word.

In addition to family devotions, however, the husband and wife need time each day for themselves. To find such time seems difficult and especially is this true in those families with older children. However difficult it may be, the husband and wife need some time alone. They need time to talk together about what happened during the day, about the needs of their children and other family members. They need to pray together and open God's Word together. Perhaps the best time for this is just before retiring for the night. Pastors ought to encourage couples and in some instances even admonish them to set aside a time to be together with their Lord.

These are some of the more important ways pastors can help couples build or re-build their marriages. In summary: 1) husbands and wives must know and confess and repent of their sinning against each other. 2) They must forgive each other "till seventy times seven." 3) They must live together in the love of God. 4) They must make time for family devotions. 5) They must pray together and meditate upon the Scriptures together daily. Living together along these straight, Biblical lines, husbands and wives may expect happy marriages. They will be able to face the trials and difficulties of life, endure and triumph over the temptations. They may expect this for God commands His blessing there. With unashamed hope, they may also look forward to celebrating the marriage feast of the Lamb of God in glory of which our earthly marriages are but a picture. ■ ■

The History of the Free Offer of the Gospel (7)

Prof. H. Hanko

(In the article which appeared in the Spring issue of the Journal we concluded our discussion of the history of the free offer of the gospel as it was developed and maintained in Presbyterian circles. In this and future articles, we will discuss the history of this doctrine in the Dutch Reformed Churches of Netherlands and this country.)

EARLY DUTCH THINKERS

In an earlier article on this subject we discussed the idea of the free offer of the gospel as it was repudiated by the fathers at the great Synod of Dordrecht. We begin our discussion, therefore, with a survey of the theologians who followed upon the Synod of Dordrecht.

Scanning the works of the great Dutch theologians of this period, we come to the immediate conclusion that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find the idea of the free offer in any of their writings. This is not to say that the terminology is not found on occasion, and that the term "offer" was not used; but as we noticed so often in our discussion of this subject, the term was used in an entirely different way from that use made of it today. It was not used to express the idea of a desire or intention on God's part to save all who hear the gospel; it was rather used to emphasize the point that the gospel is preached to many more than the elect, and that through the preaching, Christ is widely proclaimed as the One through Whom God has accomplished salvation; and all who hear are confronted with the command to believe and repent. In fact, in the writings of these men, one not only does not find the theology of the offer, but the positive development of the idea of the preaching and the call of the gospel is a flat contradiction of the offer.

There is, however, another element in the development of Dutch thought which we must recognize in order to understand the whole history of this concept. I refer to the development of federal or covenant theology as that took place in the Netherlands. It would lead us too far astray to go into this matter in detail in this series of articles, but the fact remains that the development of this doctrine had bearing on the whole idea of the preaching.

It is not surprising that in the development of covenant theology, much attention was paid to the idea of the *promise* of the covenant. It cannot be denied that the idea of the promise was inseparably connected with the idea of the covenant, for Scripture itself often speaks of the two in the same connection.¹ Furthermore, the sacrament of baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant, and the sacraments have been added to the preaching to signify and seal unto God's people through visible signs the very truth of the preaching. This means that the promise of baptism is essentially the same as the promise proclaimed in the preaching.

The difficulty was that the covenant was usually interpreted in Dutch theology as an agreement between God and man. In close connection with this, the promise of the covenant was sometimes said to be general, that is, it was said to be given to all the children who were baptized even though all the children were not elect. It is not difficult to see that this idea is closely connected to the idea of the well-meant offer. If it is true in some

1 Cf., e.g., Genesis 17:7, 8, where the whole revelation of the covenant to Abraham is cast in the form of a promise; Hebrews 6:13-20; Hebrews 4:1, 2; etc.

sense of the word that the promise of God in baptism comes to reprobate children as well as elect children, a promise in which God swears to be the God of those who are baptized and swears to make them His people, then the same thing can be said of the preaching, namely, that God, in the preaching, expresses His desire to save all who hear whether they are elect or reprobate.

Nevertheless, even though early Dutch theologians interpreted the covenant in terms of an agreement between God and man² they, with happy inconsistency, nevertheless maintained that the promise was particular, that is, for the elect alone.

The point we wish to make here is that the two ideas became inseparably intertwined as Dutch theology developed over the years. Just as the promise made in baptism was general for all who were baptized, so is the preaching general for all who hear. After all, the preaching is always the proclamation of the promise, and the promise proclaimed in the preaching is no different from the promise signified and sealed in baptism. Just as the promise made in baptism expressed God's desire to save all those who were baptized, so was the preaching of the promise an expression of God's desire and intent to save all who hear the preaching. Just as the promise made in baptism gives to all who are baptized a certain claim to the salvation promised (if they will fulfill the condition of faith), so also does the preaching give to all who hear a certain objective claim to salvation (if they will accept Christ Who is offered in the preaching by faith). Thus it was that these two ideas were linked together in continental thought. And while, therefore, early Dutch thinkers did not hold to the idea of a well-meant offer, as the two were intertwined, so by the nineteenth century, the idea of the offer was also gaining acceptance.

But to return to our main subject: we ought to take a brief look at some post-Dort thinkers to demonstrate that, while they indeed used the word "offer," they meant something quite different by it than an

2 We repudiate this notion of the covenant as being, in essence, an agreement, and believe that Scripture emphatically teaches that the basic nature of the covenant is a *bond* of friendship and fellowship between God and His people in Christ. Yet it is also clear that when one makes of the covenant an agreement, one is almost surely bound to the idea of a *general* promise; for children, who receive the promise when baptized, cannot, in fact, enter into an agreement until they arrive at years of maturity when they know what they are doing. Hence, under the idea of an agreement, all children receive the promise at baptism, but the promise becomes effective *for them* only when they become sufficiently mature to agree to the provisions of the agreement.

expression of God's desire to save all who hear the preaching.

Heinrich Heppe, in his "Reformed Dogmatics"³ apparently finds no theologian of this period who held to the idea of the offer. While making some summary remarks himself and quoting from a number of theologians, he shows clearly that the preaching was considered a general proclamation of a particular gospel. We include here a few select quotations from his book.

This calling is imparted only to the elect; God not only has His word proclaimed to them through man (*vocatio externa*), but also introduces it by the H. Spirit into their hearts and there sets up living communion with Christ (*vocatio interna*). — *Heidegger* (XXI, 8): "Calling is of those elect and redeemed through Christ. These alone are so called that they are also attracted and created new and begotten. They alone are those for whom God not only strikes their ears by His word preached through men, but also attacks their hearts, opening them, writing His law in them, changing them and inflaming them to love Him."⁴

Rather than the calling being described in terms of an offer, it was a means which God used to bring judgment upon the unbelieving.

On the other hand the rest who are not elect in accordance with the counsel and covenant of God are also called, not according to this but according to the judgment of God. Accordingly God only allows the call of the word proclaimed by men to be imparted to them and suffers them in the outward fellowship of the knowledge and in passing even inward assurance of salvation, so as thereby to deprive them of all excuses for their hardness of heart. — *Heidegger* (XXI, 9): "Clearly of another sort is the calling of those who are left non-elect and rejected. The non-elect called are not called according to the purpose and covenant of God, as heirs entered therein, but according to God's judgment and dispensation, whereby He suffers them in the outward communion of the elect through the Word of His goodness, convicts them of their wickedness and cuts short their excuse for not coming to the wedding of the King's Son. Also they are not called so directly by God affecting, changing and regenerating the heart, as indirectly through men, who may strike their ears but cannot get through to their hearts. And so they are called by the Word preached by men; yet so that they are not brought by the Spirit of God to communion with God."⁵

In fact, the notion of the offer was repudiated.

Moreover outward Church calling is not imparted to the non-elect in such wise that God wished to present them with faith, should they refrain from resisting the activity of the H. Spirit. Otherwise the possibility would arise of a counsel of God being perhaps rendered futile by man. Besides it is to be noted that man can only resist the H. Spirit. — *Heidegger* (XXI, 10): "Nor

3 Baker Publishing House, 1978; see especially pp. 512-519.

4 p. 512.

5 pp. 512, 513.

does God altogether call particular reprobate in such wise that He has decreed and wills to give them faith and repentance just like the elect, provided only they do not resist the H. Spirit's call, as is the *leptologia* (frivolity) of some. There are no decrees of God which men or any creature can frustrate. They are altogether effectual and have a most definite outcome. If He has decreed to give to some faith and repentance, He bestows them in time through the Word and the H. Spirit. In that case all men of themselves and by their nature resist the H. Spirit: Rom. 8, 7 (the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be).⁶

Rather than describing the outward calling of the gospel as an offer in which God tells men He wants to save them, the outward call, though a call to salvation, is a command of God, seriously meant, to repent and believe, but a call which is not effectual because of sin.

In the same way too it cannot be concluded that because the outward calling of the rejected is ineffectual it is therefore not seriously meant by God. Outward calling is always *per se* a real calling to salvation, since everyone who follows it up thereby gains righteousness in Christ and eternal life: only, in the case of the godless, it is ineffectual because of their hardness of heart. Similarly, the calling from God's side is always seriously intended, since God promises grace even to the rejected upon condition of faith, and makes faith for them a duty. But of course God omits to give faith to the rejected, because He is not bound to do so in the case of any man. —*Polan* (VI, 32): "Ineffectual calling is of the reprobate. — It is called ineffectual not *per se* but *per accidens*, not in respect of God who calls, but in respect of men who have deaf ears of the heart. In itself calling is always effectual, although it is not so in those who are perishing, as the sun is effective by his light in itself, although it by no means illumines the blind." — From this it follows that even the calling of the godless is on God's side "sincere and serious" *Heidegger* (XXI, 11): "Whether the serious is opposed to a joke, God in no way plays in the business of calling; or to pretence, He likewise does not simulate, because He does not profess one thing outwardly in words, concealing something else inwardly in His mind, but declares to men by calling His plain, open and steadfast will. And since the parts of calling are commands and promises, as often as He calls He commands and orders them seriously to repent and believe. For He wills that they repent and believe by His preceptive and approving will, although He does not will by His discerning will, effectual to the giving of faith and repentance. He has the right to demand both. — Moreover calling promises salvation, but not to any one promiscuously or without condition, only to the believing and repentant person." — Similarly *Wolleb* 91.

Thus in the calling of the elect man's proclamation is essentially combined with the inward efficacy of the H. Spirit. Without this activity of the H. Spirit, who writes the Word in man's heart, God's Word itself is but an empty letter, slaying the sinner and enticing him into fresh service of sin. —*Cocceius* (Summ. theol. XLII, 13): "This calling takes place through the

6 p. 513.

word heard, Rom. 10:14f. (how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?)." —Heidegger (XXI, 21): "The outward calling of the elect through the word preached by men is very closely connected with inward accosting by the H. Spirit. Were it separate from this it would be of no avail. For the word preached by men strikes the ears of natural man, dead in sins. —Any word, however divine, most true, most wise, most pleasant in itself and thoroughly lovable, when addressed to a sinner still dead in sin, whose heart has not been inscribed by the H. Spirit, remains but a letter, slays the sinner and provokes him to sin, 2 Cor. 3:6 (. . . a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life); Rom. 5:20 (the law came in beside, that trespass might abound; but where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly); 7:8 (sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting: for apart from the law sin is dead)."⁷

The same is true of Johannes Wollebius (1586-1629). In his writings too one will find no reference to an offer in the sense of God's universal intention and desire to save all. It is true that he makes use of the term, "Christ offered in the gospel"; but, again, by this he does not refer to its modern usage, but rather intends to convey the idea that the preaching *presents* to all who hear Christ as crucified for sinners. It is also true that he speaks of faith as a condition to salvation, but uses it in the sense of making salvation particular. He does not use the word to convey the idea of *prerequisite*, but rather to impress upon his readers the truth that faith is the *way* or *means* of salvation for the elect alone. He refers to the common call as serious and for all, but speaks of its purpose as being the salvation of the elect and the just damnation of the reprobate.

IV. The form of this calling consists partly of the offering of the benefits of redemption, and partly in the injunction to accept it. . . .

V. Its purpose is the glory of God and the salvation of the elect. This is served both by the glory of his mercy toward the elect who are responsive to the calling, and by the glory of his justice toward the reprobate who are disobedient.

VI. Therefore, this ordinary calling is primarily on account of (*propter*) the elect, secondarily on account of the reprobate.

VII. He calls both (kinds of people) in earnest (*serio*) and without any deceit.

Concerning the elect there is no doubt. As to the reprobate, although they are not called "according to his purpose," or to salvation, nevertheless they are called in earnest, and salvation is offered them on condition of faith. Nor are they mocked because they have been deprived of all grace of believing. Rather, because they destroyed the original grace of their own accord, and

7 pp. 517, 518.

also, by their evil passion, despised the means of grace, God therefore has the right to demand faith from them and uses it no less justly than do other creditors, so that their mouths are closed, they are without excuse, and the justice of God is upheld. Therefore, he does not call them to mock them, but in order to declare and reveal his justice.

It (the calling) can be called actual election because by it God makes the decree of election effective. "Whom he predestined he also called" (Rom. 8:30). "I chose you out of the world" (John 15:19). It is called effective calling in contrast to the calling of the reprobate, which is not effective for their salvation on account of their own sin. It is called internal because the calling of the reprobate is only external, by the word; or, if they are to some extent enlightened and internally moved, the change is only temporary.

III. The principal efficient cause is God, the active cause is His free mercy, and the instrumental cause the ministry of the word. . . .

IV. The "matter" or object of calling is elect man, who, however, is in himself wretched, animal, carnal, a sinner, separated from the life of God, altogether dead in sin.

"And you he made alive, when you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). "And you, who were dead in your sins, he has made alive" (Col. 2:13). "We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another" (Tit. 3:3).

V. The semi-Pelagians, therefore, are wrong to attribute to man either a preparation for, or a tendency toward, receiving a call.

The reason is obvious in the words cited above, for just as no dead person can confer resurrection upon himself, neither can anything be attributed to man for his calling.

VI. However, man is not like a log in connection with his calling; he is a suitable subject for calling, since he is not a lion or a dog, but a rational creature. But man's reason, before it is enlightened, is worth nothing for the calling.

VII. It is absurd to suppose that this grace of calling is extended to all, since not even that calling which we have considered above reaches all men, as the entire Old Testament record teaches; since, at that time, the Gentiles were passed by and only the Jews were called.

VIII. The form of special calling is gracious action toward man, not only the enlightenment of the mind, but the changing of the heart of stone into flesh, or turning man to obedience.

This is clearly shown in the words above, especially Ezekiel 36:26.

IX. Therefore the Arminian innovators teach falsely when they say that the mind is simply endowed with knowledge and the desire is irresistibly awakened; that it is really up to the free will to believe or not believe, and the power of believing, but not actual faith (*actus credendi*), is given by irresistible grace.

This error is obviously contrary to what God says concerning changing the heart (Ezek. 36:26). And Christ also witnessed not only that the elect learn from God and hear him, but that all who have learned come to him (Jn. 6:45). . . .

XII. The innovators (Arminians) are also wrong when they teach that

sufficient grace is given to all men, although not the actual act of receiving and using grace.

* This idea refutes itself. If one is not given grace of believing so far as actual faith is concerned, then the grace is not sufficient; for no one is saved unless he believe. We grant that common calling is enough to take away any excuse from the reprobate, although it is not enough for salvation. This is what God means in Isaiah 5:4: "What more can I do for my vineyard than I have done for it?"

XIII. The Pelagian teaching, that by the grace of calling natural powers are to be understood, is absurd.

Nowhere in Scripture is the word "grace" so used, but it means either grace that makes (man) acceptable to God, or grace that is freely given (*gratiam gratis*). "To the praise of his glorious grace, by which he freely made us acceptable in his beloved" (Eph. 1:6). "Having then gifts that differ, according to the grace which is given to us" (Rom. 12:6).⁸

Without quoting at length from other writers, we may refer to a few others.

Herman Witsius (1636-1708) agrees essentially with what we have quoted above. Repudiating the views of Amyrauld and expressing agreement with Turretin, he emphasized that the general call, in keeping with limited atonement, has as its purpose the salvation of the elect.⁹

Aegidius Francken wrote his *Kern der Christelijke Leer* in 1713. In his chapter on "The Calling" he has some interesting remarks to make which refer directly to the question of the offer. We quote a few excerpts.¹⁰

Q. 7 Does not God call all men by a sufficient grace?

A. By no means, for many are ignorant of the way of salvation without which knowledge no one can be called to God's fellowship. Acts 14:16: "Who in times past allowed the heathen to walk in their own ways."

Q. 11 Whereby does God call men externally?

A. By the Word of the Gospel, in which God offers to him Christ and all His benefits. Prov. 9:4-6: "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."

While using the word "offer" in the above quote, in another question and answer, Francken specifically repudiates what today goes under the name of "offer."

Q. 18 Does God then *intend* (emphasis ours) the salvation of all whom He calls externally?

8 *Compendium Theologiae Christianae*; quoted in *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. by J.W. Beardslee III, Baker Book House, 1977; pp. 116, 158-160.

9 Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, tr. by W. Crookshank; London, 1822. See especially Book III, Chap. V, pp. 344-356 on "The Calling."

10 The translation is ours.

A. By no means. God intends only the salvation of His elect.

Q. 19 Prove that God does not intend to save all through the external calling.

A. That would be in conflict with God's eternal decree of reprobation, in which He has determined to condemn some in their sins. He cannot intend to save those through the preaching of the gospel whom He has appointed as vessels of wrath.

Q. 20 Does not God then deal dishonestly when He calls the reprobate to salvation, whose salvation He does not intend?

A. By no means; for in the calling God only makes known to the sinner the way of salvation, faith and conversion, and promises salvation only to those who believe and repent; in this God does not deal with them deceitfully, but only shows that He has made an inseparable bond between faith and salvation.

This same emphasis is to be found in Peter Nahuys, preacher in Monnekedam in the Netherlands, who, in 1739 published a work entitled, *Op het Kort Begrip der Christelijke Leer; Verdedigd tegen Dwaalgeesten en Dwalingen*, ("A Brief Summary of Christian Doctrine; Set Forth Against Heretics and Heresies.")¹¹ In Lesson XXIC on "The Calling In Particular" he writes:

Q. What do you understand by the external calling?

A. The external invitation, which takes place only through the Word to all who live under its proclamation, in which Christ Jesus and all His fulness is offered for naught.

One cannot help but notice that the author here uses the words "invitation" and "offer," although he emphatically asserts that Christ is offered *for naught*. But when he explains these terms, he writes as follows:

Q. In the 34th Lesson you state that there is a twofold calling, an external or general, and an internal or particular calling; with whom do we differ in that respect?

A. With the Pelagians and the defenders of common grace (algemeene genade):¹² these recognize only a single moral calling, whereby they understand nothing more than a general invitation to all men without distinction, including a call to conversion and faith; by which invitation God would grant to all men without distinction a sufficient grace, whereby he, surrendering his free will toward the good, can accept that calling voice of God, and also actually convert himself and become partaker of salvation.

Q. What is their basic error?

A. That they want salvation as well as condemnation to depend on the free will of man.

¹¹ Again the translation is ours.

¹² Notice in this language that the author not only specifically repudiates the notion of common grace, lumping it together with Pelagianism, but that he recognizes the simple fact that common grace has always been inseparably connected to the well-meant offer.

Q. How do you contradict that contention?

A. Such a sufficient calling to all men is not only in conflict with Acts 14:16, where it is said of the heathen that God left them to walk in *their ways*, but it is also in conflict with Mat. 13:11, where God grants His sufficient grace according to His good pleasure on some, and withholds it from others. Compare I Cor. 4:7.

Q. However, what do you answer to this?

Objection: They say that if God would not grant a sufficient grace along with their calling, in order that they should be able to heed that calling, God would appear to call in vain, which is not in harmony with His wisdom.

A. This objection rests on a false premise, as if when God calls all men externally, He does this with no other purpose than to save all of them; which we deny. For many are called, while *very few* are *chosen* (Mat. 20:16).

Second objection: But they insist on their point by saying, if God does not intend to save all those whom He calls, then that external calling is only a mockery with man.

A. By no means is this true; for by that calling that man is most emphatically pointed to his calling; and thus God shows thereby His goodness to the man; while even the reprobate is the more convinced of his wickedness and rebellion.

Q. You also stated that the internal calling can not be resisted. Who oppose this?

A. Once more, the common grace (sic) defenders, who maintain the opposite on a Pelagian basis.

Q. What do they have in mind with this?

A. Not only to have salvation depend on man himself, and on his free and indifferent will, whether for the good or for the evil; but also, to cast aside the more readily God's eternal and resolute will of gracious election.

Q. How would you oppose their position?

A. 1. This does not only stand in conflict with God's unchangeable and efficacious calling, but, 2. also with the harmony between man's obedience and the divine calling (Song of Solomon 1:4, John 6:45).

Q. How do they try to defend their mistaken notion?

Objection 1: They introduce the passage from Mat. 23:37.¹³

A. It is up to those parties still to prove that an efficacious and internal calling is spoken of in this passage; and even though we grant this, this passage still does not favor the wrong idea of these parties; for the Savior very clearly refers to Jerusalem and her children; and they tried, were this possible, to prevent Him from gathering the children. But in no way does He complain about the children as if they have resisted that calling, which these parties try to prove from this passage. The opposite is true, for many did believe in Him, regardless of the fact that this displeased and was contrary to the wishes of the rulers.

Objection 2. The Savior nevertheless says of the Jews, Luke 7:30, that they rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

13 It is interesting to note that this passage is one of the favorites with those who defend the well-meant offer. We ought to note carefully what Nahuys says about it.

A. It is evident that in this passage the reference is not to an internal, but only to an external calling or invitation, which was done and presented by John the Baptist to their conversion, which *invitation or demand* (underscoring is ours)¹⁴ of God, laid in the mouth of John, the Pharisees and Scribes rejected.

Clearer language could not be spoken. Nahuys expressly rejects as Pelagian any idea that God intends, through the preaching, to save all who hear. In this respect he reflects the teaching of those of his age.

W. Brakel is another theologian of some repute from the latter part of this period. When one reads his writings¹⁵ one can find all kinds of quotations which would convince the reader that Brakel held firmly to the idea of a well-meant offer. Nevertheless, in his *Redelijke Godsdiens*, his major work on theology, he writes, in connection with "The Calling":

XIV. This raises another question: whether God in calling the sinner to Christ *intends the salvation of all*: (underscoring ours) whether God with that purpose alone calls all those who are under the ministry, that they should become partakers of salvation. I answer: No; for God cannot be prevented from attaining His goal, so that all should be saved who are called.

To understand this properly, one must consider: (a) that the calling takes place first and mainly to gather the elect (Eph. 4:11, 12). God does not give the gospel to those areas where there are no elect, and when the elect are gathered in a certain area, God usually takes the gospel away from there. Since the elect are in the world, and mixed among others, it happens that the gospel comes to the elect and also to others. By means of that calling, by preaching the gospel, God gives His elect conversion and faith, which He does not give to others. (b) One must distinguish between the *purpose of God, the Worker, and the purpose of that work, the gospel*. The entire nature of the gospel is capable of leading a person to salvation, it reveals enough of the way of salvation, and it arouses sufficiently to move someone to faith, so that it is not because of the gospel that some are not saved, but it is the fault of the man himself, because he did not allow himself to be taught and led, which is the purpose of the gospel. The purpose of God in causing the gospel to be preached to the non-elect is, to show a person the way of salvation and to make it known to him, *to demand of the person* to walk in that way; to show God's goodness by presenting to him all the arguments for salvation, and to promise him salvation if he repents and truly believes in Christ, which he would also do if he would fulfill that condition which he is obligated to do,

14 We underscore this because some might object to the word "invitation" as used by Nahuys and point out that, after all, an invitation is subject to the acceptance or rejection of the one who receives it. While this is surely true among men, Christ's "invitation" is the "invitation" of the *King*, which one rejects at the peril of his life. It is clear that Nahuys has the same idea in mind, for here he identifies "invitation" with "demand."

15 E.g., his work entitled: "Hallelujah, With Respect to the Covenant of Grace."

and which the human nature which was holy in Adam could do. If he does not fulfill it, that is not because God prevents him, or deprives him of strength, but because the man refuses, so that it is his own fault, indeed, the goodness of God should lead him to repentance. And to *convince the person* both of his wickedness that he will not come upon such a friendly invitation and of the righteousness of God to punish such rejectors of his offered salvation (John 15:20). These are the non-elect, but God did not intend thereby, God did not mean to give them the Holy Spirit, and thus to save them. This is evident from the following:

1. It would be in conflict with God's omniscience. . . .
2. It is contrary to eternal election. . . .
3. God cannot be disappointed in His intention. He must necessarily attain all that He desires, for He is all-wise, the alone wise, almighty. . . .

Those who imagine that the man has sufficient strength to convert himself and to believe in Christ oppose this. . . .

Objection 1: God would deal deceitfully if He called someone and did not mean it.

A. God intends to save those who believe, and that is God's gift. Others He leaves to themselves.

Objection 2: God invites to the wedding feast, thus He must intend that they should come.

A. The guest who was rejected at the wedding feast was not rejected because he was not invited, but because he failed to fulfill the condition of having the proper wedding garment.

Objection 3: If God does not intend that all should come, no one would dare to come because he does not know whether God intends that he should come. The Word promises salvation to all who believe.¹⁶

The conclusions from all this are unmistakable. From the time of the great Synod of Dordrecht until almost the end of the 18th century no outstanding Dutch theologians held to the idea of the well-meant offer. It is repeatedly claimed by those who defend this erroneous view that their position has a long and illustrious history. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in its decisions on common grace and the free offer made bold to say that Reformed theologians in the most flourishing period of Reformed theology held to this view. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The question is: how did this idea come into Dutch thinking and become such an accepted part of Reformed theology in our day? Undoubtedly there were various factors which influenced this, and to this we must now turn our attention.

¹⁶ These quotations are taken from the edition published by D. Bolle in Rotterdam; no date of publication is given. In the last paragraph we have summarized Brakel's thought to keep the quotation as short as possible.