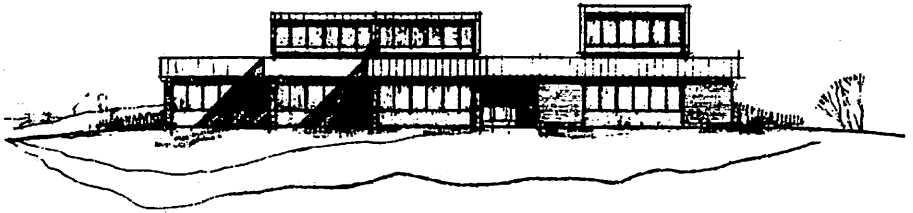


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**APRIL, 1984
Volume XVII, No. 2**

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

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Editorial Notes

With this edition of the *Journal* we complete seventeen years of publishing. It does not seem quite possible that seventeen years have already passed since we issued the first number, for the time has quickly passed. When Prof. Hoeksema and I made plans for the first issue, we gathered together a list of about 70 or 80 names, mostly from the people of our own Protestant Reformed Churches whom we thought would be interested in receiving the *Journal*. Since that time, and without any advertising of any kind, our mailing list has grown to around 700. This is quite remarkable, and we are grateful to our God Who has prospered the work.

As our readers know, the *Journal* is sent free of charge; the costs are borne completely by the Churches which underwrite the cost with money allotted to the Theological School Fund. It is for this reason that we ask those of you who receive the *Journal*, but who are not really interested in reading it, to ask to have your name removed from the mailing list. This will cut down the cost of paying for unwanted copies. Please let us know.



Included at the back of the *Journal* is a list of publications which are available from the Seminary. This list has just been revised and the syllabi advertised in the list are all available. We are sorry that the list published in the last *Journal* was not current and that we had to inform some of you who wrote that the works requested were no longer available. We assure you that this will not happen this time. Please send your money along with your order including money for postage. This will save our Secretary additional paper work.



Many of you, over the years, have asked for back copies of the *Journal*, and we have usually been unable to supply them. Although we always print additional copies, the number is soon depleted. Now we have begun to recopy these back issues, and some of them are available again. The work has been done for Volume I through Volume V. We hope to add gradually to this number so that a complete set of *Journals* will presently be available. The cost for each Volume is \$2.50. Please send your money along with your order.



The R.F.P.A. Publishing Board, an arm of the *Standard Bearer*, publishes a large number of books on various aspects of Reformed thought. If you are interested in obtaining any of these books, please send for our brochure in which they are all listed. We will be happy to send you this brochure. It contains also many (if not most) of the pamphlets and papers published by various organizations within our Churches.



In connection with our note concerning this brochure we want to call the attention of our readers to two other books which have recently been published within our Churches. One is a book by Rev. Lubbers entitled *Freeborn Sons of Sarah*, which is a commentary on the book of Galatians. The other is entitled, *O Taste and See*, a collection of Meditations written for the *Standard Bearer* by the late Rev. G. Vos. The latter makes excellent devotional material and both books will make valuable additions to the library of any Christian home. Both are available from the *Journal* address.



Finally, it might be of interest to our readers to know that the *Journal* has a truly international reading audience. The *Journal* is now sent to over 15 foreign countries with a relatively large number of readers in some countries. Let us know what you think of our paper, and pray for us in our work.

The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (11)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

[In harmony with our intention announced in Volume XV, No. 1, we continue with our translation of Rev. Herman Hoeksema's polemic against Prof. W. Heyns entitled *The Gospel, the Most Recent Attack on the Truth of Sovereign Grace*. We continue here with the translation of chapter VIII, "Offer."]

But thus it is not. The truth is different.

Thus it cannot be. And thus Scripture also does not teach. It cannot be thus exactly because God is the True One, Who cannot lie, Who also in His holy gospel never can and never will proclaim anything other than that which He has determined in His eternal counsel. If in that counsel God has determined that the elect have a right to the benefits of salvation in Christ, then God also proclaims that in the holy gospel. But Scripture also does not teach this view of Heyns. Where in the gospel would God let it be proclaimed that He has given to all men the right to the inheritance, that they are all heirs? As we have pointed out earlier, exactly the contrary is true. The heirs are mentioned in Scripture by name. And those heirs are not all men, but Abraham and his seed, Galatians 3. And lest we should make a mistake and understand this seed of Abraham in too broad a sense, Scripture also teaches emphatically that not all the children of the flesh belong to the seed of the promise. But if we are of Christ, then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise, Romans 9, Galatians 3. And to those heirs God swears with an oath by Himself that He shall bless them, in order that He may more abundantly show the immutability of His counsel, Hebrews 6:13ff. In the gospel God does not have something other proclaimed than what He has determined in His counsel. For God is one; and He is the True One, Who cannot lie!

Besides, the entire presentation of Heyns is in conflict with the truth of the particular atonement of Christ. God, says Heyns, gives to all men the objective right to the righteousness of Christ. However, if this were to be true, then it could not be otherwise than that God has also objectively

realized that right in the atoning death of our Savior. After all, the righteousness of which Heyns says that all men have a right to it and receive it in the gospel is the righteousness which is rooted in and rests upon the suffering and death of the Savior and which is sealed and brought to light in His resurrection. The righteousness is therefore objectively realized for all who are objectively in Christ, who were represented by Him on the cross. If now that is all men, then there is objective righteousness for all men; then it can also be proclaimed that all men have an objective right to the righteousness of Christ. If that is the elect only, then there is only for the elect an objective right to that righteousness merited by the death of Christ; and then also it cannot possibly be proclaimed that all men have a right to that righteousness of Christ. For how would God have something proclaimed which is not there, which does not exist, the very possibility of which is forever cut off? Now the truth is that Christ has not died for all men, that therefore also there is objectively no right for all men to the righteousness of Christ, and that this also cannot be proclaimed. The right to the righteousness of Christ is only for the elect. The atonement of Christ is particular. Heyns will concede this to me. I know that very well. But then he must also concede to me that that other presentation by him, that God gives to all men the objective right to the righteousness of Christ, is diametrically opposed to the Reformed, Scriptural truth of particular atonement.

That the presentation of Heyns is also in conflict with the Scriptural and Reformed truth of the irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby salvation is bestowed on the elect and is wrought in them, we have already demonstrated above. However, we still want to point out that Heyns in the further development of his presentation indeed also denies the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit. He does this when he says that salvation is not tied to the offer, that is, to the right to salvation which God gives everyone, but to the faith of man, and when he then presents that faith not as a gift of God whereby He puts me in possession of the salvation, but as a *demand* of God with which man must comply in order to be saved. For thus Heyns writes:

“But that the possession of the benefits of salvation through the gospel as offer of grace is an objective possession, a possession which gives a right as that of an heir to the righteousness of Christ and even to the actual being made a partaker of it through the Holy Spirit, a right freely to come and to take the bread and the water of life, a right which he could not have without that offer of the gospel, but not a possession which can be the ground for his justification, appears abundantly from the fact that the

gospel always again comes with the emphatic demand of faith, and connects salvation not with the offer but with true *faith in the offer*, adding to this that whosoever will not believe shall go lost, shall be damned.”

Let us get clearly in view what Heyns here says, in connection with what he wrote earlier about the objective right to the blessings of salvation.

First Heyns has taught us that God bestows on all men an objective right to the blessings of salvation in Christ. Emphatically he has written and writes in the words just quoted that this right, which God bestows on all men, also includes the right to the grace of the Holy Spirit whereby He makes us partakers of those benefits of salvation in Christ. The latter includes this, that God has it proclaimed to all men in the gospel: I, the Lord, offer to you, that is, have given you the right to regeneration by the Holy Spirit, to the effectual calling, whereby you will be translated out of darkness into My marvelous light, to faith, whereby you will be filled with true confidence that I not only to others, but also to you grant the forgiveness of sins and eternal life out of grace, unto sanctification as well as to justification, to perseverance, and to glorification.

Now one would say that if the matter actually stands thus, all men shall also actually be saved. For, on the one hand the matter stands thus, that the man to whom this proclamation comes has nothing in the proclamation of this right to the Holy Spirit as long as God does not also realize that right and actually bestow on him the Holy Spirit and His grace. Man is dead in trespasses and sins, and he has nothing in an objective proclamation of a right to the Holy Spirit. And on the other hand, it must nevertheless certainly be accepted that if the Lord God proclaims to man such an excellent right to something which He alone can bestow, He will also realize it. And then that man is certainly saved. There is no escaping it, that on a Reformed, Scriptural basis, if God gives to all men this right, all men shall be saved. But now Heyns teaches us that there are also men who are damned, and that in spite of the fact that they have received a divine right to all these subjective operations of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Now how can that be? How can a man go lost? Heyns says: because and through the fact that he does not believe. Good. But how can a man die in unbelief who has received from God a right to the gift of faith? How can a man go lost through unbelief to whom God has promised that He will bestow upon him faith? This last – and Heyns also sees this – can, of course, not be. Therefore Heyns then also really eliminates faith from the operations of the Holy Spirit and now presents it *as if faith is a demand with which man must comply in order also to get in his subjective possession the salvation to which God has given him an objective right.*

There is the point. There it becomes plain again how thoroughly Arminian the presentation of Heyns is.

Do not say now that Heyns does not mean it thus. He means this indeed; and this is indeed the way it is also proclaimed from many pulpits.

The matter stands thus for Heyns:

1. God offers salvation to all men in the gospel. That is, He has it proclaimed to all men: I give you a right to the blessings of salvation, both as they are objectively realized in Christ and as those blessings are subjectively applied and bestowed by the Holy Spirit. As far as I am concerned, you can indeed be saved. I will that all men be saved and will bestow upon you all that is necessary unto salvation.

2. However, He demands faith as a condition. God has it proclaimed: if, however, I am actually to bestow on you the salvation and give you the grace of the Holy Spirit, then you must believe in My gospel. Faith is then also for Heyns a bare acceptance of the gospel for true. If the sinner accepts the gospel, then he believes that God has given him a right to the blessings of salvation, and then God bestows on him the grace of the Holy Spirit, and then he is saved.

3. However, if a man does not comply with that demand of faith, does not accept the truth of the gospel, then God does not bestow on him the grace of the Holy Spirit; then he is condemned because he will not believe. And so it comes about that a man who had received from God the right to the grace of the Holy Spirit nevertheless goes lost. But what is this now, except the pure Arminian presentation? It all comes down to this: we are saved by grace, by pure grace; God must do everything through the grace of the Holy Spirit? but whether He will do this depends on whether a man shows a willingness to receive that grace by accepting the gospel!

And that is Arminianism of the purest water!

Chapter IX

The Argumentation of Heyns

We have pointed out the meaning which the term "offer of grace" has with Prof. Heyns. For the professor this term expresses the same as "placing objectively in possession." And the professor thinks he is able also to adduce proof for the correctness of this presentation from Scripture and the Confession. However, in order to be able to do this he goes a step further and asserts that "offer of grace" can also mean the same as "give and bestow." Or rather, he wants to claim that the terms "give" and "bestow," whenever these appear in Scripture and the Confession, often could be exegeted in such a way that they mean the same thing as "offer of grace and salvation." In this way the professor finds a considerable amount of proof that his presentation is Scriptural and Reformed.

Let us allow him to speak:

“To the Jews of Capernaum the Savior said: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.’

“The Catechism in Lord’s Day XXV, Qu. 66, describes the promise of the gospel as the glad tidings ‘that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross.’ (The Dutch here for ‘grants’ is ‘schenkt,’ one of the two Dutch terms which Prof. Heyns claims have the same meaning as ‘offer of grace and salvation.’ HCH)

“In Lord’s Day VII, Qu. 21, the Catechism describes ‘true faith,’ that is, the faith that is necessary to be ‘saved by Christ,’ Qu. 20, saving faith therefore, faith in the gospel, in harmony with the description of the ‘promise of the gospel’ in Qu. 66, as follows: ‘True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel, in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely *given* by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ’s merits.’

“The Compendium sums up this description in the words: ‘It (true faith) is a certain knowledge of God, and of His promises revealed to us in the gospel, and an hearty confidence that all my sins *are forgiven* me, for Christ’s sake.’

“And after the administration of baptism the Form places on the lips of the congregation a thanksgiving which begins as follows: ‘Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou *hast forgiven* us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and *adopted* us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism.’

“The words *give* and *grant* can mean to make actual partaker, to put directly in possession. Thus, for example, when Scripture says that God Himself *gives* to all life and breath and all things. That is giving in the subjective sense. But they can as well mean to extend something to someone in the objective sense, in the sense of offering. It is also giving when one extends a gift to someone, offers to him a gift, in such a way that that gift must be accepted by him and becomes his property only through acceptance. In which sense these words are intended must be determined from the connection in which they appear.

“And in all the above-mentioned expressions of Scripture and the Confession the context shows plainly that those words are used in the sense of

putting in objective possession, in a sense essentially like the meaning of offer.

“Of the Jews in Capernaum we read in the subsequent context of the chapter of nothing except unbelieving resistance, speaking of Jesus contemptuously, of being offended at Him, and of permanently forsaking Him. It was to such Jews that the Lord said: ‘My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.’ And giving expresses making a partaker. But here there is no possibility of making a partaker in the subjective sense, of making a partaker through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the way of faith, but only of objectively making one a partaker through the gospel that was proclaimed to them by the Savior Himself. In that gospel they received from the Father the true bread from heaven, in such a way that they would be saved if they believed and accepted it, but aggravated their judgment if they did not believe it.

“And when the Catechism describes saving faith as ‘an assured confidence that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are *freely given* by God’ the meaning of this *are freely given* cannot be a being bestowed through the saving impartation of the Holy Spirit. For from this it would follow that saving faith was here described as a firm confidence in one’s own saving possession of the benefits of salvation. That would mean that what is here described is what we call the assurance of faith, which is a fruit of saving faith and which is born from saving faith, so that it is not the same as saving faith, but something else. The Catechism would then make the mistake of answering the question for a definition of saving faith (for the relation in which this question stands to the preceding shows that this is the point) with a description of something else, and such a mistake may not be ascribed to the Catechism. It is true that in this answer a strong faith is described, but then nevertheless a strong saving faith, and that can never be a faith concerning one’s own condition, for that is not saving; it is even possible with it to end up being deceived (Matt. 7:22, 23); but saving faith is always faith in the gospel. Thus it is also described here, and consequently ‘are freely given’ is meant as that takes place through the gospel as offer of grace.

“This is equally true of the rest of the passages of the Confessions referred to. For in all of them the words *give* or *grant* are used in connection with the gospel. Giving in the sense of putting in subjective possession, however, does not take place through the gospel, not even in general, but through the Holy Spirit, Who works faith and does so only in the elect.

“To this the expression ‘are freely given’ and ‘hast forgiven’ do not

constitute an exception. Similar expressions are used in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant of Matthew 18. The lord, thus it is stated there, 'loosed him, and forgave him the debt' (vs. 27), and we hear him saying: 'I forgave thee all that debt' (vs. 32). And yet, when that servant treated his fellow servant as he could not have done if he had felt anything of the benefit shown to him and accepted it with any thankfulness, the lord took back that forgiveness, and delivered him over to the tormentors, until he should have paid all that he owed."

Let us attend first to the proof which Heyns thinks to find for his presentation in the Confession and in our Baptism Form.

We ought to be careful here, for actually Heyns here reasons in a circle and tries to confuse us. What Heyns must prove from Scripture and the Confession is not that *giving* and *bestowing* indeed occur in the sense of "objectively putting in possession," but that the Gospel is an offer of grace to all to whom it comes. Heyns, as far as we have now followed him, has reasoned as follows:

1. The Gospel is a well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to all men.

2. "Offer" means the same as "to put in objective possession," to give objective right to the inheritance by the testator.

3. God thus gives in the Gospel to all who hear it this objective right to the inheritance.

4. But with this God then demands faith in the Gospel. He who does not believe the Gospel had indeed a right to salvation in the objective sense, but nevertheless goes lost.

For this presentation Heyns must now offer proof. Not for the proposition that "giving" and "granting" are sometimes used in the sense of "putting in objective possession."

Now then, when we pay attention to what Heyns quotes from our Heidelberg Catechism, then it will immediately strike us that the power of proof for the proposition of Heyns is entirely lacking in it. We feel this already immediately as soon as we try to substitute the term *offer* for *give* and *grant* in the passages quoted from the Confession. This should after all be possible without doing violence to the sense of the words if the presentation of the professor were correct. For it is his contention that the latter terms are used in the same sense as the former. However, if we apply this, we get the following in Question 66 in our Heidelberg Catechism: "The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he *offers* (in place of: *grants*) us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that

one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross." We feel immediately that this does not fit. The meaning of the words would be emasculated by this if we substituted *offers* for *grants*.

Now where does Heyns' mistake lie? First of all in this, that he wants to give to the term *offer* the meaning of "putting in objective possession." And *offer* does not mean this in our time. *Offer* formerly meant *present* or *set forth*. And now it does not mean to *give the right to something*. The idea of *right* is not at all present in the term *offer*. *Offer* simply means to make known a willingness to grant something to someone. If that someone accepts it, then he receives it; if he will not accept it, that is altogether his business. The offerer cannot take it ill of the person to whom he offers something that he does not accept that which is offered. But Heyns, with respect to salvation, has given to the term *offer* the content of "to give the right to something," in this case to the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. And because *offer* can indeed not have this meaning, the word "offers" does not fit in Question 66 of the Heidelberg Catechism in place of "grants."

The second mistake which Heyns makes in this connection is that he wants to understand "grants" in the sense of "gives the objective right," without anything more. The subjective application is according to him not included in this word. And also this is mistaken. For the subject in Question 66 is the *promise* of the Gospel. And as we have seen previously, the promise of the Gospel is not only that God has objectively accomplished salvation in Christ and that therefore there is forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, but that promise also includes the promise of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the subjective application of salvation, the promise of regeneration, of faith, of the forgiveness of sins, justification, and sanctification, and glorification. Concerning that promise of the Gospel Question 66 speaks. If someone believes the promise of the Gospel, then he does not only believe that God has prepared objective salvation, but also that He applies that salvation and makes the elect partaker of it. He *forgives* sins; He *makes alive*; He justifies and sanctifies and glorifies. And saving faith is not simply an accepting for truth of a promise that is set forth, as Heyns wants it, but it is indeed properly the spiritual knowledge of the blessing of forgiveness, the faith not only that God *offers* me forgiveness, but that He grants to me personally that forgiveness, has made me a partaker of it. It is the spiritual knowledge that I am Christ's property, that Christ has died for *me*, that God has reconciled *me* unto Himself, that He has indeed drawn *me* out of darkness into His marvelous light, out of death unto life. All of that is then for *me* the promise of the Gospel. That God grants *me* all of that, objectively and

subjectively, then becomes the object of my faith. There is in faith, as Heyns wants to understand it, no life. It is dead. It is really the fruit of a dead and cold reasoning. The reasoning of faith according to the barren and dead presentation of Heyns is always again as follows: 1. God offers to all men salvation in Christ. 2. I am a man, and therefore God offers me salvation. 3. I believe the offer, therefore I am saved. But it is not thus with true saving faith. Faith is living out of Christ. It is the true spiritual knowledge that I am His property through God's grace, the confidence of love that God has forgiven me all my sins for Christ's sake, the operation in understanding and will of the spiritual tie to the Savior. And therefore *grants* in Question 66 also has a much richer sense than the "offer" or the "objective putting in possession" of Heyns.

In the third place, we must not overlook the fact that even though the word "grants" in Question 66 should have the meaning of "objective putting in possession" without anything more, and that the latter again could mean the same as "offer," Heyns nevertheless does not get one step farther in his attempt to prove that the Gospel may be called an offer of grace to all men as far as our Confession is concerned. In Question 66 after all the reference is not to all men, but only to the believers, and therefore only to the elect. The reference is to those in whose hearts the Holy Spirit has worked faith and in whom God will strengthen that faith through the means of the use of the Sacraments. God has instituted the Sacraments in order that He may the more fully declare and seal to *us* the promise of the Gospel, that He grants *us* freely the remission of sin and life eternal out of grace. Now take this granting simply in the sense of objectively putting in possession, and understand the promise of the Gospel simply in that limited sense (something which is not according to Scripture), and then you nevertheless have in Question 66 nothing else than the truth that God gives the elect the right to the forgiveness of sins and life eternal. Heyns will surely concede this to me. He cannot do otherwise. For his proposition that the Gospel is a well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all sinners who hear it he has produced absolutely no evidence from the confession.

What we wrote above concerning the meaning of Question 66 can also be applied to Question 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Especially our last observation is also applicable to that question. For it is the believer who speaks in answer to that question. Even though the "freely given" in that answer is simply understood as Heyns wants it, one nevertheless thereby advances absolutely nothing by way of proof that the Gospel is an objective putting in possession of salvation for Christ for all who hear it. The believer speaks there. The believer is the elect. To him God has

certainly given the right in Christ to everlasting salvation. And it is this that the believer confesses in the answer to Question 21.

That there then also remains no distinction in the presentation of Heyns between the congregation of the Lord and *all men*, between the line of the covenant and the generations of those who are without, between the entire world and us and our children, as far as the promise of the Gospel is concerned, is already self evident; but it becomes especially clear when we consider what meaning Heyns wants to attach to the prayer of thanksgiving in our Baptism Form. There we read that the congregation thanks God the Father that He has forgiven us and our children all our sins, has received us through the Holy Spirit as members of His only begotten Son, and adopted us to be His children, and that He has sealed and confirmed all this unto us by Baptism. Now Heyns wants to understand all of this in the sense of "objectively putting in possession" and therefore of "offering." According to him we can also render this prayer of thanksgiving as follows: "We thank and praise Thee that Thou dost offer us and our children through the blood of Thy beloved Son the forgiveness of all our sins, the being members of Thine only begotten Son, and the adoption unto children, and that Thou dost seal and confirm this offer by holy baptism." This is strictly according to the presentation of Heyns. Notice now, however, that this "offer" according to the presentation of Heyns, comes not only to the church, but to all men who hear the Gospel. The Gospel is a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. And then you will also see that Heyns removes from the prayer of thanksgiving after baptism all that is specific. He has no church left. What is true for the church is also true for the whole world in so far as it comes into contact with the Gospel of salvation. According to the presentation of Heyns, you could as well pray the prayer of thanksgiving after baptism after an evangelistic sermon on a street corner! Now I know very well that Heyns tries to rescue himself from this difficulty by the assertion that the special privilege of the child of the covenant consists in this, that he receives a certain subjective grace whereby he is put in position to accept or to reject that offered salvation. The covenant child, according to Heyns, really has a free will unto good and unto evil. But by this the matter is only made worse. This simply demonstrates how dangerous it is once to depart from the pure Reformed truth. And he who then keeps in mind that these things have been taught for years at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church, so that many young men have gone into the congregations with this thoroughly false presentation, does not have to wonder any longer at the fact that the situation with respect to the Reformed truth in these churches is so sad.

However, Prof. Heyns appeals for his view also to Holy Scripture. First of all he appeals to John 6:32, where the Savior says to the Jews: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." According to the explanation of Heyns this verse must mean: "My Father puts you objectively in possession, offers you all, head for head, the bread that cometh down from heaven." Now there were among the Jews to whom Jesus directed the word many who did not believe and who were offended at Him. Therefore it must follow that if the explanation of Heyns is correct, we have in these words a general offer of grace. However, there is also another explanation possible. According to this other explanation the word "giveth" retains its ordinary and full meaning of "to impart, to make one a possessor." Only then the "you" does not refer to all the Jews, head for head and soul for soul, but must be understood in the organic sense. The Savior is speaking to the Old Testament Church, to Israel. That church was also represented among those to whom Jesus was speaking there at Capernaum. For He says to them just a little later: "But there are some of you that believe not," in which it certainly is implied and included that there were also those who did indeed believe. Besides He spoke also to His own disciples. The word of Jesus then means: "My Father gives you, His church, His people, the true bread from heaven." This explanation has everything for it, and nothing against it. In the first place, it has in its favor that it is the ordinary manner of speaking in Holy Scripture. Although Israel is never so wicked, Scripture always addresses the people as the church of God. In the second place, with this explanation we do not need to tamper with the word *giveth*, as Heyns certainly does when he wants to change it into *offers*. And finally, this explanation is also much more in harmony with the context. As far as the word "giveth" is concerned, this occurs more often in the context. And it occurs not in the sense of *offers*, but in the sense of actually bestowing, imparting, putting in possession. Thus, for example, in verse 37: "All that the father giveth me shall come to me." The present tense of the word *giveth* which is here used proves indeed that it does not have reference to an objective putting in possession, but to the bringing of His own to Jesus by God. Otherwise the Savior would have said: all that the Father *has given* Me. Thus also in verse 65: "And he said, therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my father." Also here it is plain that the word *give* is used in the sense, not of offer, but of actual putting in possession. And besides the entire context, as already appears from the verses quoted above, is particular. Thus it is also in verse 39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent

me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." The entire context, therefore, militates against the presentation of Heyns and pleads for our presentation.

The parable of the unmerciful servant, to which Heyns points in conclusion, apparently offers some difficulty. For if we apply the parable in all its parts and transfer it to the reality of the Kingdom of heaven, then it appears to teach that God makes the forgiveness of our sins dependent on our forgiving one another's trespasses. And this also appears at first glance to be the meaning of the conclusion which the Savior draws at the end of the parable: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." Thus Heyns wants it. The professor has no difficulty. He does not see anything against it to read in a text the presentation that the Lord can forgive someone's guilt in order nevertheless later again to reckon that guilt to his account. But he who values the principle of explaining Scripture with Scripture and who wants to abide by the pure Reformed truth can never find satisfaction with such a method of explanation. For he knows that God is unchangeable. He also knows that with God the forgiveness of debt means the *blotting out* of the debt in the blood of Christ. There is no forgiveness except through atonement, and there is no atonement except through satisfaction, and there is no satisfaction except through the payment of the debt and the bearing of the punishment. If Christ has suffered for someone and has paid the debt for him, that person's sins are forgiven, and that, too, forever, and they can never again be imputed to him. Therefore also another explanation of the parable shall have to be sought, and it will not be possible simply to transfer the parable in all its parts to the spiritual reality of the Kingdom of heaven. And then the explanation is certainly not to be sought in a change on God's part, so that He at one time forgives someone's sins, only to impute them to him again later; but the explanation is to be sought in the subjective experience of the forgiveness of sins. He who is altogether unable to forgive his brother his trespasses has also never felt the need of the forgiveness of his own sins, much less tasted the great blessedness of that forgiveness. But also in the relative sense of the word it is true that the child of God cannot taste and experience the forgiveness of his sins, that the Holy Spirit does not cause him to experience that grace in his heart, that the prayer for forgiveness dies on his lips and the heavens remain closed for him, as long as he does not forgive his brother his trespasses. He who never can forgive does not only not taste the forgiving grace of God, but such a person's sins are also not blotted out, and his debt is also not remitted in the objective sense of the word. But he whose sins are indeed

blotted out in the blood of Christ also does not always *taste* the forgiving grace of God, namely, not when he does not forgive the brother. In that sense it is true that our heavenly Father does not forgive us our trespasses unless we also forgive one another from the heart. And therefore, for the forgiveness of our sins it is precisely requisite that we can pray from the heart: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors their debts."



The History of the Free Offer of the Gospel (4)

Prof. H. Hanko

[In our last article we dealt at length with the teachings of Amyrauldianism as they related to the question of the free offer of the gospel.]

Francis Turretin was deeply involved in the Amyrauldian controversy. He was a contemporary of Amyraut, teaching in Geneva at the time this controversy raged in France. And it was in part in response to this creeping heresy of Amyrauldianism that he helped draw up the *Consensus Helvetica*. There are a few of these articles which were specifically written against the Amyrauldian heresy. There are articles which also repudiate the idea of the free offer of the gospel.

XIII. As Christ was from eternity elected the Head, Prince, and Lord of all who, in time, are saved by His grace, so also in time, He was made Surety of the New Covenant only for those who by the eternal Election, were given to Him as His own people, His seed and inheritance. For according to the determinate counsel of the Father and His own intention, He encountered dreadful death instead of the elect alone, restored only these into the bosom of the Father's grace, and these only He reconciled to God, the offended Father, and delivered from the curse of the law. For our Jesus saves *His people* from their sins (Matthew 1:21), who gave His life a ransom for *many sheep* (Matthew 20:28; John 10:15), His own, who hear His voice (John 10:27, 28), and for those only He also intercedes, as a divinely appointed Priest, and not for the world (John 17:9). Accordingly in the death of Christ, only the elect, who in time are made new creatures (II Corinthians 5:17), and for whom Christ in His death was substituted as an expiatory sacrifice, are regarded as having died with Him and as being justified from sin; and thus, with the counsel of the Father who gave to Christ none but the elect to be redeemed, and also with the working of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and

seals unto a living hope of eternal life none but the elect, the will of Christ who died so agrees and amicably conspires in perfect harmony, that the sphere of the Father's election, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sanctification is one and the same.

XVI. Since all these things are entirely so, surely we cannot approve the contrary doctrine of those who affirm that of His own intention, by His own counsel and that of the Father who sent Him, Christ died for all men each upon the impossible condition, provided they believe; that He obtained for all a salvation, which, nevertheless, is not applied to all, and by His death merited salvation and faith for no one individually and certainly, but only removed the obstacle of Divine justice, and acquired for the Father the liberty of entering into a new covenant of grace with all men; and finally, they so separate the active and passive righteousness of Christ, as to assert that He claims His *active* righteousness for Himself as His own, but gives and imputes only His *passive* righteousness to the elect. All these opinions, and all that are like these, are contrary to the plain Scriptures and the glory of Christ, who is *Author* and *Finisber* of our faith and salvation; they make His cross of none effect, and under the appearance of augmenting His merit, they really diminish it.

XIX. Likewise the external call itself, which is made by the preaching of the Gospel, is on the part of God also, who calls, earnest and sincere. For in His Word He unfolds earnestly and most truly, not, indeed, His secret intention respecting the salvation or destruction of each individual, but what belongs to our duty, and what remains for us if we do or neglect this duty. Clearly it is the will of God who calls, that they who are called come to Him and not neglect so great salvation, and so He promises eternal life also in good earnest, to those who come to Him by faith; for, as the Apostle declares, "It is a faithful saying: — For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Nor in regard to those who do not obey the call is this will inefficacious; for God always attains that which He intends in His will, even the demonstration of duty, and following this, either the salvation of the elect who do their duty, or the inexcusableness of the rest who neglect the duty set before them. Surely the spiritual man in no way secures the internal purpose of God to produce faith along with the externally proffered, or written Word of God. Moreover, because God approved every verity which flows from His counsel therefore it is rightly said to be His will, that *all who see the Son and believe on Him may have everlasting life* (John 6:40). Although these "all" are the elect alone, and God formed no plan of universal salvation without any selection of persons, and Christ therefore died not for everyone but for the elect only who were given to Him; yet He intends this in any case to be universally true, which follows from His special and definite purpose.

This idea of the command of the gospel must be distinguished clearly from the idea from a free or well-meant offer. It is true, as we observed

in an earlier article, that sometimes among Reformed theologians the word "offer" was used in this sense. And when it is used in this sense, we have no quarrel with the idea which is proposed by it. Nevertheless, the *idea* must be distinguished from what is commonly taught by those who maintain a free offer. The latter teach that through the preaching God expresses His desire, willingness and intention to save all who hear the gospel because it is His revealed will to save all — a will that is rooted in some sense in an atonement which is for all. That through the preaching of the gospel the *command* to repent of sin and believe comes to all is an entirely different idea. This command is rooted in the creation ordinance itself. God created man good and upright, capable in all things to will the will of God. When man fell, he lost all ability to obey God and keep His commandments and plunged himself into the ruin of sin and death. But just because man, through his own foolishness and sin, lost the ability to love his God, God does not withdraw His requirements which demand of man that man obey Him. God is just and righteous in all that He does. Whether man can or cannot keep God's law makes no difference whatsoever. God still requires of man that which He originally required when He created man upright and able to serve Him.

Perhaps an illustration will demonstrate this. Suppose that I hire a contractor to build a house for me and my family. If this contractor agrees to build this house for a stipulated amount of money, then he is under obligation to do this. Supposing furthermore, that I, at his request, advance him one-third of the cost. If he would take that money which I have advanced him and spend it in a lengthy vacation in Hawaii, he would in no way escape the obligations to which he is bound. He may plead with me that he is unable to build the house because he needs money first before he can actually begin the work, but his inability in no way excuses him from his obligation. My answer to him is simply: "I gave you the money. The fact that you squandered it is no excuse. You are obligated to build the house."

No less is this true of God. He still requires obedience from man. And if man pleads that he lacks the ability to obey, the answer is simply that God created man capable of obeying, but man squandered his precious gifts. The fault lies with man. And his sin does not excuse him from his obligations.

The Heidelberg Catechism speaks to this point when it says:

Doth not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform? Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own

wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts (Q. & A. 9).

It is this truth which forms the basis for the command of the gospel which comes to all to turn from sin and obey God.

Turretin faced the question of what this command to obey God and believe in Christ actually means. In answering this question, he made a distinction in the idea of faith. We quote him at some length because this is a question of some importance.

What everyone is bound to believe absolutely and simply, directly and immediately, without anything previously supposed, we grant is true. But the case is different in relation to those things which one is bound to believe mediately and in consequence of some acts supposed to be previously done. It is false, however, that all men are bound to believe that Christ died for them simply and absolutely. In the first place, those to whom the Gospel has never been preached, to whom Christ has never been made known, are not surely bound to believe that Christ died for them. This can be affirmed of those only who are called in the Gospel. "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13). Secondly, even all those who hear the Gospel are not bound to believe directly and immediately that Christ died for them, but mediately. The acts of faith and repentance are presupposed; they must precede a belief that Christ died for one's self; for Christ's death belongs to those only who believe and repent. So far is it from being true that unbelievers are bound to believe that Christ died for them, that he who persuades them so to believe miserably mocks them. . . .²

In order to explain this in the light of the fact that all who hear the gospel are commanded to believe in Christ, Turretin makes the following distinctions:

I shall proceed to distinguish various acts of faith. First, one act of faith is *direct*, which has for its object the offer of the Gospel. By this act I fly to Christ and embrace his promises. Another act is *reflex*, and has for its object the direct act of faith. By this act I discovered that I have indeed believed, and that the promises of the Gospel belong to me. Again, the direct act of faith is twofold. One of its operations consists in the *assent* which it gives to the Word of God and to the promises of the Gospel, as true in relation to the giving of salvation to all who repent and by a living faith fly to Christ and embrace him. Another operation of saving faith is its *taking refuge* and *trusting* in Christ, acknowledging him as the only sufficient Saviour. It is by this we fly to him, rest in him, and from him obtain pardon of our sins and salvation. Now, that faith which is

1. "The Atonement of Christ," Francis Turretin, Baker Book House, 1978, pp. 177, 178.

commanded in the Gospel is commanded as to the first and second act which are direct, before it is commanded as to the third act which is the reflex, and which necessarily supposes the two former; as it cannot exist unless preceded by them. Hence we are enabled clearly to detect the fallacy of the above objection. When the objection speaks of the faith commanded, it refers to that act by which the sinner lays hold of Christ; but when it speaks of the thing believed, then it refers to the last, by which we believe from the evidence furnished by the direct act in our souls, that Christ died for us. Christ is not revealed in the Gospel as having died for me in particular; but only as having died in general for those who believe and repent. Hence I reason from that faith and repentance which I find actually to exist in my heart, that Christ has, indeed, died for me in particular. . . .

Hence it appears that the command to believe in Christ embraces many things before we come to the last consolatory act, by which we believe that he died for us. . . .²

It is clear from this that Turretin is struggling with the question of how the command to believe can come to all when Christ did not die for all. To solve this problem, he makes a distinction between the direct act of faith and the reflex act of faith, the former referring only to the command to believe in Christ as One in Whom is full salvation for those who come to Him; and the latter being the act of faith whereby one personally appropriates Christ as one's own. Only the former is the content of the command which comes to all who hear the gospel.

But is this distinction satisfactory? We think not.

While it is indeed true that the command to believe in Christ surely does include the command to assent to the Scriptures as true and to believe that Christ's sacrifice is the perfect and complete sacrifice for sin, Turretin's distinction separates "assent" from "assurance" and does this chronologically as faith operates in the believer. It really is the same distinction which arises in the discussion found later in Reformed and Presbyterian theology concerning whether assurance is part of the *essence* of faith. It suggests an historical faith which includes assurance and trust, though it is not personal — i.e., a personal assurance that Christ died for me. But this is unsatisfactory, for it is surely true that to believe that Christ's sacrifice is the perfect and complete sacrifice for sin necessarily implies a personal fleeing from sin and resting in Christ, i.e., a personal appropriation that Christ is indeed *my* Savior and Redeemer.

We shall have occasion to return to this subject in future discussions,

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-181.

but it is important now to understand several points. In the first place, Turretin repudiated the whole concept of the free and well-meant offer of the gospel, along with its corollary that Christ in some sense died for all. Secondly, Turretin did not deny that the *command* to believe in Christ comes to all. This truth he steadfastly maintained and this truth has always been maintained by those who repudiate the idea of a free offer. In the third place, as he attempted to harmonize this with a particular or limited atonement, he distinguished between the activity of faith in such a way that he separated the "assent" of faith from its "assurance." With this we cannot agree and there is no Scriptural warrant for doing this. Nevertheless, he clearly maintained that the atonement of Christ was limited to the elect only and that no idea of a universal atonement can serve as the basis for an offer which expresses God's intent to save all. In this respect Turretin stands in the line of Reformed thought.

DAVENANT AND THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY

The error of Amyrauldianism was not confined to France, but soon spread to many parts of the continent and came also into Britain. It is not surprising that this should happen for John Cameron, the teacher of Amyraut, ended his career as Principal in Glasgow College where John Davenant (1576-1641) was his student.

While it is not our purpose to enter into detail concerning the views of Davenant, who many consider to be one of Britain's outstanding theologians, nevertheless, it is of interest to note that he was one of the delegates from Great Britain to the famous Synod of Dort and was, along with his fellow delegates, among the weakest representatives present at that great Assembly. Perhaps only the Bremen theologians were weaker in their views, although also the British delegates consistently favored the Arminian viewpoint in many crucial instances.

Davenant attempted to find a middle road between outright Arminianism and the supralapsarianism which some in England favored. He found in the theology of Saumur such a road and defended the Amyrauldian views of hypothetical universalism, a general atonement in the sense of intention as well as sufficiency, a common blessing of the cross, and a conditional salvation. All these views stood in close connection with the theology of the well-meant offer of salvation to all.

It is clear that Davenant defended a view which was contrary to the views of Calvin and was an attempt to alter the system of Calvinism as it was maintained by many theologians within Britain.

In an interesting book entitled, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, by Paul

Helm the author speaks of these views of Davenant³. Helm writes,

According to Kendall, Calvin held that the scope of the death of Christ is different from that of His intercession. He died for all, but intercedes only for the elect. The Amyrauldians appeared to have made no such distinction, arguing that the work of Christ *as a totality* was for all, and that this total saving work was applied by the Holy Spirit to the elect alone. According to Kendall's Calvin only part of the provision of salvation in Christ was universal in its intent, namely, his death, while his intercession was particular. It is this that makes his interpretation of Calvin unique. . . .

In his *Dissertation on the Death of Christ*, a book written from a broadly Amyrauldian position, John Davenant considers the following objection to his own view: "If the death of Christ is to be considered as a remedy or ransom applicable to every man, from the ordination of God, then also the resurrection, intercession and mediation of Christ will have respect to all men in the same manner. But Christ was not raised up for all, does not intercede for all, is not the mediator of all: therefore, neither is his death to be extended to all." It might be expected that Davenant would reply to such an objection by insisting that the scope of Christ's intercession is narrower than that of his death, and by backing this up with an appeal to the illustrious precedent of John Calvin. But Davenant replies: "For as we can truly announce to every man that his sins are expiable by the death of Christ according to the ordination of God and will be expiated, if only he should believe in Christ; so also we can truly declare, that the same Christ was raised again, that he might justify him through faith, and was exalted at the right hand of God, that, by his mediation and merits, he might preserve him through faith in the favor of God, and at length might lead him to glory. Therefore we do not put assunder those things which God hath joined together; but we teach that the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ are joined together in indissoluble union. . . ."

It is clear from this quote that Davenant wanted both an atonement which was universal in some respects and an intercession of Christ which was of the same extent as the atonement.

The following quote expresses the same view of Davenant:

In England the notion of a universal desire in God for the salvation of all men was also the root principle of the Davenant School at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This school taught that there is in the

3. This book was published in 1982 by The Banner of Truth Trust. It was written against Dr. R.T. Kendall, who in his book, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, defends the proposition that Puritan theology "departed significantly from, and even opposed, the theology of John Calvin." This, according to Kendall, was especially true of Calvin's doctrine of the atonement.

redemption purchased by Christ, an absolute intention for the elect and a conditional intention for the reprobate in case they do not believe.⁴

A number of men were influenced by Davenant's thinking and this school of thought was represented at the Westminster Assembly by such men as Arrowsmith, Sprigge, Pritte, Carlyle, Burroughs, Strong, Seaman, and Calumy. These men in general agreed to an absolute decree of predestination for the elect, but a general and conditional decree of all men. They defended a universal atonement in the sense of intention as well as sufficiency, i.e., that the atonement was *intended* for all as well as sufficient for all. Flowing from the cross were general blessings which came to all, a certain common grace which was the possession of all who came under the preaching. And, in connection with these views, they defended the idea also of an offer of the gospel to all in which God expressed His intention and willingness to save all.

In his *Introduction to the Minutes of the Westminster Assembly*, A.F. Mitchell writes:

The same care was taken to avoid the insertion of anything which could be regarded as indicating a preference for supralapsarianism; and for this purpose, the words, "to bring this to pass, God ordained to permit man to fall," were changed into "they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ," etc. Did these divines mean to follow an opposite policy in regard to the point on which Calumy, Arrowsmith, Vines, Seaman, and other disciples of Davenant, or according to Baillie of Amyraut, differed from the more exact Calvinists? After repeated perusal of their debate, I cannot take upon myself certainly to affirm that they did, though I admit that this matter is not so clear as the others above referred to. No notes of the debate in its latest stage are given, nor is a vote of dissent respecting it found in these Minutes. Calumy, who spoke repeatedly in the debate on the Extent of Redemption, avowed that he held, in the same sense as the English divines at the Synod of Dort, "that Christ by his death did pay a price for all, with absolute intention for the elect, with conditional intention for the reprobate in case they do believe; that all men should be *salvabiles non obstante lapsu Adami*. . . ; that Jesus Christ did not only die sufficiently for all, but God did intend, in giving of

4. *Universalism and the Reformed Churches, A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism* published by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. This pamphlet is a detailed refutation of the idea that the free offer of the gospel stands in the line of historic Calvinism. It shows clearly that the notion of the free offer is a "modification" of Calvinism and a modification which introduces into the Calvinistic system a deadly Arminianism. Unfortunately, this pamphlet is presently out of print and, therefore, difficult to obtain.

Christ, and Christ in giving himself did intend, to put all men in a state of salvation in case they do believe." Seaman, Vines, Marshall, and Harris in part at least, agreed with him. And though I cannot find that Dr. Arrowsmith took part in this debate, yet he was attending the Assembly, was a member of the Committee on the Confession, and in his writings has repeatedly expressed his leaning towards the same opinion.⁵

That these men held to these views is, as Rev. Mitchell points out, clear from the record of the Minutes.⁶

In this same connection, Philip Schaff writes in his *Creeds of Christendom*:

Several prominent members, as Calumy, Arrowsmith, Vines, Seaman, who took part in the preparation of the doctrinal standards, sympathized with the hypothetical universalism of the Saumur school (Cameron and Amyrauld) and with the moderate position of Davenant and the English delegates to the Synod of Dort. They expressed this sympathy on the floor of the Assembly, as well as on other occasions. They believed in a special *effective* election and final perseverance of the elect (as necessary means to a certain end), but they held at the same time that God sincerely *intends* to save *all* men; that Christ *intended* to die, and *actually* died, for *all* men; and that the difference is not in the intention and offer on the part of God, but in the acceptance and appropriation on the part of men.⁷

The question arises whether these views of the Davenant school were incorporated into the Westminster Confession. The answer to this question is that, although these views were defended on the Assembly by able theologians, they were nevertheless not included in the formulation of the Confession as it was finally adopted. The Assembly spoke, in connection with predestination, of a sovereign election without conditions and of a sovereign reprobation in which "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice."⁸ There is no mention made of the hypothetical universalism of the Saumur school.

In connection with the redemption which Christ worked on the cross, the Assembly was equally strong: "The Lord Jesus. . .purchased. . .an everlasting inheritance. . .for all those whom the Father had given unto him" (VIII, 5). "Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and

5. pp. 56-59.

6. Cf. for this material pp. 152-156.

7. Vol. I, p. 770.

8. Cf. chapter III.

benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect. . ." (VIII, 6). "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same. . ." (VIII, 8).

In this connection too, the Assembly spoke of the effectual calling as for the elect alone: "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit. . ." (X, 1).

But these references do not solve our entire problem, for the question arises whether or not the idea of the free and well-meant offer was incorporated into the Westminster Creed. And this, in turn, brings up another question which is much debated: Did the Westminster Divines specifically and categorically exclude the Amyrauldian view as set forth by the Davenant school?

In connection with the first question, Westminster does specifically refer to the offer in VII, 3, strikingly enough in connection with the doctrine of the covenant rather than, where one would expect it, in connection with the calling. The article reads:

Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they might be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

While it is true that the term "offer" is used here, (the Latin reads: *in quo peccatorivus offert gratuito vitam ac salutem per jesum christum*), there are several considerations which lead us to conclude that the idea of the offer as used by the school of Amyraut and as promoted by the Davenant men was not intended by the Westminster divines. In the first place, the *theology* of the offer — a double will of God, a universal intention in the atonement, a conditional salvation — was not incorporated into the creed. In the second place, the word "offer" is not found in the chapter on effectual calling where one would expect it, but in the section on the covenant, which leads one to think that it was intended by the Westminster fathers, not as a flat statement concerning the offer, but in the sense of Christ *presented* or *set forth* in the gospel. In the third place, even in the article where the word is used, it is made synonymous with the command to believe: "freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, *requiring* of them faith in him. . ." And, in this same article, the promise of salvation is said to be to the elect alone: "and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe."

Nevertheless, the views represented on the Assembly by the Davenant men were not specifically repudiated. Some have argued from this that the Assembly deliberately worded the confession in such a way that the Davenant men were given latitude for their views and were thus enabled also to sign the Confession in the firm conviction that their views were not specifically condemned.

Schaff deals with this question at some length⁹, and concludes:

This looks like a compromise between conditional universalism taught in the first clause, and particular election taught in the second. This is in substance the theory of the school of Saumur, which was first broached by the Scotch divine Cameron (d. 1626), and more fully developed by his pupil Amyraut, between A.D. 1630 and 1650, and which was afterwards condemned in the Helvidic Consensus Formula (1675).¹⁰

In an interesting footnote, Schaff connects all this with the idea of the offer, an idea which he espouses:

The ablest modern defendants of a limited atonement, Drs. Cunningham and Hodge, are as emphatic on the absolute *sufficiency* as Reynolds. Their arguments are chiefly logical; but logic depends on the premises, and is a two-edged sword which may be turned against them as well. For if the atonement be limited in *design*, it must be limited in the *offer*; or if unlimited in the offer, the offer made to the non-elect must be *insincere* and *hypocritical*, which is inconsistent with the truthfulness and goodness of God. Every Calvinist (sic) preaches on the assumption that the offer of salvation is truly and sincerely extended to *all* his hearers, and that it is their own fault if they are not saved.¹¹

Mitchell takes the same position.

But it is remarkable that, though the assembly met after the Synod of Dort, and had for the president one whose opinions on these mysterious subjects were almost as pronounced as those of Gomarus himself, it fell back not on the decrees of that Synod, but on the Articles of the Irish Church, which had been drawn up before the Synod of Dort was summoned, for the controversies its decrees occasioned had waxed so fierce. The debates of the Assembly clearly show that its members did not wish to determine several particulars decided by the Synod of Dort, far less to determine them more rigidly than it had done. . . . Did these divines mean to follow an opposite policy in regard to the point on which Calumy, Arrowsmith, Vines, Seaman, and other disciples of Davenant, or according to Baillie of Amyraut, different from the more exact Calvinists? After repeated perusal of their debates, I cannot take upon myself certainly to affirm that they did, though I admit that this matter is not so clear as the others above referred to.¹²

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 769-773.

10. *Ibid.*, 772, 773.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 772.

12. *Op. cit.*, pp. 54, 55.

This conclusion is, I think, correct. While a certain defense of Amyrauldianism was represented at Westminster, it was not incorporated into the Confession, but it was also not specifically and explicitly excluded.

There are probably several reasons for this. In the first place, the Westminster Confession has no negative sections in it which condemns specific errors, as, e.g., the Canons have. In the second place, this in turn was probably due to several factors. On the one hand, the Confession was not born out of the fire of persecution (as was the Belgic Confession) or out of the fierce battles of doctrinal controversy (as was the Canons of Dort). This gives, in fact, to the Confession, a certain objective and somewhat abstract character, far removed from the warm personal confession of the Belgic Confession, which begins its articles with the words, "We believe. . .," and from the strong pastoral concern of the Canons of Dort which speaks so warmly of the personal assurance of the child of God in all its chapters. On the other hand, within the context of the times, the Parliament, which authorized the Assembly, and the Assembly itself were interested in establishing the doctrines of Westminster as the religion of the State, intending it to replace Anglicanism. And this intention necessarily involved making the Confession inclusive rather than exclusive, for it was to be the Confession of the realm.

We can only conclude therefore, that the Westminster Confession is weak at certain key points. It is weak in failing to exclude certain views promoted by the Davenant men, a failure which enabled these men to sign the Confession. It is weak in failing to define clearly its idea of the offer – a subject which was indeed an issue among those who defended some form of Amyrauldianism.

Yet it must not be forgotten that the positive statements of the Confession set forth the truth of Scripture on all these points and do not, by any stretch of the imagination incorporate the views of the free offer in its formulation. Any form of Arminianism, also such as represented by Amyrauld and Davenant, and the whole notion of the free offer were excluded from the formulation of this great Assembly.

We conclude this section with a quote which shows the difference clearly between Arminianism and Calvinism on the question of the offer.

The Arminians, believing in universal grace in the sense of God's love to all men – that is, *omnibus et singulis*, or His design and purpose to save all men conditionally, – and in universal redemption, or Christ's dying for all men, – consistently follow out these views by asserting a universal *proclamation* to men of God's purpose of mercy – a universal occasion, or offer and invitation to men to receive pardon and salvation, – accompanied by a universal sufficient grace, – gracious assistance actually and universally bestowed, sufficient to enable all men, if they chose, to attain to the full

possession of spiritual blessings, and ultimately to salvation. Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all to whom the gospel is preached, and that all who can be reached should be invited and urged to come to Christ and embrace Him, *deny that this flows from, or indicates, any design or purpose on God's part to save all men* (the italics of this clause is ours); and without pretending to understand or unfold all the objects or ends of this arrangement, or to assert that it has no other object or end whatever, regard it as *mainly* designed to effect the result of calling out and saving God's chosen people; and they deny that grace, or gracious divine assistance, sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, is given to all men.¹³



Pastoral Care of Married Persons

Prof. Robert D. Decker

The Origin of Marriage

The wisest of men was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing. This statement, especially in today's world, may appear untrue. Viewing marriage today one might object to this Word of God. Virtually every pastor in God's church can point to examples of broken marriages, divorce, unfaithful spouses, transgressions of the seventh commandment which have occurred within the congregation which he serves. Problem-ridden marriages are increasing at an alarming rate even within the pale of orthodox, Reformed churches. Many a pastor could probably point to an unfortunate marriage within his congregation and conclude that that man did not find a good thing when he found his wife. He found a bad thing. Perhaps the man failed as well to obtain the favor of God.

Solomon is speaking of a godly marriage, a "marriage in the Lord." In the world a true marriage can never be consummated. Marriage among the unbelievers is begun in sin; it continues in sin and it ends in sin. The favor of God is never obtained by the ungodly husband and wife for: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. . ." (Prov. 3:33a). In the sphere of the Covenant and church of God, which is to say, in the sphere of the grace of God in Jesus Christ true marriage is found. It is of that

13. *Historical Theology*, William Cunningham, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, Edinburgh, 1979, Vol. II, pp. 396, 397.

kind of marriage, a wedding between two Christians, that the Scripture speaks in Proverbs 18:22. In the church of Christ and by the grace of God it is true: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord."

Because of our sinful natures, to which the appeals of the sinful world are directed, problems remain within the church. It is simply a fact that pastors are increasingly called upon to deal with couples having problems of one sort or another within their marriages. This is sad, even tragic, but a fact nonetheless. If we who are called by Christ to shepherd the flock of God (cf. I Pet. 5:1-4) are to be able to deal with these marriages properly and effectively we must know from the Word of God what is the origin of marriage and what is the institution of marriage. We must know what the Bible says about the calling (not "role") of the husband and the calling of the wife. We must know how to care for these troubled husbands and wives in a Biblical way. What are the problems in the light of Scripture? What does the Bible offer as the cure for these problems? In this initial article, which is of an introductory nature, we shall examine the questions concerning the origin and institution of the holy bond of marriage.

Marriage has its origin in the very beginning of all things, in the creation by God of heaven and earth and all that is in them. On the sixth day of the creation week, after He had created the animals, God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let *them* (note the plural, man means already here male and female) have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26, 27). In chapter two of Genesis, which might be called a divine commentary on chapter one, we learn that male and female were not created at the same time nor in the same way. The man was created first by a twofold act of God: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (vs. 7). It is apparent that Adam is alone for a time. After God put him into the garden which He (God) planted and after God gave Adam the commandment concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life, God created the woman. Just how long a period of time elapsed between the creation of Adam and that of Eve we are not told. It is clear, however, that up to that point Adam was alone (cf. Gen. 2:7-17). The rest of chapter two speaks of the creation of the woman: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of

the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (vss. 18-25).

Marriage, therefore, has its origin in creation. God created the man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. By this twofold creative act of God man became a living soul. Later God created the woman out of the man. God took one of Adam's ribs and from that rib God made (the Hebrew verb means: built) the woman. Having built the woman from Adam's rib God brought her to Adam who said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." The Lord adds: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Thus having created Adam and then Eve from his rib God brought them together in the first marriage. For this reason too, God says a man must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh. This is the origin of marriage. It belongs to creation itself.

The Institution of Marriage

There are several truths revealed in the Genesis passages which have direct bearing on the relationship between the husband and his wife. By way of implication at least, these same truths have something to say concerning the respective callings of the husband and wife.

1) The man and woman share a common nature. This is evident already from Genesis 1:26, 27. Both male and female were created in the image of God and after God's likeness. Both male and female were blessed by God and to both God commanded: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (vs. 27). The narrative of the creation or "building" of the woman (Gen. 2:18-25) also makes this clear. The woman was taken

literally out of the man (cf. vss. 21, 22). Upon awaking from his deep sleep Adam recognized this immediately for he exclaims: "*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*: (emphasis mine, R.D.D.) she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (vs. 23). Her name in the Hebrew, *ishshab*, also indicates this essential oneness of nature between the man and the woman. This name may be translated, "female man."

Upon the basis of its very creation by God "in the beginning" the marriage bond is without doubt the most intimate relationship that can possibly exist among men. The relationship of parents and their children is a very intimate one. Who can measure the love a godly father has for his sons and daughters? He will do all within his power to provide for them, to care for them, to instruct them in the fear of Jehovah. And those children adore their father. They have an almost naive trust in father. In father's presence they are not afraid no matter the circumstances. Who can measure the love a godly mother has for her children? It is a love which makes her forget the pain of childbirth the instant she holds her newborn in her arms. She carries the unborn for nine months under her heart. She nourishes the babes at her breasts. From early morning to the quiet hours of night she labors for her children. She teaches them their first words. With patience she nourishes them in God's fear. When they are ill she will gladly spend the entire night at their bedsides. Any pastor who has stood with parents at the grave of their child and witnessed their profound grief over the loss of that child knows something of the deep and profound love parents have for their children. But as intimate as the relationship between parents and their children may be the relationship between husband and wife is more intimate. That most intimate bond of marriage is based upon the fact that husband and wife according to the very origin of marriage share a common nature. The wife is bone of her husband's bones and flesh of his flesh. While God created the man and the woman by two very different and distinct creative acts God did not, as it were, create the woman alongside of the man. God took the woman out of the man. Out of the man's very nature, this means. The woman possesses essentially the same nature as the man. They are one flesh. Adam, upon awaking from that deep sleep during which the Lord made the woman, recognizes this immediately for he says: ". . . she shall be called woman, *ishshab*, 'female man'." Husband and wife are of the same nature. For this reason the marriage bond is the most intimate union among men.

This first, fundamental principle must govern pastors who are called upon to shepherd married persons. Spouses who sin against each other

and the Lord violate the most intimate and sacred union God has created. They tear apart what God has created as one. It is also true that because they are one in nature a man and woman can live together as husband and wife. This oneness of nature is the basis of the bond of marriage according to God's creation. Apart from anything else the pastor must attempt to lead married persons to the proper expression of their unity as husband and wife.

2) Although they share a common nature by virtue of creation the husband remains man and the wife remains woman. They are not identical. The wife is not a clone of her husband. This too, is clear from the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2. The man was created first while the woman was created second. The man was created out of the dust of the ground while the woman was created from the rib of the man. Thus the woman is always the woman and the man is always the man. All of this is rather obvious though the unbelieving world of today attempts to blur this divine distinction. The woman is different emotionally. Generally the woman has a "softer" nature than the man. She is feminine while he is masculine. The woman is more intuitive while the man tends to "think things through." The man also differs physically from the woman. The man is the stronger of the two and usually the larger. These differences could be multiplied. The point is that man is man and the woman is woman.

It is precisely because of these two factors: their oneness of nature and their personal distinction that man and woman are able to live together in the sacred bond of marriage. It is only on the basis of their essential oneness, their common nature that husband and wife can live together in the married state. Their common nature is the basis of their union. At the same time the fact that they are personally distinct makes it possible for them to fellowship together as husband and wife. If they were identical all fellowship would be impossible. As two who are one husband and wife interact, love and are loved, converse, aid and assist one another.

This is why too, the marriage relation as created by God is a natural or creaturely reflection of God's covenant. Marriage is a reflection of the covenant as it exists in God triune. God is a covenant God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: three distinct persons. But the three persons of the Godhead are one divine nature possessing the same divine attributes. Within that one divine nature God the Father is always the Father, God the Son is always the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is always the Holy Spirit. God is the covenant God. But God has also established His covenant with His people in Christ. God fellowships with His people in

Christ. Of this most intimate union or covenant marriage is the earthly reflection. Marriage is an intimate union of one man and one woman, a covenant union of body and soul. No one may interfere with or enter into that exclusive union. Any violation of this intimate, covenant union of marriage between one man and one woman is a gross violation of God's creation ordinance and His holy law which states: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

3) Within this intimate union, marriage, there is a beautiful relationship between the man and the woman. The fact that Adam was created first means he is the head of his wife. This the Scriptures clearly teach in more than one passage. One reason why a woman may not teach in the church nor usurp authority over the man in the church is the fact that Adam was created before Eve. The apostle writes to his spiritual son: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:12, 13). That the man is the head of the woman is also evident from the fact that the woman was created out of the man. The same apostle in his first letter to the Corinthians makes this very point: "But I would have you know, (notice how emphatic this is!) that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. . . . For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:2, 7, 8, 9). The apostle's argument is this: because the woman was created of the man and not the man of the woman, the man is the head of the woman. In the Greek original this is put even more emphatically. Verse eight reads: "For the man is not out of the woman (*ou . . . ek gunaikos*); but the woman of the man (*gunce ex andros*). Still more, the apostle continues in verse 9: "Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Literally the text reads: "Neither was the man created for the sake of, or for the benefit of the woman; but the woman for the sake of, or for the benefit of the man." In both clauses the Greek has the preposition, *dia*, followed by the accusative case. The apostle applies this truth to the marriage bond when he exhorts wives to submit themselves to their own husbands: "For the husband is the head of the wife. . ." (Eph. 5:23). The husband is the head of his wife, therefore, because: a) The man was created before the woman and, b) the woman was created out of the man and for the benefit of the man. Does this imply some kind of tyranny of the man over the woman or some kind of superiority of the man over the woman? By no means. The Holy Spirit,

perhaps in anticipation of just such questions as these, wrote: "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (I Cor. 11:11). In the Lord neither the man nor the woman stand independently of the other. They belong together. Neither can realize his or her God-given calling apart from the other. Why is this? "For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman" (vs. 12). After Adam every man has been born of a woman. The woman was created out of and for the benefit of the man, but subsequently there could be no man without the woman. Each in his or her God-given place and calling and both before the face of God are equally the recipients of the blessings of salvation in Christ. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 4:26-29).

These truths are apparent already from the narrative of the creation of the woman out of the man recorded in Genesis 2. After Jehovah formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He put him in the garden which He (God) had planted with the command to dress and keep it (vss. 7-15). Next the Lord gave Adam commandment concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. At this point God declared: "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him" (vs. 18). The question is: what does the Lord mean? Why is it not good that the man should be alone? Why does he need a help meet for him? Does the man need a woman merely to alleviate his loneliness? Was the woman created merely as a companion for the man? It cannot be doubted that the woman provides the man companionship so that without her he suffers from loneliness. This is the experience of every widower and widow. It is also true that the loneliness of a widower or widow can often be an extremely painful form of emotional and mental suffering. Certainly the woman was created to be a companion to the man. But there is something more and deeper involved. It was not good for the man to be alone because he, in a very real sense, could not be alone. The man could not alone fulfill his calling to dress and keep the garden as the image bearer of God. The man alone could not: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Alone the man could not: "subdue the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Adam could not all by himself function as king of God's creation. Alone, he was not able to press the earthly creation into the service of God. For this reason, especially, it was not good for him to be alone.

In an altogether marvelous way God taught Adam to realize this. God brought the beasts of the field and the fowl of the air to Adam so that he (Adam) could name them. After he named the animals we read this significant statement: “. . .but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:20). The animals were male and female. Adam saw this and realized that he was alone. There was no help meet for him. Notice it is help meet and not helpmeet. There was no help meet, i.e., fit for Adam. Adam lacked something. What Adam lacked was someone to stand at his side and help him fulfill his calling as king over God’s creation. Thereupon God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took one of his ribs and from it “built” the woman and brought her to Adam. God supplied Adam’s lack by creating out of him the woman. The woman, therefore, is the help fit for Adam. She is the perfect complement to the man. She supplies what he lacks making it possible for him to subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing. The woman is precisely what the man needs to fulfill his place and calling as God’s friend-servant. She fulfills her calling as the help for her husband. The man is the head who is served by the woman. Together they are one for the woman is: “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . .” (Gen. 2:23). For this reason, God said: “shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (vs. 24).

4) Marriage is a communion of love. By love is meant the love of God. True marriage is a communion of one man and one woman in the love of God which is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). This needs emphasis especially in our times. This love is not the love of which the world of sin and unbelief speaks. Nor is this love mere sexual attraction. No marriage based merely upon physical sex can be a true marriage according to the institution of God. The love of which the world speaks is no more than carnal, wicked lust and passion. This is precisely why, according to the latest statistics, one out of every two marriages in the United States ends in divorce. Marriage is a most intimate communion between one man and one woman in the love of God. Thus it was originally. Having created the woman and brought her to the man God said: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). How beautiful!

When our Lord Jesus was confronted (tempted) by the Pharisees with their question concerning divorce He quoted this very passage: “And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he (God, R.D.D.) which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more

twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put assunder" (Matt. 19:4-6; cf. Mark 10:2-12). The apostle Paul writes the same: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). Both Jesus and the inspired apostle alter the quotation by the addition of one word. That word is, "twain" or "two." God made them male and female for which reason a man must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they *two* shall be *one* flesh. The two become one! They who were two are now one flesh in the love of God. Even though sexual union within the sacred bond of marriage in the Lord is the highest expression of the unity of husband and wife, the most beautiful and pure expression of the love of God between husband and wife, more than mere physical, sexual union is meant by "they shall be one flesh." Husband and wife who were formerly two become one flesh in every sense of the word. They are of one mind, the mind of Christ. They are one in purpose, to serve the Lord their God. They are one in their faith, one in hope, one in the greatest of these, the love of God. The husband is head of the wife, the wife is called to submit to him in the love of God. Together they are one flesh. No more are they two. Just one. Let men and women say what they will, this is marriage as instituted by God "from the beginning," at the very dawn of history. Marriage is a most intimate communion of the love of God in Christ between one man and one woman.

This is why, too, marriage in the true sense can only exist in the church. Only husbands and wives whose sins have been forgiven and who are washed in the blood of Christ, in whose hearts has been shed abroad the love of God by the Holy Spirit; only these can truly love each other in God's love. Only these can be united in the sacred bond of marriage as instituted by God. Marriage among the ungodly is a corruption, an adulteration of the sacred bond of marriage. Marriage outside of Christ can be based upon physical attraction and carnal lust and nothing more. Marriage among the godly, marriage in the Lord and in His love is a sacred communion, a most intimate union of one man and one woman. The *two* become *one* flesh.

5) For this reason marriage is a beautiful picture of the union of Christ and the church which is His body. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord tells His people to sing and not to fear (cf. Is. 54). The ground or reason why the church can sing without fear is: "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Is. 54:5). Here God, the Lord of hosts, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, the God of the

whole earth calls Himself the husband of His people, the church. The church, therefore, is the bride. *The marriage is the covenant of friendship and fellowship which God has established and which He forever maintains between Himself and His elect church in Christ. Natural marriage, our earthly marriages, are but a reflection of that marriage between God and His people in Christ. Why does Scripture repeatedly call idolatry adultery? Why does the Bible call God's people adulterous when they depart from Jehovah and serve other gods? The answer is: because earthly marriage as instituted by God "in the beginning" is a reflection of the marriage between God and His saints in Christ. This is the teaching of Scripture in Jeremiah 3:1, 2: "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers: yet return to me, saith the Lord. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness." When Israel turns to idols she is playing the harlot. Her wickedness is called by God, "thy whoredoms," with which she has polluted the land. In spite of her adultery the Lord says: "return again to me." This means that Jehovah never breaks His covenant. Although a husband would never remain with an adulterous wife, God remains with His people. No matter how often they sin against Him God forever and eternally remains faithful to His people and stays with them. His Word of love and tender mercy is always: "return again to me." This same, precious truth is taught in the prophecy of Hosea. Jehovah admonishes His apostate people: ". . . let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts" (2:2). Later in the same chapter God promises His people: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. . . . And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (vss. 19-23). God promises to betroth His people to Himself forever. God stands in relationship with His people as a husband is related to his bride. The church is married to God forever. Marriage is a reflection of that union.*

In even clearer light does this truth appear in the New Testament Scriptures where the church is repeatedly said to be the bride of Christ. We are taught this in Ephesians 5:22-33: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife,

even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” One cannot help but remark, and we shall have more to say about this in future articles, that if God’s people in the church lived in obedience to this Word there would be no marriage problems.

Notice, the passage speaks in very practical terms about the marriage bond and the respective callings of husbands and wives. Wives are called by God to submit themselves to their own husbands. In doing so they are submitting to God Himself. The reason wives must do this is the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the Head of the church and the Saviour of the body. The conclusion is that just as the church is subject to Christ so wives must be subject to their husbands in everything. Husbands are called to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. So intimate a union is marriage that husbands are called to love their wives as their own bodies. In the same way that the Lord nourishes and cherishes His body, the church, husbands must nourish and cherish their wives. It is for this reason (and here the apostle quotes from Genesis 2) that a man must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is marriage and the duties of husbands and wives within that intimate bond. At this point the Scripture says: “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (vs. 32). What does this mean? What is implied in this statement? It means that in this passage concerning the marriage relationship the apostle is speaking of the great mystery of Christ and the church! When the apostle speaks of the wives’ calling to submit to their own husbands and of the husbands’ calling to love their wives, he is speaking of the great mystery of Christ and the church. Why must wives love their husbands and submit to them in the Lord? Why must husbands love their

wives and nourish and cherish them? They must do this because marriage as instituted by God in Paradise the first is a picture or reflection of the relationship between Christ and the church! The church is the bride of Christ, the blood bought, redeemed bride of Christ. Christ is the Head and Saviour of that church, the Husband of the church. This means that the real marriage, *the* marriage is the intimate and sacred union between Christ and His bride, the church. Marriage among men, the natural, earthly marriage bond as instituted by God "in the beginning" is not the real or essential marriage, but only an earthly reflection of the heavenly reality: the marriage of Christ and the church. This is the marriage bond as instituted by God at the very dawn of history.

Pastors must understand and believe this teaching of the Word of God concerning marriage. They must instruct the people of God entrusted to their care in these truths both from the pulpit and privately. These foundational or principle truths of Scripture must govern pastors in all their dealings with people in their churches who are experiencing difficulties in their marriages. Only where these truths are upheld and only where husbands and wives live together in the holy bond of marriage in obedience to these Biblical teachings will there be found true marriages in the Lord. These truths cannot be lightly cast aside or ignored without one reaping a very bitter fruit indeed. Witness the unhappy marriages, the crowded divorce courts, the broken homes, the scarred children, the anxiety and stress among those who refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved! Husbands and wives must know that their marriages are reflections of Christ and His bride the church. They must take their callings in the marriage bond seriously and they must strive to live together as God would have them live together. It is of these kinds of homes and marriages that the inspired poet of Psalm 128 speaks: "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

(to be continued. . .)



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