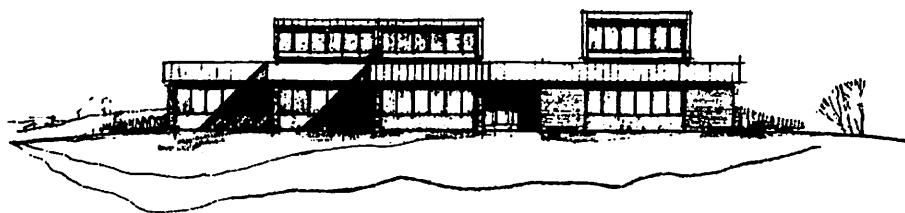


# **PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL**



APRIL, 1987  
Volume XX, No. 2

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

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THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

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Protestant Reformed Churches  
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## EDITORIAL NOTES

With this issue of the *Journal* we have, under God's blessing, completed twenty years of publishing. We are thankful that the Lord has prospered this work, that our mailing list has continued to grow, and that many have written of the benefit they receive from the articles which we have printed. It is our prayer, and we hope it is also yours, that God will continue to use this *Journal* for the defense and development of the precious heritage of the Reformed faith.

\* \* \* \* \*

Prof. Hoeksema begins a new series of articles in this issue. As he states in his introduction, this is the beginning of a new translation work, this time of Rev. Hoeksema's pamphlet, *Een Kracht Gods Tot Zaligbeld* – "A Power of God Unto Salvation." We believe that these works from the past are part of our heritage not only, but make significant contributions to the understanding of the Reformed faith. Since the knowledge of the Dutch language is almost lost among us, a translation will make this material available to many who rejoice in this heritage and treasure it as part of the gift of the Spirit of Christ to His church.

\* \* \* \* \*

Prof. Decker has included in this issue of the *Journal* a paper which he prepared as an independent research study in his M.Th. program at Calvin College. The subject of preaching continues to be of importance in the church, and this paper will have importance for all those who, with us, consider preaching to be still the chief task of the church of Christ.

\* \* \* \* \*

After many articles appearing over several years, Prof. Hanko brings his series on the history of the free offer to a conclusion. Some have asked whether these articles will appear later in book form. We have no plans to do this, but the Seminary does offer reprints of any articles appearing in the *Journal*. These can be obtained by writing the Seminary. The cost is low, only as much as our own costs are in reproducing the articles.

Continue to pray for us.

# A Power of God Unto Salvation or Grace Not an Offer

Herman Hoeksema

[After I completed the translation of the late Herman Hoeksema's polemic entitled *The Gospel*, in connection with my articles on the free offer of the gospel, several readers suggested to me that a translation of another work, *Een Kracht Gods Tot Zaligheid*, would also be worthwhile. The former work was pertinent in connection with the subject of the simplicity of the will of God and the free offer, the subject with which we are still occupied in this series. While this little book is not so directly pertinent as was Hoeksema's polemic against Prof. Heyns's "two wills doctrine," nevertheless it is pertinent to the subject of the free offer. And therefore we will try to complete a translation of it in a few installments. — Homer C. Hoeksema]

## Chapter 1 The Real Point Not Addressed

For some weeks the Reverend H. Keegstra, editor-in-chief of *De Wachter*, the Dutch-language organ of the Christian Reformed Churches, has been instructing his readers about correct and pure preaching, the kind of preaching which ought to be heard from Reformed pulpits. Our attention was drawn especially to the fact that in various articles he ventured an attempt to make it clear that the presentation of a well-meant offer of grace and salvation truly has a place in Reformed circles, that it is a plant growing from Reformed soil, and that it is an indispensable element in all true preaching. The doctrine that the offer of grace, well-meant on God's part, comes to all those who hear the Gospel must, according to the conviction of the editor-in-chief, be maintained, if we are not to lose our pure Reformed character.

We venture to suggest that in writing these articles he has more than once had our Protestant Reformed Churches in mind.

And perhaps it is also not too bold to suggest that the Rev. Keegstra even expected that we would respond to the content of his articles.

In any event, this was indeed our intention from the very beginning of his series of articles.

And we are of the opinion that although the Rev. Keegstra has not yet completed his series, we can make a beginning (taking into consideration what the Rev. Keegstra has produced) with proposing some thoughts concerning this important subject.

Let it be said from the outset that although we could appreciate much that the Rev. Keegstra wrote about *Practical Preaching*, and agree with it, we nevertheless emphatically differ with him when he proposes that a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation has a place in Reformed preaching. Precisely the fact that we consider this doctrine to be unbiblical and unreformed constitutes one of the reasons why we are impelled to cross swords with the Rev. Keegstra.

We consider this entire presentation dangerous.

The presentation of a general and well-meant offer of grace not only cannot be harmonized with the Reformed doctrine of election and reprobation, as its defenders readily admit; but it also militates against the entire line of Reformed thinking, belief, and confession. It is a denial of the Reformed confession of God's grace at virtually every point.

What, if we do not play with words, is the idea of an offer? What are the various elements implied in that term?

In the first place, there is certainly implied the earnest and sincere desire, on the part of him who offers, to bestow something upon a certain person or persons. If there is an offer of grace on God's part to all men, then this implies, if it means anything at all, that there is in God the earnest will and desire to bestow grace on all men. If this is not the case, if the defenders of this doctrine deny this, then the offer is simply not sincere and honorable. But the defenders of this theory even emphasize this point when they add that this offer is *well-meant*. Also the Rev. Keegstra is committed to this position, as appears from the article *The Offer of the Gospel Sincere* in *De Wachter*, April 16, 1930.

In the second place, the concept *offer* also includes, if it is to mean anything, that he who makes the offer actually possesses that which he offers, that it is available, so that in case the offer is accepted, it can also be granted. Anyone who offers something which he does not possess is branded a dishonorable bluff among men. If therefore the general offer of grace and salvation is to mean anything, if one does not play with words when he uses that term, then there must be grace and salvation for all men.

In the third place, there is implied in an offer the idea that that which

is offered is recommended to another. He who offers manifests his earnest desire that that which is offered shall be accepted; and for that reason he highly commends it. With a view to our subject, this implies that God manifests the earnest desire that all men shall be saved — everyone, head for head and soul for soul. For in the presentation of such a general offer it is precisely emphasized that this well-meant offer exactly does not pertain only to the elect, but to all men who come under the preaching of the Gospel. And note carefully, the doctrine is not that the Gospel must be preached to all men *by the preacher*, but that *God Himself* offers His grace to all men and thereby manifests the earnest desire that it shall be accepted by all.

In the fourth place, the idea of such a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation implies that the one who offers either makes the offer *unconditionally* or upon a condition of *which he knows that those to whom the offer comes are able to fulfill it*. If I set a delicious meal before someone who is bound hand and foot, offer that meal to him and express my earnest desire that he may do justice to that meal, then I mock him. Applied to our subject, the well-meant offer of grace and salvation implies that God knows that all men can accept it. Unless you are playing with words, you shall have to concede this.

Everyone will have to concede that all these elements are implied in the idea of an offer.

Do not say now that we again want to comprehend things, that we are putting reason on the foreground. For such bogey-men have no effect on us. We are not engaged in trying to harmonize one thing with another before our rational understanding. We are simply discussing the ordinary meaning of the words which are used by those who speak of a general offer of grace. When we use words, then those words have meaning. We cannot simply inject into them a meaning as it pleases us or as it may best suit us. And without any danger of contradiction we can indeed establish that all that we have written above is indeed included in the notion of an offer. None of the four elements mentioned can be eliminated. If you nevertheless exclude one of them, you have no offer left. We say this the more freely because the entire term “well-meant and general offer of grace” *never occurs in Holy Scripture*. It is a term of human invention. And in the paragraphs above we have done nothing else than to analyse the term in order to understand what we are discussing.

Now thus understood, the entire notion of a general, well-meant offer of grace militates at every point against the Biblical, Reformed conception of God's grace.

For as far as the first point is concerned, the Reformed doctrine is not

that there is with God the earnest will and desire to bestow grace upon all men; but grace is particular according to God's decree and intention. God does not will in any single sense of the word that all men, head for head and soul for soul, shall be saved. He wills to bestow grace upon the elect, and upon none other. This is the clear Scriptural, Reformed doctrine. And not only has he determined to bestow grace only upon some; He has also determined *to bestow no grace on others*. There is therefore also a determinate will in God to bestow no grace upon some men. And with this, the first essential element of a general offer is already ruled out and simply made impossible. You cannot be Reformed and speak of a general offer of grace on God's part.

With respect to the second point, namely, that he who makes an offer must possess that which he offers, the Reformed doctrine is that Christ has not made satisfaction for all men, that the satisfaction of Christ is particular, pertains only to the elect, that grace for all men was never merited by Christ, and that therefore it simply does not exist. With this, according to Reformed standards, the second essential element of such a general offer of grace and salvation falls away. Everyone shall have to concede that I cannot offer what I do not possess. Every Reformed person will concede that there is in Christ no grace for all men. And every rational person will also grant that either the Reformed position or that of a general offer of grace and salvation must fall.

As far as the third point is concerned, namely, that he who offers must clearly manifest that what he offers is sincerely intended for all to whom it is offered, it is the Reformed doctrine that this is precisely not the case. No Reformed preacher may even say that God has intended grace for everyone. Also the Rev. Keegstra, who now and then admittedly struggles to remain Reformed with his defense of this foreign idea, concedes this. But herewith the third essential element also falls away. God simply does not offer grace to all, i.e., He Himself teaches us most clearly that He wills to bestow grace only on the elect. Also in this respect the one view literally militates against the other.

Finally, it is the Reformed doctrine, in contrast with the fourth point which we mentioned as an essential element of every offer, that no natural man can accept grace in Christ, *that grace is precisely not a matter of offer and acceptance whatsoever, but of the irresistible operation of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Hence, if one presents things as though grace in Christ is an *unconditional* offer on God's part to sinful man, then this conflicts with the Reformed position: for there is no man who would by nature be willing to accept God's grace. And if you propose that salvation in Christ is an earnest offer of grace on *condition of faith*, then this is



equally not in harmony with the Reformed position: for no one is in a position to fulfill that condition. In one word, it is Reformed to say that there is no one among men who even possesses in himself the very least of that whereby he would be able to accept an offered salvation. But with this position also the possibility of an offer falls away absolutely. For what sense does it have to speak of an offer of something to men of whom one is certain that they cannot accept that which is offered?

It is plain, therefore, that at every point the idea of a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation militates against the Reformed truth. The one is simply a denial of the other.

The two exclude one another.

For that reason we said that we consider the idea dangerous.

It is misleading. Therefore it is even more dangerous than plain and simple Arminianism.

For they want to hold to the view of a general, well-meant offer of grace, but also be called Reformed.

And in order to do this they have to accomplish the juggling act of maintaining two mutually exclusive ideas and forcing these upon faith. And if then one points out that this cannot be, that you can never demand this of a reasonable faith, then they tell you that this belongs to the mysteries and that you may not try to penetrate further into this. As if we make ourselves guilty of spiritual intrusion when we ask that they make plain to us how it can be true that God offers something which He does not want to bestow, that He wills that which He does not will ("will" taken here in the same sense both times), that black is white, that yes is no, or, according to the presentation of the "double-track" philosophy of Van Baalen (the Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen, one of the common grace protagonists of 1924, HCH), how can a train run at the same time on two sets of rails in two opposite directions.

But it finally comes down to this, that men consider Reformed what is purely Remonstrant, and delude the congregation into thinking that they are proclaiming the Reformed truth while they nevertheless do nothing else than proclaim and strongly defend Arminianism.

Now that is the chief reason why we want to investigate the articles of the Rev. Keegstra and subject them to the test of Scripture and the Confessions.

We entitled this chapter: *The Real Point Not Addressed.*

The articles of the Rev. Keegstra could leave the impression on some who are not knowledgeable concerning the case, who know something about it but do not discern the real issue, that the esteemed editor of *De Wachter* has furnished a defense in these articles of the first of the

Three Points adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924.

Do not misunderstand us. It is not our intention to assert that it was the intention of the Rev. Keegstra to write a defense of the First Point. Much less would we impute to him that it lay in his intention to leave the impression that he wanted to defend and has also defended Point I of 1924.

We even want to believe that a man like the Rev. Keegstra understands very well that Point I cannot be defended.

But although all this may be true, the fact remains that his series of articles could nevertheless leave that impression.

After all, men have gradually tried to present matters as though our difference with the Christian Reformed Churches really officially concerned the question whether there is a well-meant offer of grace in the preaching, without anything more; that the Christian Reformed Churches have declared in Point I that there is such an offer; that this is the content of Point I; and that we have denied this.

Besides, the Rev. Keegstra sometimes leaves the impression in his articles that he had our churches in mind when he wrote.

Therefore we think that it is not superfluous to warn the reading public and to declare here with emphasis: *The Editor-in-Chief of De Wachter has not touched, has not addressed, the real point of the first point.* (For those who understand Dutch, the expression which we have translated by "the real point of the first point" is in Dutch: "*bet puntje van het eerste punt*" — referring to the doctrine of the general well-meant offer of grace and salvation attached to the First Point of Common Grace, the doctrine under discussion here. HCH)

He has not touched it with so much as a letter.

What after all is the content of the First Point?

It reads as follows:

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

What is the real point of this first point?

Merely that the offer of the Gospel is general?

No, but that this offer of the Gospel is *general grace*.

The preaching of the Gospel, thus the Synod of 1924 taught, is grace of God not only for the elect but also for the reprobate, not only for those who are saved by it but equally for those who go lost under it.

That is the point.

The preaching of the Gospel is *grace for all*.

And this point was not touched by the Rev. Keegstra. Let it be said once again: this certainly was not in his intention; it is of great importance that we see this clearly.

We hold, over against the First Point of 1924, that the preaching of the Gospel is grace *only* for the elect, that for the reprobate it never is and never can be anything else than judgment and a savor of death unto death. Therein lies our disagreement with the Christian Reformed Churches as far as Point I is concerned. And we do not hesitate to declare bluntly that the standpoint of 1924 is Arminian. The preaching of the Gospel is general grace – that is the Arminian position.

Let the Rev. Keegstra, or any of the leaders in the Christian Reformed Churches, simply furnish an answer to the question we have so often posed: what grace do the reprobate receive from God in the preaching of the Gospel? And you will see how Arminian such an answer would be.

But no one has ever ventured an answer to that question. Neither does the Rev. Keegstra attempt one.

The real point of the First Point was not touched by him.

We must point to one more matter before we conclude this introductory chapter.

The Rev. Keegstra sometimes leaves the impression that we or others, who reject the position of a well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to all men, would take the stand that we must preach only for the elect.

Also here we will gladly accept that it did not lie in the intention of the esteemed editor to leave that impression. But, in the first place, one must not forget that we have been pictured that way by others upon occasion. I think here especially of Prof. L. Berkhof. And in the second place, one could nevertheless gain that impression from some passages of the Rev. Keegstra's articles. Thus he writes, for example, in *De Wachter* of April 9, 1930:

We need not timidly hesitate at this and anxiously ask whether all those hearers are indeed elect, or, if one would rather express it that way, whether Christ with his atoning death has indeed made

satisfaction for all those people head for head. Never and nowhere in Scripture is the preacher charged to investigate that first, before he sends forth to his hearers the Gospel entrusted to him. For that matter he cannot even do this. What mere human is in a position to sift his fellow men and to separate the sheep from the goats? Indeed the elect, after their regeneration, make themselves known in part by their works. But even from that we still do not have absolute certainty because there are hypocrites. And the reprobate can certainly not be known before their death.

Now we do not say that we would subscribe to all that the esteemed writer has stated here. Especially is not all of this true concerning congregational preaching. The tree is indeed known by its fruits, also for us. And the preaching of the Word in the congregation must indeed be sifting and separating discipline. Besides, the congregation sifts and separates also in ecclesiastical discipline. A few generalities do not by any means suffice here. But for the rest we can readily concede to the writer that a preacher need not first timidly and anxiously inquire whether all in the congregation are elect, or, in case he labors as a missionary, whether all in his audience are elect. I could safely go a step farther and say that he knows beforehand that this is not the case. Scripture teaches him that plainly. For Holy Scripture does not only teach that Christ has not atoned for all men, nor merely in general that there are elect and reprobate, but also that reprobate as well as elect belong to the visible manifestation of the congregation; that reprobate as well as elect are brought under the preaching of the Gospel by the Lord Himself. In other words, he knows that it is the will of the Lord that the Gospel shall be brought not only to the elect but also to the reprobate. All anxious inquiry whether all are indeed elect, therefore, is summarily excluded here. A preacher who would want to speak only for the elect does not understand the will of his Sender, cannot possibly accomplish his task.

But there was also no definite reason for the Rev. Keegstra to write these words.

As far as I know, there have never been such preachers who anxiously make this inquiry, preachers who want to preach the Word only to the elect.

Hence, it was not necessary to write about this.

The Rev. Keegstra himself even states that it would be impossible to separate his audience in that manner, and thus first to investigate whether all are indeed elect. But if it is impossible, then certainly no one will ever first accomplish or try to accomplish the impossible, before he proclaims the Gospel.

Yet such writing can indeed leave the impression that we think that way. The more so, because as was already remarked, that impression has been given by others.

Therefore we must first make this declaration from the heart.

If we are to speak with one another about the truth, where there is difference of views, then the precise point of difference must first be clearly grasped. This is a prime requisite. Neither must we blur this point and becloud the discussion by dragging into the discussion all kinds of incorrect and untrue presentations.

Our difference, therefore, is not at all about the question whether the Gospel, according to the will of God, must also be proclaimed to all who come among our audience, reprobate as well as elect.

This is established on both sides.

But our difference indeed concerns the question what the real character of that preaching is, what its content must be, and what God's purpose is with this preaching with respect to both elect and reprobate.

And then our difference with Keegstra lies here, that he maintains and we deny that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to all men.

And our difference with the official declaration of the Christian Reformed Churches lies here, that they teach and we deny that that preaching of the Gospel is *grace* for all men.

About these things we hope to write more, in connection with the articles from the pen of the Rev. Keegstra. ■ ■

# G. Campbell Morgan, The Preacher

Prof. Robert Decker

## INTRODUCTION

G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) was a remarkable man. Though he received virtually no formal theological education or training for the ministry he became known throughout the English-speaking world as the "prince of expositors."<sup>1</sup> He served two lengthy pastorates at the large,

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1 Warren Wiersbe, *Walking With The Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 129.

independent (Congregational) Westminster Chapel in London. Prior to these and between these Westminster years Morgan travelled extensively throughout the British Isles and North America preaching to large crowds.

Much could be written about "his man of God. One could profitably focus on various aspects of his life and work: his theology, his method of Bible teaching, his homiletical and expository method of preaching, his concern for and views of evangelism and missions. In this paper we shall briefly discuss Morgan's life and the world in which he lived. We shall concentrate, however, on his homiletical-expository method of preaching. The last section of the paper will offer an answer to the question: "How does one explain the success of this man?"

## I. HIS LIFE AND TIMES

G. Campbell Morgan was born December 9, 1863 in the little village of Tetbury in Gloucestershire, England. He died on May 16, 1945. Thus his life was lived in two centuries from the mid 19th to the mid 20th. He was born at the height of the Victorian era in Great Britain and lived to see the great depression and the two World Wars of the 20th century. Politically the British Empire reached its zenith. Along with colonial expansion came better educational facilities and opportunities, and victory in several wars (including the Boer War in Africa). Social and labor movements increased tensions between the upper and lower classes of people in Great Britain. This was the era of some of the truly great writers, e.g., Tennyson, Hardy, Kipling, Stevenson. Some of the cherished tenets of the Christian faith were challenged by great scientific minds, such as Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and others. Ralph G. Turnbull comments on this period:

Modern Biblical criticism and historical research disturbed the status quo of conventional belief as scholars in both conservative and liberal schools of thought began to restudy the Bible in the light of its environment and the new knowledge then emerging. Benevolent organizations multiplied as the church tried to meet the clamant needs of poverty and slums, degrading practices, drunkenness, and vice. The church itself was splintered into several parties with labels telling of High, Broad, Low in the Anglican fellowship; and Evangelical over against Liberal. Tradition was strongly held, but newer schools of thought emerged such as the Keswick movement with its pietistic emphasis. It was in this context that preaching was seen with its variegated strength and color. Preachers with followers and a following were commonplace. Centers of preaching dominated. Sermons were published in all communions, and publishing houses prospered from the sale of religious literature.<sup>2</sup>

2 Ralph G. Turnbull, *A History of Preaching*, v. III (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 430.

Not the least of these “preachers with followers and a following” in those days was G. Campbell Morgan.

In some ways Morgan is difficult to assess. Wiersbe remarks for example:

As far as theology is concerned, Morgan was too liberal for the conservatives and too conservative for the liberals. He considered himself a preacher of the fundamentals of the faith, and certainly anyone who studied his books (especially *The Crises of the Christ*) will have to agree that he did. But he would not identify himself with any “theological camp” or carry the flag for any religious leader. He was his own man, and nothing would make him violate his conscience.<sup>3</sup>

During a time when strident voices from both the liberal and fundamentalist camps were heard, especially concerning the issue of biblical criticism, polemics occupied a very small place in the preaching of Morgan. In a sense he stood above the fray. To Morgan the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, infallible in matters of faith and practice. Morgan himself said:

If . . . I am asked for my view of the Bible I should reply that I look upon it as being the complete library of the Holy Letters, as Paul described the Old Testament (*Hiera grammata*, II Timothy 3:15), the nature of which is given by Paul in the words, “Every writing God-breathed” (*Pusa grapho Theopneustos*). The rendering “inspired of God” is rather interpretation than translation. You will recognize that *Theopneustos* refers to the writing and not to the writer, thus affording no definition of what is called inspiration, but giving a clear definition of the character of the literature. God-breathed literature must reveal the mind, the heart, the will of God. That, I claim, is what the Bible does in a way which is not true of any other literature. Hence, to me, the Bible affords full and final authority on all matters of faith and practice. . . . It is my conviction that the Scriptures as originally committed to writing, were safeguarded in every word by the Holy Spirit. I feel strongly that, like everything else committed to man, these Scriptures have suffered from translation and from copying, and that in this field there is room for devout and scholarly criticism.<sup>4</sup>

Though this was his firm conviction concerning Holy Scripture, Morgan refused to enter the polemic concerning the Bible. Said he:

I have constant sorrow in my heart over the bitter theological controversies which characterize the hour; and the saddest thing is the spirit of them. . . . However, I never feel that I am called upon to enter into

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3 Wiersbe, *Walking With the Giants*, p. 134.

4 Jill Morgan, ed., *This Was His Faith: The Expository Letters of G. Campbell Morgan* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 17, 18.

these controversies. My work is wholly constructive, and I believe that that is the only kind that is really of value.<sup>5</sup>

Morgan conceived of his task in terms of preaching and teaching the Word of God as it applies to the lives of the people of God. In his own words: “. . . wherever I go I find a great multitude of souls, hungry for the Word of God.”<sup>6</sup>

About the time of Morgan's birth, his father, The Rev. George Morgan, resigned his Baptist pastorate and under the influence of the Plymouth Brethren “hired a hall in Tetbury, and preached there ‘according to the dictates of his conscience.’ ”<sup>7</sup> His wife, Elizabeth Fawn Brittan, was a devout, energetic woman who gave to her son a love for good literature. Morgan received his elementary education under a strict disciplinarian and excellent teacher (who later educated Morgan's sons), Mr. Joseph Leonard Butler. At the age of twenty and during a time when the theologians were arguing doctrinal questions with intensity and bitterness Morgan became confused and temporarily lost his assurance that the Bible was indeed the Word of God. Locking all of his books in a cupboard he took a newly purchased Bible with him into his room and began to read it. “‘That Bible *found* me,’ he said, ‘I began to read and study it then, in 1883. I have been a student ever since, and I still am’ (in 1938).”<sup>8</sup>

During the same year (1883) two things happened to Morgan which had a lasting impact upon his life. He was appointed as an assistant master (teacher) in the Jewish Collegiate School for Boys in Birmingham. This school prepared the Jewish boys for the bar mitzvah. Here Morgan developed teaching skills which served him well as a minister. More importantly this experience increased his understanding of the Jewish tradition which forms the background of Holy Scripture.<sup>9</sup> D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey during their second tour of England spent three weeks conducting evangelistic meetings in Birmingham. Little did the young teacher realize at the time how much influence Moody was to have on his life and

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5 *Ibid.*, p. 245.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 245.

7 Jill Morgan, *A Man of the Word: Life of G. Campbell Morgan* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972) p. 25.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 41ff. See also Don M. Wagner, *The Expository Method of G. Campbell Morgan* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1957), pp. 20, 21.



ministry.<sup>10</sup> During the years he spent (1883-1886) at the Jewish School Morgan busied himself preaching several times per week and often as many as four times per Sunday at "tent meetings" and for Salvation Army meetings.

In December of 1887 Morgan applied for the ministry in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He preached a trial sermon on May 2, 1888 and was rejected!<sup>11</sup> On August 20, 1888 he married his first cousin, Annie (Nancy) Morgan of Staunton. Of this marriage his friend and colleague, John Harries wrote:

Since that day, forty-two years ago, the love and devotion of a faithful, loving wife has (next to the grace given him from on high) been the greatest inspiration and source of power, in the life of Campbell Morgan.<sup>12</sup>

Morgan's first pastorate was the Congregational Church at Stone (1889-1891). There he was ordained into the Congregational ministry on September 22, 1890. This was followed by two more pastorates in Congregational Churches; Rugeley (1891-1893) and Birmingham (1893-1896). In 1896 he made the first of fifty-four (during his lifetime) trips across the Atlantic to visit the United States. While in the states Morgan formed a close friendship with D.L. Moody and was invited to speak at the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. When he returned to England he served the New Court Church at Tollington from 1897-1901. From 1901 to 1904 Morgan worked with the Northfield Extension in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

Morgan is perhaps best known for his ministries at Westminster Chapel in London. His first pastorate was from 1904 to 1917, and his second from 1933-1943. Here he preached to great crowds twice per Sunday (seating capacity in the chapel was a little over 2,500) and conducted his popular Friday Night Bible Classes (average attendance, 1400-1500). In addition Morgan preached during the week at various places in England. The Friday night meetings consisted of hymn-singing, prayer, and an hour long lecture (using a blackboard) by Morgan in which he would introduce a book of the Bible, explaining the message of the book and giving an outline of its contents. This work resulted in the publication of his

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10 Morgan, *A Man of the Word*, pp. 44ff.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 57-60.

12 John Harries, *G. Campbell Morgan: The Man and His Ministry* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1930), p. 38.

13 Wagner, *The Expository Method of G. Campbell Morgan*, pp. 22, 23. See also Morgan, *A Man of the Word*, pp. 63-136.

famous work, *The Analysed Bible*. These meetings were attended by people from all walks of life and included a great many pastors, missionaries, and Bible School and Sunday School teachers. People from the neighborhood of the chapel, poor and uneducated, wealthy and influential professionals, high-ranking government figures from all over London made up his congregation on the Lord's Days. Also during the first pastorate at Westminster, Morgan conducted Summer Conferences at a retreat called Mundesley-on-the Sea (1906-1914). Speakers (preachers and missionaries) from all denominations attended. In 1911 Morgan published a hymnal and in that same year formed the Bible Teachers Association for the purpose of training Bible School teachers. Morgan served as President of Cheshunt College (Cambridge) from 1911 to 1914. On January 1, 1917 Morgan resigned as pastor of Westminster Chapel.<sup>14</sup>

During the interim between his pastorates at Westminster (1917-1932) Morgan engaged in an itinerant ministry. During the First World War he labored in England and France and after the war he preached and lectured in the United States and Canada. He preached in every state except Texas, gave the James Sprunt Lectures at Union Theological Seminary, and went on ten preaching tours of one to two weeks each giving 12 (one hour long each) addresses or sermons per week during a ten-year period. He had brief teaching stints at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA College) and at Gordon College in Boston. From 1929 to 1932 Morgan was pastor of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.<sup>15</sup>

In 1933 he took up the pastorate at Westminster once again. He served during the difficult years leading up to and including World War II. He preached his last sermon in Westminster in August of 1943. Morgan was taken up into glory on May 16, 1945.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, himself a great preacher and his successor at Westminster Chapel, best summed his influence upon England and the United States and his impact upon his times when he said of G. Campbell Morgan at the Memorial Service:

"But the point I want to make about him as a preacher is this," he said, "that we are all agreed that he was God's gift to His Church. He surely was the supreme illustration of the fact that God always gives His gifts at the right time. . . When did he come upon the scene? It was immediately after those

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14 *Ibid.*, pp. 137-220.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 221-283.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 284-319.

wonderful campaigns of D.L. Moody and Sankey in this country. There had been those great visitations of the Spirit. Men and women had been converted by the thousand. This great evangelistic movement had come into the whole life of the Church, and what was needed above everything else at that point was someone who could teach these converts. And 'a man came from God' whose name was George Campbell Morgan; and he came at the critical moment, at the very right time when all those spiritual emotions and experiences needed to be harnessed and deepened and fostered. The evangelists had done their work; it was the time for the teacher and God sent him.

"... It is my privilege as I travel about the country to engage in conversation with ministers, and they always come and talk to me about Dr. Morgan ... and they have told me of the blessing they have received from him. I am amazed at the number of men who have told me that the whole basis of their preachings has been derived from the method adopted by Dr. Morgan. And that is true, not only of Free Church ministers but of Anglican clergymen also. One of the latter said to me: 'I never approach a text without asking myself, What would Campbell Morgan do with this?' And there is further special point I want to make here. If ever there has been a preacher who has been of untold blessing to lay preachers, it has been Dr. Morgan. They come to me wherever I go and tell me about the help he has been to them. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

We turn next to a discussion of what has come to be called the "Morgan Method" of Bible exposition. We shall attempt to illustrate the features of this homiletical method with references to some of Morgan's sermons.

## II. HIS HOMILETICAL METHOD

A great deal has been written by others concerning Morgan's method of constructing sermons. Warren Wiersbe (*Walking With the Giants*), Ralph Turnbull (*A History of Preaching* and *A Treasury of G. Campbell Morgan*), and his biographer, Jill Morgan (*A Man of the Word*) all have something to say about the "Morgan Method." A detailed and competent study is offered by Don M. Wagner (*The Expository Method of G. Campbell Morgan*). Of lesser value is the work of John Harries.<sup>18</sup> While we certainly acknowledge our indebtedness to the above writers for our understanding of Morgan's homiletics, we prefer to listen to and learn from Morgan himself.

In Morgan's opinion, and we concur with him heartily:

The supreme work of the Christian minister is the work of preaching. This is a day in which one of our great perils is that of doing a thousand little things to the neglect of the one thing, which is preaching.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 329, 330.

<sup>18</sup> Harries, G. *Campbell Morgan: The Man and His Ministry*, pp. 185ff.

<sup>19</sup> G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching* (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1937), p. 11.

If "doing a thousand little things to the neglect of the one thing, which is preaching" were a great peril in Morgan's time, it is an even greater peril in our day. But, to the subject at hand. In his discussion of "The Essentials of a Sermon"<sup>20</sup> Morgan proceeds from an analysis of two Greek words translated "preaching" in the New Testament. The first of these, *eangelizo*, he translates as "the proclamation of good news." This verb implies the "need of man" (his sin and fallen condition) and the "grace of God in Christ" (which alone can meet that need, save a person).<sup>21</sup> The second word, *kerusso*, Morgan translates, "proclamation from a throne." This term implies that a messenger comes on behalf of a ruler. Two ideas thus emerge: "the authorising Throne, and therefore the consequent claim that the messenger is called upon to make."<sup>22</sup> Merging these two ideas (*eangelizo* and *kerusso*) Morgan offers this definition of preaching:

It has a hundred particulars and varieties and intonations. But here is the unifying thought. Preaching is the declaration of the grace of God to human need on the authority of the Throne of God; and it demands on the part of those who hear that they show obedience to the thing declared.<sup>23</sup>

Morgan further explains:

The preacher should never address a crowd without remembering that his ultimate citadel is the citadel of the human will. He may travel along the line of the emotions, but he is after the will. He may approach along the line of the intellect, but he is after the will. When preaching becomes merely discussion in the realm of the emotions, and when preaching ends in the intellectual or emotional, it fails. It is successful only when it is able to storm the will, under the will of God. The preacher comes with good news; but he does not come with something to be trifled with. His message has in it an insistent demand, because he comes from a king.<sup>24</sup>

This element of authority or "insistent demand" along with a sense of urgency characterized all of Morgan's preaching.

The essentials of a sermon according to Morgan are: truth, clarity, and passion.<sup>25</sup> The sermon must be an expression of the truth for the

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20 *Ibid.*, pp. 9ff.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-38.

understanding of others. Christ is the truth and the Bible is the revelation of Christ, the truth. Thus Morgan insists:

And that is what we have to preach. God's revelation, the truth as it has been expressed. We must enter upon the Christian ministry on the assumption that God has expressed Himself in His Son, and that the Bible is the literature of that self-expression. The minute we lose our Bible in that regard, we have lost Christ as the final revelation. I don't want to be controversial, but you will find it is always so. Let me speak with profound respect of the men who have suffered this loss. Here is a man who for some reason refuses the authority of his Bible, but says he will stand by Christ. What Christ?<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the preacher is a steward of the mysteries of God. By "mysteries" Morgan means not things which cannot be apprehended or understood, but things which the human intellect cannot discover, things which are *revealed* by God. Preaching, therefore, is not the proclamation of theory or a discussion of one's doubts or a declaration of negatives. The preacher's task is not to "catch" but to "correct" the spirit of the age.

Because the truth is found in the Bible every sermon ought to be characterized by originality and authority. Originality is not the creation of the truth, only God can do that. Originality comes from exegesis of the Scriptures and thus from the interpretation of a truth already existing, communicated, and possessed. Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28, 29). The difference between Jesus' authority and that of the scribes lies in this that: "His authority was rather the authority of the thing he said, as it found them and found in them an answer of acquiescence."<sup>27</sup> "If," Morgan says, "his sermon is an exposition, interpretation, and application of some part of truth, it always carries authority."<sup>28</sup>

By "clarity" Morgan means the preacher must preach so that the people apprehend the message. "Passion" or feeling must be produced not by conscious effort on the part of the preacher, but by the message itself.

In chapter two of his book, *Preaching*, Morgan discusses the whole subject of the text.<sup>29</sup> A text must be considered as "primarily woven into the web of Holy Writ."<sup>30</sup> Morgan devines the text as: "... the

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26 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-55.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

paragraph, the verse, or part of a verse, which is the basis of a sermon."<sup>31</sup> The text must not be merely a peg on which to hang a sermon. For three reasons preachers must have a text. The text as a part of God's Word gives authority to preaching and definiteness to the Christian message; and by preaching on texts we ensure variety in preaching.

How does one choose his text? Morgan answers, out of regular devotional reading of the Bible. When the preacher is struck by a particular text he ought to make a note of it. Sometimes, but not often, a text will bring a ready-made sermon. One can sometimes find his text out of public Bible reading. Morgan admonishes preachers to take great care in and prepare for public Bible reading. One finds a text in order to deal with some special need, or in order to teach a specific doctrine. Principles to follow in the selection of a text include the following: 1) it must have a theme or complete thought and 2) one ought to preach on a text which has gripped or rebuked him. Morgan cautions that the text must be a complete statement. One may preach on a phrase or part of a text, but he must be careful to do so in its context. Morgan stresses that the preacher must always preach on the text in its context lest he make Scripture say something it does not in fact say!

Chapter three of his book, *Preaching*, deals with the central message.<sup>32</sup> Every sermon must be an explanation of a text or the text repeated more fully. Having selected his text the preacher begins by defining the purpose of that text. What is the definite idea or message of the text? This, he ought to write down, and then work on the text. Among the different types of sermons, Morgan speaks of doctrinal sermons, practical, ethical, devotional, and providential sermons. These latter deal with God's government of all things. A true sermon, Morgan insists, always meets a need. The message must be put into form. Morgan's advice (and it's well taken) is to sweat over the text yourself before turning to the commentaries.

Three things make up proper preparation of sermons: 1) Spadework, which includes mental and physical preparation for the work. One must approach his text with a clear mind and sound body. 2) Earnest thinking on the text. At this point Morgan urges preachers to exegete the text themselves first and only when that is complete to consult the commentaries. 3) Constructive work, which amounts to putting the material gleaned from exegesis into sermon form.

Every sermon ought to contain three essential elements: an introduc-

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31 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 59-79.

tion, the message itself, and a conclusion. The preacher must begin with the central message and, when that is completed, prepare a proper introduction and conclusion. The theme must first be determined. There ought to be clear-cut divisions of that theme indicating the sequence, relationship, and synthesis of the various elements of the text. Construct a skeleton outline and let the people see that, Morgan suggests. The next step is to put flesh on the bones of the outline. The main divisions of the outline ought to be as few as possible. In this connection preachers in the Dutch Reformed tradition ought to take to heart Morgan's warning not to be "bound by the fetish of the three."<sup>33</sup>

In chapter four of the book, *Preaching*, Morgan deals more specifically with the introduction and conclusion.<sup>34</sup> A proper introduction must remove obstacles such as prejudice, ignorance, the preoccupation of the congregation, and the attitude of the congregation. An introduction ought to be simple, pertinent, and courteous. With respect to this latter, Morgan says the preacher ought to respect the rights of the crowd. This writer would add an element which Morgan does not state, but which is found in all of those sermons analyzed later in this paper, *viz.*, the introduction must indicate the relationship of the text to its context.

The purpose of the conclusion is to end the sermon and, therefore, it must *include* all pertinent elements of the central message and *preclude* all new material. Morgan urges preachers to apply the word, fire the shots. One must remember that he is "storming the will." He can do that via both intellect and emotions. His remarks concerning the last sixty seconds of a sermon ought to be taken to heart by every preacher:

The last sixty seconds are the dynamic seconds in preaching. Of course, it is important not to approach the last sixty seconds until they are really near. If we value our reputation for truthfulness and fair play, don't let us tell our congregations we mean to conclude and then fail to keep our promise. Don't let us say, "Now finally," and presently, "In conclusion," and a little later on, "One word more," and then still later, "And now before we part." Dr. Pattison said that that kind of ending to a sermon reminded him of Pope's ode, with a very different application:

"Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,  
O the pain, the bliss of dying."

Don't let us be getting to that sixty seconds until we are there. But let us make that last sixty seconds, as we are able, instinct and intense with all the power of our message.<sup>35</sup>

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33 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 80-90.

35 *Ibid.*, 89, 90.

Did Morgan follow his own instruction? We think he did. The analysis of some of his sermons we hope will indicate this.

### III. AN ANALYSIS OF SOME OF MORGAN'S SERMONS

The first of these sermons is titled, "The Terms of Discipleship."<sup>36</sup> The sermon is an exposition of Matthew 16:24 and Luke 14:33. The introduction serves well to draw the attention of the congregation. Morgan begins the sermon by speaking of "two elements" concerning Jesus, His tenderness, gentleness or "wooing note," and Jesus' severity or harshness. Morgan demonstrates what he means by referring to several incidents in the Gospel narratives. Why this element of severity? Why does Jesus employ what Morgan calls a "repelling method"? Citing the illustration of the building of the tower and fighting the battle in the context, Morgan concludes that the answer is: Jesus needs men and women on whom He can depend for the building of the church and for fighting the battle against all the forces that are against man and God. In this connection Morgan notes that "quality is always better than quantity." This brings Morgan to the heart of the message. The terms of discipleship are three "and yet only one." "Follow me" which includes trust in Christ and complete obedience to Christ is the essential term. The first two, "denial of self" and "taking up one's cross," are "preliminary." Morgan brings the sermon to a climax with what we would call a passionate plea. He reminds the congregation that the only way one can deny himself and take up his cross is by "fixing your eye upon Him and crowning Him" (Jesus, R.D.). The sermon ends with a call to the congregation: "Let us come, those of us who will, and say to Him, Christ, Thou hast drawn us irresistibly. We are here to see Thee, to hear Thee. Thou hast frightened us with Thy terms, but we also would help Thee in Thy building and in Thy battle, and we will deny self and take up the cross with our eyes fixed upon Thee. . . ."

Whether one agrees with Morgan's exegesis or not one would have to agree that the sermon in general is clear, interesting, compelling. There is excellent choice of words, e.g.: "Quality is always more than quantity. . . . They are too many, sift them. . . but infinitely mightier the three hundred than the thirty-two thousand" (p. 41).

Morgan pays attention to exegetical detail. He points out that "common" in the sense of the poor, lower classes, the uneducated among

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36 G. Campbell Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit*, v. I (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1954), pp. 33-45.



the people is a wrong translation of *polus* in Mark 12:37. This results in a wrong understanding of the text. Better is the translation, "much people." The meaning then is: many people, people from all classes and walks of life, heard Jesus gladly (pp. 35, 36).

The second sermon is titled, "The Fruit of the Spirit."<sup>37</sup> Morgan builds this sermon around the three outstanding words in the text: "Fruit" which is the "method," "Spirit" Who is the "power," and "love" which is the "issue." Fruit suggests life in contrast with "the works of the flesh." Life is the power of spiritual propagation while works always operate in the realm of death. The Spirit is the power or source of the fruit. Love is the issue. Morgan makes a fine point of exegesis when he interprets the fruit as being one, *viz.*, love. He points out that both *karpos* and *agape* and the verb, *estin*, are singular. The text does not say: the fruits of the Spirit are, but, the fruit of the Spirit is. He concludes that there are not nine fruits, but only one fruit which is love. The other eight virtues (joy, peace, etc.) are all components of qualities of the one fruit of the Spirit, love. Morgan proceeds from this to explain each of these qualities of love. Joy is love's consciousness, peace is love's confidence, longsuffering is love's habit, kindness is love's activity, goodness is love's quality, faithfulness is love's quantity, meekness is love's tone, and temperance is love's victory. The sermon ends with an application and sense of urgency. "Thank God if the first movement is in your heart. If at the back of all your thinking and planning and doing lies selfishness, then yield yourself tonight to Him Who alone is able to give you the victory over self by the inflow of God's own love" (p. 179).

There is application throughout the sermon. The illustrations are taken from everyday life and serve to clarify pertinent points Morgan makes. We ought also note that not only in this sermon but in many of his sermons Morgan quotes hymns or poems to drive a point home. All of these elements make this sermon and other of his sermons sparkle.

In a sermon on Mark 10:21 Morgan begins with an illustration of a large organ lacking one to play it.<sup>38</sup> This little story serves to gain the congregation's attention by illustrating "one thing thou lackest. . . ." In this sermon Morgan's Arminian tendencies are quite apparent. For example, he says: "Christ loves that man and can save him if he will let him" (p. 140, c.f., pp. 148, 150). His exegesis of Jesus' question, "Why callest thou me good?" and of the Lord's command, "Go, sell all that

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37 *Ibid.*, pp. 166-179.

38 Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit*, v. II pp. 138-150.

thou hast and come, follow me" is incorrect. The command applies to all. All must make everything in their lives subservient to following Jesus. Morgan's exegesis of the concept "eternal life" is correct (p. 141). Eternal life is not merely unending existence.

There is a fine touch of originality in Morgan's treatment of this text. The focus of the sermon is on the young man whom Morgan describes as discerning, courageous, and humble. The application, while it contains Arminian overtones, is powerful and compelling, and conveys a great sense of urgency. "My brothers and sisters, the story needs very little application. You tell me it is an old story. It is as fresh as this Palm Sunday. . . . That is the meaning of our story. Anything that stands between you and the Christ, I beseech you, sweep it away. . ." (pp. 148-150).

Morgan preached a powerful sermon on Amos 8:11-13: "Famine For the Word of God."<sup>39</sup> In the introduction Morgan describes the prophet and the uniqueness of his method. Amos began far away with Damascus and at last spoke to Israel. There is in this a twofold significance: 1) God maintains His government of the nations and 2) Privilege creates responsibility. Morgan ends the introduction with a sketch or skeleton of the sermon and concludes that this text is a final statement of the judgment falling upon Israel.

The theme of the sermon is: "Famine For the Word of God." His points are: I. The Famine Suggested II. The Restlessness Ensuing from the Fruitless Search and III. The Issue in the Fainting Virgins and the Young Men. The sermon may be outlined as follows:

I. The Famine Suggested:

- A. Not that God ceases to speak, but man is incapable of hearing, "men hear it and never hear it."
- B. The cause of this idolatry, unbelief. [note the application: "It is possible there is someone in this congregation. . ." (p. 209)].

II. The Restlessness:

- A. The Fruitless search.
- B. Restless is the result:
  - 1. Ignorant restlessness.
  - 2. Semi-conscious restlessness.
  - 3. Conscious search for God which finds no answer.

III. The Issue:

- A. Text speaks not of adults, but of *fair* virgins and *young* men, the strongest and the best, most hopeful, most able to endure. "The

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206-216.

best without God fails and if so, what of the rest?"

B. Cast away the idols!

This sermon too indicates Morgan's keen exegetical gift and skills. The sermon is practical, concrete, and speaks to the times in which it was preached. Powerful and urgent are the two adjectives which best characterize this kind of preaching. Here are the essentials: truth, clarity, and passion. Indeed, Morgan "fired the shots."

#### IV. THE SECRET OF MORGAN'S SUCCESS

How did this man of such humble origin and with no formal theological education succeed? How can it be explained that he preached with such power and to such large congregations both in Britain and the States? The secret of his success lay in his method of exposition. Morgan preached the Word of God. The flesh on his sermon skeletons was the fruit of his "sweating over the text" as he carefully exegeted. For this reason he preached with authority and confidence.

But, there is more to it than this. Morgan worked hard. Two things are involved in preparing to preach and teach the Bible: "work" and "live." Morgan said:

As to the first, let me state in the briefest manner possible what I want to impress upon the mind of those who are contemplating Bible teaching, by declaring that the Bible never yields itself to indolence. Of all literature none demands more diligent application than that of the Divine Library.<sup>40</sup>

Morgan practiced what he preached. He was in his study by 6:00 AM and remained there until noon six days per week. During this time he was not to be interrupted.

But hard work does not in itself guarantee success. The secret of his success lay in the fact that he was gifted by God in an unusual way. Physically, though tall and thin, he was strong. God gave him a powerful, resonant voice. Mentally he was blessed with a keen mind. Spiritually he was totally devoted to the work of preaching the Word. He spent a great deal of time in personal devotions: prayer and Bible reading. Often he would read a book of the Bible forty or fifty times before beginning his exegesis and sermon preparation. Morgan himself sums it best:

The second word indicating the true method of preparation is the word "live."  
If it be true that the Bible never yields itself to indolence, it is equally true

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40 G. Campbell Morgan, *The Study and Teaching of the English Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), pp. 77, 78.

That it never yields itself to disobedience; and also that it does yield up its secrets growingly to honest obedience.

There never can be weight and point and power in teaching unless the mystic and spiritual truths which have come to us as the result of our study are obeyed.<sup>41</sup>

That was, by the grace of God, G. Campbell Morgan, the preacher.

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# The History of the Free Offer of the Gospel

(10)

by Prof. H. Hanko

## ANALYSIS AND POSITIVE STATEMENT

We have now reached the end of our historical survey of the doctrine of the free offer. It remains for us to point out the errors of the free offer and set forth the truth of Scripture over against it.

A great deal of confusion is present in the ecclesiastical world concerning this matter of the free offer. There are those who insist that any denial of the free offer is in fact hyper-Calvinism. This has become so common a notion that people who hear of anyone who denies the free offer, instinctively and with a knee-jerking reaction, brand such a one as a "hyper," who refuses to preach the gospel to all men, but insists that it can be preached only to the elect.

There are hyper-Calvinists in our day; and they do indeed take the position that it is proper and right to limit the preaching to the elect only. Such are the *Gospel Standard* people in England, e.g. And they are also to be found in this country.<sup>1</sup> But a denial of the free offer does not automatically place one in the hyper-Calvinist camp. We who deny that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meant or free offer, emphatically assert both that the gospel is preached to all who hear and *must be* preached to all who hear. In fact, this very truth is incorporated in the Canons of Dort, to which Confession we wholeheartedly subscribe. Canons II, 5 emphatically asserts:

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.

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1 For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Engelsma, *op. cit.*, in which book the hyper-Calvinists are identified and their position analyzed.

And in III & IV, 9 the Canons speak of those who reject the gospel which is preached to them:

It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ, offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel, and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the word, refuse to come, and be converted: the fault lies in themselves; some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes, and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the word by perplexing cares, and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower, Matt. 13.

This truth is also clearly taught in Scripture. There is a powerful passage in Ezekiel 3:17-19 which places the blood of those who go lost upon the head of the preacher who does not warn the wicked of his evil way, and only by warning the wicked can a preacher escape the possibility of being responsible for his destruction.

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Indeed how much clearer would a man want it than the very words of our Lord when He commanded His church: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

But several things are to be noticed about this general proclamation of the gospel

In the first place, according to Canons II, 5, the gospel is the general proclamation of a particular promise: the promise, according to this article, is only to those who believe and repent, i.e., the elect in whom God works faith and repentance. While it is indeed publicly proclaimed, it is the public proclamation of a particular promise which God makes only to His people and which is theirs in the way of faith and repentance.

In the second place, when the Canons use the word "offer," as they do in III & IV, 9, they use it in the sense of "present, proclaim," which meaning is the meaning of the Latin word *offere* as it was used in the original Canons. Christ is publicly and promiscuously presented in the gospel and proclaimed as the One in Whom God worked the great work of salvation. But such a proclamation and presentation of Christ in the gospel

is not a *Christus pro omnibus*, a Christ for all, but a Christ in Whom God wrought salvation for those who believe in Him and repent of their sins. Thus He is publicly presented as the One in Whom God wrought salvation for His people.

In the third place, this is entirely in keeping with the character and nature of the gospel. According to Scripture, in Romans 1:16, the gospel is the *power* of God unto salvation to all who believe. The gospel is not a mere lecture on a theological subject. It is not a learned dissertation on some given text. It is emphatically *preaching*. And preaching is the means which God is pleased to use to call His people out of darkness into salvation in Christ. Preaching is God's means, sovereignly and efficaciously, to bring salvation and heavenly glory to those who belong to Christ.

To make the preaching an offer robs the gospel of this great power. It reduces the gospel to a mere expression on God's part to save all those who hear. When it reduces the gospel to this kind of expression, it robs the gospel of its saving power. It makes the gospel nothing but some kind of pleading, begging, earnest seeking on God's part for the sinner to turn from his way and to accept the salvation offered in Christ. God stands helplessly by, waiting to see what man will do. God wants to save all. The gospel expresses His intention and desire, His earnest longing to save all who hear. But God can do very little about it. He must wait to see what man will do. If man accepts the gospel, then indeed salvation is granted him. But he may very well reject it, and thus his reaction to the gospel stands outside God's power and sovereign determination.

This sort of notion about the gospel is thoroughly Arminian. It is Arminian because it denies the truth of irresistible grace. It is Arminian because it ascribes to man the power to accept the gospel; thus it denies man's utter depravity and inability to do any good. It is Arminian because it makes salvation dependent upon the free will of man.

And let it never be forgotten: ultimately these questions are questions of Who God is. Is the sovereign God of heaven and earth, the Maker and Sustainer of all, the God Who gives us our life and breath, Who upholds us every step of our earthly sojourn, a helpless god who cannot save? Such a view of God is an idol, the creation of men's fevered and proud imaginations. Such a view destroys the God of the Scriptures and reduces Him to a pleading beggar. This is a terrible sin and brings down the wrath of God upon those who make Him such a weak being that He is as putty in the hands of man.

It is, of course, true that those who want to maintain the free offer of the gospel and still go under the name of Calvinism or Reformed try to get around this terrible evil by assuring us that the faith and repentance, which

are necessary for us to receive Christ, are gifts worked by God in the hearts of His people. They say: Christ is offered to all. God wishes to save all. His intention and desire is to bring all to salvation. The gospel expresses this truth forcibly. But actually and in fact, God works the faith necessary to receive the gospel only in the hearts of the elect. So only they in fact are saved and only they really receive the salvation offered.

But this kind of evasion will never do. On the very surface of it, we have, in this conception, a strange idea of God. Think of how this actually works. God wants desperately to save a man; He expresses His desire and the deep longing of His soul to save the man; He earnestly and longingly does everything He can to make that man accept Christ as His Savior. But He does not give to that man the faith which is necessary for salvation. What kind of a God is this? Can anyone imagine a God Who so deeply and passionately wants to save a man, but withholds from him the one thing necessary to be saved, namely faith? It is after all within God's power to give faith. But He refrains. What kind of a husband would I be if I earnestly longed for the health of my wife who is dying from cancer, when I had in my power to restore her to health, but refused? I would be branded by all men a monster and would probably be hailed before the courts of the land indicted on a charge of negligent homicide at least. Yet so it is that men present God.

But there is more. The gospel is the promise of salvation in Christ. The burning question is: Does God promise, as a part of that salvation, faith and repentance? Or, to put it a different way, are faith and repentance part of salvation and therefore part of the promise? If they are, then through the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, all of salvation is worked, including faith and repentance. But when one makes the promise of the gospel dependent upon the conditions of faith and repentance, one separates faith and repentance from salvation and makes them prerequisites to salvation. But if they are not a part of salvation, then they are the work of man. One cannot have it both ways. Either faith and repentance are part of the promise, worked sovereignly and irresistibly through the gospel, or they are conditions to the promise, therefore, not a part of the promise, and thus the work of man.

It is important to understand in this connection that a general and well-meant offer *must* also be conditional. It must be conditional because every one who maintains it, freely admits that not all to whom the gospel is proclaimed are actually saved. While God desires the salvation of all, there are always those who reject the gospel. Thus, the free offer is conditional, dependent upon faith and repentance. And thus faith and repentance are the works of men. The free offer is inherently Arminian and



a denial of all that has ever been true of the Calvin Reformation.

It is no wonder then that those who have held consistently to a free offer have inevitably drifted into the Arminian camp. Here again one need only consult history. Wherever the free offer has been maintained, Arminianism has raised its ugly head. This was true of the Arminians who were condemned by the Synod of Dort, for they alone were the ones who maintained a conditional salvation.<sup>2</sup> This was true of the Amyrauldians, whose influence extended to England, Europe, and the Netherlands. This is true in the history of the Reformed Churches also in this country. That such a conditional salvation has led to Arminianism in the Christian Reformed Church is evident, e.g., from the failure of this denomination to condemn a form of universal atonement as it appeared in the Sixties. We can come to only one conclusion: the necessary conditionality of the free offer is essentially Arminian and a denial of Calvinism.

It might be well to spell this out a bit more in detail, because such a discussion will quite naturally lead to another aspect of the idea of the free offer.

Anyone acquainted with the so-called five points of Calvinism will know that they are often remembered by the memory device: TULIP — total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints. The free offer leads to a denial of them all.

The free offer leads to a denial of total depravity because salvation is made dependent upon the will of man. The best illustration of this which we can offer is the position of the Christian Reformed Church in this matter. Already in the "Three Points of Common Grace" total depravity was explicitly denied, for these three points<sup>3</sup> teach that because of a general operation of the Spirit in the hearts of all men, sin is so restrained that the sinner is capable of doing good. This denial of total depravity has often been expressed in Christian Reformed literature by a distinction which is made between *total* depravity and *absolute* depravity. The latter is intended to refer to complete depravity so that the sinner is incapable of doing any good and able to do only evil. The former, which the Christian Reformed Church professes to believe, is interpreted to mean that the sinner is depraved in all parts of his nature, though in every part are some

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2 It is interesting to note that the word "condition" never appears in the Canons, except in the mouth of the Arminians. See, e.g., I, B, 4 and II, B, 3.

3 Cf. above for the text.

remnants of good. By this distinction the truth of total depravity is denied. Yet it is essential for the doctrine of the free offer because the natural man must not only be able to do good, but he must also be able to respond to the gospel offer. If I offer one thousand dollars to ten corpses, people will think I am crazy. But Scripture defines the sinner as *dead* in trespasses and sins. Only when this spiritual death is less than death can the free offer make any sense.

The free offer of the gospel leads to a denial of particular atonement because a salvation which is intended for all must also be a salvation which is purchased for all. If God, through the gospel, offers salvation to all who hear along with the intent and expressed desire to save all, this salvation must be available. If it is not, the whole offer becomes a farce. If I offer one thousand dollars to each of ten people, if they will come to my house to pick it up, I had better have it somewhere in the house, or I am in trouble. If I do not have all the money that might be needed in the house, I am making a farce of the offer and really lying. If God offers salvation to all who hear and really earnestly desires their salvation, He had (I speak as a man) better have that salvation available. If He does not, the offer becomes a farce. God offers that which He does not have. This makes God a liar and the offer a fake. Hence, the only sense one can make out of the offer is to teach a salvation which was earned by Christ on the cross for everyone. Thus the cross of Christ and the redemption which He accomplished becomes universal in its extent. It is not surprising that Dekker argued in the Sixties within his denomination that because the love and grace of God were general, the atonement was also general.

The free offer leads to a denial of irresistible grace. When the offer expresses only God's desire to save all and offers salvation to all, then the grace of the preaching is not irresistible, but resistible. Men may choose to resist it and refuse to accept the offer. God cannot accomplish that which He wills. His intentions and desires are frustrated and His purpose is made of no effect because of man's resistance.

Ultimately the free offer also makes the perseverance of the saints a doubtful matter. It stands to reason that if man can either accept or reject the gospel offer, he can at one time accept it, at another time reject it, and yet again accept it. But because his salvation is dependent upon what he does, his salvation hangs by the thin thread of his own free will. Thus his final salvation is always in doubt. He can fall away from the faith, and he can, while once having accepted Christ, still spurn Him in the future. It is undoubtedly this general Arminian teaching which is the basis for revivals and recommitments to Christ through the invitation.

But of particular concern to us is the truth of unconditional predestina-

tion. While it is true that the "U" of TULIP speaks only of unconditional election, reprobation has also always been a part of the truth of predestination. The free offer denies both. The free offer denies reprobation first of all because if God's sovereign purpose is not to save some, including some who hear the gospel, God's purpose in offering them salvation is nonsensical. On the one hand, God purposes not to save; on the other hand God purposes to save. On the one hand it is God's will not to save; on the other hand it is God's will to save. The result is that in those circles reprobation is finally denied.

This is, in fact, what has happened in the Christian Reformed Church. The truth of reprobation is hardly ever preached, if at all; and a specific attack was made against this doctrine by Harry Boer in the late Seventies and early Eighties, when he asked the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to strike the doctrine of reprobation from the Canons. While Synod refused to do this, it put its stamp of approval on a report of a committee appointed to study the matter, which report contains a definition of reprobation which is completely out of keeping with the historic definition of the doctrine and with the truth as it is taught in the Canons. Synod, in effect, approved of a conditional reprobation, the very view which the Arminians maintained and which our fathers at Dort repudiated.

But if reprobation is denied, then also election falls by the way. They are two sides of one coin, two parts of one truth.<sup>4</sup> But the free offer cannot bear the truth of election for the same reason that it militates against reprobation. On the one hand, God purposes to save only His people chosen in Christ; on the other hand, He purposes to save all. One will is to save some; another will is to save all. And because the two are so flatly contradictory, they cannot both be maintained. So, the truth of sovereign election is sacrificed on the altar of the free offer.

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4 It is striking that our Canons take this same position when in I, 6 they say: "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal *decree*. (Notice the singular, "decree" and not the plural, "decrees.") . . . According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy." The one decree, therefore, includes both election and reprobation.