

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## A History of Hypo-Calvinism

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In the preface to the 1853 edition of *The Works of Arminius*, Methodist Episcopal minister W. R. Bagnall, who stated that he had "admiration of the character and theological system of Arminius,"<sup>1</sup> sought to document the widespread influence of his hero's teaching on most of Christendom. In addition to noting the myriad denominations that were overtly Arminian, Bagnall noted that "Arminianism had exerted a very manifest influence, particularly within the last century, in modifying the views of professed Calvinists, or, if not their views, certainly their modes of presenting them, so that the doctrine of absolute decrees has lost prominence in their teaching, and many of the ablest divines among them have advocated the Arminian views of the atonement."<sup>2</sup> What has been embraced and promulgated in the name of Calvinism over the past two centuries has proven that Bagnall had more insight about what was going on in Calvinistic circles than many of the professing Calvinists did, and his words offer a haunting description of the "modified Calvinism" that would pervade so-called Reformed circles 144 years later.

### *Amyraldianism*

Perversions of Calvinism have existed for centuries. In 1634, just 15 years after the Synod of Dort, a

professing Calvinist named Moise Amyraut (Amyraldus) wrote his "Treatise on Predestination" in which he stated that "The sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered was *equally for all*; and the salvation which He received from His Father, in the sanctification of the spirit and the glorification of the body, was destined equally for all—provided the necessary disposition for receiving it were equal."<sup>3</sup> His treatise systematized what he had been taught at the Theological School at Saumer, France; he was particularly influenced by a professor by the name of John Cameron, who, according to George Smeaton, "propounded the theory of hypothetic universalism; that is, that God wills the salvation of all men, on condition of faith, and that Christ's death was for all men, on condition of faith."<sup>4</sup> Smeaton goes on to describe what has come to be known as Amyraldianism: "Its advocates speak of a *universal decree* in which God was supposed to have given Christ as a Mediator for the whole human race; and of a *special decree*, in which God, foreseeing that no one would believe in his unaided strength, was supposed to have elected some to receive the gift of faith."<sup>5</sup> Further, according to B. B. Warfield, this theory said that "God gave His Son to die for all men, alike and equally; and at the

<sup>3</sup> Moise Amyraut, *Treatise on Predestination*, in George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Apostles* (1870; Hendrickson, 1988), 541.

<sup>4</sup> George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Apostles* (1870; Hendrickson, 1988), 540.

<sup>5</sup> Smeaton, 541.

<sup>1</sup> W. R. Bagnall, trans., preface, *The Works of James Arminius*, D.D., 3 vols. (Derby, Miller, and Orton, 1853), 1: iii.

<sup>2</sup> Bagnall, iii-iv.

same time . . . declare[d] that when He gave His son to die, He already fully intended that His death should not avail for all men alike and equally."<sup>6</sup>

Smeaton wrote that Amyraldianism

was a revolt from the position maintained at the Synod of Dort, under the guise of an explanation. . . . [I]t laboured under the defect of supposing a double and a conflicting decree; that is, a general decree, in which He was said to will the salvation of all, and a special decree, in which He was said to will the salvation of the elect. To Christ also it ascribed a twofold and discordant aim, viz. to satisfy for all men, and to satisfy merely for the elect. As a reconciling system, and an incoherent one, it aimed to harmonize the passages of Scripture, which at one time seem to extend Christ's merits to the world, and at another to limit them to the church; not to mention that God is supposed to be disappointed in His purpose.<sup>7</sup>

Warfield stated that

it is impossible to contend that God intends the gift of his son for all men alike and equally and at the same time intends that it shall not actually save all but only a select body which he himself provides for it. The schematization of the order of decrees presented by the Amyraldians, in a word, necessarily implies a chronological relation of precedence and subsequence among the decrees, the assumption of which abolishes God, and this can be escaped only by altering the nature of the atonement. And therefore the nature of the atonement is altered by them, and Christianity is wounded at its very heart. . . . A conditional substitution being an absurdity, because the condition is no condition to God, if you grant him even so much as the poor attribute of

foreknowledge, they necessarily turn away from a substitutive atonement altogether.<sup>8</sup>

He concludes that Amyraldianism "is not . . . an acceptable form of Calvinism, or even a tenable form of Calvinism. For one thing, it is a logically inconsistent form of Calvinism and therefore an unstable form of Calvinism."<sup>9</sup> As we will see, Hypo-Calvinism revels in its logical inconsistency and calls anyone who would seek to find logical consistency a "rationalist" or a "Hyper-Calvinist."

The teacher of Amyraldus, John Cameron, moved to Glasgow College to continue to present his views. One of his students was John Davenant (1576-1641), who was a British delegate at Dort and influenced some of the members of the Westminster Assembly. He promoted "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."<sup>10</sup> The "root principle of the Davenant School" was the "notion of a universal desire in God for the salvation of all men."<sup>11</sup>

In the floor debate on redemption at the Westminster Assembly, Edmund Calamy of the Davenant School attempted to insert Amyraldianism into the Catechism. During the debate, he said,

Christ did pay a price for all,—absolute intention for the elect, conditional intention for the reprobate in case they do believe,—that all men should be *salvabiles, non obstante lapsu Adam* . . . [salvable, notwithstanding Adam's fall] . . . that Jesus Christ did intend, in giving of Christ, and Christ in giving Himself, did intend to put all men in a state of salvation in case they do believe. . . . I argue from the iii. of *John* 16, in which words a ground of God's intention of giving Christ, God's

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Eerdmans, 1942), 94.

<sup>7</sup> Smeaton, 540-541.

<sup>8</sup> Warfield, 94-95.

<sup>9</sup> Warfield, 93-94.

<sup>10</sup> Herman Hanko, *The History of the Free Offer* (Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1989), 82-83.

<sup>11</sup> *Universalism and the Reformed Churches, A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism* (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia), in Hanko, 84.

love to the world, a philanthropy the world of elect and reprobate, and not of elect only; it cannot be meant of the elect, because of that 'whosoever believeth.'<sup>12</sup>

George Gillespie responded, "I cannot understand how there can be such a universal love of God to mankind as is maintained. Those that will say it must needs deny the absolute reprobation; then a love to those whom God hath absolutely reprobated both from salvation and the means of salvation."<sup>13</sup> Samuel Rutherford responded, "The love in the iii of *John* 16 is restricted to the church. . . . It is an actual saving love, and therefore not a general love."<sup>14</sup>

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) held to a form of Amyraldianism, although he was less Calvinistic than Amyraut. [H]e devised an eclectic middle route between Reformed, Arminian, and Roman doctrines of grace: interpreting the kingdom of God in terms of contemporary political ideas, he explained Christ's death as an act of universal redemption (penal and vicarious, but not substitutionary), in virtue of which God has made a new law offering pardon and amnesty to the penitent. Repentance and faith, being obedience to this law, are the believer's personal saving righteousness. . . . [T]he fruit of the seeds which Baxter sowed was neonomian Moderatism in Scotland and moralistic Unitarianism in England.<sup>15</sup> John Owen, in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, refuted Baxterianism and sent universal atonement to Hell where it belongs. It is astounding that Baxter has been promoted and published by those who profess to be Reformed.

It is important to remember while reading further in this article and the next that the heresy of Amyraldianism consists of two main parts: (1) *Hypothetical Universalism*, in which there is some sense that Jesus died for all without exception and some sense in which He died only for the elect, and (2) the *Well-Meant Offer*, in which there is some

sense in which God wills and desires and offers the salvation of all without exception and some sense in which he wills to save only the elect. Thus in each tenet, there is a god with two wills—a strong sovereign will and a weak Arminian will. The conflicting parts of each of the two tenets are not attempted to be reconciled; they are in the realm of "paradox" or "mystery." Herman Hanko says definitively that "Defenders of the double-will theory will have to admit that their conception of this idea is not a conception which stands in the line of Calvin and Dort; rather it is to be traced to Amyraut and his hypothetical universalism."<sup>16</sup>

### *Marrowism*

When Amyraldus was forty-nine years old, Edward Fisher published *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, in which he put forth the view that the true gospel is this:

God the Father, as he is in his Son, Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all, that whosoever of them all shall believe in this his Son, shall not perish, but have eternal life. And hence it was, that Jesus Christ himself said unto his disciples, *Mark* xvi. 15, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature under Heaven:" that is, Go and tell every man without exception, that here is good news for him; Christ is dead for him; and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he shall save him.<sup>17</sup>

Wherefore, as Paul and Silas said to the jailor, so say I unto you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" that is, be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> David Blunt, "Debate of Redemption at the Westminster Assembly," *British Reformed Journal*, January-March 1996: 5, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Blunt, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Blunt, 10.

<sup>15</sup> James I. Packer, "Introduction," in Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1656; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Hanko, 68. For further reading on Amyraldianism, see "The Fight for the Reformed Faith" and "Amyraldianism" in the *British Reformed Journal*, January-March 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (n.d.; Reiner Publications, 1978), 126-127.

<sup>18</sup> Fisher, 118.

The book was not well known until the beginning of the 18th century, when Puritan Thomas Boston discovered it, was very pleased by it, and set out to promote it as orthodox Christianity. In 1718, this book was republished with explanatory notes from Thomas Boston. It created such a furor that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland reviewed its contents and condemned it, partly on the basis that it espoused the old Amyraldian/Arminian notion of the "the offering of Christ, as a Saviour to all men, or to sinners as such."<sup>19</sup>

In a subsequent edition of this book, an appendix from the "Marrow Men" (which included Boston, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, James Hog, and others) was included that attempted to address the General Assembly's queries. Boston and the other Marrow Men vigorously defended the well-meant offer and that Christ is "dead for all." Their interpretation of *John* 3:16 was as follows:

*John* iii. 16, where by the giving of Christ, we understand not only his eternal destination by the Father to be the Redeemer of an elect world, and his giving him unto the death for them, in the fulness of time, but more especially a giving of him in the word to all, to be received and believed in. . . . And in this respect, we think, Christ is a common Saviour, and his salvation is a common salvation.<sup>20</sup>

In his notes on Fisher's controversial statements, Boston stated,

. . . the deed of *gift* or *grant* is to every man. This necessarily supposeth Christ crucified to be the ordinance of God for salvation, to which lost mankind is allowed access. . . . Therefore he says not, "Tell every man Christ died for him;" but, Tell every man "Christ is dead for him;" that is, for him to come to, and believe on; a Saviour is provided for him; there is a crucified Christ for him, the ordinance of

heaven for salvation for lost man, in the use-making of which he may be saved.<sup>21</sup>

In a sermon entitled "Christ the Savior of the World," Boston put it even more plainly:

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the *official* Savior, not of the elect only, but of the world of mankind indefinitely. . . . Any of them all may come to him as Savior, without money or price, and be saved by Him as their own Savior appointed to that office by the Father. . . . If it were not so that Christ is the Savior of the world, He could not warrantably be offered with His salvation to the world indefinitely, but to the elect only. If He were not commissioned to the office of Savior of all men, it would be no more appropriate to call all men to trust Him as Savior any more than He could be offered lawfully to fallen angels. . . . No one could be held guilty for not turning to Christ for salvation, unless there is a sense in which God has appointed Him to be Savior of that guilty one. . . . That [*Titus* 3:4] speaks of a love of the species mankind. God's love for humanity has appeared in two eminent instances: First, in securing, by an irresistible decree, the salvation of some of them, and second, in providing a Savior for the whole of the kind. . . . He sent His Son from Heaven with full instructions and ample powers to save you, if you will believe. And is not this love? . . . Know with certainty that if any of you shall perish—and if you go on in your sins ye *shall* perish—you shall not perish for want of a Savior. . . . You would not trust Him as Savior, even though He had His Father's commission to be Savior of the world—and your Savior.<sup>22</sup>

This is nothing more than rehashed Amyraldianism, a subtle twisting of doctrine justified by the reasoning that Christ could not be offered as a Savior to everyone and the reprobate could not be held responsible unless there is some sense in which

<sup>19</sup> John Brown, "The Occasion of the 'Marrow' Controversy, Stated by the late John Brown, of Haddington," in Fisher, 344.

<sup>20</sup> James Hog, Thomas Boston, et al., "Queries Agreed Unto by the Commission of the General Assembly," in Fisher, 366-367.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Boston, notes in Fisher, 127-128.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Boston, "Christ the Savior of the World," in John MacArthur, Jr., *The Love of God* (Word Publishing, 1996), 204-206, 208-210.

the atonement could be applied to the reprobate in case he believed.<sup>23</sup>

This controversy had a profound impact on the general view of what was considered Calvinistic, for even though the Scottish General Assembly had condemned it as unorthodox, it took fire in Calvinistic circles, even among the Puritans. It spawned a "new wave" of professedly Calvinistic evangelizing in which Christ is said to love all living humans, to be pacified toward all living humans, and to desire the salvation of all living humans. Andrew and Horatius Bonar, Robert Murray McCheyne, John Brown, and Thomas Chalmers were among those who were spreading this "gospel." Among the most famous sermons is Chalmers' "Fury Not In God" in which he stated that God is pacified toward everyone, not angry at anyone, and wishes all to be saved:

But we cannot say that there is any exercise of fury in God at the time of giving the invitation. There is the most visible and direct contrary. There is a longing desire after you. There is a wish to save you from that day in which the fury of a rejected Saviour will be spread abroad over all who have despised Him. . . . There is kindness—a desire for peace and friendship—a longing earnestness to make up the quarrel which now subsists between the Lawgiver in heaven and His yet impenitent and unreconciled creatures. . . . God has purposes of kindness towards every one of you; and as one of His ministers I can now say to you all—that there is no fury in God. Now when the spiritual husbandman is trying to soften your hearts, He is warranted to make a full use of the argument of my text—that there is no fury in God. . . . He would rather you were to turn, and to live. . . . He would rather that this enemy of His . . . should take hold of God's strength, that he may make peace with Him. . . . And so in Scripture everywhere do we see Him pleading and protesting with you that He

does not want to signalize Himself upon the ruin of any, but would rather that they should turn and be saved. . . . *God is willing to save you: are you willing to be saved?* . . . He is beseeching you to be so, and if you refuse to turn from the evil of your ways, and to do and to be what your Saviour would have you, I must tell you what your sentence will be. . . . It is not your destruction but your salvation that God wants to put forth His strength in.<sup>24</sup>

The Arminianism in this sermon is quite evident to the Reformed believer. In fact, an inevitable result of compromising the Gospel in this area was an unholy union with the God-hating Arminians. It is not difficult to see that joint evangelism/revivalism with Arminians was easily accomplished because the appeals to sinners were exactly the same in both camps. This will be seen in more detail as we progress.

One does not have to read far in the sermons of any of these men to find strains of well-meant offerism and hypothetical universalism. Excerpts from sermons from McCheyne (who was a student of Chalmers) and Brown will serve as examples:

Observe the manner in which He invites.—He cries aloud, He puts forth the voice, He stands and cries, He calls and lifts up His voice, He seems like some merchant offering his wares, first in the market, and then from door to door. Never did busy crier offer to sell his goods with such anxiety as Jesus offers His salvation. . . . *Doctrine.*—Christ offers Himself as Saviour to all of the human race. . . . He freely puts Himself within their reach. . . . Though you have no care for your soul, yet Christ has, and wishes to save it. Though you do not care for Christ, yet He cares for you, and stretches out His hands to you.<sup>25</sup>

But there can be as little doubt that the atonement of Christ has a general reference to mankind at large; and that it was intended as a display of love on the

<sup>23</sup> For an excellent treatment of the "sufficient for all but efficient for the elect" theory, see Jim Ellis' article, "Sufficient For All?" in the Sovereign Grace Theology Resource Center on the World Wide Web: <http://www.conline.com/sovgrace>.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Chalmers, *Fury Not in God* (Mt. Zion Publications, n.d.).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Murray McCheyne, *Memoirs of McCheyne* (1844; Moody Press, n.d.), 224-225, 229.

part of God to our guilty race. Not merely was the atonement offered by Christ Jesus sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, but it was intended and fitted to remove out of the way of the salvation of sinners generally every bar which the perfection of the Divine moral character and the principles of the Divine moral government presented. . . . In consequence of the atonement, every sinner may be, and if he believe in Jesus certainly shall be, pardoned and saved. . . . The kindness of God, as manifested in the gift of His Son, is kindness to the race of man. . . . The sinner, thus cordially believing the Gospel, gladly and gratefully receives "the Savior of the world" as his Savior, and trusts that by the grace of God he shall partake of "the common salvation."<sup>26</sup>

George Whitefield, who lived during the time when the Marrow controversy was in full force, was struck with the "well-meant offer" virus; this goes a long way in explaining how he could tolerate the blasphemous views of John Wesley for so long, for once again, he and Wesley were saying the same things to their audiences:

I offer you salvation this day; the door of mercy is not yet shut. O do not put a slight on infinite love. He only wants you to believe on him, that you might be saved. This, this is all the dear Saviour desires, to make you happy, that you may leave your sins. Let me beseech you to come to Jesus Christ; I invite you all to come to him, and receive him as your Lord and Saviour; he is ready to receive you. I invite you to come to him. He will rejoice and be glad. He calls you by his ministers; O come unto him. He is labouring to bring you back from sin and from Satan, unto himself. Open the door of your heart, and the King of glory shall enter in.<sup>27</sup>

In each of these excerpts—Fisher, Boston, Chalmers, McCheyne, Brown, Whitefield—and in many more, there is a grave compromise with Arminianism.

<sup>26</sup> John Brown, "The Love of God to the World," in MacArthur, Jr., 223-225.

<sup>27</sup> George Whitefield, quoted in David Gay, "Preaching the Gospel to Sinners: 1," *The Banner of Truth*, July 1994: 21.

They put forth a "Jesus" who is working hard to woo the crowd, who would be infinitely disappointed if they did not all come, and who is powerless apart from human effort. One cannot come to any other conclusion than that these are the age-old lies of Pelagius and Arminius and that the gospel being preached is corrupt. If one would continue to doubt this strong accusation, the following is a quote from one of the original proponents of the well-meant offer, Jacobus Arminius:

All unregenerate persons have the freedom of will, and a capability of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the proffered grace of God, of despising the counsel of God against themselves, of refusing to accept the gospel of grace, and of not opening to Him who knocks at the door of the heart. . . . Whomsoever God calls, he calls them seriously, with a will desirous of their repentance and salvation. . . . 'That man should be rendered inexcusable,' is neither the proximate end, nor that which was intended by God, to the divine vocation when it is first made and has not been repulsed.<sup>28</sup>

Opposed to Amyraldianism and Marrowism is God's Word: "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." (2 *Corinthians* 2:15-17, *NASB*)

## *Hoeksema and the CRC*

In 1924, a 38-year-old preacher by the name of Herman Hoeksema was the center of controversy in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The CRC had come out with its "Three Points of Common Grace" that included a section stating that God, in the general offer of the Gospel, exhibits a favorable attitude toward humanity in general. Hoeksema contended that this was not Reformed and resolved to continue preaching the unadulterated truth—that

<sup>28</sup> James Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 3 vol. (Derby, Orton and Mulligan, 1853), 2: 497.

Gospel preaching serves as grace to the elect and a means of hardening to the reprobate. He and two other ministers, Henry Danhof and George Ophoff, were expelled from the CRC for refusing to express agreement with the CRC's view of common grace. Out of this break from hypo-Calvinism came the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).<sup>29</sup>

Hoeksema and the PRC were (and continue to be) the most prolific polemicists against the heresy of the well-meant offer. Hoeksema, in a booklet against the Three Points of Common Grace called "The Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth," said this:

But what does God proclaim in the Gospel? Does He affirm that He is gracious or will be gracious to all that hear? Does He command His ministers to preach that it is His intention to save all the hearers? On the contrary. No preacher of the Gospel can claim any authority to bring such a message. He who nevertheless presents the Gospel in that light does not bring the call of the Word, but his own philosophy. He corrupts the Gospel and makes God a liar.<sup>30</sup>

In "The Place of Reprobation in the Preaching of the Gospel," Hoeksema says, "We must not surrender an inch of ground to the idea that God wills to save all, some of which are nevertheless lost. God's counsel shall stand, and He shall remain sovereign—sovereign in regard to eternal life, and at the same time sovereign in regard to eternal perdition."<sup>31</sup> And in his classic essay titled "Jesus Savior and the Evil of Hawking Him," Hoeksema strongly exposes the false gospel of the Hypo-Calvinists:

Among the more conservative and moderate of these hawkers of Jesus are those that confine themselves to the preaching of a Jesus that is willing to save

all men and who, therefore, present salvation as a mere chance, an opportunity the realization of which depends upon man's choice. . . . And with heartrending pathos they will reach the climax of their perorations by saying: "Jesus is still waiting, waiting for you to open the door of your heart, that He may enter in! Won't you come? Won't you open the door? Won't you accept Him and let Him in?" . . . Hawking Jesus is denying Him. . . . But Jesus, the Jesus of Scripture *must be preached*. He must be preached to all men promiscuously no doubt. It is a patent fact that, when the apostles go into all the world, they never hawk Jesus, they simply preach Him. . . . They preach Jesus and Him crucified and raised from the dead. They call men to repentance and faith in His name. But they never hawk Jesus. They preach a gospel that is, indeed, a power of God unto salvation; a Jesus that actually satisfied for the sins of His people, that actually saves by the power of His Spirit. And as many as are ordained to eternal life believe and are saved under their preaching, while the rest are hardened, hate the apostles, are enraged against them, stone them, kill them, as they did the prophets.<sup>32</sup>

The reader is invited to go back to the first part of this series and re-read the entreaties of the Marrow Men and their followers and compare their views of God to Hoeksema's views. It is also important to keep this in mind when hypo-Calvinists are quoted further in this series.

What has mainstream "Calvinism" said of Hoeksema and the PRC? They are branded as hyper-Calvinists. In the *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair Ferguson, David Wright, and J. I. Packer, Herman Hoeksema is named as "the most prominent recent theologian" to embrace hyper-calvinism.<sup>33</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, in *Divine Election*, specifically denounces Hoeksema's "parallelism" between election and

<sup>29</sup> For further information about the history and points of the controversy, see Gertrude Hoeksema's biography of Herman Hoeksema, *Therefore Have I Spoken* (Reformed Free Publishing Co., 1969) and the special "Reformation of 1924" issue of *The Standard Bearer*, 15 October 1995.

<sup>30</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *A Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth* (1924; Evangelism Committee of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, 1992), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *The Place of Reprobation in the Preaching of the Gospel* (Southwest Protestant Reformed Church Evangelism Committee, 1993).

<sup>32</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *Jesus Savior and the Evil of Hawking Him* (Truth for Today).

<sup>33</sup> David J. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1994), 5.

reprobation, although Hoeksema never said that they are on equal par; in fact, he said that "we must not place them dualistically against each other. They are not on the same level. . . . Reprobation should always be presented as subordinate to election, as serving the latter according to God's counsel."<sup>34</sup> "Reprobation is indeed immediately connected with election, but cannot be placed with election on par. Reprobation follows election, and the former serves the latter. . . . And in following this way the reprobate shell of the human organism serves the church of Christ. In the shell of reprobation the elect kernel becomes ripe. For that reason reprobation cannot be put on the same line as election."<sup>35</sup> As we see with many who level the "parallelism" accusation, Berkouwer later came to reject the truth of reprobation altogether. Berkouwer also said,

Because he proceeded from the sharp light and black shadow [i.e., there was no charley-horse between his ears to enable him to perceive the gray area of paradox-MDC], God's eternal love and hatred, Hoeksema could not possibly understand the first point of the statement made by the 1924 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church regarding the "general love toward man," except as a step toward humanizing the concept of God. . . . [T]he aspects of sovereignty are overemphasized at the cost of the harmony of Scripture. . . . Hoeksema sees everything in the light of his severe concept of predestination which limits the *kerygma* to the elect and withholds it from the reprobate. The *kerygma* is altered completely by this principle of explanation, and although the elect and reprobate are unknown, this distinction interferes from the very beginning with the preaching of the gospel.<sup>36</sup>

Berkouwer's contention was that if one sees the preaching of the Gospel as a means of hardening the reprobate, then the offer of the Gospel is no longer

sincere. It is important to note that active reprobation and the well-meant offer are antithetical to one another; one cannot hold to a belief that God desires the reprobate to be saved and at the same time hold that God uses the preaching of the Gospel to damn the reprobate.

By far the most comprehensive attack on the well-meant offer is PRC Professor David Engelsma's *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*. It is a thoroughly devastating treatment. He rightly rejects true hyper-Calvinism (that states that there is not a call to all without exception to repent and believe) and stands for true Biblical Calvinism against the cavils of the irrational hypo-Calvinists:

The truth of the Bible, Christianity, is rational, non-contradictory, and logical. The Triune God is rational, non-contradictory, and logical. For this is the nature of His revelation in the Scriptures, and this revelation makes Him known as He is. Jesus Christ is "the Word," according to *John* 1:1ff., literally, "the *Logos*" (whence our "logic," so that even linguistically "logical" does not have to hang its head in shame among Christians), "the logical, non-contradictory Word of God." Because Jesus is the logical Word, He can declare God to us humans (v.18). If He were sheer paradox, an utterly illogical Word, a Jesus Whose word to us is "yes and no," we could know nothing of God, salvation, or heavenly reality, which is exactly the condition of much of the nominally Christian church today. . . .

. . . There is no relief for the sheer contradiction in which the offer involves a Calvinist in the doctrine of "common grace," as though the grace of predestination were a different kind of grace from that revealed in the Gospel. For the offer exactly teaches that the grace of God for all is *grace shown in the preaching of the Gospel*. . . . The offer proposes a universal saving grace, precisely that which is denied by predestination. . . .

. . . The basis for this [Gospel preaching], however, is not universal grace and a

<sup>34</sup> Hoeksema, *The Place of Reprobation* . . . .

<sup>35</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (1966; Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1985), 334.

<sup>36</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election* (1960; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 228.

universal will to salvation as the well-meant offer likes to have Calvinists believe. Rather, the basis is predestination. God has chosen certain persons unto salvation. These persons, found among all peoples in all places, must be gathered unto Christ by the Gospel. For their sakes the Gospel is preached to all. It is also God's will that the Gospel come to the reprobate with whom His elect are mixed in natural life. It is not merely the case that the Gospel unavoidably comes to them also because of their proximity to the elect. But this will of God that the Gospel come also to the reprobate is not a will, or desire, that they be saved. For God has eternally rejected them, appointing them to stumble at the Word and perish (*I Pet. 2:8*). But they have an obligation to believe on Jesus Christ, even though they are unable to do so by virtue of their bound wills. And God wills to expose their outrageous wickedness, render them inexcusable, and harden them, as "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (*Rom. 9:22*), for His own glory and to illustrate the sheer graciousness of His effectual call to the elect.<sup>37</sup>

### *Clark and the OPC*

To readers who are familiar with *The Trinity Review* and Gordon Clark's writings, the controversy in the CRC and the convictions of Hoeksema and Engelsma sound very much like the controversy in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and Clark's convictions against the Van Tilian (and Amyraldian/Marrowist) notion of the well-meant offer. In fact, when the controversy in the OPC arose 20 years after the controversy in the CRC, Hoeksema chronicled the Clark case in a series of articles in *The Standard Bearer*. These articles have been compiled and released in book form by The Trinity Foundation under the title *The Clark-Van Til Controversy*.

Garrett P. Johnson, in his article in *The Trinity Review* (March/April 1987) entitled "The Myth of Common Grace," documents the well-meant offer portion of the Clark controversy and compares John

Murray's hypo-calvinistic interpretation of key Scripture passages with Calvinists such as Turretin, Owen, and Clark. He exposes the irrational nature of this position, which is still held by the OPC and embraced by at least one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).<sup>38</sup>

The Complainants (who were led by Cornelius Van Til) accused Clark of the heresy of rationalism: "In the course of Dr. Clark's examination by Presbytery it became abundantly clear that his rationalism keeps him from doing justice to the precious teaching of Scripture that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect, and that he has no pleasure in any one's rejecting the offer but, contrariwise, would have all who hear accept it and be saved."<sup>39</sup> Hoeksema noted,

You might object that this is not rational. But this objection would be of no avail to persuade the Complainants of their error. They admit that this is irrational. But they do not want to be rational on this point. In fact, if you should insist on being rational in this respect, they would call you a "rationalist," and at once proceed to seek your expulsion from the church as a dangerous heretic. . . . According to the Complainants, to be reasonable is to be a rationalist. . . .

. . . They openly admit, they are even boasting of, their irrational position. To be irrational is, according to them, the glory of a humble, Christian faith.<sup>40</sup>

John Murray and Ned Stonehouse presented a report to the 1948 General Assembly titled "The Free Offer of the Gospel." They concluded that

God himself expresses an ardent desire for the fulfillment of certain things which he has not decreed in his inscrutable counsel

<sup>38</sup> Morton Smith, former Stated Clerk of the PCA's General Assembly, in *Reformed Evangelism* (Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1994), quotes John Murray and Ned Stonehouse, the Marrow Men, and Iain Murray to support his view that God loves everyone and desires the salvation of everyone and that Christ's death had benefits for everyone.

<sup>39</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *The Clark-Van Til Controversy* (The Trinity Foundation, 1995), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Hoeksema, *The Clark-Van Til Controversy*, 36-37.

<sup>37</sup> Engelsma, 115, 117, 121-122.

to come to pass. This means that there is a will to the realization of what he has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which he has not been pleased to decree. This is indeed mysterious, and why he has not brought to pass, in the exercise of his omnipotent power and grace, what is his ardent pleasure lies hid in the sovereign counsel of his will. We should not entertain, however, any prejudice against the notion that God desires or has pleasure in the accomplishment of what he does not decretively will.<sup>41</sup>

We must then conclude that because the deity's ardent desire is not always fulfilled, this must be an infinitely, ardently disappointed god who must exist forever in the misery of unfulfilled wishes.

John Gerstner, in response to this document, said, "This is not 'mystery' but bald contradiction. . . . God, if he could be frustrated in His desires, simply would not be God. . . . One may sadly say that Westminster Theological Seminary stands for this misunderstanding of the Reformed doctrine since not only John Murray and Ned Stonehouse but also Cornelius Van Til, R. B. Kuiper, John Frame, and so far as we know, all of the faculty, have favored it."<sup>42</sup> In another place, he laments, "With tears in my heart, I nevertheless confidently assert that they erred profoundly in *The Free Offer of the Gospel* and died before they seem to have realized their error which . . . still does incalculable damage to the cause of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of His Gospel."<sup>43</sup> These are strong words from a former student of Murray and Stonehouse. We must realize the truth of this statement and the damage this document has done and continues to do.

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<sup>41</sup> John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Free Offer of the Gospel* (pamphlet form of report to the Fifteenth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), 26.

<sup>42</sup> John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 127-129. Trinity Book Service (of Reformed Baptist Al Martin's church) sends a warning with Gerstner's book that includes the following: "Dr. Gerstner strays from the mainstream of historic Calvinism regarding the free offer of the gospel. . . . [W]e cannot endorse his treatment of the subject of the atonement as it relates to the free offer of the gospel. We in fact commend the writing of Stonehouse and Murray on the Free Offer of the Gospel."

<sup>43</sup> John H. Gerstner, Foreword, in Engelsma viii-ix.

W. Gary Crampton, in response to the view of Van Til and his followers that "God wants all individuals to repent, whether or not he has foreordained them to do so," says, "Simply stated, this is preposterous. It is not conceivable that God sincerely seeks the salvation of those whom from eternity he has determined not to save."<sup>44</sup> It is obvious that Murray, Stonehouse, and Van Til held to the preposterous hypo-Calvinist views.

Thus Hoeksema, Clark, and anyone who would dare be so rational as to deny the quasi-Arminianism of the well-meant offer are maligned as hyper-Calvinists and rationalists. This controversy has taken on a much more sinister nature in the 20th century, as will be documented further in this series. John W. Robbins states that "the self-professed disciples of Dr. Van Til have continued to slander and misrepresent Dr. Clark"<sup>45</sup> and that "falsification of history has become the stock in trade of some proponents of Van Til and Westminster Seminary."<sup>46</sup> In fact, slander, misrepresentation, falsification, and even deceptive editing/censorship (as we will see) seem to be the name of the game for these proponents of hypo-Calvinism, who, it seems, have taken a "whatever it takes" approach in promulgating their heresy in Calvinistic circles.

### *John MacArthur, Jr.*

Recently, John MacArthur, Jr., the popular and professedly Calvinistic pastor of Grace Community Church in California, has entered the fray with his book, *The Love of God*, mentioning the controversies in the CRC and OPC, and coming down squarely on the side of the hypo-Calvinists. His four appendices showcase four of the historical fathers of hypo-Calvinism; he is even kind enough to reprint one heretical piece from each of them (Chalmers' "Fury Not in God," Fuller's "On the Love of God, and Whether it Extends to the Non-Elect," Boston's "Christ the Savior of the World," and Brown's "The Love of God to the World").

Surprisingly, there was one section encouraging to Calvinists, which surely Mr. MacArthur did not

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<sup>44</sup> W. Gary Crampton, "Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought," *The Trinity Review*, July 1996: 3.

<sup>45</sup> John W. Robbins, "An Introduction to Gordon H. Clark, Part 1," *The Trinity Review*, July 1993: 2.

<sup>46</sup> John W. Robbins, Postscript, in Hoeksema, *The Clark-Van Til Controversy*, 87.

intend. He says this: "A friend of mine recently gave me seven or eight articles that have circulated in recent months on the Internet. All of them were written and posted in various computer forums by Christians. And all of them deny that God loves everyone. It is frankly surprising how pervasive the idea has become among evangelicals."<sup>47</sup> Could these be the rumblings of Reformation? Not if MacArthur can help it. A page later he gives his position away when he says, "I want to state as clearly as possible that I am in no way opposed to logic."<sup>48</sup> This smells like a Van Tilian disclaimer. And—surprise, surprise—MacArthur goes on to say that "We must conclude that there is a sense in which His *decrees* do not always reflect His *desires*; His *purposes* are not necessarily accomplished in accord with His *preferences*."<sup>49</sup> Murray and Stonehouse couldn't have said it better. This statement was in response to the "difficulty" that "unfulfilled desire [is] compatible with a wholly sovereign God."<sup>50</sup> He goes on to devote a paragraph to "the 'free offer' controversy" in "some Reformed and Presbyterian denominations about fifty years ago" in which "one group denied that God loves the non-elect," which "is a form of hyper-Calvinism."<sup>51</sup>

One more statement from MacArthur should suffice: "The end result of God's love is therefore the gospel message—the free offer of life and mercy to anyone who believes. In other words, the gospel—an indiscriminate offer of divine mercy to everyone without exception—manifests God's compassionate love and unfeigned loving-kindness to all humanity."<sup>52</sup>

In chapter 7, more than halfway through the book, MacArthur gets to "The Love of God for His Elect." But after reading that God loves everyone, who can stomach the inevitable "oh, but God loves us even more than he loves everybody else" line? Does this not profane the sanctity of *Ephesians* 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"? For what if a husband said to his wife, "I love all the other

women in the world and really desire that they be married to me, but I love you more than I love them because my love for you is a special love"? What if Christ said, "I love the great harlot and wish the whore church would come to me and be married to me, but I love the church with a special kind of love"? Is this not vile? Is this not repulsive blasphemy? So, too, are we who know the love of Christ (and the love between husband and wife) nauseated at the lame attempts to put God's love for the elect a little bit higher than God's love for humanity in general.

The reader is urged to recognize the seriousness of this departure from the Reformed faith. It is not a large step from belief in paradox to the heresy of Barth and Brunner or from belief in the well-meant offer to the heresy of Pelagius and Arminius. Hoeksema's words ring true:

... They first claimed that the Reformed doctrine of the Gospel honors the paradox, the contradiction: God wills to save all men; he wills to save only the elect. Must they, then, not preach that paradox, if they would proclaim the full Gospel, according to their own contention? ... But no; here they tacitly admit that, for evangelistic purposes, their paradoxical Gospel is not suitable. And so they propose to forget the one side of their paradox, and to present the Gospel only as a "universal and sincere offer of salvation." And that means that they intend to limit themselves to the proclamation that God sincerely seeks the salvation of all men.

In practice, they intend to preach an Arminian gospel.

They are afraid of their own paradox.<sup>53</sup>

This compromise with the false gospel of Arminianism, embracing Arminians in evangelism, and the sinister promotion of hypo-Calvinism as true Calvinism will be made clear in the next two articles on The Banner of Truth.

<sup>47</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *The Love of God* (Word Publishing, 1996), 101.

<sup>48</sup> MacArthur, 102.

<sup>49</sup> MacArthur, 109.

<sup>50</sup> MacArthur, 108.

<sup>51</sup> MacArthur, 108.

<sup>52</sup> MacArthur, 106.

<sup>53</sup> Hoeksema, *The Clark-Van Til Controversy*, 67.