

Kenneth  
Koole

Reflections on  
*the Free Offer*  
and the Charge of  
“Hyper-Calvinism”



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*“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14).*

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## I.



# INTRODUCTION

**I**T IS A MOST INTERESTING SITE.

It is a most informative site.

It is even dangerous, in its own way. At least if you are interested in Reformed theology past and present. Once you enter it, it is hard to extract yourself and get back to real time and to things that need more immediate attention. It is easy to ‘get lost,’ as they say, and let more pressing matters ‘go begging’ for a time.

I am talking about an online website that was recently brought to my attention by a colleague—[monergism.com](http://monergism.com).

If you wonder about the word “monergism,” it is of Greek derivation, meaning “one only power (or energy).” It was coined to stand in contrast to the error of “synergism”—that hydra-headed error that, through the ages, has posited salvation as a cooperative venture between the divine will and the human ability to respond appropriately.

In the site’s own words,

Monergism: The view that the Holy Spirit is the only agent who effects regeneration in Christians. It is in contrast with synergism, the view that there

is a cooperation between the divine and the human in the regeneration process. Monergism is a redemption which was purchased by Christ for those the Father has given Him (I Pet. 1:3; John 3:5). This grace works independently of any human cooperation and conveys that grace to the fallen soul whereby the person who is to be saved is effectually enabled to respond to the gospel call (John 1:13; Acts 2:39, 13:48; Rom. 9:16). It is that supernatural work of God alone whereby we are granted the spiritual ability to comply with the conditions of the covenant of grace; that is, to apprehend the Redeemer by a living faith, to accept the terms of salvation, to repent of idols and to love God and the Mediator supremely.

Whoever is (or are) responsible for putting this site together and maintaining it ought to be commended. It is quite a site. The site describes itself as being dedicated to "Classic Articles and Resources of the Historic Christian Faith." Its real focus is Reformed, Calvinistic theology, focusing on the stalwarts of the past, but including writers of recent vintage as well (R. C. Sproul and James Montgomery Boice come to mind, along with men of lesser name-recognition). It includes writings on topics ranging from Atonement to Worship, from Antinomianism to Justification, as well as large sections lifted from classic books and commentaries of the main Calvinistic theologians and preachers of the past. And you can add to that a great variety of sermons from the past and the present, printed out in full. It is like having a good seminary library at your fingertips. What is in its 'stacks' goes on and on. It ties into other sites of theological interest as well. Let the browser who has other, more pressing, responsibilities beware.

Too bad the whole internet isn't like this. One would not have such misgivings about use of the internet and going on-line.

Be that as it may, we bring this site to your attention not only in the hopes that the interested reader will put the site to good use, but because there are certain sections that are of special interest to us as Protestant



Reformed. For instance, what caught our eye browsing through some of the site's many 'offerings' was the topic of hyper-Calvinism. This, for a Protestant Reformed preacher, is always a matter of interest, if for no other reason than that we know that in ecclesiastical circles we are commonly labelled as the foremost remaining specimen of this error. One always wonders how the error will be represented and described, whose names and writings will appear for and against it, and whether names familiar to us will appear—be they friend or critic.

Well they do; and we are—that is, names familiar to us appear, and our own name as a denomination comes up as well.

By and large, the articles and writers listed for your reading pleasure under this section deal with the free offer of the gospel—and in a favorable light, as one might suspect (and fear).

But not all. A certain Steve Hays, while critical of Hoeksema's stand against common grace, indicates he is convinced Hoeksema's criticism of the free offer was valid and ought to be considered more seriously than it has been. One might wonder how one can approve of common grace while opposing the free offer of the gospel, since they have become so absolutely intertwined, but there it is. In one of his "blog responses" Hays makes some useful distinctions in the use of the word "offer," pointing out that those who used it earlier on in various Reformed documents and confessions had something else in mind than those who now want to affix the adjectives "free" and "well-meant" to the word "offer."

But read it for yourselves (under "Triablogue"). You might not agree with Hays' appraisal that John Murray was a more careful and thorough exegete than Hoeksema (nor with a few other caveats as well), but then, he does go on record as recommending the much-maligned Hoeksema as a theologian worth reading, with things of value to say. As they say, "We will take what we can get"; and "You can't win them all."

For one to go on record these days suggesting that he finds things in Hoeksema worth reading, recommending him for his "logical" thought, and then expect to be taken seriously in Reformed theological circles, takes a rare courage. These days, you will be taken far more seriously if you go on record claiming to be a Calvinist, but then maintain that you cannot find any place really to fit eternal election (predestination) into one's system of thought in any meaningful way, deny that election has any real

bearing on the various other doctrines (e.g., the covenant of grace, the call of the gospel, or even justification, these days), and insist you cannot see how it has much bearing on preaching and its content either.

It is strange. Every anti-Calvinist sees predestination as standing at the very center of Calvinistic theology and thought, part of the very texture and design of the Calvinistic fabric (and, for that very reason, wants no part either of it or of Him, that Master Weaver, the predestinating God); and yet it seems that just about every self-professed Calvinistic theologian of the past century or so has gone out of his way to demonstrate that really predestination is not all that central to the Calvinistic, Reformed way of looking at things. The grace of election and the truth of predestination is treated like a price tag affixed to the Calvinistic garment, to take note of, but having precious little to do with the texture and design of its fabric at all.

How strange. Is it any wonder why Calvinists and Arminians find themselves shopping at the same theological store these days?

Indeed, things do not quite add up. It is as if the opponents of Calvinism realize much more clearly what is at stake in confessing God to be a sovereign, predestinating God than its professed promoters. I find it utterly baffling at times. You would think that, instead of seeing how adroitly they can extract the truth and reality of election (which makes salvation all of grace indeed—Eph. 1:4-5; 2:1-5) from key doctrines, the Calvinistic theologians would be striving instead to understand how this deeper wisdom of God (with the Christ of the covenant at its heart) has bearing on all the doctrines of grace.

What could be plainer in this connection than Paul's book of Romans, written as the apostle struggled to come to grips with the mystery of God's dealing with Israel, setting the nation of his ancestry aside, and sending the gospel with its promises to the Gentile nations instead. Has the Word of God (which is to say, the very truthfulness of God in keeping His word of promise) failed? How can that be! Ahhh, the answer: It has to do with election; the sovereign, predestinating purpose of God with a true Israel to be drawn from all humanity as known by God and given to Christ from the very beginning. And the lights went on. Now it can be explained. Deep is the wisdom of God. If you do not see that as you read Romans and get to the heart of Paul's argument in chapters 9-11, all I can say is that you

aren't trying to understand Romans, you are looking for ways to get around the apostle's plain case and argument.

But I digress—because I cannot understand why professing Calvinistic theologians are always trying to see how little bearing particular, personal election has on various doctrines, rather than striving to see the revealed predestinating purpose of God for His own, woven into the whole.

Unless it embarrasses them somehow? But why?

All that being said, I must get back to the real reason for this discussion, namely, the free offer of the gospel. This is my concern in the matter of hyper-Calvinism and its charge. That we are called names by some in this or that circle is not all that important to me. But the question in this instance is *why*? What is it that in the estimation of most of the Calvinistic church-world renders us worthy of being dismissed as “hyper-Calvinists”?

The answer is not so difficult to ascertain. It has to do with our denial of the free offer of the gospel. And that is a matter of concern. What is at stake is nothing less than the gospel—the *content* of the preaching, yes its very marrow, and *how* the precious name of Jesus will be offered (set before) to all. And that is a matter of importance—supreme importance. For that reason, what I read in an article or two on the site warrants some response. What is of interest, and even ironic, is that this section on (and against) hyper-Calvinism opens with a quote from Rev. Ron Hanks, and with approval. The quote is worth quoting in full because it exposes the true error of the true ‘hypers.’

The hyper-Calvinist, then, makes the same mistake as the Arminians and free-willists, only he draws a different conclusion. Both think that to command or demand repentance and faith of dead sinners must imply that such sinners are not dead and have in themselves the ability to repent and believe. The free-willist says, then: “To command must imply ability, therefore, men must have the ability.” The hyper-Calvinist says: “To command must imply

ability, *therefore we will not command any but the elect*?  
[emphasis mine—KK].

Adding to the irony of it all is that the site concludes with the written transcript of the debate between Richard Mouw and Prof. David Engelsma on “Common Grace: Is It Reformed?”

So in a section *warning against* the danger of hyper-Calvinism, most of the articles there are *in favor* of the free-offer; the first and last words are by two PR ministers.

Surely, that is how it should be!

Maybe the creator of the site does not know Rev. Ron Hanko’s affiliation. I have an idea, however, that he does, and perhaps has a sense humor as well. Cannot criticize a man for that.

On a more serious note is the opening article that is listed in the section of hyper-Calvinism. It is an article by a certain Phil Johnson. It is lifted from Mr. Johnson’s own personal site, under a section he labels “Bad Theology.” There he warns against the evils of hyper-Calvinism, spells out what he considers to be the chief earmarks of this dangerous heresy, and lists the Protestant Reformed Churches as the prime representative of this deadly species still at large today. He has read Prof. David Engelsma’s book dealing with the free offer of the gospel, and he did not much like what he read. (The Professor is aware of the criticism and is well able to defend himself.)

Our concern is with what Mr. Johnson and others have decided defines hyper-Calvinism. What it amounts to is a redefinition. If such is allowed, no one is safe from being labelled with any heresy.

## II.



### PHIL JOHNSON ON “HYPER-CALVINISM”

**W**E INTEND IN THIS SERIES to make some comments on the free offer of the gospel as that came to our attention through reading some articles found on the website, [www.monergism.com](http://www.monergism.com). On that website the issue of the free offer is dealt with at length in the section dealing with hyper-Calvinism. There the name of the Protestant Reformed Churches (and of H. Hoeksema and some of his ‘disciples’) appears, labelled by various contributors as the foremost remaining specimen of the error (not to say evil) of hyper-Calvinism.

While our interest is piqued by reference to the PRC as proof that hyper-Calvinism is alive and well these days, that is not our primary concern. That is how we are labelled out there, and amongst the ‘initiated’ nothing is going to change their assessment.

Our primary concern is with the free or well-meant offer of the gospel (WMO from here on). This has become the popular brand of preaching in most of what today goes by the name of Calvinism—Calvinism that has become more and more embarrassed by the doctrine of predestination, finding little place for the wonder of election in any significant way, either

in its preaching or in its theology (vis-à-vis the doctrine of God's everlasting covenant, theologians reducing the truth of election to a non-factor for all intents and purposes). And they certainly cannot bring themselves to say the word "reprobation" anymore, speaking rather of the "non-elect." That in itself is telling. The question is, why is that? Could it be that speaking of "God's love for each and every one" and then mentioning the word "reprobate" in the same breath does tend to give any sane man pause?

It becomes apparent that maintaining that there is such a thing as reprobation is enough in and of itself to make one a "hyper-Calvinist" these days. But does it, really? Or does the clear uneasiness with this biblical (and necessary) corollary of election rather betray something that is *sub-Calvinistic*? Will the real Calvinist on this matter, true to Calvin's Calvinism, please step forward? Election without reprobation? How is it possible? Another one of those things 'explained' by dismissing it in the name of "It's a paradox." How convenient to have this magic wand around when something one does not like pops out of Calvinism. But is it (i.e., an election unconnected with a decree of reprobation) true Calvinism? That's the question. Any number of the adherents to the WMO want nothing to do with that part of the Calvinist's system of doctrines. Yet they claim the right to the name of Calvin without having anything hyphenated in front of their 'Calvinism.' We beg to differ.

The WMO is, we are convinced, unbiblical, a mutant form of the gospel, and, having infected most of Reformed preaching and teaching, is what has left Presbyterian and Reformed churches with little immunity to the real and most deadly theological infections of the last several centuries, namely, full-blown Arminianism, and its stepsister, Modernism.

One of the first articles listed in the section under "Hyper-Calvinism" is by a certain Phil Johnson, who, in a section he classifies as "Bad Theology," gives a list of what he judges to be the earmarks of "this deadly error" of hyper-Calvinism. In his treatment of this error (and its primary present-day representative) he makes reference to the PRC and H. Hoeksema and to Prof. D. J. Engelsma's book, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*, as well. Before we list what Johnson deems to be the earmarks of hyper-Calvinism, it is worthwhile noting how dangerous, he is

convinced, the error of hyper-Calvinism is. The blurb to his article quotes his perspective on hyper-Calvinism:

History teaches us that hyper-Calvinism is as much a threat to true Calvinism as Arminianism is. Virtually every revival of true Calvinism since the Puritan era has been hijacked, crippled, or ultimately killed by hyper-Calvinist influences. Modern Calvinists would do well to be on guard against the influence of these deadly trends.

This is no small historical indictment.

Our concern with the above statement is not Johnson's assessment that the error of hyper-Calvinism is as great an evil and threat to the gospel as Arminianism ever was. Hyper-Calvinism is to be discarded root and branch (when properly identified). Couldn't agree more. The heresy was and is real.

But with the statement, we do have a twofold concern.

First, as one might expect, our concern is with the seriousness of the charge that Johnson lays against hyper-Calvinism—note Johnson's charge, namely, that hyper-Calvinism is what has killed virtually every (sic!) revival of true Calvinism since the Reformation, at least in England. ("Virtually" is a wiggle word, and Mr. Johnson knows it. The difference between "virtually every revival" and "every revival" is virtually nothing.) *And then into this camp he throws the PRC and those who oppose the free offer of the gospel.* That is quite an indictment. To oppose the WMO means you are numbered with the chief instruments the devil has used to cool off, deaden, and hinder the triumphs of the gospel and its spread since the days of the Reformation. Opposing the WMO has been the chief instrument of the devil in hindering the preservation of Calvinism and the true note of the gospel truth within Christ's church. Not sins, weakness, and excesses found within those rallying to these revivals; not perhaps unscriptural means and methods being used; not the error of Arminianism has been the chief agent. No. But hyper-Calvinism! (So this defender and promoter of the free offer claims).

You understand why it is that, though we have no interest in being knee-jerk reactionaries every time our name is mentioned in a critical fashion, we do take this particular charge seriously.

But we also have a second concern (make it an *allegation* if you like). It is this: while Brother Johnson declares that hyper-Calvinism is as great an evil and threat to the gospel as Arminianism is or ever was, we are not at all convinced that those who hold to the WMO these days really believe that *Arminianism is as much a threat to true Calvinism and the gospel as hyper-Calvinism is or ever has been*. Where is such evidence? The question is whether they see Arminianism as much of a threat at all. This is where our grievance and concern really lies. We read where defenders of the WMO take hyper-Calvinists (real and imagined) sharply to task—*by name, with quotes*. But now, good brothers, the question must be asked, where in the writings of the promoters of the WMO have there been these same sharp words of warning, alarm, and condemnation of those of the *Arminian* conviction?

Here there is a silence that speaks louder than words.

Shall I name just one such Arminian? Mr. John Wesley. Does any dare dispute his pedigree? And it ain't Calvinistic, I will tell you that. Where in the writings of the ardent defenders of the WMO is there warning against the writings and teachings of this man (a man known for his strident, one might even say “vile,” accusations against Calvin and Calvinism)? After all, Arminianism is as much a threat to true Calvinism, and is as deadly, as hyper-Calvinism ever was. So it is stated. But where is the hard-copy evidence that the WMO men actually believe this?

The only words I read about John Wesley from WMO men are words that describe him in terms of “that most useful and faithful servant of God.” Perhaps they can bring themselves to criticize him for a tendency towards one-sidedness—emphasizing “free-willism” too much—but that is about it. *The Banner of Truth* comes to mind. I have read its publications with profit (and my all-too-frequent contributions in purchasing their books have profited them somewhat too). It is no secret that they unabashedly promote the WMO as the very marrow of divinity. Recently (*The Banner of Truth*, Aug.-Sept. 2005, pp. 39-46), they have once again raised warning against hyper-Calvinism (almost certainly because a certain small PRC affiliate is making a small noise in the fair Isles of Great Britain).



But concerning John Wesley (that rascal of the strongest Arminian stripe) and his gospel preaching, not a word of condemnation or serious warning do we ever read. Concerning John Wesley, in their publications it is always “*magna cum laude*.” And yet we are to believe that those of the WMO persuasion perceive Arminianism to be “as great a threat and deadly danger to the gospel” as hyper-Calvinism is.

We trust you understand if our skepticism remains in place.

Every evidence, including the numerous joint-conferences headed by men committed to the WMO over the past 50 years in both England and the States, in the name of ecumenicity, indicates that there is something deeply rooted that the WMO men have in common with Arminians of various stripes. And that something has to do with the marrow of these men’s divinity, namely, the well-meant offer itself—or they would not get along so well. And this all while men are insisting that the WMO is true Calvinism when it comes to gospel preaching. Surely, something does not add up.

This brings us to Mr. Johnson’s list.

He supplies the following categories of identification (and then goes on to give a brief commentary on each of his points).

A hyper-Calvinist is someone who either:

1. Denies that the gospel call applies to all who hear; or
2. Denies that faith is the duty of every sinner; or
3. Denies that the gospel makes any “offer” of Christ, salvation, or mercy to the non-elect (or denies that the offer of divine mercy is free and universal); or
4. Denies that there is such a thing as “common grace”; or
5. Denies that God has any sort of love for the non-elect.

What Johnson lists under points 1 and 2 describes, of course, what characterizes historic hyper-Calvinism. He acknowledges that these first

two are the more extreme forms of hyper-Calvinism and does inform the reader that these cannot be laid at the door of the PRC.

We appreciate at least that declaration.

But the list goes on. In points 3 and 4, direct reference is made to writers of the PRC and their positions. And point 5 applies by necessary inference. Points 3 through 5 clearly have to do with opposition to the free offer. And it is apparent from the article that it is with the critics of the WMO that Johnson is most concerned.

To give the reader a flavor of what Johnson has to say about the WMO and the PRC, we will quote part of what he has written in connection with point 3.

*3. The denial of the gospel offer.* Type-3 hyper-Calvinism is based on a denial that the gospel makes any “offer” of Christ, salvation, or mercy to the non-elect. An alternative of this view merely denies that the offer of divine mercy is free and universal. For an excellent discussion of this issue, see *The Free Offer of the Gospel*, by John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse ...

If the hyper-Calvinists in England tend to be Baptists, in America the Presbyterian variety seems more common. The best-known American hyper-Calvinists are the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). They deny that there is any sort of “offer” (in the sense of a proffer or tender or proposal of mercy) in the gospel message. They also deny that they are hyper-Calvinist, because they insist that the only variety of hyper-Calvinism is that which denies the gospel call (Type-1 above).

A few things before we end this chapter.

First, there are things that must be said about the use of the word “offer,” and about the charge that those who deny the free offer want nothing to do with a gospel offer in any sense. It is not only Johnson who

suggests this, but it is the language of other WMO men as well (as we shall demonstrate later in this discussion). It is not true. This must not be allowed to stand unchallenged. Something important is at stake here, as we intend to point out.

Second, Mr. Johnson is not correct in the last statement he makes in the above quote. It is not true that the PRC insist that the only form of hyper-Calvinism is what he lists as Type-1. We also condemn as hyper-Calvinism what he calls Type-2—the denial that faith is the duty (the solemn calling) of every sinner. To put it simply, we too insist that it is the duty of every sinner to whom the gospel comes to repent and believe. One's inability to comply with the commands and overtures of the gospel call no more excuses the preacher from calling such a one to faith, than the hearers' inability to obey God's law excuses a preacher from calling all in his congregation to keep that law. We had thought Mr. Johnson was clear on that. If not, we assure him it is so.

And now one more thing in conclusion. I cannot refrain from noting that in point 5, which has to do with denying that God has any sort of love for the non-elect (sic!—KK), Johnson brings up the name of A. W. Pink. This is interesting—interesting enough to warrant saying more about it.

### III.



## THE GOSPEL “OFFER”

SO FAR, WE HAVE PROVIDED A LIST OF SOME FIVE characteristics drawn up by a certain Phil Johnson, which he designated as earmarks of hyper-Calvinism.

The first item is Johnson’s claim that to deny that God has any sort of love for the non-elect is hyper-Calvinism (his point 5, if you recall). Our response is, since when? Evidently since the WMO men decided it should be counted as such.

Be that as it may, of greater interest to us is that in Johnson’s explanation of this ‘error’ he mentions the name of A. W. Pink as representative. As well Johnson should. We appreciate his honesty in this regard. This was Pink’s position. But even *Pink* a hyper-Calvinist? And yet this is how the WMO (well-meant offer) men must label him. For all Pink’s speaking of “Christ being freely offered” in his opposition to the Gospel Standard hyper-Calvinism of his day, he was no free-offer man.

In associating Pink with this above-mentioned “error,” Johnson tries to be as gentle with Pink as possible. Understandably so. Pink is a writer of impeccable Calvinistic credentials, and to the popular mind is as closely

associated with true Calvinistic soteriology as one can get. And no one can deny that Pink has been used as a powerful tool of God for good in the lives of untold Christians. How many do not testify that they were lifted out of the deceptions of Arminianism and even outright unbelief by reading Pink's magisterial volume, *The Sovereignty of God*?

What is of interest, in the first place, is how Johnson words his point 5, namely, God having no sort of love for the *non-elect* (*sic!*). But this is not the word Pink used. He used the word "reprobate," as in, God having no sort of love for the *reprobate*.

This, we reiterate, is significant—this avoidance of the word "reprobate" by those committed to the WMO. It indicates something amiss with their Calvinism, and that in fact the free offer really will not allow them to be so 'true' to Calvin and Calvinism as they claim. This comes out in the Banner of Truth's recently republished version of *The Sovereignty of God*. As Johnson himself is all too well aware, Pink's chapter on "The Sovereignty of God in Reprobation" was lifted and removed from the book.

Even apart from the question of honesty in republishing books of the deceased and deliberately altering (via omission) what they have written (especially a man of Pink's integrity and convictions), another just-as-serious question raises its head, namely, what right do those who deny the decree of reprobation, as any number of the promoters of the WMO have and do, have, to the claim of being the faithful representatives of Calvinism in its purest, truest form?

The answer should be self-evident, we think.

And now the real point: why this stumbling over reprobation—this *decretum horribile* ("terrifying decree"), as Calvin himself characterizes it? The answer? Because it stands in flat contradiction to the WMO, as any sensible man (rational human being) knows. Any new convert who has sat under free-offer preaching and then might come across this doctrine in Pink's book would realize it too, and begin to ask some hard questions.

And so, Calvin's doctrine of reprobation (which is to say, Paul's and the Scripture's) is jettisoned. Commitment to the WMO with its "God desires and yearns for the salvation of everyone" compels them to do so. For all their claim of being able to live with logical contradictions in biblical doctrines (calling them "paradoxes" and claiming that irrationality

in some instances is the very mark of orthodoxy), the tension between reprobation and the free offer evidently is one “apparent contradiction” that even their commitment to irrationalism chafes against and cannot live with. So, out goes reprobation. It is their “Shibboleth.”

But is this “historic Calvinism,” and can those who reject reprobation claim to be its faithful keepers? The question remains.

The second item we come back to is the use of the term “offer” or “gospel offer.” As we have already stated, our concern is with the charge by the WMO men that those who deny the free offer deny that one can speak of any kind of offer in the gospel in any sense. If such is not an explicit charge in every instance, yet such is the impression that is plainly, and, one might conclude, even deliberately left.

Johnson does this. He writes:

Deliberately excluded from hyper-Calvinist “evangelism” is any pleading with the sinner to be reconciled with God. Sinners are not told that God offers them forgiveness or salvation. In fact, most hyper-Calvinists categorically deny that God makes any OFFER in the gospel whatsoever.

And then Johnson brings this up again in his “Type-3” brand of hyper-Calvinism (in which section he brings in the name of the PRC). Writes Johnson, “Type-3 hyper-Calvinism is based on a denial that the gospel makes *any ‘offer’ of Christ, salvation, or mercy to the nonelect.*” (Italics mine—KK)

This must not be allowed to stand unchallenged. The reason is, if such is true, we would be undeniably hyper-Calvinists. After all, the Reformed creeds do use the word “offer,” and any number of stalwarts of old spoke of the gospel offer and of Christ being offered to all in the gospel. As is well known, the *Canons of Dordt* themselves read:

It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered [sic!—KK] therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of

the Word refuse to come and be converted ...  
(Third and Fourth Heads, Art. 9).

Maurice Roberts does the same in another article further down the site (also printed in *The Banner of Truth*, Aug.-Sept. 2005). He writes of two kinds of objections to the free offer, the second being, “From those who claim that God in the gospel does not give a sincere offer [sic!—KK] to any but to the elect.” This he labels as “Dutch-American Hyper-Calvinism” associated with H. Hoeksema and the PRC in America. He then lists a number of things that he asserts follow from our insistence on a particular, rather than a general, promise. Representative of this list is his assertion that we claim, “It is not proper for a preacher to ‘offer’ Christ promiscuously to a mixed audience of Christians and non-Christians.” And this when the *Canons* speak of “the gospel, [and] of Christ offered therein.” So, it would seem “as obvious as a cow” that our opposition to the WMO means we do not even square up to our own most Calvinistic and Reformed creed. What else can one conclude—“hypers”!

The fact is that we do not “categorically deny” that one may speak of any offer in the gospel whatsoever. What we object to is “the free offer of the gospel.” And that is something else again.

We do not deny that Christ is and can be offered in the gospel preaching in a proper sense. In the gospel offer of which the *Canons* speak, Christ is set forth before all as the one sacrifice for sin, God’s Savior from wrath. Christ Jesus is trumpeted as the revelation of God as He graciously wills to have mercy upon sinners. We are authorized to declare to every man in the gospel, “Jehovah is a forgiving God. Turn ye unto Him and He will have mercy upon you. Everyone who turns to Him seeking salvation and forgiveness in Christ Jesus’ name shall find it. He has never turned one such seeking, sorrowing sinner away yet, and I can assure you, He is not about to begin now. Repent and believe, and thou too shalt be saved!” This is the true gospel offer. In these terms, Christ, crucified and risen, is to be set forth for the consideration of all, of everyone without exception to whom the gospel comes. You can even throw in a “Whosoever will, let him come!” We would not mind at all. Really! If Scripture says it, say it, by all means—to all. You are free, yea, called to do so.

One wonders how much more “promiscuous” one must be to have a good reputation these days! But this is not what is meant by the “offer” anymore these days. It has been hijacked by the WMO of the gospel, giving men license to use language that neither the apostles nor the fathers of Dordt used. This is why we tend to stay away from the use of the word altogether—people hear the word “offer of the gospel,” and think “free offer.”

The free offer authorizes preachers to speak of the God who has, in love, elected just some to salvation, as yet also wanting and wishing for the salvation of *every* sinner, yearning for their salvation with all His divine heart (cf. *The Banner of Truth*, Aug.- Sept. 2005, p. 41). In the end, the free offer authorizes men to say to every hearer in God’s name (be they Herod, be they Judas Iscariot), “God loves you. Yes, Christ died for you!”

This is the language of the WMO.

It is sheer Arminianism.

It is precisely this language that occasioned the writing of the *Canons of Dordt* to begin with, in defense of true Calvinism and the gospel. And yet, according to the promoters of the free offer, such language is now to be considered the very “marrow” of Calvinistic gospel preaching. Astounding!

This brings us to the third matter of interest to us, namely, the practice of the WMO men of using the terms “paradox” and “*apparent* contradiction” when called upon to defend the contradictory statements that the free offer compels them to make.

It is not our intention at this point to examine this at any length. We simply want to get clearly before the reader’s mind just how deep and serious this contradiction goes. We set it in bold relief; the free offer comes down to this—the Jehovah God whom we are to preach has told us that He desires in deepest, most tender sincerity (willing and wishing and longing for) the salvation of every sinner, (and we are to tell everyone that); but at the same time He has determined to withhold from the majority of sinners that one “thing” without which He knows full well they cannot be saved, namely, His good and Holy Spirit.

So, the God we preach desires and yearns for the salvation even of the reprobate sinners, (yes—deeply, sincerely), but at the same time He



has no intention of giving them the Holy Spirit, whom He alone can give them—and without whom they must perish.

And yet this God is “sincere” in His professed desire to save every sinner?

This is the incongruity with which the WMO leaves one. You may call it a paradox if you will, and then claim that what the free offer foists on Calvinist believers are only “apparent contradictions,” but the fact is that even a blind man sees that what the free offer calls into question is the very sincerity and character of the sovereign God. This, in the end, is what is so troubling about the free offer of the gospel.

Significantly, nowhere in the apostles’ preaching in the book of Acts do you find them, as they utter calls to repentance and salvation, explaining the warrant for obedience to this call in terms of God’s love for everyone or Christ having died for “you all.” If indeed such utterance does belong to the very marrow of the gospel, surely one would expect it to loom large in the apostles’ preaching? But, not so. The reason is that there are other ways of “offering” Christ and preaching the gospel call with its sweet promise than resorting to such Arminian language, namely, by using language that is compatible with a sovereign Shepherd seeking His own given Him by the Father from all eternity.

The fact is that the marvel that God’s saving love is a *predestinating* love ought to have more bearing on what one says in the preaching and gospel call than simply a refraining from preaching an overt “free-willism” (and therefore I am Calvinistic and Reformed). Surely it ought also to have a bearing upon how one preaches the very heart of the gospel as well, namely, the love of this almighty, saving God and Christ’s *atoning death and suffering*. This distinctive note and ‘color’ the free offer removes.

Before concluding, we bring up one more issue, namely, the matter of sovereignty and responsibility. The WMO men charge the critics of the free offer with wanting to put too much emphasis on the sovereignty of God in salvation, and not enough on the responsibility of man. In other words, the WMO men claim that they, for the sake of balance, put equal emphasis on the responsibility of man.

We find this a curious and telling charge and position—and not simply because this has always been the charge of Arminianism against

Calvinism, “Your emphasis on sovereign predestination destroys man’s responsibility,” though that too.

The question is, what do the WMO men mean by “emphasizing also the responsibility of man”? The word “responsibility,” as it stands, is an ambiguous word. It can refer to one of two things: either to the “accountability” of a man (holding one accountable for his wrong), or to the “ability” of a man (his ability to respond—the part man must play).

Do the WMO men really mean to say that we as “hyper-Calvinists” do not emphasize the “accountability” of man for his sin enough? They know that not to be the case. If it is one thing those labelled as “hypers” have emphasized, it is man’s accountability for sin (completely responsible through Adam and by wicked choices). What does that leave us with? Evidently, according to the WMO men, we do not stress the “ability” of man enough. But they do? For the sake of balance, there should be a little more emphasis on unbelieving, spiritually-dead man’s *ability*? And this is Calvinism true to Calvin and the Reformed faith?

We will be so bold as to say that that is exactly what they are saying, though the word they use is man’s “responsibility.” We know they may not want to say this, but this is what they are left with.

The WMO brethren may want to examine a bit more closely their defending the WMO in the interest of “placing more emphasis on man’s responsibility.”

#### IV.



## WRATH AND HATRED

**W**E NOW INTEND TO EXAMINE THE FREE OFFER and the arguments of its promoters by taking into consideration various biblical passages and concepts as they are brought to bear on this controversy.

Of late, the WMO (well-meant offer) men have gone on record defending the notion that God not only loves the elect, but He also hates them; and that He not only hates the “non-elect,” but He also loves them.

They argue that to deny this is simply hyper-Calvinism. We contend that to maintain such a thing is simply (and grievously) unbiblical, and demonstrates the extremes to which maintaining the free offer leads one.

The WMO men are compelled to argue this astonishing thing. They too are well aware of that ‘troubling’ passage “Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13). If Scripture speaks of God from eternity having hated the Esaus of this life, how can the WMO yet speak of God having a “love” for them too? And if Scripture ties God’s love in with the elect, the Jacobs—the love of a Sovereign God, which love invariably works

salvation—surely one cannot then speak of God also loving the *reprobate*, can one? What is this but the ABC’s of logical thinking?

Behold, once again we show you a paradox, and escape the dilemma. Whom God loves, He also hates; and whom He hates, He also loves. And they have Scripture to back it up, they say.

So that it is clear that we are not misrepresenting the WMO men and their arguments, we offer you a couple of quotes lifted from another article listed on the website, *monergism.com*, an article entitled “All House and No Door: A Critique of the False Teaching of Hyper-Calvinism,” written by the Dr. C. Matthew McMahon. Dr. McMahon is sweet on the free offer, and goes on record as finding those who oppose it extremely sour to his taste. (At least he does not find us lukewarm.)

McMahon offers a list of six things that, he declares, the free offer understands and maintains, and that, if they are denied, prove one to be a hyper-Calvinist. (And some of them do.) One of the things that the free offer affirms (the opposing of which, according to McMahon, makes one a hyper-Calvinist) is:

5. The Love of God to the Reprobate and the Hatred of God to the Elect—huh? (Yes, I understand what I wrote in this heading). No doubt, Hyper-Calvinists believe that God only hates the reprobate, and only loves the elect, in any sense whatsoever. Hyper-Calvinism completely denies that God loves men generally in any way and completely denies that God hates the elect in any way. It may seem at the outset that a general love to all men is not as radical as my inference that God hates the elect in some way. But I will qualify this ...

Having presented his scriptural support for his contention that God has a general love for all His creatures, including the “non-elect” (which we will briefly touch on later), McMahon goes on to support his contention that God also hates the elect (in some way). We turn to this first, not because the contention that Scripture teaches God loves even

those whom He eternally hates is of little concern to us, but because if anything demonstrates to what grievous lengths and Scripture-bending the free offer forces one to go, it is the contention that God also hates those whom from all eternity He has loved in Christ, *the Elect One*.

In this connection, McMahon writes, “God also hates the elect in Adam,” and then he quotes Ephesians 2:1-3, highlighting the words, “*and were by nature children of wrath, even as others,*” a phrase that refers to the regenerated, renewed elect. McMahon explains it this way:

If [God] hates or loves, it is an eternal hatred or love for sin or good work in Christ. He continually, in Adam, hates our rebellion. Yet, He eternally loves us in Jesus Christ. That is why we are not consumed as Jacob’s sons. Hyper-Calvinism teaches that the elect are not hated in Adam, but only loved in Christ. I suppose then, Paul was wrong in saying we were children of wrath *like the others*. Is wrath a form of love? I think not, unless Hyper-Calvinism would like to admit that God loves all! No, wrath, like others, is real wrath intended for damnation. If it were not for Christ we would not escape this. The reprobate are only hated in Adam, though generally loved by God as seen in His indiscriminate love for all men and the whole world as He upholds it. The elect are exceedingly grateful (though not as they should be) for the deliverance they have in Christ. If God did not, nor does hate their sin, then why are they grateful, and what did Christ die on the cross for?

Three things in analyzing the above quote.

First, we note that the Doctor speaks of God “in Adam, hat[ing] our rebellion,” and then of God hating the sins of the elect. But what does that prove? That, therefore, God hates the elect themselves? Surely it is possible to hate one’s sins and foolish rebellion without hating the person. Parents do it with their children all the time, especially if a child in cruelty

has hurt someone else—hating the deed, not the child. So with God. Yes, even His elect children yet living in unbelief, whom God “foreknows” in love, such as Saul of Tarsus, hating his pride and cruelty, but not Saul himself, whom in everlasting love God intended to adopt and save. It was exactly because God so loved Saul (seeing him in Christ) that He would separate him from the sins that He so hated. God would not have this young fool destroyed. He was a vessel of mercy, loved in Christ.

But second, what about God’s wrath—of the elect being under wrath even as others? The simple fact is that “wrath” and “hatred” are two different concepts, and it is possible to be filled with wrath towards someone, and to deal with one in just wrath, *without hating that person at all*. Wrath towards one whom one yet loves. A judge in a small community may have to sentence his own daughter to a lengthy prison term because she drove while drunk and killed a family coming the other way. That is just wrath. And then that judge visits that daughter in prison with tears week after week. An elder votes to excommunicate his own son, who, as a young man, is living in fornication and wasting his living. Anger, wrath, and what? Hatred? No, rather praying to God to have mercy, and to make the son a prodigal who comes home in time.

Shall we mention David, who had Uriah murdered? There came upon David a divine wrath for all to see. God was grieved, as any father would be; but did God *hate* him? If God hates you, He never brings you back, no, not from the fall of Adam itself. All of us, Cains and Abels, in Adam in common were children of wrath, forfeiting life and under the sentence of death. The difference is that some are vessels of wrath *fitted to destruction* (Rom. 9:22), hated by God; but the others, though under God’s just wrath, are vessels of mercy, to be fitted to honor.

McMahon asks, in rhetorical fashion, “Is wrath a form of love?” But that is not the question. The question is, is wrath *always an expression of hate*? That is what McMahon is contending. And to that the answer is “No,” as is plain even from human life. There are times when, indeed, it proceeds from hatred, when one’s intention is to see another destroyed (and perhaps forever—read Malachi 1:1-4), but it can also be visited on one whom one loves, justice demanding it and one’s own righteous character, though the object of the wrath is one whom you love, is precious to you,

but is to be cut off from that love's expression, until the wrong doing is properly addressed and dealt with.

Consider Christ crucified, the object of God's wrath for those three dreadful hours, cut off from every expression of love. Did God then hate His Son? If McMahan is correct, He must still hate His Son in some sense even now. Be careful what you say here, lest you speak with a rashness completely out of place.

One of the passages McMahan quotes to support the contention that the God who eternally hates a person also loves them, and whom He loves in Christ eternally He also hates, is Psalm 5:5: "The foolish shall not stand with thee; thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

The WMO men argue that since the elect can also be guilty of iniquity, therefore they too are hated by God. Really? One must then ask what God meant when He through His Spirit has wicked Balaam say concerning His true Israel, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Israel"? (It is this, of course, that explains God's longsuffering love for a sinful, damn-worthy people).

While it is true that the elect can live wickedly for a time in unbelief, and even have to be converted from amongst the wicked, this is not the perspective of this Psalm and others that use similar language. The Psalms have a practice of drawing up absolute contrasts between the righteous and the wicked, those who are God's own in Christ the righteous one, and those who are not and never will be. Do not forget that the Psalm goes on to plead with God concerning these wicked, "Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsel; cast them out ..." Remember, in the Psalms, *Christ* speaks. And are we to believe that Christ speaks this way concerning *His sheep*, including those "other sheep" given Him, yet lost in darkness? Hating them as the wicked, praying for their utter destruction? Nonsense. Because if He did, it is a prayer not answered. How fortunate for us!

Psalm 11 uses the same language. It speaks of "the wicked and him that loveth violence," whom God's soul hateth (v. 5). It then goes on to say, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone ... this shall be the portion of their cup" (v. 6). This is what the Spirit of Christ in the psalmist wills for the elect? For those whom He sees as righteous in Christ according to His "foreknowing" love? Not so. But this is what happens

when, as a professing Calvinist and interpreter of Scripture, you lose sight of the truth of God's being the God of a predestinating will and people, which truth is revealed to us for the sake of reading Scripture aright—as Paul found to be true when he wrote the Book of Romans, for instance—whether one knows who the elect are or not. We do not have to. God does, in Christ. And that is enough to know to interpret such passages.

This does not mean that such a psalm has little to say to the child of God. It is exactly God's hatred of wickedness, and then of His perpetual hatred of those impenitently committed to wickedness, that gives one the strong incentive to depart from the wicked and their ways.

There is one other matter that we must address yet before we conclude this chapter, and that is the strange and completely unwarranted way in which the WMO men go about proving that there are different degrees of love by which God loves different men, and then use this to justify the free offer and its declaration that God has a saving love for every sinner, loving them with a saving desire.

It is a rather interesting logical jump, and really a wonderful sleight of hand. McMahon does it, and so does Phil Johnson in his article supporting the free offer.

Both criticize those who claim that God “only hates the reprobate” and those who “completely den[y] that God loves men generally in any way ...” (cf. above quotes). They charge that such is the mark of a hyper-Calvinist. Both insist that none can deny that Scripture teaches that God loves all men in some general way. And to support this general love of God towards everyone, they quote the same texts that are used in support of common grace. For example, “The Lord is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works,” and “... for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Ps. 145:9 & Matt. 5:45). Texts that prove, it is said, a general benevolence and favor (a lovingkindness) of God to everyone in general, reprobate as well as elect.

We are not interested in the theory of common grace at this point. In fact, for the sake of argument, let us play the fool, and say, we grant it. You have convinced us. Scripture teaches that God has a general favor and lovingkindness toward all, as shown in His goodness even towards the reprobate. Now what?



We want simply to remind everyone of what the WMO men are doing. They are doing all this not simply to establish that God loves different men to different degrees, *but as biblical proof for the preaching of the free offer*. But the free offer does not have to do with some general love shown in the good things of this life; rather, it is the declaring of a saving love, a divine love that desires everyone's salvation in Christ. Our question is, what right does one have to take this so-called general love and use it to turn the gospel into a free offer, which offer now declares that God has the greatest of all loves for everyone, a love that would save?

This is the jump that the WMO men make. Suddenly this general lovingkindness that God might have even for the Esaus and Herods of the race blossoms into, and becomes irrefutable evidence for, the notion that He must also love them with a love that would save them in Christ. What gives? As if once you have 'proved' common grace, and are convinced certain texts speak of a general, non-saving benevolence of God towards all, you have the right to bring Christ into the picture with His cross and declare, "God yearns for the salvation of every sinner. Let every man addressed by the gospel know that Christ died for him!"

This is why we stated above that we find McMahan's contention that God also loves the reprobate whom He hates astonishing! Because, say what he will, though McMahan badgers those who deny the free offer for not being willing to concede that God loves the reprobate in any way at all (with a different, lesser kind of love), the fact is that McMahan, in the end, is not talking about God having merely a more general, non-saving sort of love for the reprobate. What he and other WMO men are talking about is God loving the reprobate with the same sort of love, a 'desire-to-save' sort of love, one that has to do with Christ, one that finds its evidence and power in the cross.

This is what the free offer is all about.

As should be evident, the WMO men realize that, once you have conceded this general lovingkindness of God towards all, you have placed your foot irretrievably on a road that leads to accepting the free offer as well. Concede the one, and you have for all intents and purposes adopted the other. The one rather subtly transforms itself into the other. If nothing else, such should give every Reformed man pause before simply adopting

the contemporary view of common grace and its lesser love. There is reason why we disavow it at every turn.

That God is good to all, no one denies. He was good to Esau, giving him greater health and strength than Jacob himself, and a better personality besides. But is this proof that God therefore loved him, and desired with deepest yearnings his salvation? Esau, whom God *hated*? Think about it.

There is more, of course, that can be said on the issue of the free offer. There are questions put to us by WMO men that they would like answered—for instance, are we not commanded to love all those with whom we have contact? Why would God require this of us ... if He does not do the same? Matthew 5:44, 45 is inevitably raised. Worth considering. But explanations of various biblical passages can wait until the next chapter.



## MORE LOVING THAN GOD?

**I**N OUR DISCUSSION OF THE FREE OFFER ERROR, we have refuted the charge of the promoters of the free offer that opposing the teaching that God loves everyone (including even those whom He hates from all eternity) makes one a hyper-Calvinist—as if opposing the free offer and ‘God desires the salvation of everyone’ makes one ‘Hyper’ *per se*. We have also pointed out the un-Calvinistic language and contradictions to which the Well-Meant Offer (WMO from now on) commits one.

We now continue our discussion on the free offer.

It is not enough to demonstrate to the WMO men the contradictory theological language inherent in the free offer. They acknowledge the same, calling such “a paradox” and “an apparent contradiction.” Those who confront them with the contradictory language found in their free-offer theology—positing two, opposite wills in God: He wills to save all, He wills not to save all (labelled by Abraham Kuyper as theological “gibberish”)—are dismissed as rationalists, guilty of scholasticism, and exalting human reason above the mysteries of faith and of God.

The argument of the WMO men is that, regardless of the contradictory propositions to which the free offer commits one, the Word of God, which is so much larger than man’s mind, in passage after passage

requires a “free offer” interpretation, which is to say, preaching that asserts a yearning of God’s gracious will to save all to whom the gospel comes, even the reprobate. And they say that such must be preached despite its standing in stark contradiction (according to every law of logic) to the doctrine of God’s election with its particular, exclusive love and grace. Regardless, they maintain, Scripture speaks of a general benevolence and love—a grace, of God towards all. This general love of God, gospel preaching cannot ignore. Passages such as Ezekiel 18:21,22; 33:11; Matthew 5:43ff., and Matthew 23:37 are quoted as cases in point.

It is not our intention to examine all the texts the WMO men adduce to justify propositions that stand in flat contradiction to election’s exclusive, saving love. We will content ourselves with a consideration of Matthew 5:43-48, used by the WMO men to justify their gospel practices. We do so, first, because the WMO men commonly take this text and apply it not simply to a common-grace kind of non-saving love (with which interpretation we are so familiar), but to a *saving* kind of love (though, they admit, not the love that actually saves, but a love found in God that only *desires the salvation* of those whom He in another compartment of His counsel has determined not to save). You say that what you have just read sounds like double talk? Well, welcome to the world of theological paradoxes. Nothing is as straight-forward as it first appears.

And, second, we use Matthew 5:43ff. because it lends itself to an intriguing question, a question put to us by the WMO men that amounts really to a charge of inconsistency on our part. We raised the question earlier in this discussion. Are we not commanded to love all those with whom we have contact, to the point even of seeking their salvation? Is this not the implication of Matthew 5:43ff.? Why would God require this of us (in fact, *how could* God require this of us), if He does not do the same?

But, as we said, it is more than an intriguing question. It really amounts to a charge made by the WMO men against us who deny the free offer. The charge is this, that we as ‘high Calvinists’ end up putting the character of believers at odds with the nature of God—on the one hand, denying God has a love for all those whom He addresses in the gospel, and yet on the other maintaining that what motivates us in bringing the gospel to all and confronting everyone with God’s Word is a love for all.

Is it not so? But how can this be? “Are you claiming to be even more gracious than God Himself?”

The WMO men are convinced such cannot be, and, in fact, is not. Such, according to them, is the position in which we as ‘high Calvinists’ leave ourselves, but that’s because we misrepresent the character of God. According to the WMO men, the truth concerning God is that God, for all His particular, electing love, is also a God who loves all men. And so the desire of believers is not out of sync with God’s will and desire, but squares with His; in fact, our love for all with whom we have contact is and ought to be a reflection of God’s love for all. And this supposedly is the teaching of Matthew 5:43 ff.

Is it indeed!

We intend to point out the error of such ‘reasoning.’

As an aside, though it may sound a bit cynical, yet it strikes one that the WMO men are willing to use logic and reason when it suits their purpose, pointing out apparent inconsistencies in their critics’ positions. But when one uses logic and reason to expose fallacies in *their* arguments and logic, one is suddenly guilty of being of the school of the scholastics and rationalists.

Well, perhaps it is best to leave it with the poet who said, “Ours is not to reason why ...”

Be that as it may, first of all, let it be stated *what our objection to the WMO interpretation of Matthew 5:43ff. is not*. It is not this, that we object to interpreting these words of Christ to mean that He calls us to love all those with whom we have contact, even those who will prove to be ‘non-elect,’ desiring even the salvation of their souls, if God so wills. Rather, our objection is to the WMO assertion that our calling to love all men means that *God* must therefore love all men, and that this is what Matthew 5:43ff. by necessary inference teaches. With this we take issue.

But, first of all, what we want to make plain is that we want no part of the notion that we are really to love only those whom we think God may love, earnestly desiring the salvation only of those who give evidence of having the Spirit of Christ in them to some sensible degree. Simply put, this is ‘practical’ hyper-Calvinism. Let no one who names the name of God want any part of such. The reality is, the believer is called to love those who are walking in ungodliness, many of whom God may prove not to

love at all. And this love means seeking their repentance and conversion, and doing so even with beseeching supplications and tears.

This, we are convinced, Christ requires of believers in Matthew 5:43ff. After all, Christ speaks of prayer, praying even for those neighbors who spitefully use us. And prayer certainly has to do with these men's souls.

This is not a strange notion. I do not have to go out into the world to come across such neighbors. It starts pretty close to home. Has one never heard of one's own flesh and blood?

We are talking here about believers' own children and grandchildren, some of whom may wander far from home and from God; some in the end, as Esau of old, proving to be despisers of God and His promises, having enmity for the saints as well. We love our children—all of them. But not all are Jacobs. We *may* love them all. In fact, according to God's revealed will of commandment, we had better be praying for the prodigals of our number, whether God in His secret will intends to answer that prayer to the saving of their souls or not.

We are not here talking about an "Oh Absalom, my son, my son" mentality, as if our beautiful curly-headed Absaloms can do no wrong, however much damage they are doing to church and to the name of our Lord. But we love with a love of God and *for* God, which is to say, a love that puts God first, brings strong reproof, and, as pointed out earlier on, may mean excommunicating one's own flesh and blood from the kingdom and even from one's own fellowship of life. But for us, even excommunication is, according to our confessions, a step of love, called the extreme *remedy*. By it we are seeking amendment of life and heart. That is our intention and desire.

For instruction and clarity about the Reformed perspective on this issue, we can do no better than to quote from the prayer found in the Form of Excommunication.

O righteous God and merciful Father, ... the bosom of Thy church is always open for those who turn away from their wickedness, we therefore humbly beseech Thee to kindle in our hearts a pious zeal, that we may labor, with good Christian admonitions and examples, to bring again this

excommunicated person on the right way, together with all those who, through unbelief or dissoluteness of life, go astray.

Notice, this is a prayer for the excommunicated, whom the Form, in fact, has just described as being “cut off from the community of the church,” beseeching our God (“O ... merciful Father ...”) to bring such to repentance and to restore them to the bosom of the church. What is this but a love expressed for all without distinction, seeking to prevail upon God to bring the straying sinners back, some of whom will prove to be reprobate seed for all our supplications and prayers. If one has a problem with this, we suggest he read Romans 9:2, 3 and learn to make Paul’s spirit his own.

Let us be clear about this.

On the one hand, there are those whom, in answer to prayer and strong words of love and concern, God does retrieve and bring back. Saul of Tarsus comes to mind, as well as Augustine of Hippo, son of tears. Neither wayward, unbelieving son of the church appeared to be elect. In the one instance, God used a mother’s prayers and strong letters moved by love to bring a sinning son to his senses; in the other, God used words of the apostles, spoken in their love for the lost sheep of Israel, to stab the heart of a youthful, persecuting Saul and to bring him to his senses as well. Who knows who the true, chosen vessels of God’s true mercy may be (Rom. 9:22, 23), even amongst our own seed? We love some very great sinners living in some very carnal ways. We are called to! Who knows whether they may yet prove to be children of God, chosen and beloved.

And our point is, this is true not only for our own flesh and blood who are in bondage to sin at the moment, but for all the “children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2) to whom we bring the Word.

What did the apostle say? “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (II Tim. 2:25).

At the same time there are those whom God never brings back. For all our love and continued prayers for them, which the Form for Excommunication certainly requires of us, God never brings them back.

But now the question: Why not, despite all our prayers?

For the Calvinistic man, the answer stares one in the face—because God Almighty *determined not to*.

For the Protestant Reformed believer (and parent) it has to do with the sovereignty of God and reprobation. “... Esau have I hated.” And, “hath not the potter power over the clay?” We bow in submission, painful though it proves to be.

For the WMO man, however, the answer is a bit different. They may say, because in His sovereignty God has determined not to bring them back, but they are speaking of those whom He with deepest yearnings sincerely, like a parent, loves.

Consider the implications for God! As a believing parent or officebearer, love means I do all within my power to secure the saving of the prodigal’s immortal soul: instruction, embraces, discipline, prayers, rebukes, pounding at odd hours of the night on the wayward son’s door and on the door of heaven itself. This in accordance with the demands of God’s covenant. But for God, not so. In instance after instance, God’s love means He does not do all within His power to bring this or that one back (else they would be brought back!)

Conclusion? According to the free-offer scheme of things, God’s love and will to save, flowing from His divine heart, in instance after instance does not begin to compare with our love for sinners. Love, worthy of the name, means we do all within our power to restore the lost; but not so for God.

And this is posited as the “marrow of divinity”?

It’s enough to make one weep.

The WMO men can charge ‘high Calvinists’ all they want with putting the believer’s character at odds with God’s nature (our heartfelt yearnings for the salvation of many whom God intends from all eternity to destroy), but the fact is, they do not escape the same ‘problem.’ Their presentation does not actually harmonize our love for sinners and God’s love either. Their free-offer position also puts the two ‘out of sync’; and it does so in a most troubling way.

Surely, if God indeed loved our wayward, unbelieving, ‘non-elect’ children half as much as we do (or that Paul did his “kinsman after the flesh”), God without fail would change their hearts and ways. Can it be imagined that the God of covenant promise should love them as the



WMO men claim, with “deepest yearnings of love,” with a love more profound even than a mother’s love, and then not take it upon Himself to bring them back? The kindest thing I can say about such a notion is that it confounds all notions of love, God’s love no less, God’s love to save.

We will have a bit more to say about Matthew 5:43ff., considering where the WMO interpretation goes astray. And, having posited the reality that our neighborly love is ‘broader’ than God’s love (but neither as deep nor powerful), we will set forth the scriptural evidence for this reality, and consider why, evidently, God intends it to be so.

## VI.



# OUR CALLING TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES

**W**E HAVE NOTED AND RESPONDED TO THE CHARGE of the promoters of the WMO (Well-Meant Offer) that we ‘high-Calvinists’ are in many instances guilty of claiming to have a greater love for certain lost sinners than God does, because we claim there are many sinners whose salvation in love we seek, but whom God does not love at all, but only hates.

Our response is, guilty as charged.

However, for the sake of accuracy, let us be clear. Our claim is not that we have a “greater” love for certain lost sinners than God does, because the certain sinners of whom we are speaking are those for whom God has no love at all, never has, never will. Not according to Scripture. To state it as clearly as we can, our contention is that we as disciples of Christ love many whom God does not love at all, whom He has reprobated (the Esau of this life), whom He neither has, nor ever had, any intention of saving (for instance, the greater part of that apostate Israel living when Christ spoke the very words of Matthew 5:43ff.); *and, we assert, to this God Himself calls us.* To this the sovereign and electing God calls us for His own secret and predestinating purpose, as He works out His ‘saving’ and ‘condemning’ will.

And please note that we speak not only of God's 'condemning' will, but also of His 'saving' will. In fact, we mentioned 'saving' first, because, with God, 'to save' is always His first and primary purpose. So it must be with us. And yet God's purpose of passing a just condemnation upon the reprobate ungodly is also always part of the picture.

Any proper interpretation of Matthew 5:43-48 must keep this in mind.

And note further, we are not saying that we know who the elect and who the reprobate are in the state of unbelief (that belongs to the secret and hidden things of God); we are simply saying that many of those whom we love, and to whom we are called to do good, will prove in fact to be reprobate according to God's own predestinating purpose and will. God does not call us to start speculating about who may or may not be what; in fact, He sternly forbids us to engage in such guesswork, calling us rather to do good to all indiscriminately (in love), leaving the fullness of knowledge and purpose to Himself as Almighty God.

It is in this context that we assert that Matthew 5:43ff. does not teach that God loves all men (nor, for that matter, that God loves all those whom He calls us to love). The WMO men insist it does—if not directly, then by clear and necessary implication. But it does not.

We can understand their reasoning, based on a surface reading of the text; just as we understand why many might conclude, on the basis of a first reading I Timothy 2:3-6, that it teaches a general atonement, or that Revelation 22:17 ("And whosoever will, let him take ...") teaches free willism. But, in the light of the rest of Scripture, do they? Is this what the apostles are actually teaching in such passages? Not according to Reformed insight and explanation. So it is with Matthew 5:43ff.

The reasoning of the WMO men is clear. Christ calls us to love our enemies, namely, even those who hate us, and to do good to them. Basically this amounts to loving all men with whom we have contact, none to be excluded, not even our enemies, loving them also as our neighbors. And, since Christ says this in the context of showing ourselves to be *children* of God (i.e., reflecting the character of God as our Father), what must one conclude but that *God* must also love all men without distinction?

Surely this is the clear and necessary implication.

Not so. Such a conclusion is indeed an inference made by many, but that is exactly the problem—it is but an inference. And not a necessary one at that.

Let us be clear what we are saying here. We are not saying that this text *is proof against* a free-offer kind of love; for that there are plenty of other texts in Scripture. We are saying that Matthew 5:43ff. offers *no proof for* any free-offer gospel. Such is something that must be read into the text. Matthew 5:43ff. requires no free-offer idea in order to interpret it as it stands, nor to bring home Christ's point with power.

And further, to insert a WMO concept requires one to do violence to any number of other scriptural passages.

What Christ is doing here is giving incentive and reason why we are to love even those miserable, abusive, ungrateful enemies of ours, loving many more than only those who love us—loving even those who have failed to treat us with the respect and consideration we are sure we so richly deserve (at least I do! I do not know about the rest of you!). And the reason which Christ gives is that God also has loved such miserable ingrates throughout the centuries, and He still does, as we well know. Christ is saying to His disciples, “Now, knowing that, go and do thou likewise. Do that in order to demonstrate that you understand what love and goodness has been shown to you as abusers of God and His Word.” Yes, a love shown even to us who were once counted as the enemies of God (Eph. 2:11ff.).

But note well: declaring that God has loved and saved *many* abusive ingrates through the centuries, and has turned enemies into friends, is not the same as saying He loves or has loved *all* the abusive ingrates of the human race. That the text does not say.

Christ chose His wording carefully.

The simple, undeniable fact is that at no place in the passage does Christ utter the words, “... for your Father also loves all men” or “... for your Father also loves all of His enemies,” as if that is the reason why we are to show love to all with whom we come into contact—we are to love even our enemies, because God loves all His enemies, i.e., those who hate Him. He does not. Some He does and has, but nowhere in Scripture do you read that God loves all His enemies. Nor does Christ say that in this text.

The passage says that God makes His sun to rise on all men without distinction, on the evil and the good, and that He sends on all the cheering rain. He *does good* to all alike. Therefore, so must we. But that still does not say God *loves* them all alike. The sending of sunshine and rain does not indicate God's desiring a salvation for all. In His sending of good things upon many of the ungodly, God has a different purpose in mind, even as He has in our love for many of our neighbors.

Indeed, *we* are called to love all of our enemies. But that's not because *God* loves all of His, or ours either. That is not what Christ is saying. What Christ is saying is, we are called to love all of our enemies *because God loved us*, even us who were once God's enemies. That is the significance of verse 46, "For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

It is obvious that Christ here is reminding His disciples of a love that goes beyond the love of publicans, which is only for those who also loved them. Christ is reminding them of God's love, which love loved even those who did not love Him. But that does not mean that Christ is saying that God loves *all* who do not love Him. That is to read something in the text that is not there. The conclusion is an extrapolation without any basis. Rather, the proof for this love of God for those who did not love Him *is His love for some*, namely, for them—Christ's disciples. God loved and loves me, and many others who make the same testimony (Gal. 2:20), who did not love Him at all. Who am I not to love others likewise?

Not only is this all that is necessary for Christ to make His point, but in this way He makes His point in the most personally powerful way.

We say again, to maintain that Matthew 5:43ff. teaches that God has a love for everyone "because we as His children are to love all of our neighbors" is an unwarranted inference. It reads something into the text that Christ carefully avoids saying. And it puts one at odds with the rest of the Scriptures as well.

What serves as motive for the believer to love and to do good to one's enemies is not an imagined love of God for all humanity and for all our enemies besides. All that is necessary is the knowledge of God's particular, personal love, namely, that I was once numbered among God's enemies (as was a certain young, arrogant Saul of Tarsus of old), and yet He loved me, and returned me good for evil. When I reflect on that love of God, I

have more than enough incentive to love my own personal enemies. And when I actually *do reflect* unto others that love of God for me (what God was willing as the Divine parent to endure from me), then I show as well that I am a child of God.

And if we need any more motivation to love our enemies, consider that any number of them may prove to be elect after all, maybe even from our own household.

We say again, not only is a free-offer notion not found in the text, neither does the text require such to bring its message home with power. Why do such, when all it does is to force one to place this passage into contradiction with other passages, and then necessitates calling upon a paradox once again to “save the day”?

But there remains another question in all of this, and that is, what is God’s purpose in all of this? Why will Christ, God’s Son, have us express such a self-effacing, self-denying, much-enduring love to all?

The answer is twofold: the first (and surely the primary) reason is that our rendering good for evil in longsuffering love is a means God is pleased to use in a powerful way to draw others unto salvation. Consider I Peter 3:1ff. and the calling of the Christian wife towards an unbelieving and perhaps even harsh husband: “that ... they also may without the word be won by the [chaste] conversation of the wives.”

But the second part of the answer is that this is also the way God is pleased to work out His decree of reprobation, working out the damnation of the ‘non-elect,’ and bringing upon them their just condemnation. I am not saying this is a thought we are to relish. In fact, there is evidence in Scripture that indicates quite the opposite (which we intend to consider next), but this is a fact of Scripture and revelation. And we must be willing to be used by God as such, if that is His will. It is no different than it was with Paul and the gospel word that He was to bring to the Jews first of all, which Word he knew would serve, in instance after instance, as a savor of death unto death. As he cried out, “And who is sufficient for these things?” (II Cor. 2:16). But such was his calling.

So that salvation might find God’s true Israel, Paul went forth and did good, bringing the Word, knowing that, even as he opened his mouth and preached, God was using it to harden and judge the larger segment of his beloved kinsmen. And yet, even in this hardening and condemning

aspect of the good gospel preaching, Paul was so bold as to call himself a “sweet savor of Christ” unto God (*nota bene!*). In other words, what Paul was doing was pleasing to God, even in his bringing the Word that was to serve as condemnation unto so many. It was so intended by God all along. It belonged to God’s deeper purpose. And Paul had to bring himself into submission to that reality.

And note as well, this purpose of God to use the witness of His people unto the condemnation of many is not something hidden. It is revealed and known. God in His Word has made it plain that He will use us in that way. What is hidden is who God is pleased to harden as a reprobate, why this one and not that one (me, or you!); but that God will use the good words and actions of His own in this hardening way is not hidden at all. Paul could not be plainer. We must also be willing to be used in this way if God so wills.

But our larger point is this: that this twofold purpose and effect not only belong to the preaching, but are also part of the reason why God will have us do good to all men and to show love to our enemies. It may not be why we want to do these things (does anyone *want* to have his parental instruction used to harden and condemn his own children?), but it still belongs to *why* our Lord calls us to do these things.

So it is also in Matthew 5:43ff.

Again we reiterate, to prevent any misunderstanding, that the main reason we are called to return good for evil is not so that many may be condemned through us. God’s central reason surely is His good pleasure to use such to bring even those of our enemies to conversion and faith. But this unto-condemnation-purpose remains one of the reasons why God will have us to love and do good to the neighbor. And it has that outcome as well, a divinely appointed outcome, to a definite number no less.

But God says, “You leave that with Me. You simply do unto others as I have done unto you.”

A passage that brings this all home with some power is Romans 12:20, 21. It is a passage hotly disputed and universally altered. Few, it seems, want to live with the plain teaching of this passage. Not even very many good men. Certainly not the WMO men. They find this passage as difficult to come to terms with as Romans 9:13. So they change its explanation to

fit their WMO presuppositions. Yes, of all things, they allow their theology to rule their exegesis.

Strange as it may sound—that the WMO theologians of all men should allow their doctrinal presuppositions to rule their exegesis, preventing the ‘freedom’ of explaining a text according to its plain meaning (ask the late ‘rationalist’ Gordon Clark and that notorious ‘scholastic dogmatician’ Herman Hoeksema about such persistent charges)—yet so it is.



## VII.



### HEAPING COALS OF FIRE

**I**N OUR CONTROVERSY WITH THOSE WHO WOULD promote the free or well-meant offer of the gospel (WMO), we turn now to a few texts that clearly indicate that while God calls believers to express one attitude towards their neighbors (one of love), God’s attitude towards those same neighbors may be quite the opposite. We have in mind passages such as Romans 12:20; Proverbs 25:21, 22; and Proverbs 24:17, 18 (to be quoted later).

We do this in response to the assertion of the WMO men that, since Scripture clearly calls *us* to love all with whom we have contact, even our enemies, thereby showing ourselves to be children of our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:43ff.), we must therefore conclude that *God* also has a love for all men. *Our* love for all and sundry is but a reflection of *His* love for all and sundry. And this, say the promoters of the WMO, must be preached; for this is what belongs to the very “marrow of divinity” (that is, to the core of gospel preaching, in its deepest emotional appeals and “beseechings” to the unsaved—“God loves you. Christ has died for you”). And this from Reformed and Calvinistic pulpits.

In opposition to this rank Arminianism foisted upon the gospel, we respond that, while it is true that God calls us to love all with whom we

have contact, seeking even their salvation, this in no way proves that *God* loves all with whom we have contact, seeking their salvation. The simple fact is, God calls us to love many for whom He has no love at all. Why? As we pointed out last time, for His own sovereign and predestinating purpose, some to bring to salvation and others to work out their condemnation, according to His eternal will and righteous judgment.

That God calls us to do good and show love as a Christian neighbor even to those for whom He may have no love at all is demonstrated in a passage such as Romans 12:20: “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”

It must be noted that Paul is here quoting (in summary form) an Old Testament passage: Proverbs 25:21, 22.

What is of interest is how those of the free offer and Arminian flavor of things attempt to explain that troubling phrase, “... for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” What the promoters of the WMO want no part of is explaining the phrase in terms of God’s wrath, as if the apostle were suggesting that those whom God calls us as believers to love in the most neighborly and merciful way may very well be those for whom He has no love at all, but are numbered amongst those for whom He intends wrath and burning destruction; and in fact, it is to that destructive end that God intends to use our very deeds of mercy and love.

Such an idea is foreign to contemporary Christianity, no matter what one’s denominational affiliation these days. And yet such is the text. To get around this plain and simplest explanation of the text, some rather fanciful explanations have been offered. At one time, the most common attempt to remove the offending explanation was to speak of the coals of fire in terms of the Christian’s love, his returning good for evil, a burning love causing the unbeliever pain, the pain of remorse and shame. And so, through the believer’s loving deeds, the ungodly enemy feels pain of conscience, as if coals of fire had been applied to him. And so, a purification occurs.

Today, along the same lines, the popular explanation suggests that this heaping of coals of fire on the heads of one’s enemies is a reference to an ancient Arabian method of attempting to heal various diseases, namely, by the application of hot coals to one’s head and body. So likewise,

by kind and merciful deeds the believer addresses the disease of hatred in the heart and mind of the ungodly man, and thereby the ungodly is cured of his hatred and cruelty.

The simple fact is that these are strained explanations to get around the simple and plain meaning of the text. They are the result of coming at the text with certain theological presuppositions that are imposed on the text, resulting in strained exegesis that grasps for an explanation that will harmonize somehow with one's system of doctrine—in this instance, the “free offer” (God desires the salvation of everyone) mentality.

In response to this notion that the text could have some ancient Arabian method of healing in mind, we point out that the text does not refer to a mere *applying* coals of fire to someone, but to *heaping* coals of fire on someone—and that is a figure of judgment.

This is confirmed by the Proverbs 25 passage, which adds the phrase, “... and the LORD shall reward thee,” immediately following the phrase, “For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head ...” In other words, the phrase “heaping coals of fire on his head” stands in contrast with how God treats the believer for his deeds of mercy upon his enemies. For deeds of kindness towards one's enemy, the Lord rewards the believer; in contrast to that is how the Lord will deal with the believer's enemy, namely, by a judgment of burning, ignited by these coals of fire.

Old Charles Hodge certainly had it right in his brief commentary on the Romans 12 passage when he wrote, “The most common and natural meaning of the expression, *to heap coals of fire upon any one*, is to inflict the greatest pain upon him, to punish him most severely ... To rain fire upon any one, is to visit him with the severest and surest destruction.”

The phrase is found elsewhere in Scripture, and all without exception use it in the above described manner. Psalm 140 (an imprecatory Psalm) reads, “Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire” (v. 10). And again Psalm 11:6, “Upon the wicked he shall rain coals, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest.”

The question is not whether we relish such a notion; the question is, *is it scriptural?* Plainly it is.

But having referred to this text, perhaps we need to say a bit more about its explanation. We of the New Testament may blanch at the notion that in Romans 12:20 the apostle could be suggesting to Christians

something so pragmatic as—if you desire that your enemy be punished in the severest manner, then treat him kindly. In fact, Hodge labels this a “revolting ... interpretation” and opts for an interpretation that for all intents and purposes makes the “coals of fire” refer to the potential saving value of the believer’s love after all.

Hodge is mistaken, and our blanching misplaced.

What must be kept in mind are two things: first, the apostle is quoting (in summary form) an Old Testament passage—Proverbs 25:21, 22 (as already pointed out); and second, he quotes this passage in the context of calling believers to refrain from taking vengeance into their own hands. The simple fact is that Old Testament believers had no reservations about wanting vengeance upon their enemies and calling God’s wrath down upon them. What they had to learn as believing children of God was to refrain from taking matters into their own hands. Leave such to the Lord. And certainly the Gentile Christians to whom Paul wrote, living in a culture where taking revenge was considered a matter of personal honor, were not so far removed from this spirit either.

What the apostle and the writer of the Proverbs before him are dealing with is the practical reality of human nature and life, the believer’s included. The practical reality is that there are times when wrongs suffered move one to righteous anger and to a desire for justice and vengeance. Let one slander the name of your beloved spouse, or have a trusted business associate cheat you and manipulate law in such a way that results in his evicting you from your own property and taking over the business you founded and developed, and you will know what the texts are talking about. One’s very nature cries against such injustice and wrong. It happened in Old Testament Israel—do not think it did not. It happens today. When it does, what pastoral counsel does one give?

This: You are a Christian. You may not take vengeance into your own hands. Vengeance is the prerogative of the Lord. Leave it with Him! And consider this: if indeed what you as a believer are looking for is justice and judgment upon those who have so abused you and your family, the surest way to accomplish it is not by taking matters into your own hands and giving as ‘good’ as you got. Do that, says God’s Word, and you will bring judgment on yourself. Rather it will be by returning good for the evil, and leaving the vengeance to the Lord.

This simply is a solid, common sense, shrewd, wise (in the ‘Proverbial’ sense) approach to human nature as we find it even in ourselves as believers. It is the apostle’s way of saying, in his pastoral shrewdness, if indeed the one who has done you these grave wrongs is as wicked and incorrigible as you at the moment are convinced he is, then leave it with the Lord; and it will be your doing good to this enemy of yours in return for his evil that will bring just condemnation upon him, not your behaving in like manner to him. What the apostle is pointing out by implication is that the Lord alone knows who is truly incorrigible as an enemy and who is not. Let Him be God, working it out, bringing to repentance those whom He may be pleased by your good deeds yet to save, and hardening others whom He has fitted to destruction—in the words of Romans 2:8, numbering them amongst those who treasure up unto themselves “indignation and wrath.”

There is one other passage that merits mentioning in this connection—Proverbs 24:17, 18. It reads “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.”

The passage is significant. First of all, because it is another one of those texts that clearly imply that those unto whom the Lord Himself calls us to do good in self-denying love may very well be those for whom the Lord Himself has no love at all; after all, those to whom the believer is called to do good are, the text informs us, the very ones for whom the Lord has been intending judgment and wrath.

Secondly, the text is significant because it confronts us with another reason why we are to love and do good to those whom the Lord may view only as vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction. The first we have already considered, we must leave it to the Lord to use our deeds of kindness as He will, to salvation or to His own just end of judgment and wrath. He is God, determining the destiny of men’s souls. We must not imagine we can usurp this right.

The second reason for this call to show love to ungodly men is that God will never have us forget who we are, namely, in ourselves absolutely no different from that ungodly enemy of ours, no matter what his sin. Woe be unto us if we think for one moment we have made ourselves to differ—as if that is why we are saved. After all, we are the elect! And the

reason we are the elect is that we somehow have more to offer to God as His dear children than these others.

This is the spirit that would be displayed should we be found glorying over our enemy's fall and stumbling. One of pride. He fell and failed—I am glad; he stumbled—what a fool. He comes under God's judgment. Of course. It is no more than he deserves.

But we do not? We do not deserve the same judgment, being left to stumble in our ways, heaping to ourselves wrath? What! We think we have made ourselves to differ?

That, God will not abide—not in one of His children. No more than we would if one of our healthy children should laugh at the deaf and the blind stumbling in confusion, or at the mentally handicapped child. “Look how stupid and slow they are. How superior I am to that. You never see me making such mistakes.” How sorely grieved by such an attitude we would be. And the child would come to know it in no uncertain terms. “If I ever hear you talk that way again ...! But as for now, this is your punishment for the next few weeks ...”

So with God and us His children, when it comes to those who are lost in sin, perhaps even numbered with those who are never to know God, according to His own determination. What do we think, such could not possibly have been true of us or one of ours?

As those saved out of the mass of fallen mankind, we must never forget our natural identity with all the rest. And our attitude must reflect that—that true knowledge of self and of the grace shown to us beyond words. Our enemy falls and stumbles, suffering perhaps a punishment of God upon his foolishness and sin? We had better not rejoice. We had better grieve, and say, “There but for a sovereign grace stronger than my natural spiritual stupidity go I.”

This Proverbs 24:17, 18 makes plain. Let the wise pay heed.

No, we want nothing to do with the ‘Free Offer.’ It fails to do justice to passage after passage of Scripture, and it misrepresents to sinners the truth of God's love and promises in Christ. But at the same time, our taking issue with the free offer does not mean we are therefore devoid of love for the lost, uninterested in seeking the salvation of those living in enmity against God. Say what men will, the truly Calvinist and Reformed view that we maintain and propagate is not hyper-Calvinism. It is

consistently biblical and confessionally Reformed. This the WMO of the gospel has compromised.

As we have stated more than once, when it comes to the free offer's gospel call to sinners and the lost, the hearer is hard-pressed to distinguish anything different in what is said about the character of God and His Christ and grace from what is spouted from a thousand Arminian pulpits across the land. And this, according to the WMO men, is the 'marrow of divinity.' How sad.

And this is why the fathers of Dordt took such issue with Arminianism and wrote a definitive creed in defense of the gospel and its doctrines of particular grace? We think not. By God's good grace, we intend to continue to take issue with the WMO presentation of things, and to preach and promote God's gospel truth to all and sundry in one consistent line.

Enough of these 'It's all a great paradox!' when it comes to gospel preaching.

### **Useful Websites:**

[www.cprc.co.uk](http://www.cprc.co.uk)

[www.reformedwitnesshour.org/](http://www.reformedwitnesshour.org/)

[standardbearer.rfpa.org/](http://standardbearer.rfpa.org/)

[www.prca.org/prtj/](http://www.prca.org/prtj/)

[www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)

<http://cerc.org.sg/>

<http://www.britishreformed.org/>

<https://prcaphilippinesaudio.wordpress.com/>

<https://commongracedebate.blogspot.com/>







“The [well-meant offer of the gospel] is, we are convinced, unbiblical, a mutant form of the gospel, and, having infected most of Reformed preaching and teaching, is what has left Presbyterian and Reformed churches with little immunity to the real and most deadly theological infections of the last several centuries, namely, full-blown Arminianism, and its stepsister, Modernism.” (p. 8)

“The fact is that we do not ‘categorically deny’ that one may speak of any offer in the gospel whatsoever. What we object to is ‘the free offer of the gospel.’ And that is something else again ... We do not deny that Christ is and can be offered in the gospel preaching in a proper sense. In the gospel offer of which the *Canons* speak, Christ is set forth before all as the one sacrifice for sin, God’s Savior from wrath. Christ Jesus is trumpeted as the revelation of God as He graciously wills to have mercy upon sinners. We are authorized to declare to every man in the gospel, ‘Jehovah is a forgiving God. Turn ye unto Him and He will have mercy upon you. Everyone who turns to Him seeking salvation and forgiveness in Christ Jesus’ name shall find it. He has never turned one such seeking, sorrowing sinner away yet, and I can assure you, He is not about to begin now. Repent and believe, and thou too shalt be saved!’ This is the true gospel offer. In these terms, Christ, crucified and risen, is to be set forth for the consideration of all, of everyone without exception to whom the gospel comes. You can even throw in a ‘Whosoever will, let him come!’ We would not mind at all. Really! If Scripture says it, say it, by all means—to all. You are free, yea, called to do so ... One wonders how much more “promiscuous” one must be to have a good reputation these days! But this is not what is meant by the “offer” anymore these days. It has been hijacked by the WMO of the gospel, giving men license to use language that neither the apostles nor the fathers of Dordt used. This is why we tend to stay away from the use of the word altogether—people hear the word ‘offer of the gospel,’ and think ‘free offer.’” (pp. 17-18)