Editor's Notes

You hold in your hand the April 2012 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal.* We, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, are grateful for the privilege of presenting another issue of our journal. We trust that you will find its contents informative, soundly biblical and Reformed, and edifying. A word about the contents of this issue.

Two articles in this issue address a recent development among the proponents of the well-meant gospel offer—long a doctrine repudiated by the PRCA. This recent development is the defense of the gospel as a well-meant offer by appeal to the theological distinction between God's archetypal and ectypal knowledge. This is the defense of the well-meant offer made by Dr. R. Scott Clark in a chapter of the book *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine,* entitled "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel, and Westminster Theology." The reference to the Roman god Janus calls to mind Herman Hoeksema's charge that the well-meant gospel offer makes God into a sort of Janus, a two-faced god. "One of his faces reminds you of Augustine, Calvin, Gomarus; but the other shows the unmistakable features of Pelagius, Arminius, Episcopius."[1] Clark attempts to show that Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches are in error for rejecting the compatibility of sovereign, particular, efficacious grace and a grace of God for all in the well-meant gospel offer. Clark charges that Hoeksema and the PRCA are in error because of their failure to understand and rightly to apply the distinction between God's archetypal and ectypal knowledge. If only they would do so, their difficulties with the theology of the well-meant offer of the gospel would dissipate.

Both Rev. Clayton Spronk and second-year Protestant Reformed Seminary student Mr. Joshua Engelsma respond to Clark's contention. Read their articles and I am sure that you will be convinced that Dr. Clark in fact misapplies the distinction between God's archetypal and ectypal knowledge. Not only does he not understand the distinc-

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1 Herman Hoeksema, *A Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth: A Critical Treatise on the "Three Points" Adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1942), 30.

tion, but the distinction properly understood supports the Protestant Reformed (and others, thankfully) rejection of the teaching of the well-meant gospel offer.

Included in this issue is another significant translation project by Mr. Marvin Kamps. Some years after the Secession (*Afscheiding*) of 1834 had taken place, a man of influence who had been a vocal critic of the State Church of the Netherlands (*Hervormde Kerken van Nederland*) wrote a public condemnation of the secessionists of 1834. This man was Groen VanPrinsterer, an influential man of letters and member of the movement known as the *Reveil,* who, although critical of the Dutch State Church, never joined the secession movement. In *The Apology of the Ecclesiastical Secession in the Netherlands,* Simon VanVelzen, one of the leading ministers in the secession movement, responds to VanPrinsterer's condemnation, his judgment that the seceders were under no duty to secede. He reiterates the three reasons that have ever been the justification for believers to separate from a corrupt church institute in order to reinstitute the church: the glory of God, the truth of Holy Scripture and the creeds, and the welfare of the children of believers. Read VanVelzen's heartwarming *Apology* and remind yourself of the sacrifices that he and the others made for the sake of the truth in 1834 and thereafter. May God give us the same commitment!

We welcome to the pages of the Journal a familiar friend, Dr. Jürgen-Burkhard Klautke. Dr. Klautke serves on the faculty of the Academy for Reformed Theology in Marburg, Germany. His article is the transcription of a speech he gave to the faculty, student body, and Grand Rapids area ministers last September. The speech was an insightful analysis of the moral decline in Western society, as well as a call to the Reformed believer and church to withstand the influence of this contemporary spiraling degradation of human society.

And there are book reviews. Good book reviews. Thought-provoking book reviews.

Soli Deo Gloria!

—RLC

On Right Hermeneutics and Proper Distinctions

The Rejection of the Well-Meant Offer by Herman Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches

Rev. Clay Spronk

Introduction

For approximately 90 years theologians of the Protestant Reformed Churches have vigorously engaged in the debate over the doctrine of the well-meant gospel offer. They have addressed the doctrine in countless sermons, magazine articles, and books. By these means the doctrine of the well-meant offer of the gospel has been exposed as unbiblical and contrary to the Reformed creeds. It is a doctrine that despises the wisdom, power, and glory of God; a doctrine that destroys the power of the preaching of the gospel in the instituted church and on the mission field; a doctrine that unduly exalts man; a doctrine of confusion that threatens the elect believer's assurance of salvation.

Those who take the contrary position have criticized and attacked the Protestant Reformed rejection of the well-meant offer of the gospel. Usually the criticisms and attacks amount to nothing more than name-calling or caricatures of the Protestant Reformed position. Seldom is there a serious attempt at refutation. Claiming that the Bible teaches the well-meant offer, the critics ignore Protestant Reformed arguments and shout "HYPER-CALVINIST" ad nauseum.

Dr. R. Scott Clark's essay "Janus, the Well-meant Offer of the Gospel, and Westminster Theology" is unique. Dr. Clark analyzes the debate theologically.[1]

This does not mean that Dr. Clark completely avoids making unwarranted assertions. For example, though he never clearly defines the term *hyper-Calvinism,* he yet characterizes the rejection of the well-

[1] R. Scott Clark, "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel, and Westminster Theology," in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, Penn.: P&R Publishing, 2004), 149-179.

meant offer of the gospel by Hoeksema and others during the 1920s' common grace debate in the CRC as hyper-Calvinism.[2] The charge of hyper-Calvinism, at least as it is lodged against Hoeksema and subsequent Protestant Reformed theologians, has often been proven false. It is disappointing, therefore, that Clark lobs this charge again without even interacting with the arguments Protestant Reformed theologians have advanced to refute it.

Dr. Clark also makes the erroneous claim that the exegetical arguments of the proponents of the well-meant gospel offer have not been treated often by Protestant Reformed men, particularly the exegetical arguments of John Murray.[3] If Dr. Clark would only look through the index of the *Standard Bearer,* he would find that there are indeed many articles that treat the texts Murray attempted to exegete, and that there are even two *series* of articles specifically devoted to the refutation of Murray's arguments and exegesis.[4] Then there is Prof. Engelsma's yet unchallenged *Hyper Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel,* where the Protestant Reformed position is clearly laid out and

2 Clark, "Janus," 154. Clark writes, "The controversy over the 'Three Points' of 1924 and the Clark case (1944-48) were concerned with the problem of hyper-Calvinism)." The Clark case to which Clark referred dealt with the teachings of Gordon Clark in the OPC. For a response to R. Scott Clark's essay from a disciple of Gordon Clark, see Sean Gerety, *Janus Alive and Well: Dr. R. Scott Clark and the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel,* perhaps most easily accessible on the Internet at www.godshammer.wordpress.com/2011/05/02janus-alive-and-well-dr-r-scott-clark-and-the-well-meant-offer-of-the-gospel/ (viewed 3/2/2012).

3 Clark, "Janus," 174.

4 Clark is probably referring to John Murray and Ned Stonehouse's 1948 pamphlet, *The Free Offer of the Gospel*. In 1957 Herman Hoeksema responded to this pamphlet in a series of articles entitled "The Free Offer" in the *Standard Bearer*, no. 33: 9, 11-17, 20, 21. In 1973-1974 Prof. Homer Hoeksema responded to the arguments of Murray and Stonehouse in a series of articles entitled "The OPC and the 'Free Offer'" in the *Standard Bearer*, no. 49: 12, 15-17, 20, 21; no. 50: 3, 4, 6-9, 13, 15. Prof. Homer Hoeksema took the time to analyze and criticize the interpretation of every passage Murray and Stonehouse included in their pamphlet.

grounded upon Scripture.[5] So thoroughly have Protestant Reformed men refuted the exegesis of the so-called well-meant offer texts, that it could more fairly be said they are waiting for an answer to their exegetical arguments.

Dr. Clark does not provide exegetical arguments to prove Protestant Reformed interpretations of Scripture wrong. Instead, he focuses on hermeneutics. Dr. Clark wrote his essay in honor of Robert B. Strimple, whose lectures on the well-meant offer greatly influenced Clark. About Strimple's teaching of the well-meant offer Clark writes, "His explanation of the 1948 majority report to the Fifteenth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) by John Murray (1898-1975) was a turning point in my hermeneutic, doctrine of God, and theology of evangelism."[6] Strimple "helped" Clark "appreciate Scripture as an accommodated revelation, the distinction between God 'in himself' *(in se)* and 'toward us' *(erga nos)*."[7] For Clark, the doctrine of the well-meant gospel offer is grounded upon and in harmony with the accommodated nature of biblical revelation.

Clark believes that the debate about the well-meant gospel offer historically was not about "biblical exegesis nor historical theology... but rather matters of theological method, specifically hermeneutics and assumptions about the nature of divine-human relations."[8] Dr. Clark's position is that Louis Berkhof, John Murray, and others who agree with them correctly recognized the logical and necessary connection between the truth that Scripture is accommodated language and the doctrine of the well-meant offer. Those who reject the well-meant offer do so, he argues, because they erroneously reject the hermeneutical principle undergirding the doctrine. He writes, "This essay contends that the

5 David Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: *Reformed Free Publishing Association*, 1994). The purpose of Engelsma's book is to defend the Protestant Reformed Churches from the charge of hyper-Calvinism, so he does not give a thorough critique of Murray and Stonehouse's exegesis. Nevertheless, he does refute some of their interpretations of Scripture (see, for example pp. 176-177).

6 Clark, "Janus," 149.

7 Clark, "Janus," 149.

8 Clark, "Janus," 152.

reason the well-meant offer has not been more persuasive is that its critics have not understood or sympathized with the fundamental assumption on which the doctrine of the well-meant offer was premised: the distinction between theology as God knows it (*theologia archetypa*) and theology as it is revealed to and done by us (*theologia ectypa*)."[9] He argues that the Protestant Reformed rejection of the well-meant gospel offer is based on a wrong approach to Scripture, namely, a failure to recognize Scripture as accommodated revelation.

If valid, Clark's arguments demonstrate that the Protestant Reformed rejection of the well-meant offer is wrong. If valid, his arguments expose as futile all of the attempts of Protestant Reformed theologians to demonstrate from Scripture that the doctrine of the well-meant offer is erroneous. If Dr. Clark is right, proponents of the well-meant offer can lightheartedly wave away the exegetical arguments raised against the doctrine because they are based on an erroneous view of Scripture. If he is right, Protestant Reformed theologians have misunderstood the debate over the well-meant gospel offer for 80 plus years.

But Dr. Clark is wrong. Herman Hoeksema and his disciples do not reject the hermeneutical principle that God speaks a language accommodated to man in Scripture. The accommodated nature of Scripture, rightly understood, does not necessitate the doctrine of the well-meant gospel offer. And Protestant Reformed theologians have not missed the importance of hermeneutics in the debate, as Dr. Clark suggests, but have continually pointed out that the defenders of the well-meant gospel offer have the wrong approach to Scripture.

Dr. Clark does not understand the well-meant gospel offer debate as clearly or advance it as much as he thinks. Yet an examination of his arguments is worthwhile. This is true for several reasons. First, Dr. Clark at least attempts to defend the well-meant offer on the basis of theological arguments that are worth consideration. Second, engaging in controversy usually helps both sides see the issues at stake more clearly. Third, perhaps the proponents of the well-meant gospel offer will more seriously interact with Protestant Reformed

9 Clark, "Janus," 152.

exegesis of key passages after it is demonstrated that the Protestant Reformed approach to Scripture is orthodox.

Accommodated Revelation and the Well-meant Gospel Offer Debate

Clark takes umbrage with Hoeksema's characterization of the well-meant offer as a "Janus" doctrine. Hoeksema called the doctrine of common grace as set forth in three points by the CRC Synod of 1924 a Janus doctrine in his treatise entitled *A Triple Breach*.[10] The well-meant gospel offer is commonly called the little point of the first point of common grace. When Hoeksema described the first point of common grace as a Janus doctrine, he was especially aiming at the well-meant offer of the gospel. How is the well-meant offer a Janus doctrine? Hoeksema explains,

> For, the fact is, that the first point reminds one of the two-faced head of Janus. Janus was a Roman idol, distinguished by the remarkable feature of having two faces and looking in two opposite directions. And in this respect there is a marked similarity between old Janus and the first point. The latter is also two-faced and casts wistful looks in opposite directions. And the same may be asserted of the attempts at explanation of the first point that are offered by the leaders of the Christian Reformed Churches. Only, while the two faces of old heathen Janus bore a perfect resemblance to each other, the Janus of 1924 has the distinction of showing two totally different faces. One of his faces reminds you of Augustine, Calvin, Gomarus; but the other shows the unmistakable features of Pelagius, Arminius, Episcopius. And your troubles begin when you would inquire of this two-faced oracle, what may be the exact meaning of the first point. For, then this modern Janus begins to revolve, alternately showing you one face and the other, till you hardly know whether you are dealing with Calvin or Arminius.

10 Herman Hoeksema, *A Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth: A Critical Treatise on the "Three Points" adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924* (reprint 1992, Grandville, Mich.: Evangelism Committee of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church), 24.

"The best interpretation of Hoeksema's language," according to Clark, "is that it was an implicit rejection of the archetypal/ectypal distinction."[11] Clark's argument is that Hoeksema would have seen that the well-meant gospel offer, as taught by those who are within the Reformed tradition,[12] is not two-faced or Arminian if only he accepted the key Reformed conception of archetypal and ectypal theology.

Archetypal theology and ectypal theology are the most important terms in Clark's discussion of the accommodated nature of revelation and his defense of the doctrine of the well-meant gospel offer. Clark argues that the right understanding of archetypal and ectypal theology leads to the right approach to Scripture as accommodated revelation, which will in turn inevitably lead to acceptance of the well-meant gospel offer. For Clark, the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology is the "basic premise" of the well-meant offer of the gospel.[13] He asserts that the well-meant gospel offer is a "correlative" of the orthodox Reformed conception of ectypal theology.[14] So he argues that rejection of the well-meant gospel offer is also a rejection of the orthodox Reformed distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology.

The basic issue, Clark rightly explains, is submission to the teachings of God revealed in the Bible. Those who hold to the well-meant offer, he believes, "submit to Scripture as it comes to us."[15] Specifically, they submit to Scripture's revelation that God hates and wills the damnation of the reprobate with His decretive will and loves and desires the same reprobate with His preceptive will in the preaching of the gospel.[16] This is a "paradox" that creates "tension," Clark admits,

11 Clark, "Janus," 153.

12 The irony of Dr. Clark's essay is that it attempts to refute the charge that the well-meant gospel offer is an Arminian doctrine even though Arminians affirm the doctrine.

13 Clark, "Janus," 154.

14 Clark, "Janus," 177.

15 Clark, "Janus," 177.

16 Clark argues that the well-meant gospel offer theologians are "following the tradition" in affirming that "God is...free to reveal himself as desiring certain things that he also reveals that he has not willed decretively."

but it is not valid to say that the well-meant offer presents a two-faced God who with a Calvinist face loves only the elect and an Arminian face loves all men. For Clark, the well-meant gospel offer is pure Calvinism and must be recognized as such if one properly understands the Reformed conception of archetypal and ectypal theology.

In Clark's view, denying the possibility that God can reveal both a decretive hatred for the reprobate and a preceptive love for the reprobate in Scripture is rationalism. God's hatred and love for the reprobate may very well be a "paradox" that creates "tension" in the minds of men, but, he argues, there is no tension in God's archetypal knowledge of Himself concerning His hatred and love for the reprobate. The proper attitude of the believer, according to Clark, is to submit to the tension caused by God's revelation of ectypal theology. When those who oppose the well-meant offer seek to resolve this tension, they are rejecting the revelation of Scripture and attempting to ascend to the heights of God's archetypal knowledge where there is no tension.

Clark's defense of the well-meant offer is essentially the "it's a paradox" defense that advocates of the well-meant offer have used often in the debate. Clark is correct when he says, "during the controversy, the archetypal/ectypal distinction was never formally discussed as a Reformed theological category or proposed as a way to resolve the issue and from Hoeksema's characterization of the well-meant offer as schizophrenic."[17] The terms "archetypal" and "ectypal" have not often been part of the well-meant offer debate, but the substance of Clark's argument is not new. The attempt has been made to explain that the well-meant offer is only an *apparent* paradox in the minds of men, that it is nevertheless the teaching of Scripture, and that rejection of the doctrine is simply rationalism. What is new is Clark's clever attempt, by dragging the historically orthodox terms "archetypal" and "ectypal" into the debate, to cast Herman Hoeksema, Gordon Clark, and their theological heirs who reject the well-meant offer in an un-Reformed light. Hoeksema and those who agree with him are outside

In this same section he places God's desire for the salvation of the reprobate in God's preceptive will. Pp. 176-177.

17 Clark, "Janus," 174.

the Reformed camp because they deny the Reformed teaching these terms represent.

In addition to charging opponents of the well-meant offer with being un-Reformed, Clark turns Hoeksema's charge that the well-meant offer is an Arminian doctrine against him. According to Clark, those who reject the well-meant offer fall into the same form of rationalism as the Arminians![18] For an example of Arminian rationalism, Clark points to the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement. According to Clark the Reformed position is that Scripture teaches that preachers must make "a well-meant offer of the gospel indiscriminately, despite the fact that not all hearers are elect."[19] But the Arminians saw the tension between teaching that God does not love all men decretively and teaching that in the preaching God loves all men. The Reformed approach to this tension, according to Clark, is to accept it. The rationalist Arminian approach is to resolve the paradox "by saying that Christ died for all and for every man."[20] Those who reject the well-meant offer illegitimately resolve the paradox by saying God does not love everyone in the preaching. A failure to submit to Scripture's paradoxical teaching is evidence that the opponents of the well-meant offer and the Arminians reject the Reformed conception of archetypal and ectypal theology, and consequently both are rationalistic in their approach to Scripture.

Clark's argument for the well-meant offer rests, then, on two basic claims in connection with the Reformed conception of archetypal and ectypal theology. First, he claims the opponents of the well-meant offer reject the archetypal/ectypal distinction. Secondly, he claims that the views of the well-meant offer theologians indicate that they rightly understand and affirm this orthodox, Reformed distinction. Dr. Clark is wrong on both counts, and therefore fails to advance or resolve the well-meant offer debate.

The Reformed Conception of Archetypal and Ectypal Theology

Herman Hoeksema did not reject the orthodox conception of the

18 See, for example, Clark, "Janus," 154 and 177.

19 Clark, "Janus," 164.

20 Clark, "Janus," 164.

archetypal/ectypal distinction. Clark admits that Hoeksema does not explicitly refer to the archetypal/ectypal distinction in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. He also acknowledges that Hoeksema "seemed to acknowledge a distinction between God as he is in himself and as he reveals himself to us."[21] But Clark argues, "Most of the time, however, he argued against the substance of the archetypal/ectypal distinction."[22] In order to challenge Clark's argument it is necessary at this point to set forth briefly the Reformed tradition's teaching concerning archetypal and ectypal theology.

Dr. Richard A. Muller provides an excellent summary of the orthodox Reformed teaching concerning the arch/ectypal distinction in his *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*.[23] Muller explains in general that the "message and intention of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology" is to recognize "not only that God is distinct from his revelation and that the one who reveals cannot be fully comprehended in the revelation, but also that the revelation, given in a finite and understandable form, must truly rest on the eternal truth of God."[24] The Reformed tradition recognized that revelation in general and Scripture in particular is not God and is not a comprehensive revelation of God. Nevertheless, Scripture and all revelation is the revelation of the eternal truth of God in a "finite and understandable form." The Reformed faith used the terms archetypal and ectypal to distinguish between the eternal comprehensive knowledge of God and the revelation of that eternal comprehensive knowledge to man.

The Reformed orthodox designated God's comprehensive knowledge of Himself as archetypal knowledge. Archetypal theology, Muller writes, "is God himself, the identity of self and self-knowledge in the absolutely and essentially wise God."[25] Man does not and *cannot*

21 Clark, "Janus," 160.

22 Clark, "Janus," 161.

23 Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, no. 1 *Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 229-238.

24 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics,* 229.

25 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 231.

possess this archetypal knowledge of God. Muller explains that it is "incommunicable (*incommunicabalis*), as indeed are all the divine attributes when defined strictly or univocally. All that can be naturally communicated to created things of such an ultimate wisdom are but faint images or vestiges (*images aut etiam vestigia*)."[26]

Man cannot know God as God knows Himself archetypally, yet God is able to communicate to man the true knowledge of Himself. In Reformed thought, archetypal theology is the source of revelation, even though man can never possess archetypal theology. Muller explains:

> The nature of this archetype and its function as the source of all that finite creatures know about God poses a final paradox in the Protestant scholastic discussion of the "attributes" of archetypal theology: it is both incommunicable (*incommunicabilis*) and communicative (*communicativa*). The identity of *theologia archetypa* with the infinite essence of God renders it incapable of communication to creatures. Nevertheless, God's infinite self-knowledge is transmitted to things in the created order. In creation, all things receive the imprint of the divine, and the ability of finite creatures to apprehend revelation, to have theology, rests upon the image of God according to which they have been created.[27]

This archetypal theology is the source of the revealed knowledge of God, which the Reformed designated as ectypal theology. Muller quotes Junius' definition of ectypal theology: "And so, indeed theology simply so called, is the entire Wisdom concerning divine things capable of being communicated to created things by [any] manner of communication" (p. 235).[28] Muller includes a helpful outline of the ectypal theology as understood by Reformed theologians:

1. theology of union (*theologia unionis*): the theology known by Jesus' human mind in and through the hypostatic union
2. theology of angels (*theologia angelorum*)

26 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics,* 231.
27 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 232.
28 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 235.

3. theology of man
   a. before the fall (*ante lapsum*)
   b. after the fall (*post lapsum*) or theology of pilgrims (*theologia viatorum*)
   c. theology of the blessed in heaven (*theologia beatorum*)[29]

With the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology, the Reformed tradition honors God as high above man. To know God archetypally, man would have to become God. Reformed theology keeps man in his place as a creature by teaching that man cannot know God *comprehensively.* On the other hand, Reformed orthodoxy maintains that through revelation man knows God *truly.* For all knowledge comes from God's perfect knowledge of Himself. God does not reveal to man knowledge that *differs from* or *contradicts* the knowledge He has of Himself. For Reformed theologians, both archetypal theology and ectypal theology are true theology, and Muller writes that the Reformers taught that "true theology is one according to substance whether it is found in God or in his creatures."[30] He goes on to write, "This substantially singular theology, as known infinitely and absolutely by the divine subject, God, is archetypal; as known finitely and relatively by the creaturely subject, ectypal."

The Reformed distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology teaches that man can know God truly, but it also prevents rationalism in the form of man independently ascending to the knowledge of God. God is the source of all knowledge, and man is limited to knowing God as God reveals Himself to man.

Hoeksema's Agreement with Reformed Orthodoxy

With the Reformed understanding of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology Herman Hoeksema (along with subsequent Protestant Reformed theologians) is in full agreement.

Clark offers only one random and isolated quotation from Hoek-

29 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 235. The content of the outline is from Muller, the form of the outline is mine.

30 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 230.

sema to support his contention that Hoeksema rejects the substance of the arch/ectypal distinction. He quotes Hoeksema's statement: "If we want to make separation between revelation and Himself, there is no knowledge of God."[31] This statement in isolation does not argue against the arch/ectypal distinction. Hoeksema does not identify revelation with God, nor does he indicate that man ever knows God archetypally, either apart from or through God's revelation of Himself. The statement is ambiguous (as many statements are in isolation), but there is no reason to believe that Hoeksema is saying anything different from orthodox Reformed theology's affirmation of the inseparable connection between archetypal and ectypal theology. Hoeksema is pointing out that revelation cannot be separated from God and that through revelation man *truly* knows God.

Clark believes that Hoeksema's statement is the basis for serious problems in Hoeksema's theology. After quoting the statement, he writes,

> This approach influenced how [Hoeksema] structured his theology. For Hoeksema, God is the *principium cognoscendi*, whereas in contrast, for Berkhof, Scripture performs that role. This is a significant difference. Berkhof's doctrine of God began with revelation. Hoeksema, however, began not with revelation, but with God himself as the beginning of knowledge. This move suggests a sort of intellectualism, that is, an intersection between our mind and God's, in Hoeksema's theology. There was tension in his *Dogmatics*. At one point he nodded politely to the Creator-creature distinction, but elsewhere he argued against the substance of the archetypal/ectypal distinction, and the historical record is that his rhetoric against the well-meant offer tended to militate against the distinction.[32]

31 Quoted in Clark, "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer," 161.

32 Clark, "Janus," 161. Clark offers as an example of Hoeksema's rhetoric against the archetypal/ectypal distinction Hoeksema's pamphlet *Pedestination Revealed not Hidden nor Confused* (Grand Rapids: The Radio Committee of the First Protestant Reformed Church, 1948). Hoeksema speaks against the well-meant offer in this pamphlet, but there is no evidence that he speaks against the archetypal/ectypal distinction. Clark seems to be assuming what he needs to prove—that the rejection of the well-meant offer is rejection of

Hoeksema does indeed call God the principle of knowledge (*principium congnoscendi*). Hoeksema writes,

> God is a knowing God. He is not a cold, abstract power, but he is the absolute, perfectly self-conscious, infinite being, who is in himself the implication of all perfections. When we say that he is a knowing God, we mean that he is the self-sufficient one even in his knowledge. He has no need of anyone, of any being outside of himself, to be a knowing God. He is not in need of an object of knowledge outside of his own infinite fullness. In himself he is the subject and object of all knowledge. He is the perfect subject as well as the infinitely perfect object of his own knowledge. When we say that God is the *principle of all knowledge* of God, we mean thereby that in the deepest sense he is also the principle of all knowledge of him that is found in the creature.[33]

In this statement Hoeksema does not teach that man can know God apart from His revelation in Scripture. He denies this very plainly in this section of his *Dogmatics*. Hoeksema teaches that the triune God is a knowing and speaking God in Himself, but "If nothing more could be said...there would be no revelation of God, because revelation implies God speaks not only to himself but also to another outside of himself. In other words, that there is a being who can receive and understand God's speech concerning himself and to himself is implied in revelation."[34] Hoeksema teaches that man is shut up to revelation for the knowledge of God.

Given the fact Hoeksema denies that man can know God apart from Scripture, it is difficult to understand why Clark would criticize him for viewing "God himself as the beginning of knowledge."

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the archetypal/ectypal distinction. It is ironic that Clark offers as an example of Hoeksema's supposedly Arminian rationalism a pamphlet in which Hoeksema exegetes Romans 9 in a solidly Reformed way that would appall any Arminian. I for one would like to know if Clark agrees with Hoeksema's exegesis.

33 Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd edition, no. 1 (Grandville, Mich.: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004), 23-24.

34 Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 26-27.

The Reformed faith holds that God is both prior to and the source of revelation. If Hoeksema is speaking about the objective source of man's knowledge of God, his views are in harmony with Reformed orthodoxy in teaching that the knowledge of God begins with God.

But Hoeksema is not focusing on the objective source of revelation in this section of his *Dogmatics*. He speaks of God as the *subjective* principle of knowledge and explains how man comes to the subjective knowledge of God. There must be a subjective work of God in man (especially fallen man) for him to know God. God reveals Himself through Jesus Christ, specifically through the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Without the inward work of Christ's Spirit, natural man cannot receive the revelation of God. Only the spiritual man can know God—the man who is regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, who comes from God.[35] Hoeksema's teaching that God is the subjective principle of knowledge does not deny that man cannot know God apart from Scripture but is merely recognition of the biblical and Reformed teaching that natural man cannot rightly know the things of God.

The charge that Hoeksema "at one point" merely "nods" at the Creator/creature distinction is absurd. He maintains this distinction in his entire discussion of the knowability of God. The distinction be-

35 Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 32. Hoeksema's explanation of how God was the subjective principle of knowledge before man's fall into sin is found on pages 27-28. His explanation of how God is the subjective principle of knowledge after man's fall into sin is found on pages 28-32. On page 32 he writes, "Only the spiritual man can distinguish, discern, and judge of the spiritual things, for he has the Spirit of God, through whom he is brought into contact with the hidden mystery of God, the new speech. While the spiritual man discerns these things and speaks or witnesses of them, he himself is a mystery to the natural man and is discerned by no one. The conclusion is that only he who has the mind of Christ can know the mind of the Lord and that only he who has the Spirit of Christ can know his mind (reference is made to 1 Cor. 2:10-16)." A little later, on the same page, he writes, "Centrally, then, the Spirit of Christ himself is the subjective principle of knowledge; insofar as the church becomes co-worker with Christ through faith, in the Spirit, that faith is the principle by which the church hears and reproduces the speech of God."

tween God and man is maintained by Hoeksema even in the paragraph quoted above, where He calls God the principle of knowledge. In that paragraph Hoeksema affirms that God is uncreated, man is created; God is independent in His knowledge of Himself, man is dependent upon the revelation of God for the knowledge of God; God knows Himself comprehensively, man does not.

Throughout his discussion of the knowability of God, Hoeksema teaches everything the Reformed orthodox teach about archetypal and ectypal theology as summarized by Muller. Hoeksema taught the substance of the archetypal and ectypal distinction by teaching the *incomprehensibility* of God. He taught that God knows Himself perfectly in a way man can never know Him. He teaches that God's perfect knowledge of Himself is the source of man's finite knowledge of God. In other words, man can truly know God only as God reveals Himself in a way that is accommodated to the capacity of man as a creature. Hoeksema's teachings throughout his dogmatics are encapsulated in two paragraphs at the end of his discussion of the knowability of God that must be dealt with if one is going to argue that Hoeksema denies the archetypal/ectypal distinction:

> Even as God alone knows himself with an infinitely perfect and eternally self-conscious knowledge, so also he alone is able to impart his knowledge to the creature, that is, to reveal himself. This must not be misunderstood as if there ever could be formed a creature capable of receiving God's own infinite and eternal knowledge of himself, because such a creature would have to be infinite as God is infinite.
>
> Rather, revelation consists in that God speaks concerning himself and imparts his knowledge in a form the creature can receive, in a creaturely measure. Behind and beyond the plane of revelation, there must always remain infinite depths of divine glories and perfections that we can never fathom.[36]

The evidence Clark offers does not support his argument that Hoeksema rejects the substance of the Reformed, orthodox distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology. Herman Hoeksema's

36 Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 60.

teaching concerning the incomprehensibility of God and the nature of revelation in his *Reformed Dogmatics* supplies abundant evidence that his views were fully in harmony with the orthodox Reformed teaching concerning man's knowledge of God. And although Herman Hoeksema did not explicitly affirm the orthodox Reformed conception of archetypal and ectypal theology, it is explicitly affirmed by his theological heirs. I can testify that the distinction was explained and affirmed in the introductory course on dogmatics I took in the Protestant Reformed Theological School.

The Arch/Ectypal Distinction Misapplied

In his essay Dr. Clark demonstrates a confused understanding of archetypal and ectypal theology that is not in harmony with Reformed orthodoxy. Glaring examples of this confusion are found in statements Clark makes about God's eternal decrees, particularly the decree of election. Clark's statements about election not only demonstrate that his views are not in harmony with the Reformed conception of the arch/ectypal distinction, but also that his views are not in harmony with the Reformed confession concerning election.

For Clark, the contents of God's eternal decree of election belong to archetypal theology, while only the fact of the decree belongs to ectypal theology. Here are four pertinent statements:

> 1. In its defense of the gospel and teaching on the well-meant offer, the Synod of Dort appealed not to the decree, God's hidden will, or *theologia archetypa*, but to *theologia ectypa*, that is, to God's revealed will and the outworking of the decree in history.[37]
>
> 2. In view of the fact that the number and identity of the elect is a matter of archetypal theology, the divines used the notable adverbs *promiscuously* and *indiscriminately*.[38]
>
> 3. In this regard, the approach of Dort is in contrast to that of

37 Clark, "Janus," 165. Clark's contention here and elsewhere that the Canons teach the well-meant offer is wrong. For the right explanation of the teaching of the Canons see Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism*....

38 Clark, "Janus," 166.

> both the Remonstrants and the modern critics of the well-meant offer. Rather than making deductions from the revealed fact of God's sovereign eternal decree, the Synod was committed to learning and obeying God's revealed will, even if it seems paradoxical to us.[39]
>
> 4. The fact of the decree is presupposed in and animates the well-meant offer, but since its contents are archetypal, we are shut up to ectypal theology of which the well-meant offer is correlative.[40]

For Clark the "hidden decree" of election belongs to archetypal theology. Only the fact of the decree belongs to ectypal theology. Clark does not clearly spell out what he understands by the "fact of the decree." But he does explain that the identity and number of the elect are not part of the fact of the decree revealed in Scripture. The identity and number of the elect are not and indeed cannot be revealed to man in Scripture or *any other way*, since it belongs to archetypal theology.

It is astounding that Clark relegates the identity and number of the elect to the realm of archetypal theology. If what Clark says is true, the number and identity of the elect can *never* be known by individuals or by the church as a whole. Clark's position stands in clear opposition to the Reformed doctrine of election and also the Reformed conception of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology.

It is true that God has not *yet* revealed to the church on earth the number and identity of the elect. Those who reject the well-meant gospel offer have never claimed they have the ability to know the number and identity of the elect. In fact, it is exactly because the church cannot *now* know the number and identity of all the elect that the gospel must be preached promiscuously and indiscriminately. But this does not mean that the Reformed faith has ever maintained that the number and identity of the elect cannot and will not *ever* be known by the church, and the burden of proof is on Clark to demonstrate that it has maintained this to prove his view is Reformed.

39 Clark, "Janus," 174.
40 Clark, "Janus," 175.

We believe that the identity of the elect can be and is revealed by God to the elect and therefore belongs to ectypal theology. Muller's outline of the Reformed orthodox conception of ectypal theology is helpful at this point. In that outline we find that, according to the Reformed faith, the knowledge of the blessed in heaven belongs to *ectypal* theology. For the Reformed faith the identity of the elect is known to the blessed in heaven, meaning the identity of the elect belongs to ectypal theology. The Reformed faith confidently affirms, too, that the identity of the elect belongs to the theology of fallen pilgrims. As individuals the elect are able to identify *themselves* as elect. Of course, the elect never come to this knowledge rationalistically, apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture. And through the revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture they never peer into the being of God to read their names in the book of life. But rather, through faith in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in Scripture, the elect in this life come to the sure knowledge that they are elect and that their names are written in the book of life.

Assurance of Election Denied

Dr. Clark's explanation of election is important because it indicates how the well-meant gospel offer robs the believer of the assurance of election. He even comes close to admitting candidly that the well-meant offer robs the believer of the assurance of election. He writes, "The gospel is not that one is elect.... Rather, the gospel is that whoever...trusts in Christ's finished work shall be justified and saved." Opponents of the well-meant gospel offer (at least those who are not hyper-Calvinists) would agree that the message of the promiscuous preaching of the gospel is not 'you are elect.' Yet it is significant that Clark does not say anything about election as part of the content of the gospel at this point. Nowhere in his essay does he include the decree of predestination (including election and reprobation) as part of the content of the gospel. He only identifies the decree as "fundamental to...the application of redemption" and says this decree "is presupposed in and animates the well-meant offer."

Protestant Reformed preachers would never address all who hear the preaching and say "you are elect." This is because Protestant

Reformed preachers are not hyper-Calvinists, who believe that the gospel is to be preached only to the elect. The Protestant Reformed position, clearly and often expressed, is that the gospel must be preached promiscuously and indiscriminately to elect and reprobate alike. In this sense the Protestant Reformed position agrees with the well-meant-offer theologians that the preacher must not promiscuously preach "you are elect." But Protestant Reformed preachers will and do say in the preaching, "whoever...trusts in Christ's finished work shall be justified and saved"...*and is elect*! Protestant Reformed preachers, in harmony with the Reformed confessions, preach election and reprobation to provide comfort for God's elect who believe.[41]

It is impossible to include election as part of the content of the well-meant offer of the gospel. How can one preach, 'God loves you all and wants you all to believe so that you all may know you are elect' to a reprobate, about whom God has said in His eternal decree, "I desire your eternal damnation"? Such preaching would of course be absurd. Therefore the well-meant offer of the gospel is inconsistent with the biblical and confessional demand that the decree of predestination be preached (Canons I.14).

Already we can start to see how Clark's essay demonstrates the Janus-like character of the well-meant gospel offer. The Reformed face is seen in the confession of an archetypal theology to which belongs a decree of sovereign election. But then the head of the well-meant gospel offer turns and one sees an Arminian face of an ectypal theology that denies the possibility of knowing one is elect.[42]

41 Reprobation is also part of the content of Protestant Reformed preaching, not because the preacher knows who the reprobate are, but because God uses such preaching as a key power to harden the reprobate and shut them out of the kingdom of heaven. On the flip side, preaching reprobation is beneficial for the elect, as the Canons teach us in I.15, because it "peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election." It is striking that Clark mentions reprobation but does not attempt to explain its connection to the well-meant gospel offer.

42 Dr. Clark would certainly object to this argument by pointing out that he is in agreement with Canons I.12's teaching that the elect obtain assurance of election in this life. Nevertheless, his confession that the elect obtain as-

Mixing Sovereign Particular Grace with Resistible Universal Grace

In a sense I have demonstrated in the preceding sections of this article that the well-meant gospel offer, as presented by Clark, shows a Janus-like quality in the way it *separates* election from the preaching of the gospel. God's decree to save only some is placed in the realm of unknowable archetypal theology, so that the doctrine of election is not part of the content of preaching, and the assurance of election is not worked in the hearts of believers by the preaching. The one face of archetypal theology, the hidden decree of election, is cut off from the other face of ectypal theology, the revelation of God in Scripture and the preaching of the gospel that He loves all men. In his essay Clark also explains how archetypal theology, the decree of election, is *connected* to ectypal theology, the preaching of the gospel and God's love for all men. Once again, as a true Janus, the well-meant offer of the gospel shows two faces.

In an attempt to refute "Hoeksema's characterization of the well-meant offer as schizophrenic," Dr. Clark writes,

> Given the archetypal/ectypal distinction, however, the free or well-meant offer does not contradict absolute predestination, but rather necessarily presupposes its truth. Here the adjective *free* is of paramount importance. If the promiscuous and indiscriminate offer of the gospel really were a sort of crypto-Arminianism, of course the gospel offer would no longer be free. As Reformed theology understands the nature of grace, however, if the offer were ultimately conditioned upon the *ability* of the sinner to respond, then, to quote Paul, "grace would no longer be grace" (Rom. 11:6). The well-meant offer is part of the divinely ordained administration of his decree(s) of predestination and reprobation. The fact of the decree animates the well-meant offer, but since its contents are archetypal, we are shut up to ectypal theology of which the well-meant offer is correlative.[43]

In this statement Clark presents the Reformed face of the well-meant gospel offer. God does not elect sinners on the basis of their ability to respond to grace, and therefore the salvation offered to all men in the

surance of their election is inconsistent with his presentation of archetypal theology.

43 Clark, "Janus," 174-175. "Schizophrenic" is Clark's word.

preaching of the gospel is not conditioned upon the sinner's ability to respond to that grace. The well-meant gospel offer will have nothing to do with the Arminian idea that man has the ability to accept the grace offered in the preaching.

In this same paragraph Dr. Clark reveals the Arminian face of the well-meant offer of the gospel—the ugly face of Arminian universal grace. Dr. Clark focuses on the nature of the grace shown in the well-meant offer, but the first issue that must be settled is the extent of this grace. To whom does God show this grace?

In the decree of election, God's grace is of course only for the elect. Opponents of the well-meant offer have continually attacked it as a denial of the doctrine of election characteristic of Arminianism because it teaches that God bestows grace upon both the elect and reprobate in the preaching. Hoeksema, for example, after summarizing Prof. Louis Berkhof's position as teaching that "the grace of God, the love of God for sinners, the pleasure He evinces to save them, does not apply to the elect only, but to all men" writes, "however indignant the professor may appear to be when we accuse him of Arminianism, he certainly proves by his own words that the indictment is well founded."[44]

Dr. Clark has come to the rescue of Professor Berkhof, he thinks, with the archetypal/ectypal distinction. Hoeksema did not understand that God's grace is exclusively for the elect decretively or archetypally, and since the grace of God is for all only preceptively or ectypally, there is no conflict. But Dr. Clark's rescue attempt fails miserably. In his attempt to show how "absolute predestination" and the well-meant offer harmonize with each other, he actually demonstrates that it is impossible to build a sort of Chinese wall between God's hidden grace and election on the one hand, and His revealed grace in the preaching of the gospel on the other. As an aside, Dr. Clark presents the qualifying adjectives "well-meant" and "free" as synonymous, and declares that the unmerited grace of election ("free grace") is the grace offered in the gospel. They are one and the same. According to Clark, the grace of God in election is presupposed by and animates the well-meant offer. Thus, the "well-meant" gospel offer is God's revelation of a desire to save the elect *and* reprobate on the basis of the unconditional (free)

44 Hoeksema, *A Triple Breach*, 26.

grace of election. The well-meant gospel offer is indeed a schizophrenic mixture of God's free grace for the elect alone, with the grace offered to the elect and the reprobate alike in the preaching of the gospel.

The second important issue that must be settled is the power of God's grace. Dr. Clark focuses on the power or ability of man. But what shall we say about the power of the grace of God shown to the reprobate as a desire to save them when those reprobate perish? Now that Clark has tied the desire of God to save all men in the preaching to God's eternal grace in election, we see that the well-meant offer teaches that the unconditional grace of God fails to save reprobates who perish—God's grace is resistible! Hoeksema's words about Berkhof apply to Clark: "however indignant the professor may appear to be when we accuse him of Arminianism, he certainly proves by his own words that the indictment is well founded."

By teaching that the grace of God is resistible, the well-meant offer by implication does fall into the Arminian error of making salvation dependent upon the ability of man. If the grace shown in the preaching is resistible, then man's perishing in unbelief is due not to God's sovereign determination to condemn him but to man's exercising his power to frustrate God's desire. The necessary implication is that if a man obtains salvation he does so because he exercises his ability to believe. The well-meant offer defenders may deny that man has the natural ability to accept the offer of salvation. But that does not rule out the idea that man chooses to believe by the power of God's grace, which means that man's act, not God's sovereign decree, is decisive for salvation. The idea that man's act, assisted by God's grace, is decisive for salvation is embedded in the well-meant offer. The well-meant offer may not always present a free-will Arminian face, but it always has the face of Arminian conditional salvation.[45]

45 Proponents of the well-meant offer deny that it implies free will. But Prof. Engelsma points to the history of the CRC in which early proponents of the well-meant offer also denied this, only to be followed by later theologians who moved in the direction of free-will. Engelsma warns that this is the logical development of the well-meant offer, writing, "In the meantime, before there is official adoption of free will, free will is widely preached and taught in Reformed churches. When ministers *practice* the [well-meant] offer of

Misunderstanding the Reformed Archetypal/Ectypal Distinction

In the end, Dr. Clark's misapplication of the archetypal/ectypal distinction is based on a misunderstanding of the distinction. Defenders of the well-meant offer have always resorted to the "it's a paradox" defense in response to the charge that the doctrine teaches that God has two contradictory wills. They deny that there is a flat contradiction between the idea that God loves only some in election and loves all in the preaching of the gospel. This is only a *seeming* paradox in the minds of men, but it is a completely harmonious truth in the mind of God. Dr. Clark uses the archetypal/ectypal distinction to explain the notion that in Scripture God is able to reveal such a "paradox" that creates "tension" in the minds of men.

Another problem with Dr. Clark's appeal to the archetypal/ectypal distinction is that his argument works only because he assumes incorrectly that what he is defending is a paradox in the sense of an apparent contradiction rather than a flat contradiction. The charge against the well-meant offer is that it does not teach a paradox but, as Prof. Engelsma writes, it "involves a Calvinist in sheer contradiction. That God is gracious only to some in predestination but gracious to all in the gospel and that God wills only some to be saved in predestination but wills all to be saved by the gospel is flat, irreconcilable contradiction."[46] The point is that the well-meant offer teaches concepts that are not only irreconcilable in the mind of man but are also irreconcilable in the mind of God. Engelsma writes, "I speak reverently: God Himself cannot reconcile these teachings."[47]

Dr. Clark's response would be that the opponents of the well-meant offer make such a charge only because they do not understand the archetypal/ectypal distinction. He seems to believe that the Reformed orthodox used this distinction in order to explain how what man knows from God's revelation in Scripture conflicts with what

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the gospel, proclaiming to their hearers that God loves them all, desires the salvation of everybody, and now offers them salvation, they are telling the people that salvation depends upon man's decision for Christ." Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 54.

46 Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 116-117.

47 Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 117.

God knows in Himself. Clark believes that this is supported by the distinction between what God knows *in se* or in Himself, archetypal theology, and what God reveals *erga nos* towards us, ectypal theology. This distinction is important to Clark because he believes that it demonstrates that there is no contradiction in God's knowledge in Himself. The discord is between God's knowledge of Himself and man's knowledge of God, and the tension created by this discord is only in man, not in God.

It seems Dr. Clark may have overlooked Reformed orthodoxy's teaching that God's ectypal theology is first *in se,* or in Himself, before it is revealed *erga nos,* or to us. This is a mystery, but the Reformed faith teaches that God eternally determined *in se* what He would reveal to man. God eternally knows Himself archetypally and ectypally. Muller explains the orthodox Reformed view:

> Ectypal theology *in se* is, thus, the ideal case of communicated theology, the accommodated form or mode of the archetype readied in the mind of God for communication to a particular kind of subject, namely, Christ, the blessed, or the redeemed on earth. With the exception of Christ, however, the ideal case will be less than fully realized in the finite order, given the varieties and infirmities of the rational subjects.[48]

The "tension" of the well-meant gospel offer is not therefore merely between what God knows in Himself and what man knows from God's revelation. The tension begins in God, where there is discord between how He knows Himself archetypally and ectypally.

It becomes clear that Dr. Clark brings different terms to the debate—archetypal and ectypal theology—but is simply resorting to the old distinction between God's hidden and revealed will to dispel the charge that the well-meant offer posits two contradictory wills in God. But this distinction between God's hidden and revealed wills does not help to explain or mitigate the sheer contradiction involved in the well-meant gospel offer. Prof. Engelsma explains,

48 Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 235-236.

> But this effort to relieve the tension of the contradiction in which the offer involves Calvinists gets us nowhere. For one thing, the will of God to save only some, not all, is not hidden but revealed. It is found in every page of the Scriptures. It is Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:14: God has eternally chosen only some ("few") to be saved in distinction from the others ("many"). For another thing, the distinction leaves us right where we were before the distinction was invented: God has two, diametrically opposite, conflicting wills.[49]

The Reformed orthodox used the archetypal/ectypal distinction, not to explain how God's knowledge of Himself conflicts with the knowledge man has by revelation, but to explain how man cannot know God *comprehensively* and yet is able to know God *truly*. The distinction explains that there is harmony between what God knows and what man knows. God is high above man, and therefore man cannot know God comprehensively as He knows Himself. Yet, man knows God truly in ectypal theology. The mystery is that the infinite God is able to accommodate the truth about Himself so that finite man will know the truth about Him. Man can never know that truth apart from revelation. But from revelation man knows God as He knows Himself ectypally (with this difference, of course: that God knows Himself as God, and man knows God as a mere creature).

Without trying to determine whether the Reformed faith teaches that there is an intersect between the mind of God and the mind of man, at the very least it is clear that the Reformed faith teaches that the believing man who knows God ectypally through revelation knows God as He knows Himself. God knows Himself as a God who only ever loves the elect and hates the reprobate. Believers know God as a God who only ever loves the elect and hates the reprobate, not because they have peered behind revelation and seen God's archetypal or ectypal knowledge directly, but because God has revealed this truth to us through Scripture.

Reformed orthodoxy confesses that God reveals Himself in an accommodated and rational manner. Ironically, Dr. Clark demonstrates the well-meant gospel offer's rationalistic notion that the Bible is an

49 Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 117-118.

irrational book. The well-meant offer is not based on the Bible, for the Bible does not teach that God loves all men. Perhaps this means that those who affirm the well-meant offer have, to use Clark's language, sought to gain knowledge through an illegitimate intersection of the human mind with the mind of God. Whether that is true or not, the theory of the well-meant offer does not come from Scripture but was invented by the rationalistic minds of men.

Conclusion

Introducing the arch/ectypal into the well-meant offer debate really does not resolve the debate at all. Dr. Clark's essay seems more like an attempt to steer clear of the debate or transcend the debate by simply ruling the arguments of Protestant Reformed theologians out of order, than to deal forthrightly with the Protestant Reformed objections to the teaching of the well-meant gospel offer. Since he has failed to prove that the Protestant Reformed approach to Scripture is unbiblical and un-Reformed, the Protestant Reformed arguments against the well-meant gospel offer stand. If Dr. Clark wants to move the debate forward, he will have to attempt to refute the theological arguments of Herman Hoeksema, Gordon Clark, and their theological descendants.

The theology of Herman Hoeksema and his spiritual descendants has once again withstood the charge that it is in error. Protestant Reformed theology is in agreement with the Reformed orthodox conception of the archetypal and ectypal distinction. The charge of rationalism or a failure to view Scripture as accommodated language is invalid. And, far from agreeing with Arminianism, Protestant Reformed theology sharply condemns all of the doctrinal errors of Arminianism—especially conditional election, and universal but resistible grace.

The well-meant gospel offer is un-Reformed. Dr. Clark's attempt to prove its Reformed pedigree has failed. If his presentation of the well-meant gospel offer is representative of the views of other Reformed and Presbyterian proponents of the doctrine, it is clear that they do not understand the Reformed orthodox conception of the arch/ectypal distinction. The well-meant offer is not a correlative of Re-

formed theology. It is entangled instead with Arminian theology—a theology that invariably denies the sovereignty of God's grace. The well-meant offer, as Clark presents it, still has two faces. ●

The Apology
of
The Ecclesiastical Secession in the Netherlands
or

A Letter to Mr. G. Groen Van Prinsterer regarding His Opinions Concerning the Secession and the Secessionists

by
S. Van Velzen
Pastor and Teacher with the
Christian Secession Churches

Amsterdam,
Hoogkamer & Comp.
1848

Introduction to Simon VanVelzen's *Apology of the Afscheiding Churches*

Marvin Kamps

The following document was part of the discussion surrounding the reformation of the church in the Netherlands nearly 200 years ago. The date 1834 is so significant for Dutch Reformred believers, for it calls to mind the work of reformation by *our* fathers, and in particular the work of Rev. Hendrik De Cock, the founding father of the Christian Secession Church (*De Christelijke Afgescheidene Kerk*).

The date of VanVelzen's *Apology* (1848) is extremely important, for it gives a reference point for the consideration of the historical circumstances in which he wrote his defense of the Secession.[1] The Secession had occurred fourteen years earlier, in 1834. Rev. Hendrik De Cock had been already in late 1833 and the spring of 1834 suspended and deposed from office by the state Reformed Church. He and his consistory formally left the state, or established Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church by adopting, with their congregation's approval, the document *Act of Secession and Return* on October 14, 1834. There were forty-nine signatures approving of this *Act,* and eight members who refused to sign. It was a pitifully small beginning. I am reminded of sacred Scripture: despise not the day of small things (Zech. 4:10; I Cor. 1:28). The large state Reformed Church numbered in the hundreds of thousands. It was the only Reformed church that had gov-

1 "Secession" is a translation of the Dutch word that was used to describe the church reformation of 1834; that word is *Afscheiding.* The reader should be mindful that in the USA, Canada, South Africa, and elsewhere are to be found the spiritual children of the reformation of 1834. Whether Christian Reformed, Protestant Reformed, United Reformed, or Free Reformed, as children of the Secession of 1834 we all are children of the same spiritual father and have our spiritual roots in the little church of Ulrum, in the province of Groningen in the Netherlands.

ernmental recognition, legal right of existence, and financial support. One minister, one small consistory, one small flock that was located in a rural area far from the centers of power and influence made this break with the official state Reformed Church because they saw their calling before God to hold to the truth of Scripture as interpreted and confessed by their fathers at Dordrecht in 1618-'19. Our fathers felt called upon, without regard to the cost, to make this Secession from the false church, as had their fathers in the sixteenth century.

But the Lord soon added others to their number. Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte (born September 25, 1805), with his small flock in the south of the country, cast his lot with De Cock and his congregation.[2] Four other ministers, Anthony Brummelkamp, Simon VanVelzen, Georg Gezelle-Meerburg, and Albertus C. VanRaalte, who were all young, inexperienced men in their twenties, and their small churches joined in 1835. Soon the Secession numbered in the thousands, and they were not to be discouraged or dissuaded from their profound commitment to the truth. They had received from God the "love" of the truth and not merely the knowledge of the truth (II Thess. 2:10). The more they were persecuted by government officials and by state church authorities, the more they prospered and grew.

After five long, difficult, and demanding years for the saints, persecution ceased when King William II came to power in 1840. The right of public assembly was finally granted to the Secessionist churches. Yet that date also marks a time of internal struggle and dissension. This should not surprise us. God's people take their sinful natures with them into the new church federation in the time of church reformation. Besides, the devil works all the harder to destroy the work of Christ among the brethren. In addition, a new understanding of ecclesiastical unity, both institutional and spiritual, had to be formed. This takes hard work and time, and often, if not always, it occasions disagreements and dissension. Misunderstandings have to be removed and spiritual weaknesses overcome. Consider the reformation of 1924 and the establishment of the Protestant Reformed Churches. There was soon division among the ministers, and discipline had to

2 *De Afscheiding van 1834*, Dr. G. Keizer (Kampen, J. Kok, 1934), pp. 511ff.

be exercised in that new denomination. One of the founding fathers and his congregation split away.

This dreadful reality was the life of the Secession churches after 1840 as well. It is not necessary to describe this fact in great detail; but it is necessary to note the historical circumstances in order to have some idea of how seemingly vulnerable they were to the charges brought by Mr. Groen VanPrinsterer, whom Rev. Simon VanVelzen, 1809-1896, answered in this document of *Apology*. Some Secession congregations, under the leadership of elder Hoksbergen of Kampen and elder Schouwenberg of Zwolle, left the Secession already in 1838 to form the *Reformed Believers under the Cross.*[3] Rev. Scholte had been suspended from office in 1840, but he and his congregation would not honor the official work of the church. Scholte had an ingrained streak of independency in his conception of ecclesiastical life. He attempted, on his own terms, to be reunited with the Secession churches, but this was never granted. Rev. Brummelkamp, 1811-1888, supported Scholte for a long time. He and others walked out of the Synod of 1843. In this Synod of some forty-three delegates, twenty-two left without being seated. Rev. Brummelkamp and his congregations and other supporters were not reconciled to the Secession churches until 1851. In addition, many thousands of the Secession people left for America with Rev. Scholte and Rev. VanRaalte in 1846 and 1847.[4] The breach between the Secession churches and the *Reformed Believers Under the Cross* was healed when a majority of the latter returned to the Secession churches in 1869.

3 The Dutch name of this group from 1838 till June 1844 was: *Gereformeerden onder het Kruis*. This name is unique in that the words *Kerken* or *Gemeenten* are not expressed. The term *Gereformeerden* is plural and can imply either churches or believers—probably the latter, in light of the government's refusal to allow any group to use the name "Reformed Church" other than the state Reformed Church. These believers identified their Synod of 1844 (after the period of persecution) as the *Algemeene Synode der Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland* (*De Afscheiding,* Rullman, Amsterdam, W. Kirchner, 1916, p. 308).

4 *Een Schat In Aarden Vaten, Hendrik De Cock*, by J. A. Wormser, Nijverdal, 1915, p.7.

Thus the date 1848 calls to mind the dreadful disharmony and dissension that disturbed the Secession churches at that time. It was not all peace and calm in the state church either; but they were so large and powerful in society that their very size, and their connection to and apparent continuation of the sixteenth-century Reformed church, even if they were now thoroughly apostate, would give them validity in the judgment of men. But that was not the case for the Secession churches. Poor, weak, few in number, and without reputation for learning and accomplishments, they were despised and regarded as radicals and extremists. Besides, in 1848 they were torn asunder into various groups. In this light the reader can understand why they were vulnerable to attack and misrepresentation. Yet God always prepares one to defend the cause of the true church and its commitment to the infallible Word of God.

That man was Rev. Simon VanVelzen. It should be noted that Rev. De Cock, born in 1801, had been called from the victorious and militant church to the church in glory in 1842 and thus was removed from the field of strife. VanVelzen was the theologian of the Secession churches, often unappreciated, but doctrinally sound, faithful, and loyal to his and our Lord. From 1835 to 1892, when the Secession merged with the Doleantie churches of Dr. A. Kuyper, VanVelzen labored tirelessly and prayerfully for the cause of Christ in the Secession churches. He served as professor in the seminary in Kampen from 1854 till his retirement in 1891.[5] As is evident from the many responsible positions of leadership that he was asked to assume, the Secession churches highly valued his leadership. In my judgment, if it were not for VanVelzen, humanly speaking, the Secession churches would have spun out of control and fragmented into so many pieces. Opponents within the church and from without, however, knew that they would face able, clear, biblically sound, and stern contradiction from VanVelzen. His only appeal was to sacred Scripture and the confessions of the Reformed church, which are based on these infallible Scriptures.

In the material of the *Apology* by VanVelzen in 1848, we have a careful and spiritually-sensitive defense of the *Act of Secession* by

5 *Sola Gratia*, *1854 to 1954,* J. H. Kok (N.V. Kampen, 1954), p. 328.

our fathers. The man whose allegations and charges he refutes was none other than the leader of the great *Reveil* movement, so highly regarded in his day and subsequently in the Reformed churches, Mr. Groen VanPrinsterer, 1801-1876. He was a very well trained, gifted, and dedicated political figure.[6] When King William I persecuted the Secessionists, VanPrinsterer publicly lifted his voice against the government's policies. He was thoroughly opposed to the rationalistic teachings of the day that exalted man and reason above God's Word. He was committed to the creeds. Much good may be said of Mr. Groen VanPrinsterer. He bemoaned, lamented, and expressed his heartfelt disapproval of heretical teachings in the state Reformed Church. Yet he never joined the Secession! He did not join even when in the state Reformed Church a certain Dr. Zaalman, in the 1850s, openly denied the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, inherited-guilt of the sinner, as well as the vicarious, atoning, and reconciling nature of the death of Christ. All this, Zaalman and others denied publicly in the pulpit and in their writings without being disciplined by the state Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church.[7] Groen VanPrinsterer is a historical example of those who ever complain, weep, protest against biblical unfaithfulness, and pray, but who will not leave the apostate church to join the poor and despised who defend the truth of God's Word. The cost is too great! Let us be reminded of the faith of Moses, who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, Hebrews 11:25.

Groen VanPrinsterer, in his document against the Secession, charged the Secession fathers with sin for having left the state Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church. Sin, of course, does not receive God's blessing. Thus, the dissension and division in the Secession churches would be evidence of this sin and judgment of God. Apparently incontrovertible argumentation, one would conclude.

We have one problem today in presenting VanVelzen's *Apology of the Ecclesiastical Secession in the Netherlands* for your information

6 Cf. *Secession*, *Doleantie*, *and Union*, Hendrik Bouma, translated by T. Plantinga, Inheritance Publications (Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada), p. 261.

7 *De Strijd Voor Kerk Herstel*, by J. C. Rullmann (Amsterdam, W. Kirchner, 1915), pp. 102-104.

and edification. Today's reader must be mindful that the historical, civil circumstances of the church were not the same as ours today. The institutional Reformed church today stands in an entirely different relationship to the civil laws than it did in 1834. We enjoy much more freedom from intrusion by the state into the affairs of the church than did our fathers in the Netherlands. The Reformed Church in the Netherlands had ever been a state or established church. Thus the government financially supported this church, paid the salaries of preachers and professors, and provided for the poor through this church. The state Reformed Church was a tax-supported institution. Those monies bought control eventually. After 1816 the state took on an even bigger role: it assumed the right directly to control the doctrines of the state Reformed Church and to be the arbiter in doctrinal controversy. It had established a department of religion, with its chief officer responsible to King William I. Under this minister of religion were synodical, provincial, and classical boards, all virtually independent from the local congregations and appointed by, and responsible, to the king. The state Reformed Church had become thoroughly Erastian in church government.

In order to understand this document it will be necessary to have clearly before our minds several particular facts of the historical situation:

1. No other Reformed church could be established in society without state approval as far as the government was concerned. Only one Reformed Church was condoned for those who did not wish to be Roman Catholic or Lutheran, but Reformed. Thus severe persecution was the lot of anyone who publicly worshiped with others as a Reformed church.

2. The Secession churches repeatedly requested permission for public worship on the basis of God's Word and the confessions of the Reformed Church. This was eventually granted; but they could not use the name "Reformed," for the state would recognize only one Reformed Church. [8] They were permitted to call themselves Christian and Secession churches, but not a Reformed church, whether using the terms *Gereformeerd* or *Hervormd*.

8 *De Afscheiding*, by J. C. Rullman (Amsterdam, W. Kirchner, 1916), pp. 217-218, 305ff.

3. One of the points that VanVelzen makes in the following document is that the Secession churches never asked the king for the right to be the church of Christ in the world. They asked only to have the right of public worship free of persecution and disturbance. They recognized their right of existence as given by God through Christ Jesus, even if the exercise of this right meant persecution by the king and by the state Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church.

The Reformed principles set forth by VanVelzen in his answer to Groen VanPrinsterer are the all-important realities for us today in 2012. You will recognize this document as a template for a discussion of the ecclesiastical circumstances in the Reformed churches today. Now, too, the creeds, and especially the Canons of Dordrecht are despised and have been all but ignored. The answers of VanVelzen to VanPrinsterer serve as a template for our answers to the criticisms and fears of believers in the nominally Reformed churches of our day. VanVelzen's repeated arguments are that of corporate responsibility, the need to separate to the glory of God's name and truth, and the care and salvation of one's children. The latter, of course, is the concern and responsibility of covenant fathers. Woe to him that sacrifices his children on the altar of the approval of unfaithful men.

VanVelzen's work, although nearly 200 years old, is still relevant for anyone who loves the truth of Scripture as expressed in our Reformed creeds. The subject discussed is: When is it right and proper to leave the Reformed church and proceed to reinstitute the Reformed church? Is it possible to be Reformed and at the same time reject the creeds as binding documents within the church? When may and should the creeds be rejected or rewritten? Did the Reformed church of the past properly subordinate the creeds to sacred Scripture? These are pertinent questions. VanVelzen gives clear and compelling answers to these questions. These are the questions that many in the Reformed family of churches are struggling with in the year 2012. VanVelzen gives solid, biblical leadership!

As a point of clarification in regard to the following document, we note that VanVelzen makes a distinction between three Reformed churches: the *Hervormde* Church (the official state Reformed Church);

the Christian Secession (*Gereformeerde*) Church, which had left the *Hervormde* Church; and to the "Reformed church" of all ages, which is known wherever, and under whatever name, by its commitment to the Reformed creeds. The problem is that the word *Hervormde* means Reformed, as does the word *Gereformeerde.* By the use of these two terms, the churches were distinguished after 1834. But I have to translate them by one word: "Reformed." Consequently, I have identified the *Hervormde* as the official state Reformed Church, and the new church of the "Secession" of 1834 as the Secession Reformed Church. The "Reformed church" that always exists, under different names, I left as the Reformed church, which is identified by its official creeds.

With this introductory material, which I hope has been helpful, we present our translation of Rev. Simon VanVelzen's *Apology of the Ecclesiastical Secession* of 1834. ●

The Apology of the Ecclesiastical Secession in the Netherlands

Simon VanVelzen

To Mr. G. Groen VanPrinsterer
Noble, Principled, and Beloved lord!

Not long ago I read in the magazine, *The Association*, a contribution that you had written under the title *The Creeds and the Duty of Reformed Convictions*. I formed the resolve to challenge some of the assertions made in it against the Secession. A multitude of responsibilities, and a reluctance to write against anyone whom I in many ways highly regard, and the thought that those interested in the issues, by investigation of our confession in the creeds, which by you are received as the basis of the Reformed church, could readily discover the groundlessness of your disapproval of the Secession… all this robbed me of the determination to proceed and brought me to abandon the idea of a rebuttal.

However, now the objectionable positions you had taken appear in a new form as part of a book entitled *The Duty of Reformed Convictions*. What you had written earlier is produced here again. Now as well I do not have the time and opportunity to write extensively in defense of the ecclesiastical Secession, which for some time has existed in our country. Perhaps there is little necessity for this, since so much has already been written about this issue. Yet I felt myself obliged to make a few criticisms in regard to some of the claims that are made in the above mentioned work and which I believe casts aspersions on the cause of the Lord and on many faithful saints.

You said on page 127:

> If the creeds have been revoked, then the Secessionists are correct. If commitment to the Bible and the use of the name Christian, prove the lawfulness of membership in the church; if under the guise of biblical slogans unbelief's every doctrine works more and more

> division in the unified confession of the Reformed church—then we have tarried too long in this Reformed Church,[1] where unbelief possesses a vested right.
>
> Conversely, if the creedal documents still retain their legal authority, then the condemnation of the withdrawal by the Secessionists is not unjust, and it was commendable not to participate in the Secession. Forsaking a church is sin, when it is not a matter of duty.

I gladly subscribe to both of these propositions. However, out of fear of misunderstanding I would add an explanation to my endorsement.

The essentials of the confessions of the Reformed church are not subject to any change. They can be expanded, increased, or more clearly expressed, but they cannot be annulled either as to the whole or in part. The confession of the church is the revelation of and the ground of its existence. If this confession is clouded over, the church thus hides itself away. If the confession is no longer made, then the church becomes invisible. If its central witness can be partially altered, then the church would stagger and stumble. If it can be entirely removed, then the church would cease to exist. The society of men that would manifest itself in the exercises of a religious service would be a religious fellowship, but it would be wholly different from the Reformed church.

It is indisputable that the confessions of the Reformed church possess a lawful authority for its members. Whoever rejects its confessions and still would claim the name and its privileges is guilty of hypocrisy and unfaithfulness. He is unworthy of being considered an honorable man. Whatever may happen, the lawful authority of creedal documents cannot be nullified in the Reformed church. The light of the chandelier can be removed from our fatherland; the church—God guards it—can be located elsewhere; whoever does not want to enter

1 G. VanPrinsterer has reference to the state, or established Reformed Church known as the *Hervormde Kerk.* It was this state Reformed Church that had become, in the judgment of the Secessionists, a false church. It had become unfaithful to the Bible and to the confessions of the church, which expressed the truth under the leading of the Spirit of Christ and on the basis of Scripture.

into a new church fellowship, but would continue to be a member of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, must submit himself to the authority of the confessions. Are not the creeds of the Reformed church actually abolished in the official state Reformed Church? Is not unbelief's every false doctrine tolerated and honored in its midst under the guise of biblical slogans, yes, even with disdain for the slogan? Does not the official state Reformed Church mock and reject the legal authority of the creedal documents? I exclude from this assertion, of course, the many pastors and members who remain members and who sigh and sorrow over such abominations, but I am speaking of the dominating spirit of the ruling authorities, of the official government of the church, to which all, yes, also the very best, subject themselves. Those official directors have revealed by word and deed their rejection of and disdain for the confessions and at the same time their protection of unbelief; and whenever they sometimes used words that appeared to convey a better attitude, everyone discerned that they actually had spoken deceitfully.

Recently I read some statements by P. VanDenWilligen regarding H. H. Donker Curtius, both of whom had been officials in the state Reformed Church in the province of Gelderland. The latter also gave direction to the synod of said churches, having served often since 1816 as president of that body. The following statements can be found on page 19 of the volume of sermons by H. H. Donker Curtius, at Arnheim, 1840:

> Just as he freely expressed his own opinions, so too did he gladly permit the *examinandi* [the students examined, MK] freely to express themselves concerning their convictions and to maintain them. He would never have hassled any of them about a difference of opinion, even less would it ever have entered into his head to refuse admittance to any of them. He only required of them that they understand their work, according to their own perspective, and that they properly answer the questions placed before them. And if by means of the examination this appeared to be the case, then he had no objection to voting in favor of their admittance to the ministry. Frequently, (note well) he wanted to assure me of his desire that anyone who may be presented for examination before us who out of conviction strongly

> maintained, and showed himself to be thoroughly skilled in, the old theological *system* in which we ourselves had been taught in our youth at college, be accepted with praise into the number of candidates for the ministry. Such also was always the sentiment of all the members of the provincial church government of Gelderland during the twenty years that I served in this assembly.

From these lines it appears that, throughout those twenty years, no one was admitted to the office of the ministry who strongly maintained and was fundamentally experienced in the old theological *system*, in which in former times the aspiring ministerial students had been taught in the seminaries. "Not," says VanDenWilligen, "that such persons would have been turned away, but such persons never applied." The ruling body as a whole was indifferent to that confession. It is, however, well known that the old theological *system* was in complete agreement with the confessions of the Reformed church. Consequently, all the persons who by that ruling body were advanced to the office of the ministry held positions contrary to the confessions, as did the ruling body itself. The authority of the creeds has been abolished there for a long time already and, under the guise of biblical slogans, unbelief's false doctrines have been declared legal.

Similar proofs could be provided in many forms. You do not desire, surely, that I quote the over-confident explanations, shamelessly offered by pastors and professors, and by members of the major and minor ecclesiastical assemblies. It is superfluous. *Ubi rerum testimonia adsunt, quid opus est verbis?* ["Where the evidences are present, what need exists for words." MK]. The ruling body of the state Reformed Church revealed itself not only by its words but also by its deeds. Not only did the ruling body honor the deniers of the confession, but they also persecuted those who defended the creeds. Why did the ruling body of the official Reformed Church suspend and depose the shepherd and preacher H. De Cock, with others, among whom I am also numbered? They did this only because we confronted those who opposed the faith and because we came out candidly for the truth and the rights of the church.

We did not leave the state Reformed Church arbitrarily. We did not forsake our appointed posts. If I had not been hindered in laboring

faithfully, I would have gladly and thankfully remained in my relationship to the congregation of Drogeham, where I had been placed according to the evident tokens of the Lord's favor, and where I experienced unforgettable joys. The superior authority of the governing body of the church evicted me. Every one of the original pastors of the Secessionists who were deposed from their office by the official state Reformed Church ruling body had manifested themselves as defenders of the Reformed faith. It is not now our concern whether any of those pastors may have had an ulterior motive by that activity. All of them insisted upon the maintaining of the truth and the lawful authority of the symbols of the church, while they resisted those who opposed the authority of the creeds. They were suspended already for that reason. When later they omitted the hymns that were in use in the official state Reformed Church from their use in the public worship services in the existing congregations, because of the offense occasioned and because of the weaknesses that they found in them, the governing body of the official Reformed Church imagined that they should be entirely rid of those pastors. They were deposed, while the churches continued to be entrusted to public opponents of the faith of the Reformed church, to mockers of the creeds, and to those who denied the truth, whose rejection of the truth scorns God himself, and for which truth our fathers willingly abandoned their possessions and life itself. After the separation, this disposition has not changed. I am only reminded of what happened at Bodegraven and at Leyden, where the rights of Reformed people were publicly mocked and trampled underfoot. Unbelief, consequently, gained the upper hand in the official state Reformed Church, and no lawful authority is reckoned to the creeds any longer there.

It would not be accurate to say that the blame for this state of affairs belongs to the church's ruling body but not to the members of the church. Such a distinction has very little meaning, as long as the members remain subject to the governing body of the church. The governing body of the church represents those who are governed, namely, the members. I do not comprehend how this fact can be denied. What would it mean if one or more of the inhabitants of our country would declare that they did not acknowledge the civil

government as their ruling authority, while they remain dwelling in our country? I understand very well that not every member must be required to approve of everything that the governing body does. Besides, one can even protest against some of the things done by the governing body. However, how would a governing body have any power, if the members need not submit to it? Whoever, therefore, is of the conviction that the ruling body is absolutely corrupt would be required to separate from the institution. Note well, he will have actually seceded then. As long as he does not do that, his claim of not acknowledging the ruling body's decisions is a mere illusion, self deceit; the ruling body laughs at his failure to leave, while he notwithstanding continues to support the ruling body. In like manner, when it must be acknowledged that unbelief dominates the ruling body of the official state Reformed Church, and that the ruling body is absolutely poisonous for the Reformed church, then whoever knows this, and nonetheless does not leave, becomes guilty as well.

Some people still speak as if they are entirely free of what the ruling body does. I want to help them escape this self deception, and therefore I must speak about the orthodox pastors as well as of the members. Do not take it ill of me when I call attention to the pastors. I would gladly encourage everyone to esteem them very highly. I feel a heartfelt affinity to some of them, whom I know from their writings (whom I am almost inclined to mention by name) and for whom I give thanks to God that He uses them as His emissaries. When I nevertheless speak of them, it must not be understood to be disparagement of them or exaltation of myself. Often I have pitied the Secession Church that none of those pastors joined us. However, just as Peter likely did not account the criticism [of Paul] as evil (Gal. 2), I hope, accounting myself as the least of the brethren, that my words will be attributed to an interest in the salvation of the church.

As concerning the orthodox preachers, who of them has ever demonstrated by his deeds that he acknowledged the Secession Church's pastors as his brothers in the Lord's service, when these had been rejected and persecuted by the official Reformed Church's ruling body? It has happened that Remonstrant preachers and Reformed pastors have temporarily taken charge of one another's service, but fellowship has

never been demonstrated with a Secession pastor. Perhaps they think that this would be indiscreet. Perhaps they view the departure of their Secession brothers as a consequence that they brought upon themselves by their recklessness and imprudence. Well then, let me press the issue. In the congregations to which these pastors are bound, is ecclesiastical discipline maintained as God's Word prescribes? Are those persons barred from the seals of the covenant who reveal themselves by their walk or by confession as unbelievers, who deny the truths contained in our creeds, and who lead offensive lives? Do they do their work faithfully in their Preacher's Circle and gatherings at Classis? *There* their calling is to be fulfilled, and not merely at fellowship meetings and at gatherings in which they are appreciated and where they can complain loudly without fear of being contradicted. Do they urgently warn their congregations against "all false teachers, attacking wolves and hirelings, who seek their own honor and advantage, and not the honor of God's holy name alone, nor the well-being and salvation of the poor people"? These words are taken from the liturgy, "*Sabbath Prayer after the Sermon*." Do these pastors reveal something of the zeal of an Elijah, a Paul, yes, even of a John, in their battle against the enemies of the truth? Do they do as the Lord did in His chastising and exposing of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Do they display any of the fearlessness of a Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Guido deBrés? Or is it not now the time for this?

It is not sufficient that the gospel be preached from the pulpit. Nor can the fear of man be excused by abhorrence of Jehu's zeal. Behold the apostles! Behold the Reformers, and so many faithful witnesses. They set themselves against the deceivers of the people. They forthrightly opposed the enemies of the truth to their faces. If the orthodox preachers do that as well, if they fearlessly, in the strength of the Lord, charge and oppose the deceivers, then the righteous would rejoice! They would rejoice in the hope of the reward of faithful servants, even in the midst of the world's slander. Then, too, everyone will acknowledge that such pastors have no fellowship with the ruling authorities of the official state Reformed Church.

As regards the members, all receive their shepherds and preachers, whom they must acknowledge to be those sent of Christ, through

the means of the ruling body. They entrust to the ruling authorities the approval of and the appointment to office of those persons who have been sent by Christ. The pastors can be suspended and deposed by this ruling body, as soon as they are more obedient to God than to men. Thus the ruling authorities care for the most significant interests of the church and of each one who belongs to it.[2] Each person who does not withdraw his membership grants to the ruling body that care of himself.

It is of no force against this fact, if anyone thinks that he is able to discern whether the pastor preaches the pure truth. What guarantee is there that the pastor will not introduce his errors in a covert manner? What kind of religious service is that anyway, where men first and foremost have the purpose to test their pastor? While one member praises him, the other condemns him. And all this is occasioned by the preaching regarding the manner in which one is saved or goes eternally lost. How greatly is distrust fueled by this testing!

What of the children and the inexperienced? When their pastor was installed into office they heard the solemn exhortation:

> And you likewise, beloved Christians, receive this your minister in the Lord with all gladness, "and hold such in reputation." Remember that God himself through him speaketh unto and beseecheth you. Receive the Word, which he according to the Scripture, shall preach unto you, "not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God." Let the feet of those, that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things, be beautiful and pleasant unto you. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you. If you do these things, it shall come to pass, that the peace of God shall enter into your houses, and that you who receive this man in the

2 VanVelzen is not here calling into question the legitimacy of these "ruling authorities" who labored on behalf of the king's department of religion, but he is pointing out that they had the care of the church in their hands for good or for ill, and well-meaning people could not absolve themselves of responsibility for that care when they continued to grant, by their membership in the church, such authority over themselves and their children.

> name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward, and through his preaching, believing in Christ, shall through Christ inherit life eternal (see the *Form for Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word*).

Would the inexperienced, nevertheless, on the basis of the testimony of their parents or others whom they respect but who remain in the same official state Reformed Church fellowship, be able to trust the instruction of their pastors? What confusion is caused by all this? How thoroughly accustomed they become to view the solemn bonds in their church as a vain, hypocritical show! We can be sure that some will rise up and express wrong ideas; but the Lord has provided a government in the church to guard against that possibility. When, however, the ruling body itself encourages others in the way of error, and the members of the church do not actually reject that body of rulers, these members then have themselves to blame for the lack of faithful pastors, while at the same time they give their children over to the danger of false doctrine.

I think I have convincingly demonstrated that the ruling body of the official state Reformed Church does not exist independently, but that the members and the pastors regarded as a fellowship for the service of God are represented by that ruling body and have communal relations in the arrangement that by it has been given to the church. And since that ruling body has manifested its spiritual character by its rejection of the lawful authority of the creeds and by the introduction of many errors, therefore I come to this conclusion, by using your own words, for all sincere saints: "for too long you have tarried in a church fellowship where unbelief possesses a vested right."

Now I turn to your evaluation of the Secessionists. You charge them with inconsistency. What were the reasons that they gave for their secession from the official Reformed Church, and what was the goal for which they aimed, according to their own explanation?

First, this has been publicly made know in the *Act of Secession and Return* by the consistory and members of the Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) Church at Ulrum, dated October 13, 1834, and in its companion document: *Address and Invitation to believers and truly Reformed saints in the Netherlands*. It all comes down to this: [first]

that the Netherlands Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church is not the true, but the false church, according to God's Word and Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith; [second] that the secession from it, in agreement with the office of all believers as Article 28 of the same Confession declares, would stand until they who have shown that they are not of the church would turn back again to the true worship of the Lord; thus the Secession was not a separation from the true Reformed, but, on the contrary, the uniting of all those [Reformed] persons was desired; [third] that the Secessionists in all matters held to God's Holy Word and to our ancient Forms of Unity as in all respects founded upon that Word; [fourth] that they instituted their public worship services according to the ancient ecclesiastical liturgy; and [fifth] that in regard to church government they have committed themselves to the Church Order established by the Synod of Dordt 1618-1619, for the present circumstances.

By this testimony, all the ensuing Secessionists, both pastors and members, have approved the essential points of doctrine. First it was individually done by each pastor without any preceding mutual consultation—I speak from personal experience. Afterwards it was done by the officebearers at an assembly that represented all the Secessionists and that was held on March 2, 1836 in Amsterdam. By means of their signature, without any reservations, they expressed their commitment to the Forms of Unity of the Reformed Church (cf. pp. 3, 5, and 34 of the *Acts* of that assembly). At the same time it was decided to follow the Church Order of Dordt as regulating our treatment of ecclesiastical matters, as much as it could be followed in light of the lack of pastors and preachers in the church and as much as circumstances of the church would permit in times of persecution (pp. 11 and 12 of the above document).

How did we answer to this commitment? According to your presentation (pp. 130-132) the Secessionists are torn into two groups, both of whom have deviated from the voluntary and correctly chosen standard. I will not expand on those whom you charge in the first place because of their minimizing of the creeds and of the church's doctrine by their lawlessness and infatuation with their own ideas under the guise of an appeal to Holy Scripture. While those who have

deviated ought to be charged, my only comment is: the unfaithfulness of some should not be made to discredit the church, if the church applied discipline and did all they could to prevent this evil. However, according to your presentation of the circumstances of the Secession Churches, all are to be blamed. In addition to the already referred to party, you had sketched, in the second place, just *one* more and no other party. People can come to no other conclusion than that the Secession Church in our country exists as two parties. While the first has been rightfully disapproved, it would depend on the testimony that must be given truthfully concerning the others whether in fact the Secessionists have remained faithful to their commitment, and if they can be considered as the church of the Lord and as the true Reformed church in our land.

What then is your testimony? You say:

> Others have sharply disapproved of this; yet let us see what the majority of these zealous champions of creedal orthodoxy have done. They did what our fathers, to whom they looked, had never done; they did what our fathers have warned against and admonished us for as something dangerous and censurable. As if it concerned the words and laws of God, they obsessed about one word, a letter, a jot; they have scarcely acknowledged the Scriptural character of truths, whenever they were not encased in the mantle of the creeds. Still more, because the doctrine of predestination had been granted a prominent place in our creedal statements as a consequence of the ups and downs of the historical circumstances of our Church, these people have been almost annoyed at every defense of the gospel wherein the doctrine that for two centuries was the order of the day did not again receive prominence, or when one had not observed and followed every form and line of the Counter-Remonstrant strategy. Yes, even to the extent, if I have been well informed, that people have, out of preference for this concept, carefully supplied educational booklets wherein these mysteries of sacred Scripture are displayed in a kaleidoscope of a number of little lessons, wherein they are dished out to pitiable children, as perhaps the unadulterated milk of which the apostle speaks!

I will not describe the feelings those words produced within me. I only request you to prove what is said there. And if you are not

able to do it, then I request you to qualify the accusations that you have made against pastors and officebearers and their congregations. No excuses! It is not sufficient that someone, or a few, be identified who possibly have anxiously expressed themselves, sometimes from fear, on account of evident lawlessness of some individuals. If your charges are to be valid in a measure, then it must be proved that the fellowship of the Secessionists reveals a policy similar to what you have described. Your words are not to be applied to some who, besides the first party whom you have condemned, have fallen into an opposite extreme, and who have also turned away from the large majority of the fellowship of Secession congregations.

Evidently you are targeting that unified majority. You seek evidently to present the governing principle of those who adhere to the creeds and to the Church Order of Dordt. Well, I now acknowledge that, because they recognized how that earlier, by one change in the Church Order of Dordtrecht, confusion had prevailed, they have as much as possible committed themselves to it; but I deny that they obsessed about a word, a letter, a jot, as if it had to do with the words and laws of God. I acknowledge that they, without any reservation, fully hold to the creeds as expressing their faith; but I deny that they would have scarcely acknowledged the biblical character of truths when they were not encased in the mantle of the creeds. I acknowledge that they confess God's sovereign election as the fountain of every gift of grace, as the only cause that distinguishes them, as the ground of all comfort in the midst of weaknesses, as the motivation unto piety and the encouragement in the face of death; but I deny that men have well-nigh annoyed themselves at every defense of the gospel where this doctrine is not given its due, or where every form and line of the Contra-Remonstrants' strategy was not observed and followed.

Some individuals among the Secessionists have revealed their repugnance for the mentioning of election, as this doctrine is presented in the creeds. However, this does not necessarily imply that the others had made themselves guilty of overemphasizing the doctrine. I appeal to their writings and to the preaching that took place among them. Let him who is in agreement with the Reformed faith judge.

However, there appears yet one particular matter in your allega-

tions against the Secession people. Some have informed you that in our fellowship care is taken to supply school books in which this mystery of sacred Scripture is displayed in a kaleidoscope of lessons that are dished out to the innocent children. It is not clear to me how I should understand this statement, when I take this remark in connection with your opinions concerning the creeds. You certainly would not desire that election be silenced as regards the instruction of the children. Were this true, not to speak now of question and answer booklets, as that of Hellenbroek, it would be required to object to the writing of the Catechism itself, and the necessity of keeping it out of the schools would also be required. In Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, after all, election is mentioned. What am I saying? Not merely the Catechism, but the Bible itself, would have to be numbered among the forbidden books at the school.

Sometimes one hears the claim made that at school there should be taught religious, biblical, and evangelical instruction, but doctrinal instruction is not to be given. However, it is doctrinal instruction that God is one and triune. It is doctrinal instruction that Jesus Christ is the true God. It is doctrinal instruction that God has chosen some in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, so that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Should these and other doctrines, which are denied by many, be silenced at school and kept from the children? If so, then the instructor should jump over I John 5, and John 5, Luke 4, Romans 9, Ephesians 1, and so many other passages, when he lets the children read the Bible in the classroom. Or should there perhaps be read at school only excerpts from the Bible, in which deliberately such truths are omitted? But then let people stop shouting, "The whole Bible and nothing but the Bible"; and let them confess that they actually prefer their own ideas about the Bible to the Bible itself.

What? People want the Bible to be read, and to be read even with discernment, but do not want the doctrinal instruction of the Reformed? What kind of conception do people that say such things have of our godly fathers? Did our fathers inject their doctrines into the Bible, or did they discover the truth in the Bible that was taught and clearly set forth therein? Is not the Bible the only fountain out of

which they drew their confession of the faith? Whoever, then, wants to keep silent about such truths, and would still communicate the entire Bible to the children, reads the Bible with entirely different eyes than did our fathers. The eternal truths may not be placed under the rubric of dry dogma. The doctrine of God's sovereign election may not be treated, either, as an antiquity of the Reformed church of the seventeenth century. "They take up a prominent place in our creeds as a consequence of the ups and downs of the particular historical happenings of our church" [VanPrinsterer's argumentation]. Certainly! Just as the doctrine of the holy Trinity in the fourth century, and the doctrine of man's depravity and of the necessity of grace in the fifth century, were ordained, developed, contended for, and confessed as the consequence of the ups and downs of the particular historical happenings in the church.

Should we today consider these truths of lesser significance? Not at all! As soon as they are attacked, they must be defended anew. "Contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." The more strongly others turn against revealed truths that concern salvation, the more strongly we should confess them. Faith does not retreat, but it conquers the world!

If we imagine, with regard to the doctrine of predestination, which is so very bitterly hated by many, that it is not necessary for the church to confess it but that it must be silenced, then let us be honest and declare that our fathers have sinned in having made so much of it that they, the defenders of this doctrine, not the Remonstrants, troubled the church, persecuted the innocent, and have fed man's doctrine, not only to little children, but to the whole pitiable church. But then we should understand differently the words of the Lord and the words of the prophets and apostles wherein we find this truth. We should have ripped up the writings of a Witsius, à Brakel, Lodenstein, Smijtgelt, and so many others, or we should be warned regarding them.

I may expect from someone who builds his case on the lawful authority of the creeds that he will not abandon the doctrine of election, nor that he sincerely would want the children to be denied instruction in this doctrine. I prefer, therefore, to understand your statements in another sense. As I understand it now, you disapproved of men speak-

ing to children concerning election in a barren, dry manner, beyond the capacity of the children. You do not oppose that instruction when it is for their humility, or to inspire godliness in them, but only when it is done to promote speculative wisdom and pride. Note well, if you meant that, then I am in full agreement with you with all my heart.

What then is the reference to the school booklets? The issue is charged against us as something common among the Secessionists—that I know very well. Well then, whereas only the Christian Secession Church in this city and the one at 's Hertogenbosch have their own school, there have been some school booklets published, as far as I know, only here and in Groningen. Among these booklets I know of *one* that, I think, is the intended book. That book was prepared by someone who earlier had been appointed an instructor, when our school was established, but who afterward left us. When he had prepared that booklet and had already published it, subsequently he requested ecclesiastical approval for it and that it be authorized for use in our school. The consistory appointed a commission to investigate the matter.

> This commission's report is [I am quoting an article out of the minutes of the Consistory dated June 30, 1842] that in this booklet there are found many errors through which some points, relative to doctrine, are presented badly. The Commission read its criticisms, and gave, finally, its opinion: that the use of this booklet would not be appropriate, while the question book of Hellenbroek entitled *The Pattern of Divine Truth*, which was comprehensive and tried and tested, answered much better to the need to bring the children to the knowledge of divine truth. The consistory nearly unanimously agreed with this judgment of the commission, wherefore this booklet was disapproved.

As far as I know, no consistory has introduced this little book. Had it, nonetheless, been retailed through the speculative interest of a bookseller and in opposition to this disapproval, this may not be blamed on the Secession Church. Nonetheless, the use of that little book has been charged against the majority of the Secessionists. Is this noble?

I see, however, that you have said that your presentation of the school booklet was the consequence of obtained information. I may assume on that basis that you never would have brought such a complaint on your own. This relieves the pain that I feel about it. Others must have told you that particular detail for the purpose of burdening the church; and this should not be a surprise to me, for I have heard many times of the slanted presentations by which people try to expose to scorn those who sedulously maintain the Reformed Confession of Faith and the institution of the church. Many hateful things have been spread, not only by non-Secessionists, but also by some who have left the Secession Church. Sad evidences thereof have been given in the periodical *The Reformation*, *1840;* in the *Comments on the Report of the Synod of the Secession Reformed Church* of that same year; and in some other documents. The distortion of issues, as presented therein, was so great that a refutation was not thought necessary. Anyone who has been blessed with a measure of discernment and who exercises discretion can very easily uncover the slander in it. While we, however, have very often encountered such treatment, I never thought that the pen of Mr. Groen VanPrinsterer would be given to such use as to tell, without sufficient grounds, about acts and events that malign the church. When the Secessionists are condemned on the basis of the testimony of others, I may surely require that these condemnations not be written for posterity, as long as these testimonies have not been investigated and are abusive in nature. I may surely require that one also take into consideration the truthfulness of the sources; and in the event that they for one reason or another have turned against the church, or are not one with the church, perhaps even had been the objects of church discipline, then such damaging testimony must be the more suspect. One's testimony can absolutely never provide grounds for condemnation, when the truth of that testimony remains yet to be established.

The evidence that you presented to charge the Secessionists with overemphasizing the power and value of the creeds and of contradiction in this regard has been sufficiently refuted, I believe. Whoever wants properly to evaluate the issues, let him carefully investigate the historical circumstances of the Secessionists and let him read the docu-

ments that were published at the beginning of the separation. One's suspicion of overemphasis or contradiction will then diminish.

I have come to your last charge. While I express my thanks for the indulgent tone, I will concentrate my attention on the issue itself. You wrote: "The Secessionists have for years esteemed the freedom of the worship service, not as a favor, but as a *right*. They have refused to ask for authorization." You approve of this. However, you disapprove the fact that the Secessionists later have asked for authorization.

I cannot disguise the fact that I do not regard this charge as having much weight, although some have even abandoned the grounds on which they had received freedom of public worship, by which they have also deviated from the position of those that constitute the majority of those united. When we remind ourselves what happened in relation to the freedom of worship, this cannot be interpreted, according to my present conviction, as evil on the part of the Secessionists.

We have for years, yes always, viewed the freedom of our public worship not as a favor, but as a *right,* and have done so on good grounds, even as you have capably demonstrated. However, you present the matter as if we had forsaken that right, as if we had made the existence or the public worship of our churches dependent on the good graces of the government. What! We? We abdicated that right? I do not think that anyone of us who has asked for that freedom of public worship had intended anything like that. Did we not hold worship services that the government acknowledged, if we were not by violence prevented from holding such services? Were we not, because of the preaching that took place shortly *before* this recognition was granted, afterward still summoned before the courts? While I and the church had been recognized in one place, in other places I was persecuted. And then at that time I still had to be led out of the city by the military at Bunschoten because I had administered baptism, whereby the enemy's vigilance was circumvented.

However, you claim that we have requested authorization. Wherein did this request consist? We presented to King William I, under whose rule we had been severely persecuted for a long time—notwithstanding the many complaints and requests we had made, and notwithstanding the declarations of acquittal by the courts of Amster-

dam and Heerenveen—the following declaration: "We maintain the Forms of Unity of the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands respective of all its aspects and parts for the external, ecclesiastical bands of unity, and as expressions of our common faith; by which others can ascertain also our religious disposition; whereas by the rejection of the creeds our unity ceases to exist." In addition to this, the names of elected elders and deacons were presented to the king for recognition; we submitted a regulation for daily operations; and there was added the proclamation that we would make no claim to any possessions, income, rights, or titles of the official Reformed Church of the Netherlands or of any other church organization. We declared that we ourselves would provide for the pastors and the poor, without ever making any claim for subsidy from the nation's treasury; and we identified a building for the public worship services.

In consequence of this declaration the request was granted: that the king, (note very carefully) *according to our Forms of Unity*, willed to recognize and admit us into civil society with our church institution as a Christian Secession Church, under the ecclesiastical government of the persons presented as elders and deacons; and in consequence of that an exemption was granted from interference with our communal, public worship services, which interference up to that point had been a constant and continuing reality for us.

People now may say, when reading this entire request, that in tone and in manner of expression it differs greatly from earlier presentations. People may say that we did not want to pressure the king to make a declaration that the Secessionists were the Reformed Church, and that the king make a declaration that others, under the name of Reformed, have apostatized from the Reformed faith and illegally possess the real properties and titles of the Reformed Church. People may say that we made no claim to that property and titles; but I do not see that we abandoned our claim to the right of public worship. This right has been based on the confession of the Reformed faith. Our unity with that faith was placed on the foreground through the request for admittance and recognition. It was even declared that the church [the Secession Church, MK] would be dissolved by a rejection of the creeds. Our request did not include a petition to be permitted to form

as a church. The church had been organized already for a long time and it had never been disbanded, even though the king had required it and no matter how severely we had been persecuted. Consequently, our petition was merely to be recognized and admitted into *civil society*, so that we could escape persecution, as is expressed in the appeal.

Perhaps you mean: if the Secessionists had continued to maintain that they were the Reformed church, then there would have been no need to request any recognition and admittance to civil society, for that church or religious position had been for centuries already recognized and authorized in this country. I acknowledge that, standing on the basis of a right to which the Reformed in this country are entitled, we could have indeed spoken in such a manner. As one answer to the persecution, while having remained steadfast in the exercise of the worship service, we could have said: We are Reformed people; we belong to the old church. However, would that have been advisable? We were being severely persecuted and prevented from holding worship services. Should we have sacrificed the joy of free worship services, in order to require the acknowledgment of the civil right of Reformed people in the Netherlands? When would such an acknowledgment have been expressed? The Lord is certainly able sovereignly to appoint in that case what we think is impossible. However, could we expect that the Lord would intervene on our behalf, when we would require such an acknowledgment from the government? I would be afraid to assert this. It is one thing to abandon the right of free worship services; it is something different not to require from a government, not to force it, to acknowledge this right. That requirement, that forcing of the government, the Secessionists did not intend when they asked for freedom. Their request for admittance and recognition contained but one element: that they may without interference hold their public worship services, which had been identified as the true Reformed worship, leaving to the king's judgment how he wished to view us.

I will go further and claim that our behavior in requesting freedom was fitting in light of the situation in which we found ourselves. We stood over against the ruling king of our country. The ecclesiastical framework of the official state Reformed Church was his work. Ac-

cording to his plan and direction it was erected. Under his supervision men labored for twenty years to erect it. It was no wonder at all that with great self-satisfaction he gaped upon it, under the enthusiastic applause of many highly educated and religious leaders. But behold!…a few young preachers stood up; they had discovered that the building was lacking the necessary foundations, that the builders had committed deceit, and that an inevitable destruction threatened. "Danger! Betrayal!" was shouted out clearly. Hundreds listened! They had not felt at home there for a long time already. Excitement arose. They ran out of the famous building and declared it incapable of restoration.

The graying Prince [King William I, MK] warned and threatened in order to pressure people to return. Many had an inward bond with the House of Orange; everyone wanted to demonstrate submissiveness to the king; but in response to every warning to return, in response to every threat to the preaching and the worship services, they answered unanimously, "We ought to obey God rather than men." The threats against us were transformed into actions. Some of us were led off to prison; many were summoned before the halls of justice, fined, and stripped of their possessions. The rabble was turned loose against them. Many lived in danger of death. Billeting became customary. However, they remained steadfast. For some years they endured this oppression. The Secession churches meanwhile increased in number, and many petitions were sent to the king to gain relief from persecution and to obtain non-interference in regard to the worship services, yet all to no avail. Some voices were raised within and without the country that disapproved of the persecution. Many who held no affinity with the Secessionist churches felt, nonetheless, that the persecution did not bring disgrace to the Secessionists, but to the *Netherlands*. Our opponents themselves have to acknowledge that among those voices were to be found honest, irreproachable men. The glory of so many centuries has been darkened. The boast about religious worship and freedom of conscience in the Netherlands was put to public shame. Those pleadings before the courts, those fines, the billeting of soldiers in the homes of the Secessionists, the tumults by the people, the constant reporting—all revealed to the whole world the degeneration of the people of the Netherlands.

However, people sought the cause of the persecution in the Secessionists. In public writings they were reproached for not having clearly enough explained the specific requirements of the king. From the Secessionist camp, therefore, renewed attempts were made. They knew, however, that the king absolutely did not want to allot to them the rights of the Reformed Church. Should they now insist on it, in order to be granted nothing other than the acknowledgment of those rights? They did not do that. And I think they acted as is fitting for the Christian in their situation, when they would be satisfied with only the freedom of public worship services, while, nevertheless, they all to the very last one confessed to being Reformed indeed. In response to the petitions that now again were submitted, the then-ruling royal administration conferred freedom of worship to some of the congregations, although they refused it to others who had petitioned in the same manner.

When I read again the petitions that dealt with this matter and reviewed all that happened, I see clearly that the former royal administration, from the very beginning, was determined never to acknowledge the Secessionists as possessing the rights of the Reformed Church. But I also see clearly that the former royal administration was entirely disinclined to grant them the free exercise of religion. Many things serve to prove this assertion: the severity of the persecution, even where the courts had acquitted the Secessionists; the preventing of religious worship services, even when the number assembled was fewer than twenty persons; the relentless character of the persecution, for it continued notwithstanding the fact that many personally had pleaded with the king and had submitted many petitions; and the unsuccessful complaints to those in authority concerning the illegal opposition of minor officials, who called upon their superiors to give orders to oppress. Often the answer was given by our critics: you failed to send in your ecclesiastical regulations as required by the king. Nevertheless, we had submitted all the regulations that we *had,* among which was the Church Order of Dordrecht. At Amsterdam in July of 1837, even regulations that had been prepared for the daily operation of ecclesiastical affairs were submitted. However, it was all in vain. In December of 1838 Utrecht, who had earlier been granted freedom,

thought it necessary to submit another petition to the king, not because they would report a change in their convictions concerning the right of freedom of worship, but because of the constant criticism that the explanations they had provided the king were not sufficiently clear.

The reason why we finally obtained freedom, I think, was not that we made greater concessions, but because the king became inclined to grant this freedom when he saw that opposition was of no profit. After I had personally received this freedom, it was so little honored that, when I asked for an audition on behalf of other congregations, they threw in my face the criticism concerning the small number of members in such churches, or that the people would not be able to meet the costs of their religious services or be able to provide for their poor—objections that I consider to have been groundless as regards many congregations. Notwithstanding the objections, the Secessionists did obtain the desired freedom for the first time under the rule of the present king.

While I am writing about the manner in which the Secessionists obtained freedom of worship, I remember that some reproached us for having abandoned the properties and the name "Reformed Church." I remember, in addition, that we had explained "that we are not making any claim nor will make a claim on any property, income, rights, or titles of the official state Reformed Church of the Netherlands or of any other church fellowship" (cf. the petition from Utrecht, above mentioned). I recall, however, that we never declared that those who have deviated from the Reformed faith have a right to the properties, etc., of the Reformed Church. We never said that the explanation that we were compelled to give conceded even a little right of the present existing official state Reformed Church to the name and the properties of the Reformed, as if other church fellowships could, by that, legitimize their right to the name and properties that they have. Wherefore, I do not see that the explanation that we gave means very much. I recall as well, that history testifies that the church has sometimes made greater concessions in order to obtain freedom of worship. In any case, no one else would be bound by the individual explanations that we were required to give. Whoever in the future wants to separate from the official state Reformed Church because

of heartfelt commitment to the creeds of the Reformed church, but feels burdened by that explanation, gives testimony by his seceding that he continues to make a claim on the properties, rights, and titles of the official Reformed Church and makes this legitimate claim in every lawful manner.[3]

I expanded upon the obtaining of religious freedom much more than I had planned on doing, but I hope I have defended the Secessionists in this matter as much against the charge of overemphasis as also of denying the right of the church. Your last charge of contradiction on the part of the Secessionists I think I have answered and proven groundless.

Are the Secessionists correct about everything? Have I stepped forward as their eulogist? Oh, no; I wish indeed that, in the matters just treated, I could praise them in everything with a good conscience. But I am not doing that. Already in connection with the earliest instituting of the congregations, there was much that was done too hastily. However, under the pressure of persecution, there was much also that evidenced self-denial, sacrifice, and heartfelt love.

I recall that I met, at the time of the beginning of the Secession, a pastor from another church fellowship, with whom I had taken the first-year classes at the University.[4] He expressed his amazement

[3] There were many individuals who remained in the state *Hervormde* Church and claimed that they could not join the Secession because the Secessionists had given up the main thing: a demand that the King acknowledge that the Secessionists were the faithful Reformed church and the state Reformed Church was unfaithful to the creeds and thus illegally held the right and properties of the Reformed people. VanVelzen reminds these self-justifying people that what the Secessionists had done was not binding on any new members who would out of conviction join the Secession.

[4] In 1829 Van Velzen began his studies in theology at the Rijks-Universiteit at Leiden. After successfully passing his examinations, he was declared candidate for the ministry on May 15, 1834. He was installed as the pastor of the Droegham congregation in Vriesland on November 9, 1834, but only after a long four-month wait for the necessary documentation of approbation from ecclesiastical authorities. The authorities were disappointed that Van Velzen was so committed to the creeds of the Reformed church inclusive

concerning my attitude toward the official state Reformed Church. In order to inform him about the reasons for my conduct, I told him how that the truths that one must know to be saved were commonly denied, such as, for example, the godhead of Christ. At last I asked him why he thought that I had comforted myself with respect to the insults, opposition, and persecution at the hands of so many? In response to that, he answered: "I have already contemplated that. It is true that you experience abuse from many persons, but, in compensation for that, you experience a love from others who stand with you, through whom the abuse is overshadowed."

He thus gave a noteworthy witness, although he himself, like the vast majority of people, had chosen the friendship of the world in preference to this love. His words harmonized indeed with the witness of the ancient heathens when they saw the Christians hugging one another just before they suffered the death of martyrdom: "See how much they love one another!" However, how great is the change that has taken place in this regard. Some of the Secessionists have produced bitter fruits, anger, and a lust for controversy, and have demonstrated it to the whole world. Many have turned back on their commitment, which they had solemnly promised. Division upon division has taken place. After the rejection of an anti-Reformed church government, many subsequently have rejected even the order and rule that God has instituted, in order to follow their own arbitrary rules. People took up their work with incomparable thoughtlessness in regard to the ordination of pastors. *Hinc illae lacrymae!* [Because of this I weep, MK.] The same parties [in the Secession churches] that were guilty of recklessness in church doctrine were reckless also in the organization of churches. The love has generally faded. Oh! If the Secessionists, dependent on the Lord, had generally remained faithful to their public commitment and to their fellowship as brothers, what a blessing we could have expected!

I regret all those miseries. I also have experienced, as much as others, the difficulties that are inseparably joined to the act of seceding. Nevertheless, I declare concerning the separation from the official

of the Canons of Dordt (*Sola Gratia, 1854-1954,* J. H. Kok [N. V. Kampen, 1954], p. 327).

state Reformed Church that I could not, I may not, do differently. Still more! Notwithstanding the many deviations and errors that have been manifested, I contend that the majority of the Secessionists reveal themselves as the true Reformed church in harmony with her Confession of Faith in Article 29. The distinguishing marks of this church are clearly described there. These marks are not only characteristic of the church in this city [Amsterdam, MK], and with all that are united in this region under the supervision of her elders and pastors as a provincial church assembly, but are also characteristic of those churches in Groningen, whose elders and pastors for two years have held a church assembly in Groningen, with which the majority have been united. This majority have sincerely adopted the Forms of Unity and remain committed to them. They, according to God's Word, administer the sacraments and exercise ecclesiastical discipline. They have introduced the biblical church government of our forefathers and have granted a binding authority to the Church Order of Dordrecht, as much as circumstances will allow.

I was obligated to the Christian Secession churches, to you, and to all right-minded individuals to expose, in writing, your arguments that did not harmonize with the facts. Will what I wrote lead to a mutual appreciation of those whose heartfelt faith is expressed in the creeds? You hope that your viewpoint will be of service unto that end. I aim at the same goal, even though I reject some aspects of your viewpoint. For too long a time brothers have been separated who have one Lord, one faith, and one hope. If that situation is to change, then we must contemplate what the Lord says*: not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit it will be accomplished.* Especially must we appeal to that Spirit. Then too we must humble ourselves before the Lord. Although we may not agree with unfounded charges, the Secessionists have weighty reasons unto that end of humility. We must not consider the matter of secession to be of subordinate importance, as we said earlier. The forsaking of a church is sin, when it is not a matter of duty. But everyone must strive as well to be faithful to his confession. You promote and praise an open, unashamed commitment to the creeds. I do that as well, but I think also that that open, full commitment must not allow for a relinquishing of a part of the truth that is contained in

these creedal documents. Nor may there be tolerated any denial or opposition to the truth under that open, full commitment.

It is readily understood that men allow themselves to be deceived so as to relinquish this or that truth, because they desire, as much as possible, to gather as one body those with whom they feel an affinity. However, would this be faithfulness to the Lord, and in the best interest of the Reformed church and the following generation? Is this Christian caution? Where is this relinquishing of a truth taught in the Bible or in the history of the church? Where will this relinquishing stop? Where are the boundaries that men may not cross? I consider a vague acknowledgment of the creedal documents, wherein others must guess which truths are to be maintained, to be no better than a complete rejection of them. Should a new creed then be written? I do not doubt that, as soon as a new creed would be tested, the consequence of that attempt would be even greater division between those that want to join together. As far as I know, the religious disposition of the Netherlands, the historical traditions, and especially the devotion of God-fearing saints to the representations of our forefathers, do not allow for any change. First, people must demonstrate the defect in our existing creedal documents, if they do not want to fall under the just charge of having an obsession for change. This proof of defect, I trust, will remain the obligation of everyone who understands God's Word to be in agreement with the creeds' clear statements, without any intermingling of his own notions.

The name "believer" is not sufficient for determining church membership. The followers of Arminius or of Pelagius, who had received even from Augustine the testimony of their having made great progress in virtue and godliness, and of having a chaste and irreproachable moral life, would attribute to themselves the name "believers." When, therefore, under that name "believers" it is advocated that people are not obligated to accept the whole content of the creeds, I see little essential difference between a fellowship, where such a relinquishing of the truth is permitted, and the present official state Reformed Church. Will people accept into the church those who oppose the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, inherited guilt, the sovereign power of grace, or similar truths? *Non tali auxilio,*

nec defensooribus istis [Not from such help, nor from such protectors, do we desire aid. MK]. If ever secession from the official, state Reformed Church were to take place, and the newly-formed fellowship would include the pretense of having Reformed convictions, then I would account the latter worse than the former. People would have entered into the way of lawlessness not only in doctrine, but also in church government, under the guise of a beautiful name. It would be a fellowship that is nominally Reformed, and, if at least some persons maintained the whole truth out of heartfelt conviction, then dissension upon dissension would be encouraged there. No! No! Not even one truth that has been entrusted to the church may be abandoned! If the Forms of Unity are pure, biblical doctrine, and if the truths therein contained are necessary and beneficial unto salvation, then complete devotion to them cannot be unwholesome. We must instruct and warn with all longsuffering, but we must never tolerate error. If something good may be expected for the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, then the lawful authority of her confessional documents must be acknowledged sincerely, without any reservation.

No relinquishing, but also no narrow-mindedness! Whoever sincerely and completely testifies to agreement with the confessional documents, and whoever does not reveal himself contrary thereto, may not be regarded by others with suspicion. Also the manner of presentation in the preaching of the gospel must be left to everyone's freedom. The apostles themselves allowed for difference of presentation. We find differences of expression within a sincere agreement in the truth among the earlier faithful theologians of our fatherland. Let no one, then, hassle the other because of such differences. On the contrary, let that diversity, with the multiplicity of gifts, be highly valued. But let all be revealed as *one* body, of which Christ is Head, as *one* building resting upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, with which our confessions fully agree.

Oh, may that day soon dawn when the hearts of the fathers are turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers! Work, indeed. Cast forth the seed in hope against hope. But that turning again is our goal.

The nations of Europe have entered a time of rebellion. Thrones

are crashing down or are tottering. Kings are being taken down. Everywhere people hear the call, "Let us break their bands asunder." It is done to their own destruction. And what is the situation in our nation! It owes its very existence to the Reformation. By means of our fathers' service to God, it became great, rich, and powerful. But what is the situation today? The vast majority reveal unbelief and resistance to the most important truths. Superstition rises up strongly. The power that our fathers detested as being of the Antichrist, and that they broke away from at the cost of their own possessions and of life itself—that power is again brought back and tolerated by their wicked descendants. Here, too, rages the spirit of revolution. Public immorality has fearfully increased in all walks of life. Meanwhile, there is general languishing, dwindling commerce, and many judgments of God upon us. The great majority, however, do not turn back; they still do not submit to God our Father. They appear to remain deaf to all the calls for repentance, till the time that God shall bring complete ruin. Some have sought an escape to another part of the world. What will happen to the remaining godly people? It is long overdue that they genuinely confess, by word and deed, faithfully and jointly, the pure worship of God. If they do not give a good example, how can there be any expectation of restoration? Oh, that it may happen! Who knows, God may turn again and have mercy upon the *Netherlands*.

"Whosoever therefore will confess me before men," the Lord says, "him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). Let us take this to heart. This confession must not only be made with words, but must also be realized in deeds and in the whole of our walk. Whoever sincerely loves and fears the Lord confesses also the truths revealed, not because they are contained in the creeds, but because they are founded upon God's Word, since the Lord revealed them, and because our heart by grace responds with an "amen." By this we are moved to say, "We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). By this means we confess the Savior as our Lord and our God. By this means the voice of the inner man agrees already with the joyful exclamation, "Thou hast purchased us, oh God, with thine own blood" (Acts 20:28).

The Lord is faithful. He will surely fulfill His promise. On the

other side of the grave, it will appear in full reality. When the Son of God, as the Son of Man, will appear in that great day, all nations shall be gathered before Him. A great multitude will stand on His left hand. All that had denied Him will be there. On the right hand will be the multitude that no man can number, whom He who is the one sent of the Father shall name. Among them will be the prophets and the apostles, apostolic fathers and church fathers, and the Reformers and martyrs. Among them will be numbered, who could doubt it, so many lights of the Reformed church of our fatherland: the à Brakels and Teellinks, Voetius, Witsius, Smijtegelt, Lodensteijn, Marck, Koelman, Comrie, Van Den Groe, and so many others. With them we have one faith. This is evident from our confessions. If, nevertheless, the truths contained in the creeds are denied by many and opposed, and if we are misrepresented and abused because of our steadfast maintaining of those truths, please note, we do not stand alone even then. Listen to what the godly urged us to know in their writings: "Preserve the traditions that have been entrusted to you." We hear especially the word of Him that is coming again, the command and promise of the King: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The opinions set forth in this document are, I know, shared by only a few; they are condemned by many who move in different directions. Nevertheless, I trust that my message will be well received by you. The man [Groen VanPrinsterer, MK] whom all value as a historian, with whom as a Christian man many Christians feel a very close kinship, who even expresses his convictions with Hollandic, yes, with Christian, openness, upon whose heart weighs heavily the interest of church and fatherland, who continues, in the midst of a general apostasy, to apply his work for the well-being of Reformed Christianity—that man can endure the tone in which the servant of the gospel [VanVelzen, MK] has spoken in his love and zeal for the truth, for the cause of the Lord, and for the church that has been entrusted to him. I make, therefore, no apologies, but end with the wish and prayer that God may bless you according to the riches of His grace. May He give you to behold the prosperity of the church and the salvation of the fatherland! ●

Janus, Again:
The Most Recent Attack of the Proponents of the Well-Meant Gospel Offer upon the Doctrines of Grace

Joshua D. Engelsma

I. Introduction

Janus has raised his two-faced head again.

Janus was a Roman god with two faces, each looking in the opposite direction. Herman Hoeksema famously described the teaching of the well-meant offer as a modern-day Janus:

> For, the fact is, that the first point [of the Synod of Kalamazoo, in which is contained the well-meant offer—JDE] reminds one of the two-faced head of Janus. Janus was a Roman idol, distinguished by the remarkable feature of having two faces and looking in two opposite directions. And in this respect there is a marked similarity between old Janus and the first point. The latter is also two-faced and casts wistful looks in opposite directions. And the same may be asserted of the attempts at explanation of the first point that are offered by the leaders of the Christian Reformed Churches. Only, while the two faces of old heathen Janus bore a perfect resemblance to each other, the Janus of 1924 has the distinction of showing two totally different faces. One of his faces reminds you of Augustine, Calvin, Gomarus; but the other shows the unmistakable features of Pelagius, Arminius, Episcopius. And your troubles begin when you would inquire of this two-faced oracle, what may be the exact meaning of the first point. For, then this modern Janus begins to revolve, alternately showing you one face and the other, till you hardly know whether you are dealing with Calvin or Arminius.[1]

1 Herman Hoeksema, *A Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth: A Critical Treatise on the "Three Points" Adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924* (Grandville, MI: Evangelism Committee of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, 2001), 24.

This Janus has a long history.[2] There were traces of the well-meant offer of the gospel already in the teachings of the Semi-Pelagians of Augustine's day. But the teaching was especially propounded in the seventeenth century in the school of Saumur, France. From there it spread to the British Isles as well as to the Netherlands. In this way the two main branches of Reformed orthodoxy, Presbyterianism and the Dutch Reformed tradition, were affected by this teaching. The idea of the well-meant offer was then carried over to the United States, where it has gained wide acceptance. Today, the notion of a well-meant offer of salvation is generally considered to be a hallmark of Reformed orthodoxy. There remain only a few isolated voices that condemn this teaching. But those voices are virtually drowned out by ardent defenders of the offer.

Especially within the last century much ink has been spilled debating the issue of the well-meant offer of the gospel. The battle has been fierce, and neither side has seemed to budge. What is the reason, then, for undertaking another study of this issue? Is there something new that can be contributed to the debate?

We believe that there is.

R. Scott Clark, professor of historical and systematic theology at Westminster Seminary (CA) and a noted theologian, has recently proposed a new approach to the debate. In an essay entitled "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel, and Westminster Theology," Clark makes an appeal to the distinction made in Reformed theology between archetypal and ectypal knowledge. On the basis of this distinction, as well as on the underlying view of the believer's knowledge of God, Clark defends the well-meant offer of the gospel. Clark is convinced that by grounding the offer in this widely-accepted distinction he places the well-meant offer on an unshakeable foundation. He is also convinced that this will lead to more profitable discussions between the two sides in the debate. "Since the nature of divine-human relations is fundamental to the recovery and re-expression of the well-meant offer, a consideration of the rise and function of the basic assumption on which the well-meant offer is based also offers

2 Cf. the Appendix, which gives a brief history of the free offer.

avenues for discussion between the proponents and opponents of the well-meant offer."[3]

In this essay we take up Clark's offer. We intend to show that the ground on which Clark builds the well-meant offer is exceedingly shaky. In fact, we are convinced that the foundation is entirely out of line with Scripture and Reformed orthodoxy. We hope to show that Clark's understanding of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge is mistaken and that his view of the relationship between the Creator and the creature is incorrect. By pulling out the root of Clark's argument we intend to pull out also the fruit (the well-meant offer). We intend to show that a denial of the well-meant offer is not a denial of the archetypal/ectypal distinction. Rather, a proper understanding of this distinction is in complete harmony with a denial of the well-meant offer. In conclusion we will affirm the truth that God's call is general but the promise is particular. This, we are convinced, is Reformed. And this, we believe, is biblical.

II. Theology of the Well-Meant Offer

The well-meant offer of the gospel is considered by most denominations and theologians today to be squarely in keeping with the historic Reformed faith. There are only a few denominations (the Protestant Reformed Churches, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia[4]), groups (the Trinity Foundation), and individuals (John H. Gerstner[5]) who have rejected the free offer. Almost all other de-

3 R. Scott Clark, "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel, and Westminster Theology," in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries,* ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R), 154.

4 Cf. their *Universalism and the Reformed Churches: A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism* (Launceston, Tasmania: Magazine and Literature Committee of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1997) and Christopher J. Connors, *The Biblical Offer of the Gospel: Analysis and Answer to Rev. K.W. Stebbins' Book "Christ Greely Offered" in the Light of Scripture and the Confessions* (Launceston, Tasmania, n.d.) for the EPC's rejection of the free offer.

5 John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 125-131.

nominations adhere to the free offer in their preaching and teaching, if not in their official declarations.[6]

A. The Offer

But what is the well-meant offer of the gospel?

Negatively, the well-meant offer is not simply the teaching that the gospel must be preached to all promiscuously. The promiscuous and indiscriminate preaching of the gospel is not the issue between the defenders of the free offer and those who oppose it. Both sides are agreed that the gospel must be preached to all and sundry. At times this has been understood to be the chief difference between the two sides. We say again, this is *not* the issue in the debate over the well-meant offer. The well-meant offer is not simply a defense of the promiscuous preaching of the gospel over against those who deny that this must be done. The opponents of the well-meant offer believe emphatically that the gospel must be preached to all and sundry.[7] They are committed

6 The following are works in which the notion of the free offer is defended: Clark, "Janus"; A.C. DeJong, *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer: The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1954); Joseph H. Hall, "The Marrow Controversy: A Defense of Grace and the Free Offer of the Gospel," in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 239-257; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved By Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Erroll Hulse, *The Free Offer: An Exposition of Common Grace and the Free Invitation of the Gospel* (Sussex: Carey Publications, 1973); Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); David Silversides, *The Free Offer: Biblical and Reformed* (Kilsyth, Scotland: Marpet Press, 2005); K.W. Stebbins, *Christ Freely Offered: A Discussion of the General Offer of Salvation in the Light of Particular Atonement* (Strathpine, Australia: Covenanter Press, 1978); Cornelius VanTil, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1974); Cornelis P. Venema, "The Doctrine of Preaching According to the Reformed Confessions," in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 135-183.

7 Cf. David J. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel: An Examination of the "Well-Meant Offer" of the Gospel,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: RFPA, 1994), 120ff.; Herman Hoeksema, *A Power of God Unto Salvation or Grace Not an Offer,* trans. Homer C. Hoeksema and Cornelius Hanko (Grandville, MI: Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1996), 5-6, 60ff., 74ff.

to Canons 2.5: "…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."[8]

Very simply, the well-meant offer teaches that in the preaching of the gospel God expresses His earnest and sincere desire to save all who hear. Those to whom the gospel comes are all sinners. We cannot know whether they are elect or reprobate. But to all, both elect and reprobate, the offer comes. In the gospel God invites all men to repent and believe on Jesus Christ and to come to Him for salvation. Behind this invitation or offer is an earnest desire of God that the invitation be accepted by all who hear. God desires that all who hear be saved. In this offer God expresses His love for all who come under the preaching. Although many eventually reject this offer, this does not change the attitude of the loving God who sends it.

B. Starting Points

One of the classic lines of defense for defenders of the well-meant offer of the gospel is an appeal to the theory of common grace. Common grace, it is said, is an expression of God's grace to all His creatures, including all men. He expresses this grace, it is claimed, in sunshine, rain, and all the other good gifts that He gives to men. If it is true that God's grace is revealed to all in the giving of these physical gifts, how much more is His grace revealed in the giving of spiritual gifts, not least of which is the preaching of the gospel? The preaching is to everyone who hears what the sunshine and rain are to every farmer: grace. This was the argument used by the Synod of Kalamazoo in its First Point. This was also the line of argumentation used by John Murray. The first text that he gave as proof for the well-meant offer was Matthew 5:44-48, which speaks of God sending rain and sunshine upon the earth. Murray admits, "This passage does not indeed deal with the overtures of grace in the gospel. But it does tell us something regarding God's benevolence that has bearing upon all manifestations of divine grace."[9] Murray goes on to say that

8 Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes,* 6th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 3:586.

9 Murry, *Collected Writings,* 4:114-5.

this same benevolence that is seen in things like rain and sunshine is also expressed in the preaching of the gospel. Erroll Hulse is correct, therefore, when he writes, "The subject of common grace is inescapably connected with the free offer."[10]

Another classic line of defense for many proponents of the free offer has been to ground this teaching in the distinction between the will of God's *decree* and the will of God's *command*.[11] This distinction has often been referred to as the distinction between God's *hidden* will and his *revealed* will.[12] Briefly, the will of God's decree refers to God's eternal determination of all things that would take place in time and history. The will of God's command declares what God will have His rational, moral creatures to do. Those who appeal to this distinction argue in the following manner. They say that according to the will of God's decree He wills that only the elect be saved. However, according to the will of God's command He wills that all those who come under the preaching of the gospel be saved. In this way, they claim, the Reformed doctrine of sovereign, unconditional election and the idea of a well-meant offer of salvation are both maintained.

This was already an argument proposed in favor of the free offer by Amyraut in the seventeenth century.[13] Many modern defenders of the offer have used this same argument also. For example, John Murray writes, "It should have been apparent that the aforesaid Committee [of the Thirteenth General Assembly of the OPC—JDE], in predicating such 'desire' of God [to save all men—JDE], was not dealing with the decretive will of God; it was dealing with the free offer of the gospel

10 Hulse, *Free Offer,* 4-5.

11 Cf. Raymond A. Blacketer, "The Three Points in Most Parts Reformed: A Reexamination of the So-Called Well-Meant Offer of Salvation," in *Calvin Theological Journal* 35, n. 1 (April 2000): 42-3; A.C. DeJong, *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer,* 127-8; Hulse, *Free Offer,* 8; Murray, *Collected Writings,* 4:113; Stebbins, *Christ Freely Offered,* 13ff.

12 In my opinion this is a faulty designation for this distinction. The distinction here is not that one will is hidden to us and the other is revealed to us. The distinction is between what God has decreed will take place and what He commands.

13 Cf. the Appendix.

to all without distinction and that surely respects, not the decretive or secret will of God, but the revealed will." Murray goes on to say, "It must be admitted that if the expression were intended to apply to the decretive will of God then there would be, at least, implicit contradiction."[14] Erroll Hulse writes similarly, "The scriptures indicate that we are obliged to distinguish carefully between God's revealed will and his decretive or secret will (Deut. 29:29). God's revealed will is that all are to be addressed with the Gospel. The salvation of all without exception is to be attempted."[15]

Almost without fail, those who ground the idea of a free offer of the gospel in the two wills of God fall back upon "paradox" or "apparent contradiction." For example, Joseph Hall writes,

> Thus when God's Word affirms both election and the well-meant offer of the gospel, proper theological methodology bids us simply to believe God's revelation and act upon these truths according to the measure of revelation given to us. We do not claim to comprehend fully all that his Word teaches us. To fail to proceed along this path is sheer *hubris*.[16]

Cornelis Venema speaks similar language: "The supposed contradiction between God's sovereign decree of election and the well-meant offer of the gospel is what Cornelius Van Til properly termed an 'apparent contradiction,' something mysterious to us but *known by God to be fully harmonious and consistent*."[17] Defenders of the offer sense the difficulty that this argument poses to the human mind. They sense the difficulty that exists in saying that in one sense God desires only the salvation of the elect and in another sense He desires the salvation of all men, both elect and reprobate, who hear the gospel. This difficulty for the human mind is explained as a paradox or apparent contradic-

14 Murray, *Collected Writings,* 4:113.

15 Hulse, *Free Offer,* 8.

16 Hall, "The Marrow Controversy," 257.

17 Venema, "The Doctrine of Preaching," 167, n. 26. Cf. also Hoekema, *Saved,* 5-7, 78-79; Clark, "Janus," 156, 163-4; I. Murray, *Spurgeon,* xiv, 117-9; Hulse, *Free Offer,* 14, 19-20; J. Murray, *Collected Writings,* 4:113, 131; Stebbins, *Christ Freely Offered,* 24.

tion. They are careful to say that the contradiction is only apparent, that it is only paradoxical to us but it is not paradoxical to God. R. B. Kuiper explains that "when two truths, both taught unmistakably in the infallible Word of God, cannot possibly be reconciled before the bar of human reason, then you have a paradox."[18] Both ideas must be maintained, even if they are judged to be contradictory before the bar of human reason.

Recently there has been proposed a new line of argumentation in defense of the well-meant offer of the gospel. This new argument has been proposed by R. Scott Clark, professor at Westminster Seminary (CA). To a *festschrift* for Robert Strimple entitled *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*, Clark contributes an essay on "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel, and Westminster Theology" in which he defends the free offer.

In this essay Clark enters upon new ground in the debate over the well-meant offer. While Clark makes use of the distinction between God's hidden and revealed will, this is not his main line of defense. Instead, Clark grounds the teaching of the well-meant offer in the little-known distinction between archetypal knowledge or theology (*theologia archetypa*) and ectypal knowledge or theology (*theologia ectypa*).

Before going further, we do well to come to a basic understanding of this distinction.[19] The word *archetype* means "pattern in an ultimate sense."[20] Simply put, archetypal knowledge is theology as God knows

18 Quoted in Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 95, n. 1.

19 For a more detailed discussion, cf. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1527 to ca. 1725,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:225-238; William J. vanAsselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64, no. 2 (Fall, 2002), 319-335.

20 Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 44. Cf. also pp. 299-300.

it. The term refers to God's infinite, perfect self-knowledge. It is knowledge that the triune God has of Himself apart from any creature. This knowledge of God is the ultimate pattern of all knowledge. The word *ectype* means "copy or reflection of the archetype or ultimate pattern."[21] Ectypal knowledge is theology as we know and do it. It is the knowledge that we humans have of God. More specifically, ectypal knowledge is the knowledge that the *believer* and the *church* have of God by means of revelation.

On this archetypal/ectypal distinction Clark builds his defense of the well-meant offer. He writes,

> This essay contends that the reason the well-meant offer has not been more persuasive is that its critics [among whom Clark lists Herman Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches, Gordon Clark and his followers, and John Gerstner—JDE] have not understood or sympathized with the fundamental assumption on which the doctrine of the well-meant offer was premised: the distinction between theology as God knows it (*theologia archetypa*) and theology as it is revealed to and done by us (*theologia ectypa*).[22]

Clark proceeds to prove his assertion that opponents of the free offer have denied this distinction, thus resulting in a denial also of the free offer. After claiming that Gordon Clark denied this distinction, Clark says something similar regarding Herman Hoeksema: "The best interpretation of Hoeksema's language is that it was an implicit rejection of the archetypal/ectypal distinction." Later he writes that Hoeksema "argued against the substance of the archetypal/ectypal distinction."[23] Clark bases this claim on the fact that Hoeksema made *God* the *principium cognoscendi,* rather than *Scripture,* as Louis Berkhof did. Clark writes,

> This is a significant difference. Berkhof's doctrine of the knowledge of God began with revelation. Hoeksema, however, began not with revelation, but with God himself as the beginning of knowledge.

21 Muller, *Dictionary,* 101. Cf. also pp. 300-301.

22 Clark, "Janus," 152.

23 Clark, "Janus," 153.

> This move suggests a sort of intellectualism, that is, an intersection between our mind and God's, in Hoeksema's theology. At one point he nodded politely to the Creator-creature distinction, but elsewhere he argued against the substance of the archetypal/ectypal distinction, and the historical record is that his rhetoric against the well-meant offer tended to militate against the distinction.[24]

On this question Clark lumps together the opponents of the free offer and the Arminians. He claims that the issue at Dordt and the issue today is the rejection of this distinction.[25] In his conclusion he says, "It would appear that, like the Remonstrants, the critics of the well-meant offer have misunderstood, rejected, or ignored this distinction and its implications for the nature of divine-human relations, biblical revelation, and theological method."[26]

According to Clark, the archetypal/ectypal distinction has a long history in the Reformed tradition. There are traces of the distinction already in Luther and his distinction between God hidden (*Deus absconditus*) and God revealed (*Deus revelatus*). There is evidence of this distinction as well in Calvin's writings, especially when he distinguishes between God's hidden and revealed will. The Reformed theologian Franciscus Junius (1545-1602) was the first to make this distinction explicitly.[27] Other Reformed men such as Amandus Polanus (1561-1610), Johannes Wollebius (1586-1629), Louis Berkhof (1873-1957), and Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987) all held to this distinction as well.

While Berkhof and Van Til both held to the archetypal/ectypal distinction and the free offer of the gospel, Clark is the first to make an explicit connection between the two. He claims that the free offer is the "corollary" of the archetypal/ectypal distinction.[28] Although

24 Clark, "Janus," 161.

25 Clark, "Janus," 154. Clark is correct in stating that the Arminians rejected this distinction. Cf. vanAsselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology," 334-5.

26 Clark, "Janus," 174.

27 This is confirmed by Muller, *PRRD,* 1:222; vanAsselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology," 321.

28 Clark, "Janus," 176.

he does not state clearly what he means by this distinction and how it correlates to the well-meant offer, Clark does leave enough clues to form an accurate picture of what he means. It seems that Clark understands the distinction to mean that God's knowledge of Himself and all things (archetypal knowledge) has no point of contact with our knowledge of Him (ectypal knowledge). What we might know about God may not be what is actually true of God in Himself. What God knows about something may actually be quite different from what we know about the same thing.

It is fairly clear, then, how the well-meant offer fits with this understanding of the archetypal/ectypal distinction. God knows that He has determined to save only the elect (archetypal knowledge). But, according to Clark, God has revealed to us and we know that he desires the salvation of all who hear the gospel (ectypal knowledge). According to Clark this is the orthodox Reformed position. This is one of "the paradoxes of the orthodox Reformed soteriology."[29] Clark writes, "The fact of the decree [of predestination—JDE] is presupposed in and animates the well-meant offer, but since its contents are archetypal, we are shut up to ectypal theology of which the well-meant offer is correlative."[30] We are shut up to the teaching that God desires the salvation of all men who hear the gospel, according to Clark.

III. Refutation of R. Scott Clark's Starting Point

With this view of Clark we cannot agree. Not only are we convinced that the well-meant offer he is defending is contrary to Scripture and the Reformed confessions as well as historic Reformed orthodoxy, we are also convinced that he grounds his view of the offer in a wrong understanding of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge.

A. Archetypal/Ectypal Distinction

Clark is mistaken when he asserts that opponents of the free offer ignore or deny the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge. This is not the case, at least in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Neither is Clark correct in saying that Herman Hoeksema, by virtue

29 Clark, "Janus," 163-4.

30 Clark, "Janus," 175.

of his rejection of "Janus," was also rejecting this distinction. What is true is that opponents of the free offer, including the PRC, reject the archetypal/ectypal distinction *as Clark presents it*. The PRC hold to a distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge, a distinction very different from Clark's, however. Their understanding of this distinction, we believe, is in harmony with that of historic Reformed orthodoxy. Clark's is not.

Clark grounds his defense of the well-meant offer of the gospel in a wrong understanding of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge. Although he does not clearly define what he understands this distinction to mean, it is clear that he believes that the ectype, our knowledge of God, can and must be different from the archetype, God's knowledge of Himself. For Clark, there is not only a *quantitative* difference between God's knowledge and ours, there is also a *qualitative* difference. In other words, God not only knows infinitely *more* than we do, but the knowledge God has is entirely *different* from ours. The knowledge that He has of one thing can be completely different from the knowledge that we have of the same thing by means of revelation. Sean Gerety is correct, therefore, when he concludes that "for Clark the archetype/ectype distinction provides a complete break between the content of God's knowledge and knowledge possible to man."[31]

This is not the proper understanding of this distinction. The proper understanding of this distinction can be summed up rather briefly: *quantitative* difference. The knowledge that God has is distinguished from the knowledge that we have as regards *quantity*. God is infinite, and so is His knowledge of Himself and all things. Our knowledge, by comparison, is finite. God's knowledge is intuitive. Ours is acquired. There is now and forever shall be in heaven an infinite gulf between the quantity of our knowledge and God's.

But we must not assume that there is a *qualitative* difference between God's knowledge and the knowledge that we have of things. The knowledge that we have is received by revelation. God revealed

31 Sean Gerety, "Janus Alive and Well: Dr. R. Scott Clark and the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel (Part 1)," *The Trinity Review* 300a (June 2011): 3.

Himself to us in His Word. That Word is the source of all the believer's knowledge. And that Word is infallible, sufficient, and reliable. God reveals to us in His Word who He really is and what He has sovereignly decreed. We may not know everything there is to know about God, but the knowledge God has given to us in Scripture is identical to the knowledge that God Himself has. If this is not our confession, then we have absolutely no assurance that what we know is the truth. We may think something is true, we may hope that it is true, but we have no certainty that it is actually true. We cannot know whether our knowledge of something is the same as God's knowledge.

The fact that our knowledge is *qualitatively* the same as God's is in harmony with Deuteronomy 29:29, the chief passage on which the archetypal/ectypal distinction is based. There we read, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." This passage is not saying that the ectype is different from the archetype. Rather, Moses is telling the people not to pry into the things that God has not revealed but to observe all that God has revealed in His law. Applied to the call of the gospel, this verse tells us that we are not to pry into the hearts of men to see whether they are elect or not, but we are to confine ourselves to what God has revealed, namely, that all who repent and believe will be saved. And Scripture is clear that only the elect truly repent and believe. There is no antimony or apparent contradiction taught in this passage.

Clark's appeal to other Reformed theologians in support of his view of this distinction is shaky at best. His appeals to Luther and Calvin are not of any weight because neither of them was concerned with this distinction. His quotations from Junius, Polanus, and Wollebius are also inconclusive. All that is clear is that they all made this distinction. What is not clear is that they viewed this distinction exactly as Clark does. Sean Gerety concludes,

> Finally, it is not at all clear from Clark's contribution…that he even understands the archetype/ectype distinction as it has been understood throughout Reformed history, simply because, and at least in light of the citations he provides from Calvin, Luther, and others,

> there is nothing in these early expressions of the archetype/ectype distinction that is at all at odds with the views of Gordon Clark, Herman Hoeksema, or other opponents of the so-called "well-meant offer." …In virtually all of Clark's discussion of the archetype/ectype distinction, with the possible exception of Junius, Reformed theologians clearly had something entirely different in mind from what we find expressed in Van Til's Creator/creature distinction and his complete denial of any univocal point of contact between God's thoughts and man's even as we find them revealed in Scripture. Clark is reading Reformed history though [*sic*] Van Tilian lenses. …Clark's understanding of the archetype/ectype distinction is an historic novelty.[32]

Noted Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper held to the proper view of this distinction. Although he was the one who conceived of the idea of common grace to which many defenders of the free offer appeal, Kuyper himself was vehemently opposed to the idea of the well-meant offer. In his explanation of ectypal knowledge, Kuyper has this to say:

> The second point, which must be emphasized in the ectypal character of our knowledge of God, is the *truth* of our knowledge of God. If the ectypal originates by the imprint of the archetypal, the ectypal image is no phantasy, no imagination, but an image *in truth*. Just as we saw in the antithesis between Theology here and hereafter, that our knowledge of God on earth shall then be done away, and rise again in a higher form of a knowledge 'face to face'; but always such, that the *truth* of our knowledge 'in part' shall be the more fully exhibited by the completer knowledge in heaven. Our given knowledge of God derives from this its absolute character, not as to its degree of completeness, but with reference to its connection with its object, i.e. with God. God who is, has knowledge of Himself; and from this self-knowledge God has taken the knowledge given to us. This excludes not only doubt, but also the dilution of subjectivism, as if our formulated statement of the knowledge of God in our confession were unimportant, and

32 Sean Gerety, "Janus Alive and Well: Dr. R. Scott Clark and the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel (Part 2)," *The Trinity Review* 300b-301 (July-August 2011): 6.

> *without loss of truth* could be exchanged for every other confession or placed on a line with it.[33]

Kuyper makes clear in this quotation that the denial of the truthfulness of our knowledge of God has at least two serious consequences. On the one hand, the child of God will doubt all that Scripture says. On the other hand, the truth becomes subjective, each man claiming for truth that which is right in his own eyes.

Herman Hoeksema was in complete agreement with Kuyper. He did not deny the archetypal/ectypal distinction. Although in his writings he never used those terms, he did nevertheless affirm this distinction. He did so especially in his treatment of the Clark-VanTil controversy in the OPC. Hoeksema saw the main point of difference in the controversy thus: "According to the complainants [VanTil, et al.—JDE], it is this, that, while they hold that the difference between the contents of the knowledge of God and the contents of our knowledge is both qualitative and quantitative, Dr. Clark insists that it is only quantitative." Hoeksema then goes on to list three things for which Clark was condemned by VanTil. First, Clark held that "all truth, in God and in man, is propositional, *i.e.*, assumes the form of propositions." Second, Clark believes that "man's knowledge of any proposition is identical with God's knowledge of the same proposition." Third, Clark "teaches that God's knowledge consists of an *infinite number* of propositions, while only a finite number can ever be revealed to man."[34] VanTil and his supporters denied all of these points. Hoeksema rejects VanTil's position and affirms that which is taught by Clark. He writes that "if the complainants take the stand that Scripture reveals things that are, not above and beyond, but *contrary* to, in conflict with the human mind, it is my conviction that the complainants should be indicted of heterodoxy, and of undermining all sound theology."[35]

33 Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology,* trans. J. Hendrik DeVries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 254-5. Emphasis is Kuyper's.

34 Hoeksema, *Clark-VanTil,* 7.

35 Hoeksema, *Clark-VanTil,* 8.

B. Analogical View

What lies behind Clark's understanding of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge is a wrong understanding of the believer's knowledge in general. As is evident in his essay, Clark adheres to the view that the believer's knowledge is only *analogically* true rather than *univocally* true.

Robert Reymond explains the difference between analogical and univocal well:

> The difference is this: A given predicate applied to separate subjects *univocally* would intend that the subjects possess the predicate in a precisely identical sense. The opposite of univocality is equivocality, which attaches a given predicate to separate subjects in a completely different or unrelated sense. Now lying between univocality and equivocality is analogy. A predicate employed *analogically* intends a relationship between separate objects based upon comparison or proportion.

Univocal means that the content of God's knowledge about a certain thing is the *same* as the content of the believer's knowledge of the same thing. Analogical means that the content of our knowledge is partly like and partly not like the content of God's knowledge.[36]

Clark believes that the believer's knowledge of a certain thing (ectypal knowledge) is *analogically* true. Our knowledge (ectypal) is analogical to God's knowledge (archetypal). That is, our knowledge of a certain proposition is analogous to God's knowledge but cannot be the same. This means that God's knowledge is qualitatively different than our knowledge. What God knows about a certain thing is different from what we know about that same thing by means of revelation. There is, ultimately, no point of contact between God's knowledge and the believer's.

In his essay Clark equates this analogical view of knowledge with the traditional archetypal/ectypal distinction. He writes, "While those who accepted the archetypal/ectypal distinction tended to favor the well-meant offer, those who rejected the analogical model of theol-

36 Reymond, *New Systematic Theology,* 96.

ogy also rejected the well-meant offer."[37] Later he says, "In order to understand the Reformed orthodox insistence on analogical theology, that is, the archetypal/ectypal distinction and its corollary, the well-meant offer, it is useful to consider how the Remonstrants applied evangelical intellectualism to their soteriology."[38] He claims that "the distance between God's theology and ours, the analogical nature of our theology relative to God's, necessarily creates tension in all our speech about God."[39]

Clark claims that he is only following the line of Reformed orthodoxy. He even claims that "Luther and Calvin established and maintained assiduously a strict analogy between theology as God knows it and as he reveals it to us."[40] Clark lists the names of Junius, Polanus, and Wollebius as well. However, all Clark proves is that these men held either implicitly or explicitly to a form of the archetypal/ectypal distinction. He fails to prove that they understood this distinction in the same way he does. He also fails to prove that they based their view on an analogical view of knowledge.

The only theologian whom Clark mentions that is in clear agreement with him is Cornelius VanTil. Clark essentially proposes the same view that VanTil defended years before. In his response to the charges leveled against him by VanTil, Gordon Clark quoted from what VanTil had written:

> The view of the *Complaint* [of VanTil—JDE] is that "*God because of his very nature* must remain incomprehensible to man"; it is "not the doctrine that God can be known only if he makes himself known and in so far as he makes himself known." Moreover, all knowledge which man can attain differs from the knowledge of God "in a qualitative sense and not merely in degree." Thus God's knowledge and man's knowledge do not "coincide at a single point." A proposition does not "have the same meaning for man as for God." Man's knowledge is "analogical to the knowledge God possesses, but it can never be

37 Clark, "Janus," 160.
38 Clark, "Janus," 163.
39 Clark, "Janus," 177.
40 Clark, "Janus," 161.

> identified with the knowledge" which God "possesses of the same proposition."[41]

At the time of the Clark-VanTil controversy, Herman Hoeksema saw that this understanding of analogical knowledge would be used in defense of the well-meant offer. He wrote that if the idea that "a proposition does not have the same meaning for God as for man" is

> introduced here as a basis for what follows, and if it was the real purpose of the complainants to persuade the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to adopt the Arminian doctrine of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed by the Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924, particularly the view that God is gracious to the reprobate, and that the preaching of the Gospel is a well-meaning offer of salvation on the part of God to all men—in other words, the doctrine that God sincerely seeks the salvation of those whom He will not save—this first point is quite important.[42]

This is exactly the use to which Clark puts this analogical idea. Clark claims this analogical idea to be equivalent to the archetypal/ectypal distinction, and on the basis of that he defends the well-meant offer. To God, salvation is only for the elect. But this proposition that God knows is not the same as the one we know. We know that God desires the salvation of all men who hear the gospel.

The claim that our knowledge is only analogical to God's is erroneous. The analogical idea essentially means that the believer can have no truth at all. The best that we can hope for is an analogy to the truth, but the truth will forever escape us. In this case the truth is that God desires the salvation only of the elect. But all we can know is that God desires the salvation of all men who come under the preaching of the gospel. The truth is not something we can know and ought not be something we are concerned with. Gordon Clark writes, "If God

41 Hoeksema, *Clark-VanTil,* 9-10. Cf. VanTil, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God,* ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 33ff., 177ff., 324; Reymond, *New Systematic Theology,* 97-102.

42 Hoeksema, *Clark-VanTil,* 11.

knows all truths and knows the correct meaning of every proposition, and if no proposition means to man what it means to God, so that God's knowledge and man's knowledge do not coincide at any single point, it follows by rigorous necessity that man can have no truth at all."[43]

We confess that the truth must be the same for us as it is for God. We do not know everything that God knows, nor do we know in the same way that God knows, but what we do know to be true is the same as God knows it. That is to say, the quantity of our knowledge and the way in which we know is different. It must be, for God is the infinite God and we are but finite creatures. But the quality of the knowledge that we do have is identical with that which God has. What we know about a certain proposition is identical to what God knows about that same proposition. Revelation requires that this be true. God's revelation to us is a revelation that is reliable and accurate. He reveals Himself to us as He actually is. He reveals in His Word to us the truth about the way He works. Faith requires that this be true as well.

> Accordingly, since the Scriptures require that saving faith be grounded in true knowledge (see Rom. 10:13-14), the church must vigorously oppose any linguistic or revelational theory, however well-intended, that would take from men and women the only ground of their knowledge of God and, accordingly, their only hope of salvation.[44]

IV. The Knowledge of God and the Gospel

A. The Incomprehensibility and Knowability of God

We confess with the Reformed standards that God is incomprehensible.[45] That is, He cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind. God is infinite; we are finite. He is transcendent; we are but creatures of the dust. He is spiritual; we are psychical. This means

43 Quoted in Reymond, *New Systematic Theology,* 99.

44 Reymond, *New Systematic Theology,* 102.

45 Belgic Confession, Art. 1 in Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:383; Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 2.1 in *The Subordinate Standards and Other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Offices of the Free Church of Scotland, 1955), 6.

that no man can ever know God exhaustively. There are depths and heights and breadths to God that we will never comprehend. Even in heaven we will never exhaust the knowledge of God but will continue ever to grow.

God is incomprehensible, but He is not unknowable. We cannot fully comprehend God, but we can and do know God. We can know God only because God has made Himself known to us. We have not ascended to Him, but He has stooped down to us and revealed Himself to us. The only possibility for the knowledge of God is God's own revelation of Himself. Apart from that revelation God is unknowable. Belgic Confession, Article 7 makes this fact plain. We know God because He has revealed Himself first of all in creation, but more clearly and fully in Holy Writ. Especially in God's Word do we know Him.

This knowledge that we have of God is and must be a *true* knowledge. We confess that what God has revealed to us in His Word must be true. By the knowledge we have through revelation we know God truly and accurately. If this were not true, we could have no faith. Question and Answer 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism defines one aspect of true faith as "a *certain* knowledge whereby I hold for *truth* all that God has revealed to us in His Word."[46] Our knowledge is certain. We hold for truth all that God has revealed. We have no doubts about what He has revealed. We are not confronted with paradoxes or contradictions in His Word.

The fact that our knowledge of God is true means that we must conceive of the archetypal/ectypal distinction differently than Clark does. Ectypal knowledge is the knowledge that the believer has of God as He has revealed Himself. This knowledge is qualitatively the same as archetypal knowledge. This understanding of the distinction includes the fact that there is a difference between how God knows and how we know. Archetypal knowledge is intuitive; ectypal knowledge is derived. This understanding also acknowledges that there is a difference in quantity between archetypal and ectypal knowledge. Archetypal knowledge is infinite and boundless; ectypal knowledge is finite and limited. In these ways the two are distinguished. Nevertheless, there is no difference in the *quality* of knowledge. What God

46 Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:313.

has revealed to us and what we know is true. What we know about a certain proposition is identical to God's knowledge of that same proposition as far as quality of knowledge.

B. Scripture on the Offer

This has implications for the idea of the well-meant offer that Clark propounds. The notion of a well-meant offer falls with Clark's understanding of the archetypal/ectypal distinction. Clark is correct in stating that the well-meant offer is a corollary to the archetypal/ectypal distinction—that is, *his* understanding of this distinction. The fact that Scripture and Reformed orthodoxy have rejected the well-meant offer of the gospel is an implicit denial of Clark's view of the archetypal/ectypal distinction.

Scripture does not permit any idea of a desire of God to save all who come under the preaching of the gospel. Instead, Scripture teaches that God's Word must be preached to all and sundry, but that gospel is intended to and actually does have a twofold effect. The command to repent and believe is general, but the promise is particular. By means of the preaching, God brings the elect believer to salvation. By means of that same preaching, God hardens the reprobate unbeliever in his sin and unbelief and leaves him further without excuse in the judgment day.

This is the teaching of Scripture in Isaiah 6:9-12:

> And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

God is here commissioning the prophet Isaiah to speak to the nation of Judah, which had gone astray into the worship of other gods. God is telling Isaiah to preach to these people and to call them to repentance. The people are to understand clearly what God is commanding them

to do. God says "hear ye indeed" and "see ye indeed." God's purpose is that they clearly understand but reject that which they are called to do. They are to hear the command to repent. But God's purpose is that that preaching be a means to harden them in their sin. And this is to continue until God judges them: "Until the cities be wasted…." God's intention in the preaching is not that the unbelieving people of Israel be saved, but His purpose is to harden them.

The same idea is found in II Corinthians 2:15-16. There Paul writes, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Paul is writing here about himself and all other preachers of the gospel. Those who faithfully proclaim the gospel are "unto God a sweet savour of Christ." They are a sweet savor to God in those that repent, believe the gospel, and are saved. But they are also a sweet savor in those who reject the Word, refuse to repent, and perish in their unbelief. Both are according to God's good purpose. The minister must understand that God uses him to be a savor of death unto death to some and a savor of life unto life to others. Through a man's preaching, God saves His people and hardens the unbelievers. In both cases a man is a sweet savor to God.

The idea of the well-meant offer is smashed on the rocks of Scripture's teaching in Matthew 22:1-14. There Jesus preaches the parable of the marriage feast. In the parable the king sends out his servants to call the people to the wedding feast of the king's son. Many refused to heed this call, so the king had his servants gather all whom they could find to the marriage feast. One who is brought to the feast is not clothed as he ought to be. He has not truly heeded the call to come prepared to the supper, so he is cast out. Jesus ends the parable with these words: "For many are called, but few are chosen (ἐκλεκτοί)." We see here the fact that God calls all and sundry through the preaching to repent and believe in the name of Jesus Christ. But only a few of those who were called externally are actually chosen. The man without the wedding garment was called, but he was not chosen. The call to repent and believe is general; the promise is particular, that is, only for the elect.

C. The Canons on the Offer

Try as they might to twist the creeds to teach a well-meant offer, the Reformed confessions do not teach such a doctrine. The Canons of Dordt especially are opposed to the idea of the well-meant offer of the gospel. This is true, first of all, from a historical perspective. The Canons were written against the Arminians who promoted a well-meant offer of the gospel themselves. The "Opinions of the Remonstrants" make this clear.

> 8. Whomever God calls to salvation, he calls seriously, that is, with a sincere and completely unhypocritical intention and will to save; nor do we assent to the opinion of those who hold that God calls certain ones externally whom he does not will to call internally, that is, as truly converted, even before the grace of calling has been rejected.
>
> 9. There is not in God a secret will which so contradicts the will of the same revealed in the Word that according to it (that is, the secret will) he does not will the conversion and salvation of the greatest part of those whom he seriously calls and invites by the Word of the Gospel and by his revealed will; and we do not here, as some say, acknowledge in God a holy simulation, or a double person.
>
> 10. Nor do we believe that God calls the reprobate, as they are called, to these ends: that he should the more harden them, or take away excuse, or punish them the more severely, or display their inability; nor, however, that they should be converted, should believe, and should be saved.[47]

That the Canons do not teach a well-meant offer of the gospel is also evident from an examination of the three most frequently cited articles. First, there is Canons 2.5:

> Moreover the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This

47 P.Y. DeJong, ed., *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 2008), 265-266.

> 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.[48]

The proponents of the free offer find in this article proof positive that the Canons teach the offer. They refer particularly to the fact that the promise of the gospel must 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." They read into this that there is a desire on the part of God to give the fulfillment of this promise to all who hear. This is not, however, what Article 5 teaches. Article 5 is simply saying that the gospel, which includes the call to repent and believe as well as the promise that all who repent and believe will be saved, must be proclaimed promiscuously. The article says nothing about God's intention or desire in such preaching. It simply calls the preacher to proclaim these words: "Everyone listening today, repent and believe in the crucified Christ! To all who repent and believe God will give everlasting life!" Nowhere is there expressed a desire on the part of God to give everlasting life to all who hear. The command comes to all in general. The promise is for all who repent and believe. And the only ones who repent and believe are the elect.

The proponents of the offer often refer to Canons 3/4.8:

> As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly shown in His Word what is pleasing to Him, namely, that those who are called should come to Him. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to Him and believe on Him.[49]

A careful reading of this article will reveal that the Reformed fathers were not teaching the free offer of the gospel here. We are met here with the will of God's decree. God decrees in the gospel that all men

48 Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:586.

49 *Confessions of the PRC,* 168. We have quoted from this source rather than from Schaff because the latter gives an inaccurate translation of this article. Cf. Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:565-7, 589.

repent and believe. Thus, all men are unfeignedly called (*serio vocantur*). This is a serious command that comes to all men who hear the gospel. And God reveals in His Word what all men are to do: they are to come to God. The activity of coming to God in Jesus Christ is the command that comes to all in the preaching. And God declares that this act is pleasing to Him. What this article does not teach is that it is pleasing to God that *all men* come to Him. The activity of coming to Him is pleasing to Him because it is according to His will. But we have here no expression of God's earnest desire to save all who hear. He is pleased only with those who do come to Him. To them—the elect—He gives eternal life and rest.

Finally, we have Canons 3/4.9:

> It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered (*oblato*) 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 Saviour teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii).[50]

The proponents of the free offer contend that the word "offer" used in this article has the meaning of a well-meant offer of God to all men. R. Scott Clark suggests that the word means "to offer with the intention that the offer should be fulfilled if the recipients meet the condition of trust in Christ."[51] The Latin word *oblato*, however, means first of all "to present" or "to set forth." Christ crucified is presented or set forth in the preaching of the gospel. To say that Christ is offered to all men who hear the gospel implies that Christ atoned for all. But that is the teaching of the Arminians that the Reformed fathers repudiated, particularly in the Second Head of the

50 Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:589.

51 Clark, "Janus," 169.

Canons. The meaning must, therefore, be that Christ is presented in the gospel.[52]

D. Reformed Theologians on the Offer

Reformed theologians of high standing have rejected the free offer. There is space only to list some of their names. Most notably men such as John Calvin,[53] Francis Turretin,[54] Simon VanVelzen,[55] Abraham Kuyper,[56] and Herman Hoeksema[57] all rejected the free offer. The opponents of the free offer are in good standing historically.

V. Conclusion

In this essay we have attempted to respond to the position put forth by R. Scott Clark. We have attempted first of all to evaluate and critique the foundation on which Clark has built his teaching of the well-meant offer. We are convinced that Clark holds a wrong understanding of the archetypal/ectypal distinction. He believes that there is a no point of contact between the two, between God's knowledge and the knowledge we have by revelation. He makes a separation between the *quality* of God's knowledge and the *quality* of our knowledge. For our part, we believe that the distinction ought to be made between the *quantity* of our knowledge and God's knowledge and the *way* in which we know and God knows. The quantity of God's knowledge is infinite while

52 Cf. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 48, 108.

53 Cf. *Institutes* 3.22, 24; Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 141-149; Engelsma, *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin; The Institutes in Summary* (Jenison, MI RFPA, 2009), 281ff.

54 Cf. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 151-172. Turretin co-authored the Formula Consensus Helvetica in 1675 in opposition to the hypothetical universalism of Amyraut. In this document he rejects the free offer. The Formula is found in A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 656-663.

55 Cf. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 106-107.

56 Cf. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 173-192.

57 Cf. Hoeksema, *Calvin, Berkhof and H.J. Kuiper: A Comparison* (Grand Rapids, 1930); Hoeksema, *Het Evangelie of DeJongste Aanval op de Waarheid der Souvereine Genade* (Grand Rapids: Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed churches, 1933); Hoeksema, *A Power of God;* Hoeksema, *Triple Breach.*

ours is finite. God knows intuitively while our knowledge is derived. But the quality of the knowledge we have by revelation is not different from God's knowledge. What we know from God's Word is true and is not in any way contradictory.

We have also attempted to show that behind Clark's wrong view of this distinction is a wrong view of knowledge. Following the lead of Cornelius Van Til, Clark argues that our knowledge is only *analogically* true. But doing this leaves the door open for contradictions and paradoxes in our knowledge. What we know is essentially different from the way things actually are. We are convinced that this undermines the very existence of systematic theology. We are also convinced that this is perilous for the faith and salvation of the child of God. If we are unsure of the truthfulness of our knowledge, our faith and salvation are unsure.

Finally, we have attempted to prove that the house that Clark builds on his shaky foundation is contrary to Scripture and Reformed orthodoxy. The idea of a well-meant offer in which the sovereign God tries to woo sinners to accept His love is entirely out of keeping with God's Word. It is a repudiation of all of the doctrines of grace. Election becomes conditional or non-existent. Christ's atoning work is made universal. Total depravity is scuttled in defense of man's free will. Grace is made resistible. The preservation of the saints is uncertain. Yet all the while this view is proclaimed to be a precious heritage of Reformed orthodoxy. One face looks Reformed. But more and more the face that appears Arminian is clearly seen.

A Janus, for sure.

We reject this Janus. We are convinced by Scripture and the Reformed tradition that the well-meant offer has no place in the orthodox camp. God's Word clearly teaches that the call is promiscuous, but the promise is particular. In faithfulness to God, therefore, we sound forth the call to repent and believe to the ends of the earth. And we are confident knowing that by such preaching God will gather His elect out of the nations, to the glory of His name.

APPENDIX:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FREE OFFER

A. Moïse Amyraut

Although the idea of a well-meant offer of the gospel has its roots in earlier periods of the church's history,[58] the offer is found clearly in the teachings of the French theologian Moïse Amyraut (1596-1664). One historian says that "Amyraut is the first to set forth a clear and clearly worked out conception of the free offer of the gospel."[59] Amyraut received his training in the university at Saumur in western France at the feet of the Scottish theologian John Cameron. Amyraut was appointed to teach at Saumur in 1633, a position he held until his death in 1664.[60]

The idea of the free offer really has its beginnings in Cameron, Amyraut's mentor. From him Amyraut learned what he would later develop into his doctrine of hypothetical universalism. Amyraut taught that Christ died for all men and that God well-meaningly offers salvation to all men on the condition of faith. "The cloak under which Amyraut thought to smuggle this Arminian contraband into the Reformed churches was his profession of double predestination."[61] But Amyraut conceived of predestination as subsequent to universal atonement, thus making predestination conditional. Amyraut also defended his doctrine on the basis of a distinction in the will of God. Really he posited two wills in God. The one will of God was particular and unconditional, that is, God willed only the salvation of the elect. The other will of God was universal and conditional, that is, God willed to save all men on condition of faith.[62]

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58 In his work *The History of the Free Offer* (Grandville, MI: Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1989) Herman Hanko traces the roots of the free offer all the way to the Semi-Pelagian controversy in the fifth century. He finds traces as well in the Arminians at the Synod of Dordt.

59 Hanko, *History,* 68.

60 *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York: Funk and Wagnals, 1908), 1:160-1.

61 Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 167.

62 Hanko, *History,* 63.

B. The Marrow Controversy

The teachings promoted by Amyraut were carried over to the British Isles. John Cameron, after finishing his labors in Saumur, returned to Scotland to teach at Glasgow. One of his students was John Davenant, who was influential among many of the delegates to the Westminster Assembly.[63]

These views, which were spreading among Scottish theologians, came to expression in the Marrow Controversy. The controversy arose out of the Auchterarder Presbytery. The Presbytery refused to license Candidate William Craig because he rejected the statement "It is not sound and orthodox doctrine to teach that we must forsake sin, in order to our coming to Christ."[64] There was an appeal to the General Assembly of 1717, which upheld Craig and condemned the Presbytery of Auchterarder. At that meeting Thomas Boston recommended the book *Marrow of Modern Divinity* written by Edward Fisher. This book was condemned in 1720 by the General Assembly, one of the reasons being that it taught the free offer and universal atonement.[65]

Men such as Thomas Boston, Ebenezer Erskine, and Ralph Erskine opposed this decision of the General Assembly and defended the free offer. For example, Ralph Erskine said the following in a sermon: "You may say, What shall I do then that I may be married to Christ? In one Word, if you would have Christ as your husband, O then entertain his suit, and hearken to his wooing and courting motions."[66] These men became known as "The Marrow Men" and eventually they split off and formed their own denomination.

C. Among the Dutch

The idea of the well-meant offer also had an influence on developments in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The idea of the free offer came to the Netherlands from two sources. First, it came directly from France, as persecuted Huguenots fled from France to

63 Hanko, *History,* 82-5.

64 Joseph H. Hall, "The Marrow Controversy: A Defense of Grace and the Free Offer of the Gospel," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 242.

65 Hanko, *History,* 101.

66 Quoted in Hall, "The Marrow Controversy," 255.

the Netherlands. Many carried with them the thinking of Saumur.[67] Second, there was a connection between the British and the Dutch. The Dutch received many ministers from Britain and also sent many of their own ministers to be trained in the Isles. Some of these men were enamored by the idea of the free offer and introduced it into the Netherlands. Also, there were many Puritan books that found their way into the homes of the Dutch people. Often the Dutch would meet in conventicles and read the writings of older theologians, including Puritan authors who taught the free offer.[68]

The free offer, which spread throughout the Netherlands during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, became an issue at the time of the Afscheiding. The Afscheiding was largely a movement among the common people, people who had been influenced by the writings of the Puritans. Eventually there was a rift in the Afscheiding churches, the churches in the northern provinces being more orthodox and those in the southern provinces being more liberal-minded. The free offer was espoused by such men as Anthony Brummelkamp and Helenius de Cock, both professors at the Afscheiding seminary at Kampen. It was openly taught by J. R. Kreulen, who also introduced a conditional view of the covenant into the churches of the Afscheiding. Kreulen wrote that in the preaching there is "a well-meant offer of the grace of God in Christ to all who live under the gospel, with the purpose that they all would accept and obtain possession of that salvation, only on the ground of that offer which comes to them as sinners." He went on to say that this well-meant offer is "a declaration made by the truthful and holy God and that He earnestly, truthfully, and well-meaningly goes out offering His grace in Christ to all who live under the preaching of the gospel, without deceit, insincerity, and dissembling."[69] From here it would spread throughout the Netherlands and even into America.[70]

67 Hanko, *History,* 158-60.

68 Hanko, *Contending for the Faith: The Rise of Heresy and the Development of the Truth* (Jenison, MI: RFPA, 2010), 348; Hanko, *History,* 163-4.

69 Quoted in Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism,* 105-6.

70 Hanko, "The *Afscheiding* and the Well-Meant Gospel Offer," in *Always Reforming: Continuation of the Sixteenth-Century Reformation,* ed. David J. Engelsma (Jenison, MI: RFPA, 2009), 74-78.

D. The Christian Reformed Church

The well-meant offer of the gospel was a crucial issue in the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in the early 1920s, which resulted in the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).[71] One Protestant Reformed historian has said that "this question of the gracious offer of the gospel became the chief point of controversy."[72]

The notion of a well-meant offer had entered the thinking of the CRC through her connection to the Dutch motherland. Many of those who emigrated from the Netherlands to America in the late nineteenth century had been convinced of the truth of the well-meant offer by Afscheiding ministers. The free offer was transplanted then into the CRC, because many of these immigrants joined the CRC upon their arrival in the States.[73] The offer was taught by such early CRC theologians as M. J. Bosma (1874-1912) and William Heyns. In his answer to the question "Is the doctrine of the particular election of some consistent with the general offer of the gospel to all?" Bosma writes, "Yes; indeed it is. The gospel offers salvation to all.... The non-elect may come if they will. …God is sincere in offering salvation to all…."[74] Heyns held to "the external call of the Gospel as a free, wellmeant [*sic*] offer of salvation." It is "a well-meant invitation from God to sinners to receive a portion in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Heyns says the external call "comes to the sinner with an offer of grace."[75]

71 For accounts of this history see among others James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 110-115; Hanko, *For Thy Truth's Sake: A Doctrinal History of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: RFPA, 2000), 47-66; Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America: Their Origin, Early History and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: First Protestant Reformed Church, 1936).

72 Hanko, *For Thy Truth's Sake,* 53.

73 Hanko, *Contending for the Faith,* 348-9.

74 M.J. Bosma, *Exposition of Reformed Doctrine: A Popular Explanation of the Most Essential Teachings of the Reformed Churches,* 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Smitter Book Company, 1927), 56-7.

75 William Heyns, *Manual of Reformed Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerd-

The controversy raged over the theory of common grace, which was raised to the level of an official dogma by the CRC Synod of Kalamazoo that met in 1924. The Synod of Kalamazoo set forth her understanding of common grace in what are called "The Three Points of Common Grace."[76] It was particularly the first point that established the idea of a well-meant offer:

> Concerning the first point, with regard to the favorable disposition of God toward mankind in general, and not only to the elect, Synod declares that according to the Scripture and the confessions it is determined that besides the saving grace of God, shown only to the elect unto eternal life, there is a certain kind of favor, or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evidenced by the quoted Scripture passages and from the Canons of Dort II, 5 and III and IV, 8 and 9, *which deals with the general offer of the Gospel*; whereas the quoted declarations of Reformed writers from the golden age of Reformed theology, also give evidence that our Reformed fathers from of old have advocated these opinions.[77]

The idea of a general or well-meant offer embedded in this point became known as "*het puntje van het eerste punt* (the little point of the first point)."

Among others, prominent CRC theologian Louis Berkhof used this occasion to defend the well-meant offer.[78] The idea of a well-meant offer was denied by then CRC ministers Herman Hoeksema, Henry Danhof, and George M. Ophoff. Eventually these three men were deposed, whereupon they formed a new denomination, the PRC. The PRC have officially condemned the teaching of

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mans, 1926), 239, 243.

76 For the Three Points, see *Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1924,* trans. Henry DeMots (Grand Rapids: Archives of the Christian Reformed Church, 2000), 145-7. Cf. also Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America,* 85-6.

77 *Acts of Synod of the CRC, 1924,* 145-6. Emphasis mine.

78 Louis Berkhof, *De Drie Punten in Alle Deelen Gereformeerd* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1925).

the well-meant offer in a document entitled "The Declaration of Principles."[79]

The issue of the well-meant offer was raised in the later history of the CRC as well. In the 1960s, when Prof. Harold Dekker defended the notion of universal atonement, appeal was made to the doctrine of the well-meant offer as proof of Christ's death for all men.[80] Dekker asked, "[I]s the salvation which the atonement provides *available* to all men?" His answer was, "Indeed it is. Otherwise the well-meant offer of the gospel is a farce, for it then offers sincerely to all men what cannot be sincerely said to be available to all."[81]

The well-meant offer also arose in the case of Dekker's friend Harry Boer. In the 1970s Boer wrote publicly in opposition to the doctrine of reprobation. In 1977 he served a gravamen to the CRC Synod in which he based his denial of reprobation in part on the well-meant offer.[82] The universal atonement taught by Dekker and the denial of reprobation by Boer were rejected, but neither man was disciplined.

In the year 2000, the issue was raised again by CRC minister Raymond A. Blacketer.[83] In an essay entitled "The Three Points in Most Parts Reformed: A Reexamination of the So-Called Well-Meant Offer of Salvation" Blacketer rejected the well-meant offer as unbiblical and un-Reformed. The CRC, however, continues to maintain the position of 1924.

79 The Declaration is found in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 412-431. The rejection of the free offer is found on pp. 412-6.

80 Hanko, *For Thy Truth's Sake,* 83-4.

81 Harold Dekker, "God So Loved—ALL Men!" in *The Best of The Reformed Journal,* ed. James D. Bratt and Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 57.

82 For Boer's gravamen see *Acts of Synod of the CRC, 1977* (Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1977), 665-679. Cf. also Boer's account of this history in his *The Doctrine of Reprobation in the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

83 Blacketer, "The Three Points in Most Parts Reformed," 37-65.

E. The Clark Case in the OPC

The well-meant offer was also an issue in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in 1944. This came up in connection with the ordination of Dr. Gordon H. Clark to the ministry in the OPC.[84] Among other things, complaints were lodged against Clark's denial of the well-meant offer. The complainants said,

> In the course of Dr. Clark's examination by Presbytery it became abundantly clear that his rationalism keeps him from doing justice to the precious teaching of Scripture that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect, and that he has no pleasure in any one's rejecting this offer but, contrariwise, would have all who hear accept it and be saved.[85]

The issue was finally resolved a few years later. In 1948, John Murray, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, submitted a report to the 15th General Assembly of the OPC in which he defended the free offer of the gospel. This report was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly and remains the official position of the OPC on the issue of the well-meant offer.[86]

84 For more on this history consult Michael A. Hakkenberg, "The Battle over the Ordination of Gordon H. Clark," in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,* ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 329-350; and Hoeksema, *The Clark-VanTil Controversy* (Hobbs, NM: Trinity Foundation, 1995).

85 Hoeksema, *Clark-VanTil,* 33-4.

86 John Murray, "The Free Offer of the Gospel," in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 4:113-132. In a footnote we read that this report "was subsequently reprinted in booklet form under the names of John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse but although Dr. Stonehouse, as a member of the committee, offered editorial suggestions, the material was written by Professor Murray: (p. 113, n. 1). Murray also discusses the free offer in "The Atonement and the Free Offer," in *Collected Writings,* 1:59-85; and in *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 134ff.

There seems to be an interesting connection between the offer as it was affirmed in the OPC and developments in the CRC. It is interesting that men who came to teach at Westminster Seminary from the CRC were some of the most ardent defenders of the free offer. These were men such as R. B. Kuiper, Ned Stonehouse, and particularly Cornelius VanTil. It is likely that these men introduced into the OPC the free offer that was affirmed by the CRC in 1924.[87]

87 Hanko, *History,* 136; Hoeksema, *Clark-VanTil,* 11, 33.

Challenges for Christian Ethics in Light of Contemporary Developments in Western Society

Dr. Jürgen-Burkhard Klautke

Note: Dr. Klautke teaches ethics at the Academy for Reformed Theology in Marburg, Germany. He is also a leader in the Confessing Evangelical-Reformed Congregation in Giessen, which is in correspondence with the Contact Committee (CC) of the PRCA. While in the States to meet with the CC, Dr. Klautke, by invitation, gave a lecture on Ethics at the PR seminary in September 2011, to an appreciative audience of students, professors, men of the CC, and area PR ministers. We are pleased that he made available to us a manuscript of that speech for printing in our Journal.

It is my great honor to speak to you here. Thank you for this extraordinarily kind invitation. Our very small Reformed ministry in Germany has benefited much from you and your work. We learned a lot from your theological literature.

When Prof. Gritters asked me to speak to you two months ago, he proposed an ethical topic. He said I could take something from one of my areas of work. I considered that, but I dismissed this idea. I would like you to think with me about something from the area of the foundations of Christian ethics. It is obvious that we have time to touch only a few aspects of this topic. I am going to speak about: *Challenges for Christian Ethics in Light of Contemporary Developments in Western Society.*

1. The understanding of ethics in Western society

When I speak to you about contemporary developments in Western society, I should probably give an analysis of that society or culture.

But that would go beyond the scope of this lecture. I would rather focus on ethics.

The first thing we have to realize is that the ethical in our society is no longer evident, and that is putting it mildly. Even those who are only slightly acquainted with the Holy Scriptures will not be surprised to hear that. Let us remember what the apostle Paul teaches in Romans 1:18ff.: Morality declines when a society rejects God. Rejection of God leads to perversion of morality. The apostle Paul illustrates this truth in particular from the area of sexuality.

In modern times it was especially Dostoyevski who showed in his works what consequences it has for the ethos if God is rejected.

But in order to understand how immorality could spread in our culture so quickly, we first have to understand the so-called *Moral Revolution* or *Culture Revolution* that took place in the sixties of the last century. The ideas of the following philosophers paved the way for this development: Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), and Jürgen Habermas (1929-). What were they actually teaching?

On the surface they seemed to be talking about various subjects. But the key message was basically always the same: All of history has been going completely wrong. Above all, it was a big mistake to conceive of history as progressive. The philosophers cited above say that the opposite is true. They claimed that history does not advance upwards but downwards.

Normally, people judge the advancement of a society by its technology. Technology is regarded as a benchmark of the advancement of a society. But according to Horkheimer and Adorno, technology actually reveals the exact opposite. It shows how broken our society is. In truth, Horkheimer and Adorno would say, all of history is an insane stagger leading into a bottomless pit. They saw history leading from the slingshot to the atomic bomb and to Auschwitz.

The philosophers' answer to why all this happened is this: The essence of thinking in the Western world is founded in the will to power. Technology is the expression of this way of thinking. Mankind can be saved from destruction only if it destroys this kind of thinking. What that means is this: Every authority must be disposed

of. For example, fathers are no longer allowed to be the head of their families. They also say that religion, or faith in God, implies power. And this legitimization of power must also be disposed of. Morality is not allowed to start with a "Thou shalt" or a "Thou shalt not."

It is important to understand that they propagated these demands as a doctrine of salvation. The message of the Moral Revolution was not (only) an invocation to transgress the commandments of God. God's commandments have been broken continually since the Fall. That was nothing new. The new thing was that the rejecting of the divine "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" was understood to be a means of salvation. They claimed: In order to be saved from this historical process that is motivated by the will to power you have to realize that every kind of divine "Thou shalt" is repressive. It leads man into bondage and plunges society into the abyss.

So what did these philosophers envision to be the way of escape?

The answer: They not only wanted to depose the contemporary culture based on the will to power. They were convinced that the world was so broken (so "self-destructive") because of the dominion of technology, that the only way to escape was that the person should retreat from this world.

This means that man should give up technology altogether. Man must be reconciled with nature as soon as possible. And this will be possible only if people return to a lifestyle of archaic naturalism.

Think of the hippie-movement. The famous slogan "Make love not war" was not only about having more fun in life. It was actually about salvation. For the salvation of mankind it was necessary to abandon rational thinking and flee into ecstasy and intoxication. To these men, sex and drugs were means of salvation. Marcuse spoke in this context of "retrogression." Their goal was the dissolution of personality: Consistent beliefs and convictions are not allowed anymore.

Particularly in matters of sexuality there must be no taboos. Society must be shaped in a pleasure-oriented way. In particular, they propagated homosexuality. These ideas were very popular 40 or 50 years ago.

What does this mean for today?

Nowadays these ideas are no longer aggressively propagated. Today, such ideas are by no means a doctrine of salvation. But today we are all the more influenced by the aftermath of this thinking. I will give you an example. I recently read about a student who majored in religious studies. As part of her studies, she had to conduct a statistical survey. So she went to a pastor and asked him several questions. After he had answered her questions, he asked her a question too. He asked her about her own worldview. He asked her if she believed in God. She was dumbfounded and then responded as follows: "No, I don't believe in things like that. You might as well have asked me if I was vegetarian…. But I am normal."

This answer is, in my opinion, symptomatic. In Western society today, belief in God has the same level of importance as whether you are a vegetarian or not. Believing in God is seen as a weird hobby. It is like a little quirk. It is not considered normal. I do admit that that is Europe. This happened in Germany. Things are probably still a bit different in America, but I assume that the difference is not one of principle but of degree.

This attitude towards God naturally has consequences for the conduct of life. I once met someone who was married for the third (or maybe even for the fourth) time. In between, he also had other relationships. He told me about his life. The way he talked about it was very revealing. In a nutshell he said: "Not everything in my life worked out perfectly. But in this way I had many experiences, and that enriches life too, doesn't it?…That's life…these things happen… but such is life." This response shows that he is not aware of any responsibility whatsoever. He has no knowledge of guilt.

By the way, it was Friedrich Nietzsche who wanted to base ethics on one's own life-experiences. After Nietzsche had proclaimed the death of God, he asked himself: What can I use for orientation in my life? His answer was: I must try out different things in life. I have to have experiences. In so doing, I develop myself, so that my personality matures. In this way I find orientation on how to behave in this world.

The Word of God says the exact opposite of what Nietzsche taught:

Trying out sin does not lead to maturity but ruins people. (This is one of the core messages of the book of Proverbs). We need only to look around in our society today to see whether people who live in sin become mature personalities or if they break down.

The philosophy of life that advises navigating through life according to your own experiences we call postmodernism! This means that the lifestyle of people around us has no clear direction or purpose. We see evidence of that attitude today in the way people talk about sexual intercourse. They say that it is better to be careful, or at least to use a condom, because you never know whether the other person has AIDS or not. They don't care about what God decrees about marriage as an unbreakable covenant.

How do people live in our society? Let me give you a general profile. In the business world people often follow Social-Darwinism: survival of the fittest. In private life they orient themselves by horoscopes. On the one hand family values are held high, and on the other hand people don't mind marrying three or four times. And they justify it by saying that man should be allowed to get experiences. It belongs to the quality of life! That's how one understands freedom.

If people want to be emotionally stimulated, they attend a sports event or go to a concert. Of course it is also possible to take part in a religious event. You just do what you feel like. People do not say they are against God. But religion is just a quirk, which might be useful for some but not for others.

2. Responses that are given to the neglect of moral boundaries

In a world that does not ask about God or believe in truth, we are called to proclaim the truth. People today do not know that it is the will of the Creator to call sinners to Him. It is incomprehensible to them that there is a God who calls sinners into friendship (personal relationship) with His son Jesus Christ. And this is true not only about society in general. Postmodern thinking and feeling did not leave our churches untouched. First of all, I want to present three ways that try to meet the challenge of the loss of moral values.

2.1 Emerging Church

The first possibility is that of adaptation, avoiding the problem. One observes that our contemporaries are not interested in biblical doctrine, or any kind of doctrine at all. They see it as no longer "relevant" for their lives. This is especially true concerning God's commandments. Pastors give their churches the impression that biblical doctrine and especially God's commandments are not really important. This is the self understanding of Emerging Churches. They no longer proclaim in the name of God: "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not," but they leave out the ethical aspects. Instead they entertain people. They thus deliberately adapt to the world. Paganism is integrated into the church.

One of the best examples of this is the Mars Hill Church here in Grandville. What they preach there is largely heresy. Rob Bell, for example, says: "Love wins, therefore hell cannot exist."

I personally think that this kind of preaching will little impress truly secular people. In fact, it is people with a church background who are attracted by such ideas. They do not want to live in the tension of not being conformed to this world, as Paul commands in Romans 12:2 ("*Be not conformed to this world*"). They draw back (Heb. 10:38). If this movement advocates any ethic at all, it is not personal obedience to God and His Word, but "social transformation."[1]

2.2. *Losing Our Virtue,* by David Wells

An entirely different approach is pursued by David Wells. He is a professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary (MA). In his book published in 1998 titled *Losing Our Virtue—Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision,*[2] he understands the present situation as a huge challenge for the church. The church must accept this challenge.

1 One of the first ones who argued in such a way was Peter F. Drucker, "The Age of Social Transformation," in: *The Atlantic Monthly* (November 1994), p. 53.

2 Wells, David, *Losing Our virtue, Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

First, he analyzes the disintegration of moral culture in Western (American) society. In his preface he compares American society with the society of Rome shortly before its downfall, when the Vandals took over the city without any real battle against the people of Rome or without (much) resistance from the inhabitants of Rome.

He also recalls Plato's and Aristotle's understanding of virtue. Further, he compares the new spirituality and the old spirituality. He makes important statements about the law of God. He describes the influences of secular emphases within the churches today (e.g., anti-aging-workshops; marriage counseling, etc.). He specially speaks about the psychologization of our culture. Finally he concludes:

> Today, the Church finds itself in the midst of a culture whose moral fabric is rotting and whose spirit is troubled. But as evening descends upon America, the prospects for Christian faith, I believe, could be bright. The Church, however, will have to have its moral vision restored….[3]

It is evident that Wells pursues a missionary aim with his book. He points to the church, the church-community-life, as being of central importance. With respect to the topic of interest to us here, he writes: "*The church itself is going to have to become more authentic morally….*"[4] The local church is also indispensable when it comes to a truly Christian conduct of life.

We will disagree with some things in Wells' book. For example, I am not convinced of his understanding of "virtues," which he has essentially taken over from Aristotle. I think it is not biblical. But all in all, Wells' book is very instructive. His cultural analysis, not least his insights on "*Whatever happened to sin,*"[5] belongs to the best I have read on this topic. His aim of calling Christians to be "morally authentic" is commendable.

3 Wells, p. 179.
4 Wells, p. 180.
5 Wells, pp. 180-196.

2.3. Bonhoeffer: Who remains steadfast?

I want to introduce you to someone who also thought about being "morally authentic." I am talking about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He served as a minister in the state church of Germany during the Third Reich. For us, Bonhoeffer is especially interesting because he did not think about this question at the desk but in rather difficult circumstances. After July 1942 the Secret State Police (Gestapo) of the Nazis observed him regularly. In December 1942 he took stock of how to behave living in a dictatorship.

The Nazis had come to power in January 1933. So Bonhoeffer entitled his reflections *After Ten Years.* In this article he wrote a chapter that is found in the English translation "Who Can Resist Temptation?" If you look for it on the Internet, you find it under that heading, [6] but unfortunately this title is not really correct. A better translation would be: "Who Remains Steadfast?" or "Who Bears Up?" or "Who Stays Firm?"

In this article he makes general remarks about how Christians can stand in a secularized, even antichristian, society. He seeks an answer to the question: "How can we keep the Christian ethos in such a world?"[7] As Bonhoeffer faces incredible challenges, he writes:

> The great masquerade of evil has confused all ethical concepts. The fact that evil can take on the appearance of light, benevolence, historical necessity and social justice is simply bewildering to someone who comes from our traditional ethical world; for the Christian, whose life is guided by the Bible, it is very much a confirmation of the profound evilness of evil.

Let's face it, Bonhoeffer writes these lines in the months the German troops were most victorious. They were fighting their way through

6 http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1514.

7 Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *After Ten Years.* In: *Letters and Papers from Prison.* [ed. Eberhard Bethge] (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p 14. Original: Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Widerstand und Ergebung*. München [Kaiser] 1980, p. 9-19.

Russia (at the Volga, Stalingrad) and Northern Africa. It goes without saying that this was propagated as a heroic defensive war, and many people were willing to believe this propaganda.

Later in this article he discusses how to live in such a world. First of all, he asked whether man could be guided by reason. He writes:

> The failure of those who claim to be, 'followers of *reason*', the people who, with the best of intentions, and in their naive blindness to reality, think they can put the collapsing edifice together again with a bit of reason is patently obvious. Their dim vision leads them to want to be fair to all sides and, as a result, they are ripped apart by the contradictions between the opposing forces without having achieved anything. Disappointed by the irrational nature of the world, they see themselves condemned to sterility, step resignedly aside or yield themselves up completely to the stronger party.

Another way of living could be fanaticism:

> The failure of all ethical *fanaticism* is even more shocking. The fanatic thinks that he can oppose the power of evil with the purity of principle. But like a bull he charges at the red rag instead of at the person holding it, tires and then succumbs. He gets tied up in insignificant details and falls into the trap set by his cleverer opponent.

Or you navigate by your own conscience:

> The man of *conscience* fights a lonely struggle against the overwhelming pressure of dilemmas requiring a decision. But the extent of the conflicts within which he has to choose—with no one to advise and support him but conscience—tears him apart. The countless honorable and seductive disguises in which evil approaches him make his conscience anxious and uncertain until he finally contents himself with salving his conscience rather than keeping it clear, until, in order not to despair, he lies to his own conscience; for the man for whom his conscience is his only support cannot understand that a bad conscience can be healthier and stronger than a deceived conscience.
>
> *Duty* seems to point the certain way out of the confusing mass of all the possible decisions that are available. In this case what has been

> ordered is taken as the most reliable thing to do, for the person who gives the order takes the responsibility and not the person carrying it out. But by restricting oneself to doing one's duty, one can never dare to act on one's own responsibility, yet only that kind of action can strike at the heart of evil and so overcome it. In the end, the man of duty will have to do his duty even towards the devil.
>
> But anyone who tries to hold his own in the world by exercising his personal *freedom*, anyone who values the necessary deed higher than the purity of his own conscience and reputation, anyone who is prepared to sacrifice a sterile principle to a fruitful compromise or even a sterile notion of the happy medium to a fruitful radicalism should watch out that his freedom does not bring him down. He will accept the bad in order to avoid something worse and in the process he will no longer be able to recognize that it is precisely that something worse, which he is trying to avoid, that may prove preferable. This is the very stuff of tragedies.
>
> In their flight from public conflict this or that person may find sanctuary in a private *virtuousness*. But he must close his eyes and shut his mouth in the face of the injustice around him. It is only at the cost of self-deception that he can avoid dirtying his hands with responsible action. In everything he does he will be continually haunted by what he has left undone. He will either die destroyed by this disquiet or become the most hypocritical of Pharisees.
>
> Who can remain steadfast? Only he for whom neither reason nor his principles, nor his conscience, nor his freedom, nor his virtue is the final measure of all things, but who is prepared to sacrifice all these when, in faith and bound solely to God, he is called to responsible action, and who in his life seeks nothing more than to respond to God's question and his call. Where are these responsible people? ....

Thus far the quotation of Bonhoeffer. It is only an excerpt of his thoughts. Later on he talks about civil courage. He also considers the importance of giving an answer to the question of success in ethics: Do you not have to ask whether what you intend to do has a chance of success? Is the prospect of a successful outcome important for Christian ethics?

To avoid a misunderstanding: In many regards Bonhoeffer is a liberal theologian. He certainly is not Reformed, as, for example, he

believes in a universal atonement. I certainly do not recommend Bonhoeffer. Much of what he wrote should be rejected. But, at least with respect to our topic, even though he was a largely liberal theologian, he came to the following conclusion: The only way for Christians to remain steadfast in times like these is commitment to the revelation of God, i.e., the Word of God. Otherwise you will perish.

3. What does the Word of God teach?

I have addressed these three approaches to make it clear that we are not the first to reflect on the challenges for Christian ethics in a time of major developments. Others have thought about this before us. I will refer to some of the things they said, but since it is good for theologians to go back into the infallible, inerrant Scriptures when speaking about any topic, let's do that now. I ask you to read with me Romans 1:5, in which the apostle Paul describes his ministry. We read there (KJV):

> By whom we have received grace and apostleship *for obedience to faith* among all nations for his name (δι΄οὗ ἐγάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ).

Obviously the apostle Paul not only describes his own service but that of all preachers of the gospel. For he uses the plural. He describes the essence of his service with the word:

> KJV: "for obedience to the faith" (ὑπακοὴν πίστεως).

That this statement is important is illustrated by the fact that it appears at the end of the letter to the Romans 16:25-26 (KJV):

> Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations *for the obedience of faith* (…εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶντα τὰ ἔθνη).

The question is, how the word group "εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως" should be translated. I want to concentrate on the two most obvious possibilities:

1. You could translate this phrase with an objective genitive, as the KJV does: "*for obedience to faith*" among all nations.

Then the meaning is this: Servants of God call everyone to obedience that is subjected (submitted) to faith: They preach faith and call all men to obey this faith.

2. The second possibility is a translation as a subjective genitive. The NIV translates thus: "*the obedience that comes from faith.*"

The meaning is this: God's servants proclaim an obedience that is a consequence of faith.

As you probably know from your Greek lessons, there are also other ways to translate this genitive construction. For example, one can understand it as an explicative genitive. Then the meaning is this: "*obedience which is faith.*" But let us leave this and other possibilities aside.

If we want to translate this phrase as an objective genitive, we could point to the longer tradition of Bible translation. We could also point to Romans 6:17 as supporting this:

> "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (ὑπακούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθατε τύπον διδαχῆς).

This thought is commonly used in other parts of the New Testament too. For example in Acts 6:7: "*obedient to the faith."* So it is theologically, and with regard to content, not wrong to translate it this way. But the problem with this translation seems to be that πίστεως carries no article. The text does not say εἰς ὑπακοὴν τῆς πίστεως (as according to the King James Version). The absence of the article seems rather to indicate a subjective genitive: "*obedience that flows out of faith*." From what kind of faith does obedience flow?

A few verses later the apostle writes that the Gentiles live in disobedience towards God (Rom. 1:18). They have repressed that which is known of God in creation (Rom. 1:19). They did not glorify God

but fell into the folly of idolatry (Rom. 1:22-23). In response God gave them up into sexual immorality (Rom. 1:24-28).

Why does Paul write this? Please note the context. Romans 1:18 begins with "for." This means that something is being argued. What is being argued? We have to look what it says before that. So let's go back. Then we read Romans 1:17. This verse also begins with "for." So we have to go back further. Even verse 16 begins with a "for." Finally we come to verses 14 and 15. Here Paul's argument becomes clear. We read there:

> I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also! (Rom. 1:14-15, KJV).

Paul shows why it is absolutely necessary for him to bring the gospel to Rome. The first reason is: "*the gospel is the power of God*..." (Rom. 1:16-17).

The second reason is: The Gentiles have suppressed the revelation they had received in creation (Rom. 1:18ff.). Since the Jews had also rejected the revelation that they had received at Mount Sinai (Rom. 2:9 through 3:8), the whole world is subjected to the judgment of God (Rom. 3:19). Thus the only way to be saved is by faith in the gospel (Rom. 3:31ff.). This is exactly the ministry Paul describes in Romans 1:5. By faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, disobedient Gentiles become obedient.

The creed of the Old Testament: The *sch'ma Israel*: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord*" (Deut. 6:4) once made a distinction between the covenant people in the old dispensation and the idolatrous Gentiles. If the Gentiles (τὰ ϵθνη) now believe and are thus made obedient (please note the expression: "*to make the Gentiles obedient,*" in Rom. 15:18), then the middle wall of partition is removed. Then it is about Jews and gentiles becoming obedient to the gospel (see further: Rom. 10:16-18).

In I Thessalonians 1:8-10 we read what obedience that flows out of faith looks like:

> For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (compare also Acts 17:30, 31).

It is plain that the service of the apostle(s), yes of all preachers, is a proclamation of obedience, which flows out of faith.

4. Answers given to contemporary challenges for Christian ethics

4.1. Christian ethics is revealed ethics

If we want to say what Romans 1 means in light of contemporary developments in Western society, we will realize that Christian ethics is always based on the revelation of the living God. Christian ethics cannot originate from anyone or anywhere else! There is no Christian ethics apart from divine revelation: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee…!" (Micah 6:8).

If we argue for that today, then we will naturally be confronted with objections: "Why do we have to be told what is good and what is evil? Can man not find this out for himself without any special revelation from God?"

If I am right, then this objection can be divided into two broad questions.

First of all, we want to deal with the following assumption: There is such a thing as knowledge of good and evil that flows from "natural law" or "human rights," which is recognizable through reason, is it not?

Secondly, we deal with the conception that the Gentiles can also be a morally exemplary people, can they not? A life without God's law does not automatically mean a life without morality, does it?

Let us respond to these objections.

4.1.1. There is no basis for ethics apart from the special revelation of God

Natural Law?

The objection that man can know without special revelation what is good and what is evil is, if I am correct, nowadays discussed (again) in the context of natural law. I want to remark here: If you argue that ethics can be founded on natural law, then please define which natural law you mean? Let's quickly delve into history, starting in England.

John Locke (1632-1704) came up with four principles out of which in his opinion morality proceeds: 1. Reason; 2. the will of God; 3. common good (the welfare of the public); and 4. self-love (love of self). These four principles, according to Locke, arise from reason. He claimed that we need the Word of God only to confirm what we already know from reason.

Richard Cumberland (1631-1718) selected from these four principles the common good as decisive for the foundation of a legal order.

Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) was of the opinion that the ideas of the good are inherent in every human being. (Every human being has an innate sense of what is right and what is wrong.)

Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) said that our perception (our feeling) of God gives us the idea of morality. Our natural "self affections" (desires and needs) come out of nature and are by no means selfish. This is how he argued: The affections always want to preserve the cosmos as whole because they themselves are part of the universe.

For *David Hume* (1711-1776) the affections were a reliable starting point for the knowledge of virtue. He mainly thought of "compassion" and "sympathy."

To sum up: When English moral philosophers thought about natural law they mainly dealt with the significance of affections.

In *France* the discussion about natural law was different, in that they focused on the conception of man (as a whole).

The physician and philosopher *Julien Offray de La Mettrie* (1709-1751) derived the equality of all men from nature. In France, therefore,

the principle of equality became dominant in the discussion of natural law.

Voltaire (1694-1778) believed in an inherent natural basis of morality: Man is good by nature.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was so convinced of the inherent goodness of man that he argued that man could regain his lost God-likeness by going back to nature. However, his reflections on the goodness of man did not discourage him from demanding his "wife" to deliver his children to an orphanage as soon as they were born.

Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach (1723-1789) even wanted to abolish every kind of punishment because of (the laws of) nature. According to him, every moral or immoral act had natural causes. Consequently, he claimed, the physiological necessities of a crime needed to be analyzed instead of punished. Today we would say: The delinquent should not be brought before a judge but to a social worker. This social worker is supposed to analyze the criminal's inner life and heal him or her.

It is clear that, in the age of Enlightenment, ethics was autonomous. One did not hold to atheism. But people did not want to see God as the source of ethics. They wanted to base ethics on reason. It was *Immanuel Kant* (1724-1804) who smashed this way of thinking.

In the years after Kant, some people still took nature as the basis for ethics. Think of *Albert Schweitzer* (1875-1965). He wanted to base ethics on the "reverence for life." But he was not able to convey this ethics in a rationally intelligible way.

Others derived a completely different ethics from nature. Think of *Social-Darwinism*. The first advocate of these ideas was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) held this position most eminently. We may also think of the ideas of National-Socialism, which were partly derived from these ideas.

In short: The question is: Which model of "natural law" should we base our ethics on? Which natural law is thought to be derivable from reason alone? It seems everyone is allowed to make his own choice.

Human Rights?

The idea of human rights appeared in the context of the American Revolution (*George Washington*-1732-1799; *Thomas Jefferson*-1743-1826; *Alexander Hamilton*-1757/1755-1804) and the French Revolution. But soon there was disagreement about what an inalienable right actually is. I want to point only to two things:

The idea of human rights originally focused on the individual human being. Human rights were about defining the limits of the state in relation to the individual. These individual rights were reinterpreted in socialism. Socialists spoke of "collective human rights." This concept contradicts entirely the original understanding of human rights. For now it became the (Communist) party that decided, in the name of "collective human rights," what individuals may or may not do.

But what about human rights as the basis for ethics in Western societies? The fragility of human rights reveals itself when abortion, that is the killing of unborn harmless babies, is propagated as a human right because anything else would be "misogynistic." We also can think of the contemporary discussion on euthanasia in the name of human rights.

Result

Maybe it was possible to believe in a common basis for ethics apart from special revelation of God 300 years ago. But this illusion could be maintained only because the moral principles of the people were still shaped by the Bible.

Possibly this thinking could even prevail to the nineteenth and even beginning twentieth century. But this was possible in that time only because even Christian circles were drawn to (German) idealism. But it should be clear today that this was a wrong track, especially after experiencing what people did to each other in the twentieth century.

4.1.2. The sinner is not an amoral being

When asking for the basis for Christian ethics in the face of contemporary developments, you have to deal with a second objection. People say, you cannot claim that people living without the commandments of God live without morals. The answer to that objection is:

It is true that it is wrong to claim that only Christians care about right and wrong. The Holy Scriptures do not teach this anywhere.

It was J.J. Rousseau who spoke of so-called innocent pagans. The Holy Scriptures do not say this anywhere. On the contrary! Scripture teaches that man is an immoral being since the fall. But it does not teach anywhere that man is an amoral being. That is what the apostle Paul says in Romans 2:1:

> Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

This is what Paul says here: Every human being applies moral standards. There is no human being that does not have moral standards. This becomes clear when they apply them to others. The problem is: Human beings do not adhere to their own standards. That is what condemns them.

This fact becomes clear in the nursery. Once in a while it happens that one child takes a toy away from the other. Then there will be tears! The child runs to its mother and complains about his brother or sister, because he or she took something away from him.

Just wait ten minutes: The same child that had a very distinct sense of possession does exactly the same thing. He takes something away from his brother or his sister because he wants to play with it.

We see two things here. We see that no human being is amoral. Even small children are outraged when something is taken away from them. And very soon they do exactly the same thing. That is Paul's point when he says: "for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things." In other words, the fact that man thinks about morality in applying it to others shows that man is not amoral.

The conclusion that Paul draws is not that all men are able to do good things. Instead he reasons: It is not unrighteous for God to judge man; for man does not meet the standards that he applies to others.

Let me remind you that Romans 1:18 through 3:20 is not the foundation for natural theology or natural ethics. The opposite is the

case. Paul wants to argue for one thing in this long passage: Why it is absolutely necessary to proclaim the word of truth: Because man goes astray when he is not told the truth. So Paul is debtor to preach the gospel everywhere (Rom. 1:14-15).

In his commentary on the letter to the Romans, C.H. Dodd understands the wrath of God as "some process of effect in the realm of objective facts."[8] Maybe he has to interpret what Paul writes on "the wrath of God from heaven" in that way. After all, he has to defend his Postmillennialism…. But when Paul speaks about the wrath of God that is revealed from heaven, he is not talking about the inevitable necessity of God presenting Himself once in a while as wrathful, and apart from that He shines in all that's fair. That is certainly not Paul's point. Rather, we are presented here a wrathful God from heaven (!). He plunges sinners who oppose Him into ruin. People who refuse to give God the glory and honor He deserves are responsible for their deeds. God gives them over to their vain thoughts and loss of their hearts.

4.2. Ethics are an indispensable part of the proclamation of God's Word

From the fact that there is no ethics apart from the revelation of God follows that it is our indispensable duty to proclaim the faith out of which obedience comes. Romans 1:5 is still true today in the age of postmodernism.

Saying this does not mean running from the difficulties we face half a century after the Moral Revolution.

The temptation to preach a faith that excludes obedience is great. But that would be a disastrous distortion of the gospel. The Emerging Churches do not become as Gentiles for the Gentiles, nor as postmoderns for the postmodernists, but what is happening is a betrayal of the gospel. It is heresy. It is also apostasy. This way is fatal to the church of Jesus Christ. It leads to the downfall of the church. It can be tedious to teach "that form of doctrine which was delivered to us" (Rom. 6:17), for example in catechism, but to nothing else we are called.

8 Dodd, C.H. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London, 1959), p. 49.

Another problem today is selective listening. The postmodern philosophers Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jean Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) call it deconstruction. They mean that the way in which information is processed today is that everyone constructs his own life philosophy. From what they hear, they select. It seems clear that there is a real danger of this attitude taking root in the church. Then people construct their own "patchwork religion" according to their own needs or whatever.

The only solution I see to this problem is that we strive hard to pass on that form of doctrine that was delivered to us: Teaching *doctrine,* teaching *sound* doctrine, and once again I say teaching sound *biblical* doctrine. That is why preaching is indispensable for public worship. It has never been as important as it is today.

Of course, the reading of the law should not be neglected. Because this world lives in open rebellion against God's Word. God's church always lives in opposition to the world. The call to contextualize the gospel into a society has its limits, where it leads to adaptation of truth to people's needs.

4.3. Obedience to the commandments of God leads to freedom

Let's dig a little bit deeper. What are we supposed to preach to postmodern man today? What kind of obedience is that, that flows out of faith?

It seems clear that it is not an obedience that flows from one's own pleasure. But I remind you how God introduces Himself at the beginning of the Ten Commandments: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:1-2).

By giving the law, God acted as the one who had led the people out of bondage. He liberated man from slavery. He liberated man from slavery to other men. In so doing, God declares to His people that only a society that accepts His commandments can be truly free. Obedience to the commandments of God and freedom do not contradict one another but belong to one another.

Conversely this means that, to the extent in which God's commandments are disregarded, bondage returns. If a society disobeys

God and His commandments, it loses its freedom. The Old Testament, from Moses to Jeremiah, proclaims that if you turn away from the law of God, you will perish. That happened in the Babylonian captivity.

That's basically still true today. Let's consider the first commandment that God has linked to a promise: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This means that if a society does not honor father and mother, if authority is not respected, such a society will not survive for a long time. It will inevitably perish.

Since the fall, man lives in fear that if he obeys God he has to give up his needs. Adam and Eve thought that God wanted to withhold something from them by not allowing them to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Since the Moral Revolution, this fear has probably not become smaller. The fear is that obedience to the law of God might be an irrational act of subjection. Man is afraid that God demands a blind obedience of man that throws him into bondage and takes away his individuality.

From this perspective today, it is not unimportant to stress that obedience to God is always an obedience in the frame of God's covenant. Obedience is not just about conformity to a certain number of commands. It is (more) about fellowship with a living God. Obedience to the commandments is nothing but a life *coram deo*. God's commandments do not destroy us but lead us into freedom.

Freedom is not found in doing whatever you want, but in doing what you were created by God to do. Freedom is a category of the covenant.

Moreover, this obedience is made possible by the Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:33). We should not misunderstand this to mean that it is all easy. The struggle against the chaotic instincts of our flesh, to a life before God, does not take place without dramatic inner conflicts. We find ourselves in a battle between spirit and flesh (Gal. 5:16-26). The apostle talks about "mortifying the acts of the flesh through the spirit" (Rom. 8:13). That is not easy! Being a Christian is not soft. It is hard. It means bearing the cross. And it is good to be in a church. That supports you in the battle.

5. Who remains steadfast?

Let's reconsider Bonhoeffer's question and try to find an answer for our situation: Who remains steadfast in a time that is marked by decisive changes in Western (postmodern) society?

Reformed Christians have the privilege of not having to answer by pointing to their own actions. They know and confess, together with the words of the Canons of Dordrecht, that it is God and God alone who preserves (who keeps us steadfast). He is the Lord who will perfect the good work that He has begun in His elect. But the same Canons also show us another aspect:

> Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, the world and the flesh… (Fifth Head, Article 4).

The Word of God teaches clearly that the elect are ordained to live holy and without blame (Eph. 1:4).

I was asked to speak to you on an ethical topic this afternoon. It was supposed to be about practical living before God. For reasons of time, I was able to give you only certain aspects that have to do with the Christians' life in face of the developments, trends, and heresies in the twenty-first century.

If, at the end of this lecture, you come to the conclusion that he hasn't said much that we didn't already know from the Word of God, then you probably have not completely misunderstood this lecture.

Thank you very much for your attention! ●

Book Reviews

The Fathers of the Church: From Clement of Rome to Augustine of Hippo, by Pope Benedict XVI, edited and annotated by Joseph T. Lienhard, S. J. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009. Pp. x + 179. $15.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Angus Stewart.]

The apostle John declares, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (II John 9). This includes the apostate church of Rome, which officially and creedally denies that Christ alone is the full and sufficient Saviour, mediator, and Lord, with its many abominations: mariolatry, papal authority and primacy, transubstantiation and worship of the host, universal atonement (suspended on the alleged free will of the sinner), purgatory, syncretism with pagan religions, evolutionism, etc. The aged disciple continues with this warning against heretical teachers: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine [i.e., the true doctrine of Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (vv. 10-11).

What would John the divine have said of a prominent Christian publishing house, historically in the Dutch Reformed tradition, printing and promoting a book by the Roman pope, probably the greatest of the "antichrists" in our day (I John 2:18)? In printing *The Fathers of the Church*, whatever prestige and reputation for orthodoxy that Eerdmans enjoys—and I, for one, have many fine books of theirs on my shelves—is lent in support of Benedict XVI, who claims to be "The Holy Father," the "Vicar of Christ," the "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal church," etc.

What a time to publish a book by the pope! And what a pope for Eerdmans to publish! Joseph Alois Ratzinger, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1981-2005) and Dean of the College of Cardinals (2002-2005) and pope (2005-), is probably as well-versed in the scandal of paedophile and homosexual Roman priests as anyone. Despite the claims of some Roman

Catholics, he is deeply involved in Rome's cover-up and ineffectual church discipline. Indeed, he is the head of the whole rotten institution!

The pope's new book consists of thirty-six short chapters covering twenty-six church fathers, six of whom receive two chapters (Origen, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, and Jerome) and one (Augustine) is treated in five chapters.

Appropriately, the "Foreword" to Benedict XVI's book is written by a Jesuit, a member of that Romish order raised up by Satan to hinder the Reformation by attacking the gospel and persecuting the church of Jesus Christ. It was especially "successful" in Hapsburg lands.

The pope's first sentence in his first chapter begins by introducing the Roman claims of Petrine succession: "St. Clement, bishop of Rome in the last years of the first century, was the third successor of Peter, after Linus and Anacletus" (1). In the pope's last five chapters, those on Augustine (who received more than twice the length of the treatment of any of the other twenty-five fathers), Benedict XVI fails to mention anything about the Bishop of Hippo's greatest contribution to Christian teaching: his biblical doctrine of God's sovereign grace in Jesus Christ, rooted in (double) predestination. All we get is a single reference to "Pelagianism" (140) and not even a single reference to Semi-Pelagianism. The reason is not hard to find: Romanism is historically Semi-Pelagian. Nowadays, much of it is nearer Pelagianism, with a liberal dose of humanism, liberation theology, and syncretism thrown in.

John Calvin rightly applies Zechariah 13:2-5 to the false prophecy, superstition, and "filthy clergy" of Romanism. His warning and exhortation to preachers would apply equally well to Christian publishers: "Whosoever then desires to perform all the duties of a good and faithful pastor, ought firmly to resolve, not only to abstain from all impure doctrines, and simply to assert what is true, but also to detect all corruptions which are injurious to religion, to recover men from the deceptions of Satan, and in short, avowedly to carry on war with all superstitions" (Comm. on Zech. 13:2).

Doubtless, some at the judgment day will rise up against the

fools at Eerdmans, pleading that they were led astray and/or were confirmed in their errors by reading a book by the Roman Antichrist published by a purportedly Christian book company.

One wonders if this title will make Eerdmans much money. Perhaps the proceeds should go into buying a potter's field. ■

The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys, by Mark A. Noll. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010. 330 pages. $24.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Douglas Kuiper.]

This is the first book in a five-volume series that charts the history of what is called "evangelicalism." In this volume, Mark Noll (well-known church historian, and history professor at the University of Notre Dame) treats the history of this movement from approximately 1740 to 1790. Complementing this volume, John Wolffe has written *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers, and Finney* (2005), which covers the years 1790-1840; and David W. Bebbington covers approximately the next half century in his book *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (published in 2007). Noll's book was originally published in 2003 and has recently been reprinted in a paperback edition.

A History of Protestant Christianity in the 1700s

The value of this book is that it provides a wide sweep of the history of Protestant (that is, exclusive of Roman Catholic) Christianity in Great Britain, Ireland, and the American colonies and states—those places where the evangelical movement began.

The first two chapters set the stage for recounting this history. In the first chapter, Noll surveys the political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual landscape of Great Britain, Ireland, and the American colonies in the late 1600s and

early 1700s. In chapter two he narrows the focus by stating various factors that paved the way for the rise of evangelicalism. These factors include the state of English Puritanism, continental pietism, and High-Church Anglicanism, as well as the spread of education, persecution of Protestants, and increasing numbers of life-changing conversions.

The real history begins in chapter three ("Revival, 1734-1738"), in which the reader is introduced to Jonathan Edwards in New England, Daniel Rowland in Wales, George Whitefield in England and America, Gilbert Tennent in New Jersey, John and Charles Wesley in Georgia (as well as the Moravian influence in the same state), Howell Harris and Howell Davies in England and Wales, and other lesser known men in Great Britain.

Whitefield's promotion of Calvinistic doctrine in America (1740) and Scotland (1742), and John Wesley's opposition to Calvinism and promotion of Anglican (Wesleyan) Methodism, are treated in chapter four ("Revival, Fragmentation, Consolidation, 1738-1745"). That Whitefield took "the radical step of beginning to preach out of doors" (102), an example that others quickly followed, is one notable development during this period. A second is the emergence of "evangelical preaching...as a distinct form of Christian proclamation" (132)—which preaching was characterized by a strong emphasis on the damnation of those sinners who rejected the gospel, as well as a description of "the origin, nature, and process of saving faith in Jesus Christ" (133). And a third development is that these preachers began also to publish literature as a means to spread their message.

The next quarter century (chapter 6: "Development, 1745-1770") was one of "dramatic expansion and diversification" (155). In England, the movement grew to include Baptist and Independent churches, and Baptist churches in America became evangelical even more quickly than Baptist churches in England. Geographically, the movement expanded to Ireland and the West Indies. The significant influence of the Moravians is noted: they led the way in the expansion to the West Indies, and they preached to the African Americans, considering black men to be the equal of white men. The period ended

with the death of Whitefield, and with Francis Asbury's arrival in America—both of which events resulted in the weakening of Calvinistic evangelicalism in America.

Chapter seven ("Diversification, 1770-1795") covers the last quarter century covered in Noll's book. In Great Britain, partly through the work of Robert and James Haldane, evangelicalism resulted in the strengthening of the Nonconformist movement. Helping to popularize the movement on that same island were John Newton and John Erskine.

Meanwhile, one leading evangelical took an unprecedented step: John Wesley singlehandedly ordained two men to serve in America, and sent a third as a bishop. Brother Charles, never completely in agreement with the more influential John, expressed his concern about John's unsanctioned actions poetically and sarcastically:

> So easily are Bishops made
> By man's, or woman's whim?
> W----- (Wesley, DJK) his hands on C---- (Coke, DJK) hath laid,
> But who laid hands on Him?
> It matters not, if Both are One,
> Or different in degree,
> For lo! Ye see contain'd in John
> The whole of Presbytery. (204)

After the Revolutionary War in America, as the population began to spread westward, the practice of itinerant preaching circuits developed. Evangelicals also turned their attention to true mission work, as David Brainerd, David Zeisberger, and the Moravians brought the gospel to the American Indians. Finally, opposition to church tradition increased, led by men such as Alexander Kilham, James O'Kelly, Henry Alline, and Richard Allen. The latter was influential in the development of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

As would be expected of a historian, Noll not only presents the history but also analyzes it. Attempting to explain the origin of this movement in chapter five ("Explanations"), Noll refers us to the Holy Spirit being at work, to the Holy Spirit's use of young, gifted, energetic men; to the fact that the political, ideological, social, and ecclesiastical changes of that day required the old gos-

pel message to be conveyed in a way that suited the present times; and to the "dramatically heightened concern for the assurance of salvation" (151) that people sought.

In chapter 8 ("In the World") Noll demonstrates that evangelicalism was as interested in the affairs of society, as it was in the content of preaching. Particularly he turns to the matter of slavery: William Wilberforce was influential in getting some stateside evangelicals to oppose the slave trade. Yet many southern slave owners, themselves evangelicals, considered the personal advantage of slaveholding to outweigh any evangelical concerns.

Finally, arguing that evangelicalism was "True Religion" (chapter 9)—true religion, "as opposed to formal, inherited, nominal, simply traditional or corruption" religion, 262—Noll points to the fact that evangelicalism disrupted traditional gender roles (the voice of a woman was heard, and women became more influential); that its teachings were fundamentally Christian (most believed the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, Christ's divinity, substitutionary atonement, justification by faith; that the great theological disputes among evangelicals were those that always have and still do divide Arminians and Calvinists); that it produced many hymns, still popular today; and that its effect was piety and holiness of life in those who fell under its influence.

"Evangelicalism"?

But what is this Protestant evangelicalism, the history of which Noll treats?

Its defining principle, Noll tells us in the introduction, is "unswerving belief in the need for conversion (the new birth) and the necessity of a life of active holiness (the power of godliness)" (15). The term "evangelical," both in Noll's book and in others of the series, designates "a set of convictions, practices, habits, and oppositions that resemble what Europeans describe as 'pietism'" (17). It is a movement, not limited to any denomination, but found in all branches of Protestantism, and even over the years among some Pentecostals and Catholics who came to find shelter under this umbrella. Noll gives four key ingredients of this movement: a recognition of the need for conversion, a conviction that the

Bible contains spiritual truth, the dedication of lives to the service of God, and the conviction that Christ's death provided reconciliation (19).

Noll himself neither invented the term "evangelicalism," nor is he first to describe it, but he describes a term already in use, and sets forth the history of a movement that many assume to be a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

If one buys into the assumptions on which the book is based—that this evangelicalism, "what Europeans describe as 'pietism' " (17), was a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit with a view to the saving of the church of Christ—one will find no fault with the book.

If one questions these assumptions, as I do, then the value of this book is limited to the historical data it provides.

This "evangelicalism" must be distinguished from "evangelism," the preaching of the true gospel. Perhaps some of these evangelicals preached the true gospel, by which God saved some of His elect; I would not question that. But as a whole, this evangelicalism was not the preaching of the pure gospel.

Noll's book makes clear that this was more of an ecumenical movement, a movement uniting Protestant Christians of every sort, so that today Pentecostals and Roman Catholics are included under the umbrella term of "evangelical."

This ecumenical evangelicalism involved, at least in some instances, a despising of church order and church government: "By allowing authentic Christian experience to take precedence over inherited church order, the Baptist Joseph Dimock...demonstrated that [he was] evangelical" (292). The reference to "inherited church order" here is not to any particular church order, such as Baptist, Anglican, or Reformed; the reference is to the fact that Joseph Dimock was so moved by the preaching of others that he, on his own accord, *without any education or sanction from the churches*, began to preach itinerantly. One proves he is truly evangelical by simply going it on his own, because he has a moving message to bring.

In the period of history that Noll treats, as well as today, this ecumenical evangelicalism was made possible by reducing the fundamental elements of the gospel to believing the necessity

of Christ's atoning death and seeing the need for conversion and vibrant living (19). No genuine child of God should minimize the need for these; but the gospel is much richer and fuller than this. Noll does say that all but a few of these evangelicals "believed in original sin, ...justification by faith, ...substitutionary atonement, ...and sanctification in and through the power of the Holy Spirit" (269). I think he is mistaken. They all used these terms, no doubt, as do Christians today, but they did not all understand the same things by them—which calls into question the *unity* of evangelicalism as a *movement*. Then, evangelicals used these terms but did not always give the term the full, scriptural meaning. To use the term "justification by faith" is not the same as teaching justification by faith *alone*; and "substitionary atonement" is a nice term that means little, if Christ is viewed as a substitute for all humanity, or if man must add to Christ's atoning work. Noll's own explanation of justification by faith leads the Reformed reader to suspect that the ecumenical evangelicals of whom Noll writes were not all agreed on what the term meant: "humans...redeemed by an act of faith when they relied on what God accomplished for needy sinners in the person and work of Jesus Christ" (269). This is not what the Scriptures teach justification by faith alone to be.

My sense, as I was reading the book, that the gospel was jettisoned by this movement grew stronger, and was cemented firmly by the time I read the third to the last paragraph in the book: "At its worst, this new evangelicalism neglected, caricatured and distorted the inherited traditions of Reformation Protestantism" (292). Noll is candid. Then: "Most important, evangelicals could trivialize the Christian gospel by treating it as a ballyhooed commodity to be hawked for its power to soothe a nervous, dislocated people in the opening cultural markets of the expanding British empire" (292).

So the pure gospel is watered down; the gospel's saving purpose is jettisoned in favor of a psychological purpose (religion is the great opiate, after all!); and yet this was a movement of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit of *truth*? The Spirit who *sanctifies*?

I do not buy that assumption.

Nor did all who lived during

that period of history of which Noll writes. He notes that some asserted that "the excesses of revival proved that it came not from the Holy Spirit but from enthusiasm" (140).

We must try the Spirits, whether they are of God. ■

Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture, ed. Edward O'Flaherty and Rodney L. Petersen with Timothy A. Norton. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010. 209 pages. $16.00 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8028-6583-0. [Reviewed by Douglas Kuiper.]

Good books that defend the Sabbath as a creation ordinance, that relate that ordinance to the New Testament Lord's Day, and that call God's people today to keep the Sabbath holy are worth reading.

At first glance, this appears to be such a book. Rodney Petersen and Timothy Norton are co-directors of the Lord's Day Alliance. Many of the essays (fourteen in all, each written by a different author) make explicit references to Scripture, and some include detailed explanations of pertinent Scripture passages.

However, the book is disappointing. It is disappointing because, even though co-edited by co-directors of the Lord's Day Alliance, it is less concerned with a strong defense of *Sunday* as the *Lord's Day*, than with an ecumenical plea for observing days of rest—whether on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, "in church, synagogue, or mosque" (177). It is also disappointing because, while advocating a Sabbath rest for worship, the book also makes Sabbath-keeping a matter of ecology and of social justice.

As might be expected in a book of this sort, the various essays fall into three categories: those that spill a lot of ink to make a very simple point—which simple point sometimes has value in itself, and other times does not; those that are more substantive, but disappointing, in their content; and those that are more substantive and, if not interest-

ing, at least make valid points. Of course, each reviewer would have his own opinion about which chapters fall into which categories. My judgment follows.

Much Spilled Ink

Into this category falls six of the fourteen chapters.

The entire first section of the book, entitled "Relationship Presence," falls into it. In chapter one, Gloria White-Hammond draws an analogy from the movie *Home Alone* to argue that we all should make a point of seeking a Sabbath—a rest from the hectic pace of our society and lives—and that dads, seeking a Sabbath, should have some time at home with their children. Rodney L. Petersen argues that Sabbath is for all people of all cultures—not so much because the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, but because all men are made in God's image. He suggests that the Sabbath-practice promises "a glimmer of that portended heaven on earth" (22) in which Jews, Christians, and Moslems together will participate. Indicating that she shares Petersen's views, Marva J. Dawn argues that the Sabbath will help us "move from a...milieu of violence towards a world of justice building and peace making" (24). Much spilled ink: White-Hammond's basic point is good, but could be made in the space of one page; and Petersen's ecumenism and Dawn's social gospel are not truly helpful in our understanding of the Sabbath.

Several essays in the third section, "Social Integrity," are also spilled ink. In chapter ten ("Sabbath and the Common Good") Thomas Massaro argues that our nation would benefit from a common Sabbath, but that to attain that goal would be difficult. In my mind, the point made in this short chapter is a truism.

Ruy Costa's essay "The Weekend: Labor and Leisure in America" (chapter eleven) makes a simple point: because our society views time as money, we cannot *afford* a Sabbath; but we should realize that we need time for rest, as well as for work. His point is valid, but it is sufficiently simple that it does not require the fifteen pages that Costa takes to say it, nor the involved philosophical argument regarding "alterity" that he brings into it.

In chapter thirteen, "Sabbath in an Age of Ecology within an Emerging Global Society," Donald B. Conroy embarks on a noble

voyage—to relate Sabbath to the concept "covenant," in particular God's covenant with Noah—only to shipwreck on the rocks of ecumenism: if all Christians, Jews, and Moslems observed Sabbath, what a witness that would be to others who don't!

Disappointing

The essays that fall into this category have more substance to them than the essays that were termed "Much Spilled Ink." Most of the chapters in section two, "Spiritual Coherence," fall into this category.

Chapter four was substantive. In it ("Sacred Time: The Sabbath and Christian Worship"), Dennis Olson examines the law of the Sabbath as set forth in Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5, and other passages in the Pentateuch. He then treats the transition from the Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day to the Christian Lord's Day on the first day of the week. He finds the significance of the Sabbath in its relation to "time, worship, work, creation, justice, compassion, ecology, economics, land use, future hope, memory, identity, and purpose" (64).

Disappointing was his need to assure the reader who does not understand Genesis 1 and 2 literally that Genesis 1 and 2 do teach the value of rest, and so have application to the Sabbath. Disappointing was his assertion that Paul's letters to the Galatians and Colossians "suggest that Gentile or non-Jewish converts to Christianity were not subject to the Jewish law of the Sabbath" (61), giving the reader the distinct impression that Paul considered the entire fourth commandment abrogated.

Chapter seven (Horace T. Allen, Jr: "The Lord's Day as Anticipation and Promise in Liturgy and Word") is substantive—and the Reformed reader might well have read it first, because the editors claim that this chapter is an introduction to the Reformed view of the Sabbath. But it is disappointing. This is not to discredit the author entirely: one reason it was disappointing is that it reflected the stark reality that in *nominally* Reformed churches the Sabbath is not honored as it ought to be. Allen spoke of Reformed communities as "adrift in a highly non-biblical, a-historical, and extra-ecumenical definition of Lord's Day worship as something other than an essentially Christological celebration" (95). To

the extent this is true with many nominally Reformed churches, it is to the shame of Reformed churches.

Even more, the chapter was disappointing because Allen made no effort to present the official, historical view of the Sabbath as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism and Westminster Standards. I believe that what Allen said, as quoted above, is not true of those churches that strive to remain faithful to the scriptural and creedal basis for observing the Lord's Day.

Third, the chapter was disappointing because Allen dragged into it his own criticisms of the Reformed liturgy: we administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper too seldom, and that of baptism too often. In the one chapter in an ecumenical book in which the Reformed view of the Sabbath is treated, the author resorts to airing his criticisms of Reformed practice. I don't mean to suggest that we should not discuss the matter of the frequency of the administration of the Lord's Supper; but this book was not the place to criticize it.

Also chapter eight, "Theological Significance of the Lord's Day for the Formation of the Missional Church," was disappointing. Darrell Guder considers the "missional church" to be the church that knows herself to be "God's called and chosen instrument for the accomplishment of God's saving purposes for the world" (107). Carrying out this work requires the church to spend a day "in a process of discipline and formation" (115)—which is what Sunday is about, according to Guder. The Reformed reader will find himself questioning, not whether the church must indeed do mission work, but whether Guder rightly understands what the church is, why she must do mission work, and how the Lord's Day fits into that calling.

Interesting

Several chapters were interesting to me.

I would not go so far as to say that they were worth the price of the book. But they at least made the book tolerable.

Two chapters were interesting merely because they summarize significant writings of others. In chapter six, Edward O'Flaherty summarizes Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Dies Domini.* We do well to be aware of the official Romish proclamations regarding

the Sabbath. In chapter fourteen, Louis Mitchell summarizes three sermons of Jonathan Edwards, based on I Corinthians 16:1-2, that are united under the theme *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath*. We would agree substantially with Edwards' defense of the first day of the week as the Christian Lord's Day.

Chapter five, "The Lord's Day in Orthodox Liturgical Practice and Spirituality," was interesting because it presented the Orthodox position on the Lord's Day. Alkiviadis Calivas defends Sunday as the Lord's Day, a time for worship and holy activity. He explains the Orthodox practice of Saturday evening Vespers by noting that in "the Orthodox Church, the liturgical day is reckoned from one sunset to the next" (67). And he notes something that many entirely miss today: "The idea of the sacredness and the splendor of the Lord's Day is so ingrained in the Orthodox conscience that no one, for example, attends the divine services dressed shabbily or casually" (79).

Another interesting chapter was chapter nine, "'That Sunday Feeling': Sundays in the United States," by Alexis McCrossen. In twelve pages, McCrossen gives a history of Sunday practice in the United States, from the time of the Puritans until today. And his assessment of the practice today is correct: in the minds of most people, Sunday is a day for me, and for what I can get out of it.

And Last...

One chapter defies inclusion in any of the above categories. In chapter twelve, "Seven Principles for the Seventh Day," Aida Besancon Spencer sets forth seven principles of Sabbath-keeping in the Old Testament, and seven principles from the New Testament. The principles as such are all good, and the author reminds us that Jesus opposed the rabbinical interpretation of Sabbath law.

Because it advocates an ecumenical Sabbath-keeping that smacks of the social gospel, this book has little value to the Reformed reader. Instead of reading this book, reread Joseph Pipa's work *The Lord's Day* or the collection of essays edited by D. A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, or some other more substantive work. ■

The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Volume 7: Our Own Time, Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. Pp. xx+714 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8028-1771-6. [Reviewed by Angus Stewart.]

Seven Monumental Volumes

"A work of supererogation"—that is how Derek Thomas, no mean preacher himself, characterises reading "all seven volumes" of Hughes Oliphant Old's *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (1998-2010).[1] I couldn't disagree more!

Having read every page of all seven volumes and having eagerly waited for them to come off the press, I have found Old's history of preaching is a delight, not a drudgery, never mind above the call of duty.[2] If one were to make a foray into the languages of superlatives, I believe it is not an exaggeration to say that Old's magisterial multi-volume work is far and away the best in its area and unlikely to be surpassed for some time. The author's grasp of and love for his subject, his comprehensive sweep of preaching in various countries and "schools," his lively prose, and his personal knowledge of some of the ministers all make for fascinating reading—this too through over 4,000 pages and dealing with a subject that, in less capable hands, could easily become repetitive and dry. Mr. Old, I salute you and thank you!

Contents

The same engaging style and verve displayed throughout Old's monumental series characterises his seventh and final volume entitled *Our Own Time*. Seven of the twelve chapters deal with preaching in the United States:

1 Derek Thomas, "The Majesty of God in the Preaching of John Calvin," *In Writing* (Summer, 2010), p. 11.

2 In response to my communication with him, Mr. Old remarked to me, "Several times I have gotten letters of appreciation like yours, but this is the first time someone has said that they have read the whole thing...."

"mainline" liberals (ch. 1), Billy Graham (ch. 2), Presbyterians (ch. 3), Roman Catholics (ch. 6), "Black Preaching" (ch. 8), Charismatics (ch. 9), and megachurch preachers (ch. 11). That over half of volume seven should deal with Old's own country is understandable, given America's world leadership in the last century, not only economically and politically but also ecclesiastically. Old's global interest comes out in his treatment of Protestant preaching in sub-Saharan Africa with preachers in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and Zambia (ch. 4); Roman Catholic Liberation Preaching in Latin America (Mexico, El Salvador, Brazil, and Argentina) (ch. 5); Eastern Orthodox preaching in Romania in connection with its 1989 revolution (ch. 7); as well as preaching in the British Isles (England, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland) (ch. 10) and East Asia (Sri Lanka, China, Japan, and S. Korea) (ch. 12). Old has a deep personal interest in South Korea and not only deals with it at length in chapter 12 (pp. 632-666) but also touches upon that country in a section of his chapter on Billy Graham (pp. 81-85). Thus Old manages to include South America (and Central America), Africa, Europe (the British Isles and Romania), and Asia, as well as North America. Only the continent of Australia goes untreated. As well as requiring reading a lot of sermons and a judicious selection and arrangement of his material, all this calls for a "feel" for various countries and the history of their churches, preaching, and preachers on five of the world's six continents (not including Antarctica). No mean task!

So who, besides Billy Graham mentioned earlier, are some of the better known preachers included in Old's seventh volume? William Sloane Coffin, Jr., the old liberal in Northeast USA (pp. 2-16); Sinclair B. Ferguson, a Scottish Presbyterian in S. Carolina (pp. 134-146); Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria, a leader of the Southern Anglicans against the liberal, pro-homosexual, white Anglicans of the Western world (pp. 215-227); Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar A. Romero of San Salvador, the "martyr" and "pulpit saint" of liberation theology (pp. 266-288); Martin Luther King, Jr., the African-American civil rights leader (pp. 368-375); "Sister" Aimee Semple McPherson with her foursquare gospel

(pp. 396-404); Oral Roberts, the charismatic televangelist (pp. 404-410); William Still of the Church of Scotland in Gilcomston South Church in Aberdeen (pp. 449-460); evangelical John Stott of the Church of England (pp. 460-480); Charismatic Anglican Nicky Gumbel of Holy Trinity Brompton, developer of the Alpha Course (pp. 487-492); California megachurch pastor, author, and radio preacher Chuck Swindoll (pp. 529-551); dispensationalist Baptist John MacArthur (pp. 551-558); and "Watchman Nee," author of allegorical devotional works (pp. 610-620).

In late 2007, I e-mailed Hughes Oliphant Old to see if he would be interested in treating Herman Hoeksema in volume 7. After mentioning that he had "heard of Hoeksema" and stating that "a few years ago I would have been pleased to have received his sermons," Mr. Old very graciously declined my offer to send him Hoeksema's *Righteous By Faith Alone* and *Behold He Cometh!* in light of his failing eyesight and his approaching publisher's deadline. One wonders how Hoeksema would have looked amongst the extremely variegated preachers in Old's final volume!

Heretical Preachers

Sadly, in keeping with the rampant apostasy in the church world of our day, volume 7, aptly entitled *Our Own Time*, covers what can only be described, in the light of the Reformed confessions, as various false gospels and false gospellers popular in the last half century or so. Along with Eastern Orthodoxy (ch. 7); Romanism (chs. 5-6), complete with baptismal regeneration (p. 316) and Our Lady of Guadalupe (p. 180); Liberation theology in Latin America (ch. 5) and Kenya (pp. 181-188); we receive an unhealthy dose of liberal Protestantism (ch. 1), defending the indefensible—e.g., sodomy (pp. 6-8) and the murder of unborn babies (pp. 8-10)—and pleading for the "social gospel" of big (civil) government, the nanny state (p. 367). Riddled as they are with higher criticism of God's Word (e.g., pp. 38-39), often enslaved to existentialism (e.g., pp. 9-10, 19-29), and trained in liberal seminaries, it is no wonder that the "mainline" preachers degenerated into parroting left-wing "causes."

Leftist politics and even social revolution are major themes in Roman Catholic preaching, both

in the United States of America (ch. 6, esp. pp. 317-321) and, of course, in Latin America (ch. 5). Old describes Eastern Orthodox poet and preacher Joan Alexandru, each evening in the open air in Bucharest's University Square in December, 1989, calling for the end of Ceausescu's totalitarian regime. Later Alexandru led the procession to the Communist Party headquarters, holding an icon of Christ. Soon he was elected to the new Romanian Parliament (ch. 7).

Left-wing ideology is also preached among the black American ministers (ch. 7, esp. pp. 366-375, 378-385) and the East Asians (ch. 12, esp. pp. 566-587) that Old mentions. Old also throws into the mix Arminians, like Billy Graham (ch. 2), who is featured on the book's cover; a woman preacher, Sister Aimee (pp. 396-404); and the folly of the Charismatics (ch. 9), with their "healings" (p. 406) and a Pentecost Day sermon that is more like a Mother's Day sermon and that presents the Holy Spirit as "the feminine dimension of the Trinity" (p. 418)!

Part of the title of Old's series is *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, but much of volume 7 treats the preaching of "another Jesus" in "another gospel" with "another spirit" (II Cor. 11:4). The remainder of the title (*in the Worship of the Christian Church*) is only appropriate if we think of Christianity in a very broad, institutional sense, for many of the preachers in volume 7 are leaders of false churches (Belgic Confession 29; Westminster Confession 25:4-6), where the true worship of God is impossible.

Some of the antics of some of the "preachers" have one shaking his head. Trendy Scotty Smith ascends to preach in his Levi's (p. 163) and talks with two missionaries through a telephone on the pulpit (p. 162). Old has an appropriately-titled section on Aimee Semple McPherson: "Preaching as Entertainment" (pp. 402-404), which makes Scotty Smith look old-fashioned. In keeping with her scandals (her mysterious disappearance in 1926 and her disastrous third marriage while her husband was living) and bizarre services of healing and receiving the Holy Spirit are her flamboyant preaching techniques and aids. Her sermons were "enlivened" with fire alarms, fog horns, police sirens, skits, bands, and the dramatic use of lighting.

In one sermon, a camel from a local zoo was brought into her Los Angeles church. On occasion Sister Aimee made her pulpit entrance on a white motorcycle. "As Charlie Chaplin is supposed to have said, she was a superb actress, as good as any Hollywood ever produced" (p. 403)!

Thankfully, there are some preachers in volume 7 who are more conservative, such as Presbyterian William Still. But even here we are disappointed with Still's capitulation to evolutionism, for he reckoned the creation to have taken "millions of years," going so far as to thank the modern scientists (p. 453)! Anglican John Stott also has a more traditional view of preaching, and Old's treatment is helpful (pp. 460-480), but he, too, compromised with the spirit of the age, especially with his annihilationist heresy, which denies eternal punishment. Old offers us an encouraging treatment of Conrad Mbewe of Zambia, the "African Spurgeon" (pp. 227-236).

Old's Fatal Flaw

Perhaps, though, someone could argue, Old has little choice but to treat the (mostly) liberal and apostate preachers in our day, for in the last half century or so the majority of the well-known and influential preachers would fall under this description. There is something to this. Moreover, Old does at times voice some criticism, though usually mild.

But it is Old's evaluation of the preachers rather than his choice of subject matter that is most objectionable. He may write engagingly, like a Will Durant or a Paul Johnson, but, sadly, he is too lenient with ungodly church leaders, like Eli, and shares the flaws of Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 19:2). Old mentions some of his own false ecumenism: going to mass at Cuernavaca Cathedral in Mexico (p. 241) and attending the notoriously ecumenical Benedictine Monastery of Maria Laach in Germany (p. 348).

Old's skewed analysis is seen, for example, in his treatment of Trevor Morrow, minister of Lucan Presbyterian Church near Dublin and a former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) (pp. 484-487). Old inaccurately identifies Morrow as "one of the leading evangelical preachers in the British Isles in our day" (p. 484). Morrow is one of the leading liberals in the PCI

and no evangelical! In keeping with his ecumenical double-think, Old writes, "Although thoroughly Protestant in his theological orientation, Morrow insists that Irish Presbyterians must relate to Irish Catholics as their brothers in Christ" (p. 485). But to be "thoroughly Protestant" would involve upholding the Westminster Standards (the creed of both Morrow and Old), which denounce Roman Catholicism and Roman Catholics as idolatrous. Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 11 rightly explains that those who "seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else" (as Rome does with its doctrines of justification by faith and works, free will, Mary, etc.) do not believe in Jesus, who is Jehovah salvation, no matter what they may claim. Ironically, Old treats Morrow's series of five sermons on Galatians—of all biblical books!—(pp. 485-487) and notes that Morrow even quotes Luther's commentary on this great epistle on justification by faith alone (p. 486)! Have Old or Morrow understood what Luther wrote in this commentary on the truth of justification, the article of a standing or a falling church? More importantly, have they heard the awful anathema of Galatians 1:8-9?

> But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

This anathema falls not only on the Judaizers in Galatia but on all who corrupt justification by faith alone, "the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:5, 14), whether in the first or sixteenth or twenty-first century, or whether they call themselves Roman Catholics or Presbyterians or advocates of the Federal Vision or the New Perspective on Paul (e.g., Morrow cites N. T. Wright; p. 486, n. 91).

The most chilling part of Old's seventh volume comes in his discussion of John MacArthur's sermons on Matthew 8-9 and on our Lord's exorcising demons:

> I really do not believe in Satan, demonic spirits, and demon possession. Maybe I ought to, but I don't. I am

> willing to agree that I may have been too strongly influenced by the intellectual world in which I was brought up to fully grasp the full teaching of Scripture, but that is the way it is (p. 556).

Read those haunting words again: "I really do not believe in Satan, demonic spirits, and demon possession." How awful! Also deeply disturbing is Old's related statement: "I have to admit that the caveats of the Enlightenment still obscure my thoughts from time to time. I suppose I am troubled by a shadow of doubt, but then the same would be true of many in my congregation" (p. 556). So this is in his church too!

This is the huge flaw in Old's thinking: unbelief in the inerrant, holy Scriptures, which goes hand in hand with the dark doubts of the "Enlightenment." Think it through: If there is no Satan, then what of the Fall in Genesis 3 and the many references to him and his fallen angels throughout the Bible? And what of our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness and the cross as His victory over Satan? If the Lord Jesus wrongly reckoned that He was tempted by the devil those forty days, that He drove out demons, and that He defeated Satan by His death, can He really be the incarnate Son of God?

One can appreciate much in Old's learned and persuasive series. He wants to recover expository preaching. He wants the historic church's theology taught from the pulpit. He wants preaching to be viewed as worship and done to the glory of God. All true and well said. But there is a huge "But!" The only thing that can truly support all this is God-breathed Scripture, so that "all" of it is "profitable for doctrine..." (II Tim. 3:16) to equip the man of God (v. 17), who is solemnly charged to "preach the word" "in season and out of season" (4:1-2), for those of "itching ears" will depart from "the truth" and "shall be turned unto fables" (vv. 3-4).

Along with Old's rejection of Scripture's infallibility (John 10:35) and acceptance of higher criticism—one wonders what part Old's years at Princeton Theological Seminary earning his BD in the 50s played in all this—comes his false charity towards the various false gospels and false churches. There is a logic to all this. Not accepting the Bible's teaching on the devil ("I really do not believe in Satan"), how can

Old believe its testimony that the evil one sends forth false teachers (II Cor. 11:13-14) who preach "another gospel" of "another Jesus" through "another spirit" (vv. 3-4) and so establish and maintain "synagogues of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9)?

It is striking that all this becomes most manifest in Old's last volume, with the deepening apostasy of the church world in the last several decades and especially in his treatment of John MacArthur, who is arguably (and sadly) the most orthodox preacher in volume 7. It is precisely MacArthur's witness to the "authenticity" of God's Word (p. 558), "his complete confidence in the text" (p. 556), that evokes Old's chilling doubts (p. 556). Hence, not Old, but MacArthur, or, better yet, the Reformed creeds and the Reformed tradition point the way to the faithful reading and preaching of the Scriptures as worship in true Christian churches in our own time and until the Lord Jesus returns. For Old (learned and eloquent as he is) and his magisterial series (with its fascinating description of the preaching of both true and false churches) can only take us so far. ■

Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstandings, by James R. Payton, Jr. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010. 240 pages. $23.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Douglas Kuiper.]

Those who love the work God did in restoring the doctrines of sovereign grace to the church by means of the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century enjoy reading books about that Reformation. They would also have a passion for a right historical and doctrinal understanding of that Reformation. And they would be eager to read a book in which misunderstandings regarding that Reformation were corrected—providing, of course, that the misunderstandings are genuine, and the corrections are truly necessary.

Such a book James Payton

claims to provide in this volume. Convinced that many today misrepresent the teachings of the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century, Payton wrote this book to help others "appreciate" the positive value of the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, and "speak better and more responsibly of it" (14). Twelve misunderstandings he sets out to correct.

Payton gives the reader every reason to suppose that he is qualified for this task. He holds ThM and PhD degrees in church history and Reformation studies; he pastored churches in both the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Christian Reformed Church; he taught briefly at Westminster Theological Seminary, and since 1985 has been professor of history at Redeemer University College. In other words, he knows history, and he knows the Protestant Reformation.

But when the reader is finished with the book, he realizes that Payton's ultimate goal is to promote ecumenism among all Protestant groups. The Reformation was a triumph, Payton asserts in the last chapter, in that it recovered the Christian gospel. At the same time, it was a tragedy: Christ prayed for unity (John 17), but now hundreds and thousands of organizations exist, "each claiming (humbly, of course) before the divine Judge to speak 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'" (252). The heirs of the Protestant Reformation have covered the gospel with "layer of denominational clutter over layer of doctrinal distinctiveness" (255). Therefore, "the plethora of divisions among Protestants indicates clearly that the Reformation...has been a tragedy for the Christian gospel" (256).

The solution to this tragedy? Ecumenism. Dialogue. Acknowledging that "it would also be simplistic to expect that the heirs of the Protestant Reformation...would find their way readily into only one ecumenical organization" (257-258), Payton applauds all who strive toward that goal.

I would not leave you with the impression that Payton is entirely wrong in all of his arguments. Some of the chapters set forth misunderstandings that might indeed be real. And insofar as he sets forth doctrinal and historical facts relating to the Reformation, the book is reliable, and even interesting reading. The basic

weakness is in *some* of Payton's analysis of the history and doctrine of the Reformation—but this "some" is a considerable amount.

Fair Enough

Chapter 1 assesses the historical, societal, ecclesiastical, and doctrinal background to the Reformation. Payton writes it convinced that some get the Reformation wrong "by overlooking or neglecting its historical rootedness" (23).

Chapter 3 is an overview of Martin Luther's pivotal role in the Reformation. The chapter is a good, brief introduction to the man and some of the highlights of his life.

In chapter 4, noting various conflicts among the Reformers, and differences in their methods of attaining reformation, Payton dispels the myth that the Reformers all agreed with each other in all matters. Luther, in particular, gets the focus.

In chapter 6 Payton treats the common misunderstanding that by "Sola Scriptura" the Reformers ignored or dismissed all tradition, including the development of doctrine by the early church. Payton shows that Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer, and Calvin all knew the writings of the church fathers to one degree or another, respected the work of these men in developing the truth, and honored the ecumenical creeds. "What this boils down to is that for the Protestant Reformers *sola scriptura* did not mean that the written Word of God is the *only* religious authority; rather, it is the *only unquestioned* religious authority" (157).

Payton's argument in these chapters is fair enough.

Yet, in some instances Payton forces the "misunderstandings" theme on the book. To argue that "the Reformation kicked off by Luther was carried along in its early years by misunderstandings" (88, chapter 3) is not the same as saying that we today misunderstand the Reformation.

And these chapters were anticlimactic. Very possibly this was because I was hyped up, hoping to learn some fundamental, earth-shattering misunderstandings about the Reformation. Probably these chapters would genuinely inform one who is less familiar with the Reformation than I.

Beside the Point

Some of Payton's arguments

are beside the point.

This was true of chapter 5, in which he shows that all the Reformers agreed on the doctrine of justification by faith alone—what it meant, its centrality to the gospel, and that justification by faith alone inevitably leads to a life of good works of gratitude. Well enough.

The misunderstanding to which Payton directs our attention is that of many who claim that faith can be alone—that is, that one can have a faith that does not lead to godly works. Again, well enough: we must oppose the error of a dead faith.

But Payton supports his contention by referring to revivalist preachers. This is beside the point, for these preachers did not set forth the doctrines of the Reformation. When people who claim to be *Reformed* misunderstand the doctrine of justification, that is one thing; but we could not have expected different of those who were, generally speaking, open and avowed Arminians.

The reader would have been well served had Payton also given attention to the more serious denials of justification by faith alone in *Reformed* circles. I refer to the idea that faith itself is a work of man, and to the teaching of the Federal Vision and New Perspectives on Paul movements. I do not minimize the error of using my righteousness in Christ to defend my continuing in sin; but the Federal Vision error is more to the point.

In chapter 7 Payton treats various misunderstandings regarding the Anabaptists in their relationship to the Reformation. He argues that the Anabaptists "did not practice *believers'* baptism...; instead, they practiced *disciples'* baptism" (161), and that both the beliefs and historical origin of the Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation were not as homogenous as we might think today. Even if the points raised in the chapter are valid, the chapter is a sidetrack: the Anabaptists were not a genuine part of the Reformation, but a radical reaction both to Rome and to the Reformation.

The Misunderstanding is Payton's

In specific chapters I disagree with Payton's assessment. The misunderstanding, I contend, is his.

In chapter 2, Payton argues that the relationship of the Renaissance to the Reformation has been mis-

understood, particularly by those who speak of the Renaissance as a man-centered movement, and of the Reformation as a God-centered movement. He argues that the "humanism" of the Renaissance was not so much a man-centeredness as it was a return to education and scholarship: "a 'humanist' was someone who taught the 'humanities'—the liberal arts" (61). And he concludes: "To the Reformation, the Renaissance was friend, not foe" (71).

Certainly the Renaissance was a return to the classics, and certainly in that sense it served the Reformation. But Payton overlooks that the Renaissance men and the Reformers put their studies of the classics—their "humanism"—to two very different purposes: the Renaissance men to the improvement of humanity (mankind) and the existing structure of the church (Rome), and the Reformers to the reformation of the church in her worship, doctrine, and government. This very point is illustrated in the differences between Luther and Erasmus. Payton does refer to the theological differences between these two men, but notes that of the other Reformers, "none of them ever repudiated Erasmus; indeed, Bucer and Melanchthon courted Erasmus to the end of his life (in 1536), seeking to get him to declare for the Protestant movement" (70). Payton ignores that Erasmus himself was an ardent foe of true reformation. Erasmus and some Reformers were indeed on speaking terms. But Erasmus hated their cause, being committed to the idolatrous teachings and practices of Rome.

In chapter 8 Payton treats reforms within the Roman Catholic church—reforms of practice in Spain and Italy; the rise of the Jesuits; renewal within the papacy; and the Council of Trent. With all of these, he concludes that "reform had finally come to Rome" (189). The "misunderstanding" that Payton endeavors to correct here is that of supposing that any reform within Rome was minimal, and limited only to a response to Protestantism. As far as facts go, what the chapter says is all well and good. But Payton's misunderstanding is to speak of the Catholic counter-reformation as being true reform. In fact, the Catholic church did nothing in the sixteenth century to reform false teaching and bring the church back to the doctrine of the apostles.

Chapter 10 was disappointing. The question Payton faces is "Was the Reformation a success?" He answers the question by pointing to the many frustrations and disappointments that the Reformers endured, by supposing that some, after many years of hard labor, must have wondered if anything lasting came out of it, and by saying that the real success story seems to have been that of the Jesuits, who in the 1600s reclaimed for Rome some territories that had been leaning toward the Reformed camp. This chapter is an attempt to measure success by human and earthly standards, and on how well human expectations were realized. Implied in the chapter is that opposition and apparent setbacks suggest failure. Indeed, from *man's* viewpoint they do. The question is what God was doing, and whether His cause and purposes prevailed.

The Bottom Line

The discerning reader who views the Reformation as God's work of reforming His church in areas of doctrine, worship, and church government, and who is committed to Reformed principles, wonders as he reads this book what Payton is up to. Only in the last chapter does Payton clearly make known his ecumenical desires, but by then one is not surprised.

Some might consider it ironic that the very first words in the book are an accolade by Roger Olson: "*Getting the Reformation Wrong* gets the Reformation right." By the end of the book, I viewed it as more prophetic of where the book was going, than ironic. When an avowed Arminian congratulates a professing Reformed author on presenting the Reformation properly, something is wrong either with the Arminian reviewer or with the book.

Further underscoring to me that Payton really does not appreciate the Reformation as he should were his comments in chapter 9. There he argues that Protestant scholastics in the mid and late 1500s departed from what the Reformers had taught, putting different emphases on these doctrines than did the Reformers, and objectifying these doctrines. In other words, in keeping with Payton's motif, the Reformation was misunderstood already within decades of its beginning! But Payton does not consider that the Reformers of the mid and late 1500s were in fact developing

the doctrines that the Reformers taught, and presenting them in different ways to meet the need of the hour. As I understand it, Payton claims to like the *beginning* of the Reformation well enough; he does not like the *development* of the Reformation.

So the bottom line is this: by reading this book, one is informed regarding the history of the Reformation, and the issues faced by the Reformers. However, one must decide for himself if he agrees with Payton's presentation and evaluation of this history and these issues. In my judgment, those who are committed to Payton's view of church unity—outward, earthly, organizational unity—will be more sympathetic to Payton's presentation than those who view this unity as deeper, spiritual, organic unity on the basis of the truth. ■

Precious Blood: The Atoning Work of Christ, ed. Richard D. Phillips. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009. 240 pages. $16.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Douglas Kuiper.]

Reformed believers love the doctrine of the atonement. In presenting Christ's dying work as being atonement for the sins of God's people, and as providing the basis for our reconciliation with God, Reformed pastors preach the true gospel. In hearing this biblical truth preached, Reformed congregations are edified and individual believers grow in the assurance of their salvation. This is because nothing but the blood of Christ redeems. And that blood redeemed completely and fully.

What power this blood has! In two lines, John Donne poetically and succinctly captures the essence of this power, and Richard Philips quotes these words at the beginning of his preface to the book:

> Wash thee in Christ's blood,
> which hath this might
> That being red, it dyes red
> soules to white.
> — John Donne, *La Corona*

Love for the doctrine of penal, substitutionary atonement motivated the writing of this book, and would also be a right motivation to read this book.

*****

This volume is the written version of the speeches given at the Philadelphia Conference in Reformed Theology in 2008, sponsored by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. Joel Beeke, W. Robert Godfrey, Philip Graham Ryken, Richard D. Phillips, R.C. Sproul, Derek W. H. Thomas, and Carl Trueman all contribute to the twelve chapters in this book.

The book is divided into two parts—part one is "The Atonement in Biblical Revelation" and part two is "The Atonement in Christian Thought." Each part has six chapters.

The chapters in the first part each treat a different aspect of the atonement. Each is a devotional chapter, developing the theme of the chapter by taking a passage from Scripture as its starting point and working with that passage. To illustrate, Beeke's chapter on "Necessary Blood" takes the Old Testament Passover Feast, and particularly Exodus 12:13, as its starting point; Godfrey uses Psalm 49:14-15 as the basis for his chapter on "Redeeming Blood"; Ryken treats "Atoning Blood" from the viewpoint of Romans 3:23-25; Hebrews 9:13-14 is the starting point for Phillips in his chapter, "Cleansing Blood"; Godfrey's second chapter in this section, "Offensive Blood," takes off from Paul's words in Philippians 3:8-9; and 1 Peter 1:18-19 is the basis for Sproul's chapter, "Precious Blood."

Being devotional in nature, these chapters are not sermons, nor do they develop the doctrine of the atonement at any length. They do demonstrate the doctrine of the atonement to be biblical, and they explain (some more deeply than others) the pertinent Scriptures. Taken together, they give the reader an idea of the richness of the doctrine of the atonement. They also give evidence of having been speeches, originally—the authors interact with their audience, at times calling the reader to repentance and faith in this Jesus Christ who shed His blood.

As the title of the second part indicates, the last six chapters treat the development of the doctrine throughout church history. If the first six chapters stimulate the soul, the second six are food for the mind and heart.

Derek Thomas begins this historical survey by treating the doctrine of the atonement as understood by the church in the first

500 years after the apostles. Various wrong ideas about the atonement were taught during these years, including the theories that Christ was essentially a teacher and an example, that Christ paid a ransom price to the devil, and that Christ died to make us share the divine nature of God (*theopoiesis* theory, based on 2 Peter 1:4 and advocated by the Eastern Orthodox churches). These ideas were not officially condemned; but at the same time, the early fathers began laying the groundwork for the right understanding of the doctrine by teaching that the cross was central to the gospel, and by making "clear pronouncements as to the penal substitutionary nature of the death of Christ on behalf of sinners" (120).

In chapter 8, Ryken treats Anselm's role in developing this doctrine. After a brief biography of Anselm and an overview of his writings, Ryken gives a nine-page summary of Anselm's work *Cur Deus Homo,* then gives further historical analysis of Anselm's work and its influence. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book; anyone who has not read *Cur Deus Homo* does well to read this summary of it.

Godfrey writes the chapter on "The Reformation Consensus on the Atonement." He sets the background by reminding the reader of Rome's view of Christ's atoning work—partial, not complete, atonement. To Godfrey's credit, he defends Q&A 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Then he sets forth briefly the view of Luther and Calvin—substitutionary, penal satisfaction. While the role of Luther and Calvin is pivotal, of course, I wish that Godfrey had taken time to demonstrate that other Reformers of their era also shared their consensus.

Beeke treats "The Blood of Christ in Puritan Piety" in chapter 10, examining pertinent writings of Stephen Charnock, Thomas Goodwin, and Isaac Ambrose. Beeke shows that these Puritans were orthodox in their teaching regarding substitutionary atonement, and argues that their goal in presenting the doctrine was to promote piety and emphasize the sanctifying power of Christ's blood.

In a substantitive chapter, Carl Trueman treats post-reformation developments in the doctrine of the atonement. He notes that the doctrine was creedally expressed in both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. He

then treats four challenges to the doctrine of the atonement—the challenges of Rome, Arminianism, Amyraldianism, and Socinianism. He includes a section on Hugh Grotius' response to Socinianism. In the last section of the chapter, Trueman covers the debate between John Owen and Richard Baxter on this subject.

Richard Phillips concludes the book by responding to four objections that evangelical "non-violent" critics raise against the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. "Non-violent" critics are those who fault this doctrine for its presentation of a violent God. They object that this view of atonement presents God as a God of wrath; presents a God who responds to sin with retributive justice; speaks of a God whose acts toward men are in conflict with His inner trinitarian covenant life; and teaches a God who violates the very ethics of love and peace that Jesus Himself taught. Phillips' response to these objections is biblically sound and glorifies the true God. He argues that the "non-violent" critics have done violence to the biblical doctrine.

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The book's value is in its *defense* of the doctrine of penal, substitutionary atonement.

The book's twofold division presents the reason why we would defend this doctrine—that the truth that is scriptural (part one), and that the Spirit of truth led the church to understand more deeply (part two), must be defended, and is worth defending.

The second part of the book also underscores that the doctrine *needs* defense—it has been, and still is, attacked. Anselm's doctrine was attacked early, and is under renewed attack today. Ryken defends Anselm: "the real quibble these theologians have is not with Anselm but with the Bible itself" (141). The Puritans rose to the defense of this doctrine over against Rome, Socinianism, and Arminianism and the views of Hugo Grotius. Carl Trueman's chapter deals almost exclusively with controversies regarding this doctrine. And Phillips exposes not only modern denials of the doctrine, but also the crafty methods that some use to deny it—that of suggesting that the death of Christ is so mysterious that no one presentation of what that death did is sufficient. In fact, the goal of such an idea "is not merely...to include various strands of insight

regarding the cross, but a violent determination to exclude one particular theory of atonement, namely, penal substitutionary atonement" (208). (That this view is a "theory" is not Phillips' own conviction; he presents here the idea of the critics. Phillips himself views this doctrine as the true biblical explanation of Christ's death on the cross).

Concluding the last chapter, and therefore the book, Phillips presents the essential necessity of Christ's penal substitutionary atonement—sin. Any objection to penal substitutionary atonement involves "a downplaying of sin, sin's dreadful consequences in God's judgment, and the infinite nature of sin's offense to our perfectly holy God" (224-225).

Every sinner understands the need to defend this doctrine. Every sinner can read this book with appreciation.

*****

One aspect—an integral aspect—of the doctrine of penal, substitutionary atonement is the *limited character* of this atonement. In this connection I bring up my negative critique of this book.

Very little is said about the doctrine of limited atonement in this book. The book is to be commended for addressing *substitutionary* atonement, but it manages to address that precious, offensive doctrine while only barely facing the question of *for whom Christ was substitute*.

Only two writers *explicitly* address the issue—Godfrey and Trueman. Both of these treat limited atonement in connection with presenting the view of other men—Godfrey in his treatment of the views of Luther and Calvin, and Trueman in his survey of John Owen. Godfrey makes clear that Calvin taught, and Calvinists believe, that Christ's atoning benefits extend only to the elect. And Trueman argues briefly that limited atonement is not "a mere logical deduction from the doctrine of election and reprobation" (197-198), but that the doctrine of limited atonement rests on biblical exegesis as well.

At least this much is said. And I suppose that the reason most writers don't even allude to it is the fact that the issue does not arise out of the text they treated, or was not an issue in that period of church history that they covered.

However, both Godfrey's explicit reference to limited atone-

ment, as well as Beeke's and Godfrey's implicit references to it elsewhere in the book, indicate that these men view the preaching of the gospel as a free offer of Christ to all who hear.

In treating the Passover, Beeke touches on the matter: "Christ our Passover is available today to all who hear the gospel.... The blood of Christ is sufficient for everyone who comes.... No one who is hungry for the Lamb will be rejected" (29). Pharaoh heard the gospel—was Christ available to him in the Passover? That those who come to Christ hungry will be satisfied is in itself true; but is it not also true that those who come hungry are those who thereby give evidence already of enjoying the blessings of Christ's death? Beeke's statements proceed from his view of the preaching of the gospel as a well-meant offer.

Godfrey's is the credit for making the clearest, most explicit statement in the whole book on this issue. He defends "the offer of the gospel to all" as being Calvinistic; "an error into which some Calvinists have fallen (is) a reluctance to affirm Christ's free offer of the gospel to all" (158). Of course, Godfrey is right on three points: that election governs atonement, that the gospel must be promiscuously preached, and that elect sinners freely receive these blessings through that preaching. Of concern is his view of the preaching as a *free offer to all.* This term not only suggests that the gospel must be promiscuously preached, and that believers receive Christ's blessings freely; the term also suggests that it is up to man to accept or reject the offer.

In defending the penal, substitutionary nature of the atonement, this book serves a good purpose, and is worth reading.

More could have been done with the limited nature of that atonement. Perhaps that will be a future conference subject, and book topic, for the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. ■

Contributors for this issue are:

Joshua D. Engelsma, second-year student at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, Wyoming, Michigan.

Marvin Kamps, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

Jürgen-Berkhard Klautke, professor in the Academy for Reformed Theology in Marburg, Germany, and a leader of the Confessing Evangelical-Reformed Congregation in Giessen.

Douglas J. Kuiper, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Clayton W. Spronk, pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.