

Why Do We Believe *That*?

Class 20 – The *Ordo Salutis*, Part 2

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Westminster Confession of Faith

Article X: Of Effectual Calling

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ: enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.
2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.
3. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.
4. Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore can not be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may is without warrant of the Word of God.

Westminster Larger Catechism

Question 67: What is effectual calling?

Answer: Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto) he does, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his Word and Spirit; savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

Question 68: Are the elect only effectually called?

Answer: All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the Word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume Four, Soteriology*
(Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015)

p. 39-40

12. How can one relate internal calling and regeneration to each other?

By saying that:

- a) If we consider the one who calls, God, regeneration is an effect of calling. "Calling" then means the act of calling, as it is in God and as it embraces the sinner
- b) If we consider being called as what occurs in the one who is called, then calling is the effect of regeneration, for the ear is first opened by the latter so that it can recognize the voice of the God who calls. "Calling" then means being called and knowing oneself to be called.
- c) If We take the matter in its full scope, we must say that calling, as it were, encompasses regeneration from beginning to end. It precedes and follows it, according to whether one draws attention to the consciousness of God or to the consciousness of the sinner who is called. It hardly needs to be mentioned that this preceding and following is not to be taken in a strictly temporal sense.

13. Is it necessary to say that the sequence of the acts of grace is: (1) calling, (2) regeneration?

Some have proposed that in order to, in this way, arrive at a clear distinction. Although one can now readily say, in the sense just described, that regeneration follows calling, there are still objections to this manner of representation.

- a) In doing this one runs the danger of losing sight of the fact that calling has an essential significance for the consciousness of the sinner. In fact, one then restricts the name to the action of God in order to call the other, the effect of the action as that which causes change, regeneration
- b) On the other hand, it is wrong to so restrict regeneration that it becomes only the product, the outcome, the transition, while the activity of God is omitted. Scripture emphasizes that we are regenerated, that God regenerates us according to His will, etc. (Jas 1:18).

Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011)

p.562-563 (bold type added)

Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism identify effectual calling (or regeneration) with baptism — though with different formulations. Largely removed from the Western controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, the **East** nevertheless teaches an *ordo salutis* that is similar to that of Arminianism, with “preparatory grace and means sufficient for the attainment of happiness” given to all. “In the exposition of the faith by the Eastern Patriarchs, it is said, ‘As [God] foresaw that some would use well their free will, but others ill, he accordingly predestined the former to glory, while the latter he condemned.’”

For **Rome**, baptism infuses a new habit or disposition into the soul, negatively, washing away original sin and (in the case of adults) actual sins up to that point, and positively, strengthening the soul to cooperate with grace. This baptismal regeneration is called the “first justification” and is said to be followed by an increase in inherent holiness through cooperation with grace, with the ultimate hope of attaining to final justification through grace and merit. At any stage along the way, this justification (as an infused habit) may be lost, but there is in most cases the possibility of renewing one’s beginning in justification through the sacrament of penance.

Confessional Lutheranism also ties regeneration closely to the moment of baptism, but clearly distinguishes justification (a declaration of righteousness) from sanctification (an actual transformation in the moral life of the baptized). Imputation, not infusion, is the Lutheran (as well as Reformed) understanding of justification. In the Lutheran view, new life (*regeneratio prima*) is begun in baptism but is constantly renewed throughout the Christian life (*regeneratio secunda* or *renovatio*). Although the principle of new life is given in baptism, the flowering of this new birth occurs through the preaching of the gospel. Since Lutherans do not distinguish (as the Reformed do) between external calling and inward or effectual calling, they regard this ministry of the Spirit as effectual except in the case of those who willfully resist it. Confessional Lutheranism teaches total depravity and unconditional election while also holding to God’s universal grace (*gratis universalis*). Accordingly, all of the elect will believe and persevere, but others who have been regenerated and justified may lose their salvation.

Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*

(Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 1993)

p. 197

There is thus a calling which is of an effectual nature and penetrates the inner man - his intellect, will, and inclinations, changing and sanctifying them. This is the internal call. There is a calling by means of the Word of God which is not accompanied by God's effectual operation (which generates faith and love), but which comes to the external ear only. It leaves man in his natural state, who, in his wickedness, rejects this external call. He despises this call due to his free will which wills by way of necessary consequence. This is true of most who are called (Mat. 22:5, 14).

p. 202-204

The External Call of the Gospel Comes to All who Hear the Gospel

Question: Does God call all who are under the ministry of the gospel, but who as yet are not saved, or does God call the elect only?

Answer: God calls all and everyone who live under the ministry of the gospel. This must be noted so that one may have liberty to receive Christ by faith, which one would not have if the gospel were not offered- and also in order that the justice of God would be

acknowledged in punishing those who neglect so great a salvation and do not obey the gospel. The following must be noted in order that everyone may be convinced of this matter.

First, compare yourself with the wild Indians, who neither know Christ nor have knowledge of salvation. Do you not see that God deals differently with you than with them? Would you wish to trade Places with them? Why not? Is it not because there is more hope for salvation where you are than where they are? Will not the condemnation of those who have lived under the ministration of the gospel, but who do not repent, be greater than the condemnation of the wild heathen? Why would this be if salvation had not been offered to you? This therefore proves that all who hear the gospel are called

Secondly, everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel hears the voice of the minister as he preaches, exhorts, and rebukes. It is thus addressed to him who hears it. The minister is a servant of Christ, a steward of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1), and an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore he who hears the minister hears Christ, and he who rejects the minister rejects Him (Luke 10:16). Consider also that the very words of God Himself are contained in Scripture. Since, therefore, everyone hears the voice of the minister and the very words of God resound in his ears, all that is said is addressed to him who hears it and he is called by the gospel.

Thirdly, Scripture states clearly that many who perish had been called. "... many be called, but few chosen (Mat. 20:16); and (he) bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready And they all with one consent began to make excuse' (Luke 14:16-18); "And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come (Mat. 22:3). Had the guest without the wedding garment been invited? He most certainly was. It was not his crime that he did not come, but rather that he came in the wrong way, that is, without a wedding garment. It is thus evident that everyone who is under the ministry is called and invited to come to Christ.

Fourthly, there is a general and unconditional declaration to all, that is, to him who thirsts, who is without money, and who wills (Isa, 55:1-2; John 7:37; Rev 22:17). He who neither wills nor is thirsty will refrain from coming. This is his own doing and he will be responsible, having been invited and having heard this general calling

Fifthly, since many reject the gospel, it is necessarily offered to them, for whatever is not offered cannot be rejected. "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Many are disobedient to the gospel (2 Th. 1:8), and are disobedient to the Son (John 3:36). It thus follows that Christ was offered to them and they were commanded to believe in Christ.

Sixthly, the exhortations to repent and to believe are joined together. No one will be in doubt that the exhortation to repent pertains to everyone, and thus each will also have to

acknowledge that the exhortation to believe pertains to everyone, for they are of equivalent importance. "...repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Seventhly, unbelief is a dreadful sin; yes, it is a sin whereby we esteem God to be a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10); "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin...of sin, because they believe not on Me" (John 16:8-9). If Christ were not offered to him who remains in his unbelief, he would not be accountable and his unbelief would not be a sin. Since his unbelief is a sin, however, it is clearly evident that the gospel was offered to him.

Eighthly, since a dreadful judgment awaits unbelievers, the gospel has most certainly been offered to them, and they have most certainly been called. Observe this in the following texts: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Th. 1:8); "If had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22). If everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel had not been called, and Christ had not been offered to them, how can they then be punished and how can their condemnation be the heavier? Since, however, they are punished for disobedience to the gospel, and are punished more severely than others, it follows that it was offered to them.

p. 205-206

We must make a distinction between the objective of God- He who works- and the objective of His work: the gospel. The very nature of the gospel is suited to lead man unto salvation, as it sufficiently reveals to him the way unto salvation and stirs him to be persuaded to believe. The gospel is not to be blamed when all who hear it are not saved; rather, man himself is the guilty one. He is to be blamed if he does not desire to be taught and led.

Such is the objective of the gospel. God's objective in causing the gospel to be proclaimed to the nonelect is to proclaim and acquaint man with the way of salvation, to command man to enter this way, and to display His goodness, presenting all the reasons to him for doing so and promising him salvation upon repentance and true faith in Christ. The Lord would indeed do this upon man fulfilling the condition for which He holds him accountable, and which the human nature, having been created holy in Adam had been capable of doing. If he does not accomplish this, it is not because God hinders him or deprives him of the ability to do so, but because man wills not; and thus man himself is to be blamed, for it is the goodness of God which should lead him to repentance. It is also God's objective to convict man of his wickedness in his refusal to come upon such a friendly invitation, as well as of the righteousness of God in punishing such rejecters of this offered salvation (John 15:20). Such is God's purpose and objective in allowing the gospel to be proclaimed to the unconverted. It is, however, neither God's purpose and objective to give to them His Holy Spirit nor to save them.

p. 207

Objection #1: God would act deceitfully if He were to call someone to salvation, and yet were not sincere in doing so

Answer: God calls all who hear the gospel unto salvation, and it is His objective and intent to give salvation to all who truly believe. Faith and true repentance are, however, singular gifts of God's grace, which He gives to all whom He wills to save. Others however, God leaves to themselves who, being unwilling—and due to their wickedness, blindness, and unwillingness are unable—do not fulfil this condition, and thus will not be saved. Since—God has prior knowledge of this and has decreed not to give them the gifts of grace, and since He cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His purpose, He therefore also cannot have their salvation in view. God nevertheless does not deal deceitfully by making the way of salvation known to them, in obligating them by way of many arguments to enter upon this way, promising to save them upon repentance and faith in Christ. God sincerely and truly has all this in view. In all this He has in view that the unconverted be convinced of His goodness, their wickedness, and His justice—and to punish them in consequence of this. The fact that man is not able to repent and believe is not God's fault, but man is to be blamed. God did purpose to provide them with all the means unto salvation, withhold additional grace from them, leave them over to themselves, and condemn them for their failure to repent and for their wickedness; however, He did not purpose to save them. One matter may relate to various purposes, and thus by purposing or one thing, one cannot conclude the purposing or not purposing of something else. Here the objective relates to the means and not to the ultimate end of salvation. The gospel is an able and sufficient way unto salvation.

Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume 2*

Trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg PA: P&R, 1994)

p. 503 (bold type added)

For the **Lutherans** think the internal and external on the part of the thing are one and the same, so that all externally called are internally called. Being asked, however, how it happens that the external calling is efficacious in one and not in another, they reply that this arises from the will of man. The **Arminians** explain the matter more clearly. Calling is inefficacious in some but not in others, not because God works more in the latter, but because the good will of man superadds efficacy and because they freely receive the word which the others reject. But the **orthodox** hang that difference not on the free will of man, nor do they measure it by the event only, but seek it in the very decree of God and the nature of calling and the difference in subjective grace (which operates far more efficaciously in some than in others).

p. 507-508

XIV. Although God does not intend the salvation of the sources of reprobate by calling them, still he acts most seriously explanation. and sincerely; nor can any hypocrisy and deception

be charged against him-neither with respect to God himself (because he seriously and most truly shows them the only and most certain way of salvation, seriously exhorts them to follow it and most sincerely promises salvation to all those who do follow it [to wit, believers and penitents]; nor does he only promise, but actually bestows it according to his promise); nor as to men because the offer of salvation is not made to them absolutely, but under a condition and thus it posits nothing unless the condition is fulfilled, which is wanting on the part of man. Hence we cordially embrace what is said on this subject by the fathers of the Synod of Dort: "As many as are called through the gospel are seriously called. For God shows seriously and most truly in his word, what is pleasing to him, to wit, that the called should come to him. He also seriously promises to all who come to him and believe rest to their souls and eternal life" ("*Tertium et Quartum: De Hominis Corruptione et Conversione*," 8 *Acta Synodi Nationalis ... Dordrechtii* [1619-20], 1:[302]).

XV. He, who by calling men shows that he wills their salvation and yet does not will it, acts deceitfully, if it is understood of the same will (i.e., if he shows that he wills that by the will of decree and yet does not will it; or by the will of precept and yet does not will it). But if it refers to diverse wills, the reasoning does not equally hold good. For example, if he shows that he wills a thing by the will of precept and yet does not will it by the will of decree, there is no simulation or hypocrisy here (as in prescribing the law to men, he shows that he wills they should fulfill it as to approbation and command, but not immediately as to decree). Now in calling God indeed shows that he wills the salvation of the called by the will of precept and good pleasure (*euarestias*), but not by the will of decree. For calling shows what God wills man should do, but not what he himself had decreed to do, It teaches what is pleasing and acceptable to God and in accordance with his own nature (namely, that the called should come to him); but not what he himself has determined to do concerning man. It signifies what God is prepared to give believers and penitents, but not what he has actually decreed to give to this or that person.

XVI. It is one thing to will reprobates to come (i.e., to command them to come and to desire it); another to will they should not come (i.e., to null the giving them the power to come). God can in calling them will the former and yet not the latter without any contrariety because the former respects only the will of precept, while the latter respects the will of decree. Although these are diverse (because they propose diverse objects to themselves, the former the commanding of duty, but the latter the execution of the thing itself), still they are not Opposite and contrary, but are in the highest degree consistent with each other in various respects. He does not seriously call who does not will the called to come (i.e., who does not command nor is pleased with his coming). But not he who does not will him to come whither he calls (i.e., did not intend and decree to come). For a serious call does not require that there should be an intention and purpose of drawing him, but only that there should be a constant will of commanding duty and bestowing the blessing upon him who performs it (which God most seriously wills). But if he seriously makes known what he enjoins upon the man and what is the way of salvation and what is agreeable to himself, God does not forthwith make known what he himself intended and decreed to do. Nor, if

among men, a prince or a legislator commands nothing which he does not will (i.e., does not intend should also be done by his subjects because he has not the power of effecting this in them), does it follow that such is the case with God, upon whom alone it depends not only to command but also to effect this in man. But if such a legislator could be granted among men, he would rightly be said to will that which he approves and commands, although he does not intend to effect it.

XVII. An absolute promise cannot be serious unless founded upon the will and intention of the promiser to give what is promised. But it is different with a conditioned promise. It suffices for the preservation of his sincerity that there be the intention in God to connect most certainly the thing promised with the condition, so that the latter nowhere occurs without the former attending it. Hence it happens that on account of this connection and dependence, the offer of salvation made to believers is most serious, for no one will have faith who will not most surely obtain salvation.

XVIII. The word of external calling ought to be the sign of some decree upon which it is founded; but not forthwith of a decree concerning the saving of individuals, but concerning the means and their connection with salvation. The foundation of calling in general (inasmuch as it is directed indiscriminately to men) is the decree concerning the collecting of a church by the word. The foundation of calling with respect to the elect is the special decree concerning the bestowal of the salvation acquired for them by Christ upon some certain persons. The foundation with respect to reprobates is the _decree concerning the order and connection of the means of salvation and concerning the proposal and enjoining of these means upon men. Therefore the word of calling is the sign of that decree by which he made an indissoluble connection between faith and salvation (which because the word proposes, no simulation can be ascribed to God since he proposes nothing which is not most true).

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Although the intention of pastors who call ought to be conformed to the intention of God (by whom they are sent to call men) in this—that they are bound from the order of God to invite all their hearers promiscuously to repentance and faith as the only way of salvation; and that they ought to intend nothing else than the gathering of the church or the salvation of the elect (in bringing about which they are co-workers [synergoi] with God). Still in this they also differ—the omniscient God distinctly knows who are the elect among gospel hearers and who are the reprobate. The former alone he wills to save individually, not the latter. However, ministers (being destitute of such knowledge) do not know to whose salvation their ministry will contribute, not being able to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, charitably hoping well for all, nor daring to decide concerning the reprobation of anyone. Thus they address all the called promiscuously and indiscriminately even by God's appointment, still intending the salvation of no others than the elect (like God). Thus they do nothing in this ministry which does not answer both to the command and intention of God, although God (conscious of his decree) proceeds further than they and distinctly intends the conversion and salvation or the inexcusability of particular persons.

XXIII. The foundation of consolation is not weakened in the preaching of the gospel, although there is a certain diversity between the intention of God and that of the minister. However it suffices for its foundation that they agree in the general intention and primary object of gathering a church to God which he may sanctify and glorify and of calling all who repent and believe for that end to salvation. Now the diversity which occurs about the knowledge of individual reprobates or elect persons (whom God alone knows and not ministers) cannot overthrow consolation or furnish just cause of despair, no more than the particularity of election and the immutable decree of reprobation. For as the intention of God is not (the decree of reprobation being rescinded) to admit the reprobate by calling into communion with him; SO neither ought that to be the intention of the ministers who ought to intend properly the salvation of no others than the elect (although in accordance with charity, they can also wish for the salvation of others and to promote it as far as in them lies).

Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*

(Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966)

p.153

There always has been difference of opinion, and sometimes a rather heated controversy, among Reformed people and Reformed theologians about the question of the relation between regeneration and calling. In our opinion there is very little cause for such a heated controversy about this question, if only we distinguish correctly and accurately. In a certain sense it can indeed be maintained that calling precedes regeneration, if only it is clearly defined what is meant by the calling and what is meant by the rebirth. In another sense, however, it must very definitely be maintained that regeneration is the very first work in the heart of the sinner, and that there can be no question of a saving hearing of the Word of God without this regeneration of the heart.

pp. 470-472

This is also true with respect to the proclamation of the gospel, or the external calling through the Word. This calling also is in a certain sense general, although it does not reach all men, but only those to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel. Yet, although this is true, the fact remains that many are called, but few are chosen. Also the calling through the gospel does not come only to the elect, but also to the reprobate according to the good pleasure of God. And also this calling has significance, not only for the elect, but also for the reprobate. This significance certainly is not, as some have it, that this calling is grace for all that hear the gospel. Scripture as well as experience teaches the very opposite. Just as it is no grace when the darkness does not comprehend the light of the Logos, so the preaching of the gospel is no grace for those that are lost. Neither on the part of God, Who causes the gospel to be preached unto them, nor on the part of the hearers, who without the regenerating and illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit always reject that gospel, can it be called grace when reprobate is under the calling of God through the gospel. Grace is never

general, but always particular. But this does not alter the fact that the Lord God has His purpose, and that this purpose is also attained when He causes men to be under the preaching of the gospel without changing their heart through regenerating and illuminating grace. Also through this calling the responsibility of man and his ethical character are maintained. God speaks to him through that gospel. In that gospel He calls him to repentance, to conversion and faith. And in a way that is very clear, and not to be denied, He presents to him the way of sin as a way that displeases God and that makes the sinner the object of God's wrath, as a way in which he gathers to himself treasures of wrath in the day of the revelation of God's righteous judgment. Moreover, in that gospel He opens for him that repents a way to be reconciled to God and to return to the heart of the Father, and assures him that he will never be cast out, and promises him eternal life. No sinner that repents shall ever be able to say that God has delight in his death. All this is being preached in the gospel, and is preached without distinction to all that are under the gospel, also to the reprobate. Moreover, this calling through the gospel is distinguished from the so-called *vocatio realis* in this, that it opens a way of redemption and salvation and gives the hope of eternal life in the way of faith and repentance. In this way, however, the judgment of the ungodly is aggravated if he does not repent. For by virtue of the remnants of natural light that are in him, he certainly understands this calling of the gospel. Also in regard to understanding this calling of the gospel there are indeed all kinds of difference of degree among natural men. Some have so little comprehension that they can understand only the first principles of the Word of God, while others are illuminated, taste the gift of the Holy Spirit, and feel in themselves the powers of the age to come. But this does not alter the fact that, organically considered, the natural man has remnants of natural light, through which he can understand the preaching of the Word. And when he does not receive grace, when God does not call him efficaciously through the operation of the Holy Spirit, he never embraces that gospel in a saving sense. He declares in word and deed that he will rather be lost than to serve and glorify the God that saves His people. He does not come to the light, for he loves the darkness rather than the light. And in this way the preaching of the gospel becomes to him a savor of death unto death. He is fully revealed as a sinner that stands in rebellion against the loving God. And God is justified when He judges him.

When, therefore, we speak of the calling in the saving sense of the word, as a link in the chain of salvation, it is of importance that we remember and place on the foreground that this is a work of God's grace in the absolute sense of the word, and that He accomplishes this work only in the elect. We are so easily tempted to confuse the calling as a step on the way of salvation with the preaching of the gospel as it is proclaimed by men. The calling as a work of salvation in that case becomes general, comes on the part of God to all men, and is gradually changed into an offer, well-meaning the part of God, to all men, the acceptance of on which depends on the free will of man. And thus we come on the track of Pelagius and Arminius. And therefore, although we certainly do not deny that the proclamation of the gospel comes to many, and, according to the good pleasure of the Lord is brought also to many that are not saved, we must never forget that after all many are called, but few are chosen. And the calling, as it is being treated in Soteriology, as a work of the grace of God,

may never be confused with the external preaching of gospel to all. The calling in saving sense, through which the sinner is translated from darkness into God's marvelous light, is a work of God's grace, and is wrought in the elect alone, It is, like all the work of God's grace, strictly particular, Even as election is strictly particular and dependent on God's sovereign grace alone, even as the blood of Christ and His atonement is particular and that blood is shed only for the elect, even as the work of regeneration does not at all depend on the will of man but is wrought efficaciously by God's sovereign grace only in the elect, thus also is the calling in a saving sense never general, but always particular. This calling of God does not come to all men, but only to the elect.

That this is true is plain from all Scripture,

More than once Holy Writ speaks of this calling. And always it is very plain that it is the work of the Lord, a work which He works only in His own elect. The Good Shepherd calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When they hear the voice of the Good Shepherd as He calls them, they follow Him.? They do not become His sheep only at the moment when He calls them, still less because they hear His voice and follow Him. On the contrary, they are His sheep from before the foundation of the world. The Father gave them to Him. And because they are His sheep, therefore He calls them by name. And because He calls them, calls them efficaciously, therefore they hear His voice and follow Him. They that are not of His sheep and for whom the Good Shepherd did not give His life do not hear His voice, not called by Him by are name, and believe not in Him. "Ye believe not," says the Savior, "because ye are not of my sheep.

p. 642

The question is indeed very important, because it also concerns the problem concerning the regeneration of the children of believers. It is true that this difference of opinion can be reduced to a All Reformed theologians certainly emphasize that the sinner by nature minimum is completely dead in sin and misery that he is so blind that he cannot see the things of the kingdom of God, that by nature he is so deaf that he cannot spiritually hear and understand the truth of the gospel, and that his heart is so filled with enmity against God and His Christ that he will never come and embrace the Christ of the Scriptures his own accord and in virtue of his own free will. Hence, they one and on all oppose the doctrine of the Arminians, which presents the work of regeneration as if it were a matter of moral persuasion, effected by the external preaching of the gospel. All emphasize that regeneration is wholly a work of the Holy Spirit, powerful and efficacious. It is wholly effected without the will of man. Hence, they all must admit that logically regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit that precedes all other Work of grace, the opening of the eyes to see, of the ears to hear, and the implanting of the seed of the new of the elect. Whether. therefore, we maintain that regeneration takes life in the heart place through the preaching of the gospel or not, it is certain that all Reformed theologians, unless they want to swing over to the Arminian camp, must admit that in a certain sense regeneration is always

immediate. For it logically always precedes every other work of grace in the heart of the sinner

Ronald Cammenga & Ronal Hanko, *Saved By Grace*
(Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1995)

p. 53-54

This very common teaching says that the preaching of the gospel constitutes a well-intentioned offer from God to all who hear, i.e., that God, for His part, wants their salvation and even offers it to them.

Now, apart from the fact that the Scriptures never once speak of the gospel as an offer of salvation and apart from the inconsistency of many who believe this and at the same time say that God from eternity does not want the salvation of all who hear the gospel, there is the fact that an offer, if it is to be meaningful, must mean that those to whom the offer is made have some power to accept or refuse that offer. And if man has any power to respond to an offer of grace in the gospel, he cannot be totally depraved. An offer of assistance to a dead man is obviously meaningless, and an offer, to use another example, [*censored – not appropriate*]. God's work is neither meaningless nor mockery.

The answer of many to this dilemma is to say that God gives to all men who hear the gospel a certain preparatory grace or common grace (another version of that doctrine) to make such a choice, but this is simply the old Roman Catholic doctrine and also a denial of the biblical truth that grace is always irresistible and unto salvation.

p. 90-92

The teaching known as the free offer or the well-meant offer of the gospel is also an implicit denial of sovereign predestination. According to this teaching God loves and sincerely desires the salvation of all men. Christ has died to make salvation possible for all men. And in the preaching of the gospel salvation is freely offered to all who hear the gospel. In the end salvation is dependent on whether or not a man accepts the gospel offer.

Now certainly, if God has eternally chosen some men unto salvation and rejected and reprobated the rest, it cannot also be true that God sincerely desires to save all men and offers salvation freely to all. Then, at the very least, this offer is not sincere. At the worst, God and His gospel are a failure. For who can deny that many to whom the gospel comes reject the gospel, are not saved by the gospel, but perish in their sin and unbelief? Notwithstanding God's love for them and His earnest desire to save them, they go lost. It ought not surprise us that in those churches and denominations where there has been acceptance of the teaching of the free offer, there has been a resultant and increasing repudiation of sovereign predestination.

It certainly is true that all who come under the preaching of the gospel are confronted with their duty before God to repent of their sins and are called (commanded) to faith in Jesus Christ. That is true. But it is quite another thing to tell all men that God loves them, desires to save them, and freely offers salvation to them.

How does this conception of the preaching of the gospel square with God's commission to the prophet Isaiah? Does God send Isaiah out to tell all men that He loves them and wants to save them? On the contrary: "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Is. 6:9, 10). Or listen to Christ's words, really a prayer of thanksgiving to God, in Matthew 11:25, 26, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things (of the kingdom) from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Or again, Paul's words in I Corinthians 2:14-16, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

pp. 115-116

This pestiferous teaching [the free offer of the gospel] has crept into Reformed theology in recent years and is an enemy in the camp" in that it also constitutes denial of limited atonement. This teaching says that God in the gospel makes sincere and well-meaning offer of salvation to every person who hears the gospel, expressing in the gospel His desire that all be saved.

If this is true, then God lies in the preaching of the gospel, for He says what simply is not true according to the doctrine of limited atonement. His will as revealed in the cross is not that He desires that salvation of all men, but of some only, that is, of His elect, nor did He send His Son for all men but for the elect. How then can He sincerely say in the gospel that He wants all men to be saved without contradicting Himself and making Himself a liar? Nor is this taught anywhere in the Scriptures.

What is more, it is self-evident that if God really does express in the gospel a desire that all men be saved then the only possible basis for that can be that in some sense of the word He also sent Christ to die for all men. But that is not limited atonement. The problem here is that many who claim to believe in limited atonement actually do not teach it and in fact contradict it at this point. By doing so, they seriously damage the cause of Calvinism. This teaching, by the way, is explicitly rejected in the Canons of Dordt, the original Five Points, as part of the erroneous teaching of the Arminians (cf. Canons III/IV, Rejection of Errors, 5).

pp. 141-142

The teaching of the free offer of the gospel, inasmuch as it presupposes the free will of the sinner, is also an implicit denial of the irresistibility of grace. If the gospel is not any longer the power of God, as Paul says that it is in Romans 1:16, not the means by which God works grace in the hearts of the elect, but only an offer of salvation, dependent on the sinner's acceptance of that offer; then it is clearly implied that the sinner may very well choose to reject the gospel and the offer of grace and salvation in the gospel. Then, although God wants to save him, although God expresses His love for him in the gospel, the sinner is able to frustrate that desire and love of God. The doctrine of irresistible grace is effectively thrown out the window.

Homer Hoeksema, *The Voice of Our Fathers*

(Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980)

p. 354

The next question is: does this article teach, or does it deny, any further limitation of that gospel? Is the gospel, in so far as it is proclaimed to many nations and many individuals, general, that is, intended as to its contents, its "good news," for all to whom it is proclaimed? Is it good news for them all? Or is that gospel limited and particular? Is it intended for elect and reprobate alike? Or is it meant only for the elect? Is it, according to this article, an offer or a promise of God to all to whom it is proclaimed, conditioned by the demand of faith and repentance? Or is it an unconditional promise to the elect alone?

There are other questions connected. Why, if that gospel is general, is it proclaimed only to some of the reprobate, not to all of them? That gospel surely reaches all the elect. But if it is general, why does it not reach all the reprobate? In the second place, what is the basis of such a general gospel? If God makes a general offer, or a general, conditional promise, does He offer or promise something which He actually has and which He can actually supply in case the condition should be fulfilled? The Arminian is consistent enough to answer this question in the affirmative: for he teaches that Christ died for all and for every man. His solution to this question, though erroneous, is therefore reasonable and understandable. The double-track theologians' of the Reformed family, though Arminian in their conception of the gospel offer, are restrained by their Reformed sense from the sin of teaching general atonement. But for that reason they can furnish no answer to this question, and they involve themselves in the greater foolishness of accusing God of pretense, of fraud, when He (offers or promises) salvation to all who hear the preaching. Their entire position is absurd because of its impossible double-track. But I suppose that under their view, if a reprobate should ever appear before the Almighty with the condition of faith and repentance fulfilled, the Lord God would be compelled to admit to such a man, "Sorry, but I fooled you. I cannot fulfill My divine part of the contract. I offered something which I did not really have for you, My beloved Son died only for the elect." You reply that such is both unthinkable and blasphemous in regard to the Lord Jehovah? I agree.