

Correspondence

A Matter of Controversy.....

Editor's introductory note. Readers may need to be reminded that Mr. John M. Brentnall, Secretary of the Sovereign Grace Union, authored an article in the Banner of Truth magazine for August -September 1995, in which he asserted his view of the "Free Offer of the Gospel" critically, as being also Calvin's view, over against the British Reformed Fellowship, and by association, the Protestant Reformed Churches of the U.S.A. This article was critiqued by Mr. Allen Baird in Issue No. 12 of the British Reformed Journal under the heading "Calvin and the Free Offer". Mr. Brentnall herewith responds to Mr. Baird's criticism, and we have appended Mr. Baird's own response to this letter.

**FROM: Mr. John M. Brentnall
DERBY.**

Dear Editor,

I enclose my response to Allen Baird's attempt to discredit my findings in Calvin, acquaintance with the Westminster standards, grasp of logic, espousal of Marrow teaching, claim to have read Cunningham accurately, and understanding of the central issues involved in the Free Offer controversy. Such bluster is good shrapnel, but would never pass in a theological debating chamber. May I recommend Tyndale against More, Jewel against Harding, and Rutherford against the Aberdeen doctors as classic examples of theological debate.

Now, since a soft answer turns away wrath, I will set aside all emotive language and appeal to the facts.

1. Mr Baird claims that I do not define my terms. I took Warfield's definitions of Calvinism and adhered to the first, as explained. I will define what I mean by "Offer" later in this reply.
2. I adopted the Westminster standards as the confession of my faith in 1958. I spent a whole year of my theology course studying them in detail with proof texts. At my ordination, I vowed before God to uphold them against all other systems of doctrine: as far as I can tell, by God's grace I have been enabled to adhere to them to this day. I am currently studying the Confession with my congregation every third week. I taught my children the Shorter Catechism and have examined candidates for church membership on it. Do I really lack acquaintance with the spirit and contents of the Westminster standards?
3. Deducing lawful inferences from Scripture is a far cry from imposing unScriptural logic on Scripture. When R. Hanks (BRJ No.8) claims that holding the Free Offer (in the sense of God being sincere in so offering Christ) denies all the attributes of God, all the 5 points of Calvinism and the dignity of Jesus Christ, he is simply stating what is not true. I challenge anyone to prove this from Scripture and Reformed divines without reference to logic. As for

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my embracing absurdity, perhaps Mr. Baird will be kind enough to point out an example in my article on Calvin. Does he mean an externally-imposed logical absurdity or a Scriptural one?

4. Is Mr. Baird aware that the same Scottish General Assembly which rejected the Marrow teaching vindicated the Arian Professor Simson? So much for their orthodoxy! I possess all the documents of that controversy, and none of the Replies to the Twelve Queries is either unBiblical or anti-Confessional. Has Mr. Baird read these? On what does he base his claim that they are?

5. I have read and I understand Cunningham on the issue, as well as most other Reformed writers on the subject, right up to Mr. Harinck. Has Mr. Baird? A thesis I wrote about 20 years ago, besides an old article in the Free Presbyterian Magazine, at least evince an attempt to understand. I dare say I have a great deal more to understand on such holy and mysterious matters as God's secret and experiential dealings with man.

6. Mr. Baird's mention of the date 1924 as the origin of the trend against, say, Old Princeton's understanding of the Free Offer, should arouse everyone's suspicions. Or are we to believe that the truth on these matters was concealed from God's church till then?

Now, to respond to Mr. Baird's challenge:

1. to define what I mean by "Free Offer".

a) etymologically, "offer" is derived from the Latin 'ob' = 'near' and 'ferre' = 'to bring'. It therefore means "to bring near", not "to exhibit" or "to present", as Mr. Baird claims (Article, "The Westminster Standards and the Gospel Offer" BRJ No. 10 April-June 1995 page 9).

b) its usage in Thomas Manton and all the Westminster divines and their contemporaries, following Scripture mode (e.g.: Isaiah 55 : 1 ff) is always 'commercial'. Of course, the wonder of it all is that Christ is free, and cannot be purchased. The Shorter Oxford English dictionary confirms this meaning. It defines 'offer' as "a presenting for acceptance", "a proposal to give or do something", "a proposal of marriage". Even the slightest acquaintance with Gospel terminology (e.g.: John 1 : 12; 6 : 32; Matt.22 : 4, 9; Rev. 19 : 9) indicates that this is the correct understanding.

2. The whole question of God's 'desire' in relation to his 'will' is satisfactorily dealt with in three splendid treatises or articles, to which I refer Mr. Baird:

(i) John Howe's *"Reconciliation of God's Prescience of the sins of Men with the Wisdom and Sincerity of His Counsels, Exhortations and Whatsoever Means He uses to Prevent Them."* (Works II. pp 474-514.)

(ii) John Howe's *Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls.* (Works II. 316, 380).

(iii) Dabney's *God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy, as Related to His Power, Wisdom and Sincerity.* (Discussions I., 282, with special reference to his comments on the appropriate Scripture texts, pp. 306-313).

Their position is my position. Let Mr. Baird refute them (and I mean refute, not rebut; the former is to prove to be in error, the latter to assail with violent or emotive language), and I will be ready (DV) to consider his refutation.

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Meanwhile I wish all readers of the British Reformed Journal to act upon the wise counsel of our brother Mr. Colin James. (see BRJ No. 12 pp. 47-48). Remember dear, friends, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth".

I remain, Yours sincerely,

John M. Brentnall.

RESPONSE FROM MR. ALLEN BAIRD:

Instead of reprinting each argument of Mr. Brentnall's point by point (as I had originally intended to do but was halted due to excessive space), and allowing the essence of the issue to be choked in a quagmire of historical and methodological accidents, I will restrict myself to the main subject of the "well-meant" offer". I suppose that the main subject in view originally was Calvin's view of the offer, but Mr. Brentnall has been pleased not to attempt to try and counter any of the quotes from Calvin I used in my article and restrict himself to the "offer", therefore I will do the same.

Firstly, however, could I make this point. Throughout his letter Mr. Brentnall seems to be under the illusion that I am concerned with making challenges upon his personal scholarship and Calvinistic commitment. Neither of these is the case. It would be impossible for me to do this even if I wished (which I do not) for the simple reason that I have never met him, and knew absolutely nothing about him when I wrote my reply, apart from the single article under consideration. All my criticisms were directed, therefore, only at the article, and not at him.

But this is not a matter of personality, or even primarily of history. It is theology that concerns us, especially that element of soteriology which deals with the external call of the gospel. When Mr. Brentnall finally comes to consider this matter in relation to what the word "offer" means, we seem to be in close accord, at least about what the central linguistic meaning of the non-Biblical word "offer" is. However, when he uses Scriptural metaphor to alter this definition, I think he is guilty of interpreting analogy literally. This is easily seen in the smattering of Scriptural texts he quotes to allow him to modify the purely etymological analysis of "offer" with "commercial" significance. While it is literally true that Christ gives the right of adoption to all those who receive him (John 1 : 12), it is not literally true that Christ is bread which came down from heaven (John 6 : 32), or that we literally thirst and buy wine and bread without money (Isaiah 55 : 1). My analysis of Mr. Brentnall's uneven exegesis is confirmed by his quotation of Matthew 22 : 4, 9, in which Christ is teaching by parables, which by definition are not literal.

Mr. Brentnall is prepared to directly equate his own position with that of John Howe and Robert Dabney. I will concentrate on the last author only, not only because Dabney is better known than Howe and his work more readily available, but also because Dabney mentions Howe and therefore incorporates Howe's thoughts with his own in one fairly succinct article.

A number of extremely interesting points proceed from Dabney's article. (1). The first is his description and subsequent rejection of the position of Francis Turretin on the matter (2). He puts Turretin's view as follows: "He urges that the only merciful volition of God in

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Scripture is that towards the elect; and 'the rest He hardeneth;' that it is inevitably delusive to represent an omniscient and omnipotent Agent as having any kind of volition towards a result, when, foreseeing that the sinner will certainly not present the essential condition thereof - faith - He Himself distinctly purposes not to bestow it; that the hearing of the gospel (Rom. 10 : 14) is a means equally essential, and God providentially leaves all the heathen without this; and that it is derogatory to God's power and sovereignty to represent any volition of His, that is a volition, as failing in a multitude of cases." (3) a more clear and concise statement of the position of the BRF on the matter could hardly be hoped for! But not only does Dabney admit that this is the position of the greatest of the Protestant seventeenth century theologians, he laments that other Reformed theologians have "so often" held the same view. The BRF might not have many friends in contemporary Calvinistic circles, but we do have historically.

Most of Dabney's discussion constitutes an attempt to draw and defend a distinction between volition and propension, will and affection, in God. This would, or could, allow him to say that God desires, loves, and is favourably inclined towards the non-elect without having to will or determine their ultimate salvation. I believe that Dabney's attempt, and therefore Mr. Brentnall's position, fails for the following reasons.

Firstly, after emotively asserting that Turretin's position flies in the face of the many Scriptures which ascribe to God a pitifulness towards the non-elect, he proceeds to try and prove his point by way of 'analogical instances' (4) from fictitious scenarios involving humans. Clearly, this will not do. To argue by analogy means to give examples of similarity between two things which have a partial likeness to each other so that the more complex of the two (in this case God) can be more clearly understood in the light of the more familiar (in this case man). Although a methodology championed by Mediaeval theologians, the Reformed have tended to reject the way of analogy because of its arbitrary and concocted nature, and also because it enables us merely to say what God is like, not what God is.

Secondly, after drawing heavily upon the wells of the Mediaeval Schoolmen in his use of analogy, Dabney amazingly tries to justify the distinction of will and affections in God by refuting mere 'scholastic' explanations of God's absolute simplicity! The point here is that God is simple and not composed of parts such that he can be divided into parts, and it is therefore impossible to make any such real distinction in the divine mind. (5) Dabney rejects God's absolute simplicity, as does the modern Presbyterian theologian John Murray (6) so that he can maintain the analogy with the human mind and the division between will and desire which it allegedly proves. (7).

In his discussion of God's impassibility, Dabney makes two great mistakes. First, he ascribes to God "passive powers" (8) or affections, so that it is false to say along with "the theologians" (a reference to traditional Reformed Theologians, no doubt) that God immutably acts on everything but is acted on by none. Indeed, says Dabney, God is acted on by the creature, so that God has to display or is caused to show certain dispositions toward them like wrath and delight, both of which Dabney wrongly considers as emotions rather than volitions thereby making them separate from God's own choice and sovereign freedom.

Thirdly, and somewhat inconsistently, Dabney interprets God's wrath, pity, pleasure, love

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and hatred as anthropopathical in character and therefore not literal - a consequence of his use of analogy, I think. But is this not to undermine himself? If it is not literally true that God loves all men under the preaching of the gospel, as Dabney is trying to prove, then why bother to try and prove it? And if it is not literally true that God loves all men under the preaching of the gospel, then what on earth does it mean? What use could be derived from telling a sinner that God loves them and desires their salvation, but only in a metaphorical or analogical sense? Not much comfort for God's people, either.

Dabney's man-centred approach reaches its zenith when he considers Christ. The divinity and not the humanity of Christ constitutes the root and basis of His personality, so that when certain passages are considered which speak of Christ loving and willing, they must be analysed firstly and primarily from the perspective of the divine, not the human. Since the sixth Council of Constantinople in 680 AD, the established position is that the human will by its union with the divine did not become less human, but was heightened and perfected by the union, the two wills always acting in perfect harmony as directed by the divine person. But Dabney seems to want to make Christ's mutable and temporal will dominant so that any passage of Scripture which seems to imply that Christ exercised a universal love must be taken in isolation from what Scripture teaches about God's simplicity, eternity, immutability, and impassibility, and the divine is made to follow the leadings of the human. (9).

Much more could be said, especially with regard to Dabney's attempt to justify the well-meant offer by rejecting the truth that God knows through eternal and immediate intuition by speaking of God "thinking a sequence".(10). Again this done by means of an analogy between God and man. Dabney goes on and on, talking about psychology and giving tedious examples from history to "prove" his point. But despite this rationalism, he finally finds solace in the absurd, speaking of "this wondrous and blessed paradox of omnipotent love lamenting those who yet it did not save." (11). Mr. Brentnall can rest here with Dabney if he wishes. He too can base his arguments on human psychology, history and paradox. But we, with Calvin, will stick with Scripture.

FOOTNOTES.

- (1) *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney* Vol. 1 pp 282-313. Banner of Truth reprint 1967.
- (2) For a full discussion of Turretin's doctrine of the will of God and the Gospel call see "*Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*" by Prof. David J. Engelsma pp. 151 - 172: Second edition: publ. Reformed Free Publishing Association U.S.A. 1994.
- (3) Dabney, op cit. p. 283.
- (4) *Ibid.* p. 284
- (5) See **Westminster Confession of Faith** Ch 2 Sect. 1.: "There is but one only, living and true God who is.....without body, parts, or passions..."
Also see Belgic Confession of Faith: Article One: "We all believe with the heart.....that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God;...."
- (6) *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* by John Murray page 69 Note 44.

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- (7) I say "allegedly" on purpose because Dabney proves no such thing. In fact, Dabney is completely out of step with Reformed thought on the matter of seeing the will and affections as different. Augustine, Calvin, Bavinck, and Kuyper all held that the two were to be identified in men. For good discussion of the matter see : Jonathan Edwards: "*Freedom of the Will*", Part one, Sect. 1, and "*Religious Affections*" Part one, sect.1.
- (8) Dabney: Op. cit. p.291
- (9) Ibid. pp. 303 - 308
- (10) Ibid. p. 294
- (11) Discussions p. 309. Compare this attitude to Calvin who said: "I abhor paradox" See *Calvin's Selected Works*: Vol. 3 and page 149. Publ. Baker U.S.A. reprint of 1983.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS. (Editor).

With respect, the six points that open Mr. Brentnall's letter are not entirely in order. Mr. Baird declined to comment on these, for the reasons he has given in his first paragraph. Hence herewith an endeavour to set the record straight on these matters. The paragraph numbers correspond to those in the first part of Mr. Brentnall's letter.

1. Definition of terms. In his original B.O.T. article, taking Warfield's three-fold definition of the meaning of "Calvinism", Mr Brentnall poses the three definitions as questions as to where the "Free Offer" debate could or should "fairly be placed", and decides immediately that this debate could "fairly be placed within any of the three of Warfield's categories." A few lines later he contradicts himself, when he says regarding emplacement of the "Free Offer" debate within Warfield's third category, "Clearly, the advocacy of the free offer by many non-Calvinists eliminates the third category". (B.O.T. op cit. p. 29). This, he continues, "leaves us free to concentrate on the first two." (Notice here, *in passim* his nonchalant admission that "free offer" is advocated "by many non-Calvinists" ! As if this is all just by the way! When in fact it forms a major anti-Calvinist weapon wielded by the Arminians, Amyraldians, Socinians, and masses of modern Evangelicals!) Anyhow, left with Warfield's first two definitions, Mr. Brentnall then imports his own view of "free offer" into Warfield's "John Calvin" category, without defining "free offer" first, and without explicitly excluding Warfield's second category, viz., "more broadly it signifies the doctrinal system professed by Calvinistic churches." Mr. Baird was quite right to point out (BRJ 12 p. 1) that Mr. Brentnall's approach here was all really irrelevant. It is "free offer" that needed defining, not "Calvinism". Furthermore, Mr. Brentnall ipso facto admits all this, when in his article he says: "the current debate could fairly be placed within any of Warfield's three categories".

In his B.O.T. article, he then gives us a smattering of undocumented Calvin quotes to show that Calvin "certainly did teach a free offer of Christ to all". (Op cit. pp.29-30). Contrast the documented Calvin quotes in Mr. Baird's article, *none of which were addressed by Mr. Brentnall in his reply*. Mr. Baird rightly stated in his article that "no one, at least in the P.R.C.'s or the B.R.F. would or could accuse Calvin of not holding to the free offer of the gospel, or the indiscriminate preaching of God's revealed will freely to all". (BRJ No.12 pp. 3-4) The question is, as Mr. Baird rightly put it, what is the correct meaning of that term "free offer"? Did Calvin et al mean by it the same as Arminians and Mr. Brentnall mean by it? We refer our readers again to Mr. Baird's article in BRJ No. 12 pages 1 - 5, especially pages

4 and 5, where Calvin is allowed to explain for himself what he understands the “indiscriminate offer” means. All documented!

2. With regard to Mr. Brentnall’s theological qualifications and vows vis a vis Westminster, with deepest respect, we feel he ought to consider carefully whether in taking Dabney’s view on God’s simplicity and immutability (which effectively is unorthodox), one might be forced into a disparity with **Confession 2 : para. 1**. Westminster’s recommendations that ministers have “skill in logic and philosophy” (Directory for Ordin. of Ministers), and also Confession I : 6 and XXIX: 6 leave no doubt as to the Assembly’s requirements.

3. Deducing lawful inferences from Scripture. Mr. Brentnall accuses the Rev. Ron Hanko herein of propagating “what is not true”. (Ref. to BRJ No. 8 pp.15-18: Article: *Further Objections to the Free Offer*). In response to this article Mr. Brentnall challenges anyone to “prove this from Scripture and Reformed divines without reference to logic”. As if faithful, accurate, exegesis of Scripture will not, of itself, yield a logical result, and “logic” has to be imposed upon it to make the results of exegesis logical! Mr. Brentnall seems to imply here that correct exegesis of Scripture can, and does, in at least the cases under consideration, produce absurdity! Worse, he asks Mr. Baird to point out anywhere in his original article where there is an absurdity, and whether it is an “externally-imposed logical absurdity” or a “Scriptural one?” In this he seems to imply that there are such things as Scriptural absurdities! Is he *de facto* admitting here that the “paradox” position is an absurdity? But readers ought to look again at Ron Hanko’s original article (BRJ No.8). Fact is, he opens up a whole suit of evidence that makes embarrassing reading for those committed to the modern, neo-Calvinist position. And as to him “imposing” an “external” logic on Scripture, I am agast that Mr. Brentnall makes this accusation! The full body of the article is *deductive*, in the manner of Westminster’s “good and necessary consequence” (Conf. 1:6), all from the basis of established exegetic findings! There is no “imposition” at all!

4. Mr. Brentnall rubbishes Mr. Baird’s reference to the Scottish General Assembly of 1720. “So much for their orthodoxy” he quips. But this is to miss the point. No one is claiming unimpeachable “orthodoxy” for that assembly, who would for almost any Assembly? But an assembly’s decisions affecting doctrine reflect the Sovereign predestining government of God over the Church providentially, sometimes for blessing, and other times in that “judgment” which “must begin at the House of the Lord” (1 Pet. 4 : 17) and in this respect it is noteworthy that Marrowism was condemned, and we feel rightly, and biblically, contra Mr. Brentnall’s assertions in his letter. Others of us have had access to the documents concerning this controversy too! We are not convinced that the Marrowmen’s replies to the Assembly’s enquiries were entirely Biblical and Confessional. Dr. John McLeod, himself a marrow sympathiser, in his seminal work “*Scottish Theology*” had this to say: “In connection too, with *The Marrow* itself, there were a good many unguarded expressions, that taken by themselves, had an Antinomian sound. These had to be *explained* and *glossed* when Boston came to edit the work in detail” (Op.cit.p.157, emph.mine). “**Glossed**” indeed! And yet another “Marrowman”, James Walker, in his famous “*Theology and Theologians of Scotland*” has admitted: “But while the Marrow theology was almost extreme in its doctrine of Particular Redemption, there were aspects of it in which you do not wonder that it gave offence. I think it would have given offence in some points to the best men of a passing generation, and they would have dreaded some of its positions; for while it is substantially the old Calvinistic Theology, it is certainly more.” (Op Cit. p.91). Walker proceeds to adumbrate some telling criticisms. But we have, on careful examination of the Scriptures ourselves, found Biblical reasons for rejecting the “Marrow”. None of this implies that we agree also

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with that same Assembly's exoneration of Simson. By God's Providence, neither Marrowism on the one hand, or Arianism on the other were allowed to modify the Church's Creeds. Now, many Anglican General Synods for years and years did right when they refused the ordination of women. Those same synods also however sanctioned other measures that were dubious. Is their refusal to ordain women to be rubbished because of their failings in other directions? Or were they to be rightly commended where commendable, and rightly condemned where condemnable? We only ask that the 1720 Scots Assembly be given the same fair trial. In God's providence, whatever their failings in many, many, respects, they were His instrument in preventing marrowism from achieving virtual creedal status. That is Mr. Baird's point.

5. Ref. reading and understanding Cunningham. We trust that Mr. Brentnall has read and understood Cunningham, and that therefore he will inevitably agree with Mr. Baird's quote from the same (BRJ No. 12 p.2).

6. Ref. concerning 1924 as a date to "arouse everyone's suspicions". Mr. Brentnall has apparently misconstrued Mr. Baird's argument here. Mr. Baird is saying that the PRC actually agree with Mr. Brentnall here ref. "conditions". The date 1924 merely indicates that the PRC have maintained this position on this matter since their inception in that year. Contra Mr. Brentnall, however, the PRC resistance to "say, Old Princeton's understanding of the Free Offer" was no new phenomenon in 1924! Fact is, Hoeksema was a faithful follower in all this of the generations preceding him right back to Dordt and Geneva! He has been shown to be in alignment with Dutch and Continental Orthodox divines like Turretin, Calvin, Kuyper, A Brakel, et al! Anyway, "Old Princeton" it should be noted, espoused "Westcott-Hortism", "evolution", "un-inspired hymnody", and some highly dubious philosophical approaches as evident in Charles Hodge's "Systematic Theology". What shall we say? So much for *Old Princeton's* orthodoxy? Indeed, there was nothing "new" about the emergent PRC in 1924, they were **the last of the old guard, standing fast!**

Ref. meaning of "offer". At last Mr. Brentnall tries, though somewhat unsuccessfully, to get to the nub of the matter. He should have done this in his article for the B.O.T. He has consulted the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. He should have consulted the Complete un-abridged version! Available in most city municipal libraries! It would have given him a far better view of the linguistic origins and "career" of the word "offer", both by synchronic cross-section, and dia-chronic trajectory. But fundamentally, he is incorrect to state that the Latin meaning "*to bring near*" does NOT mean "*to exhibit*" or "*to present*". If that were so, well, it means that it is possible to "offer" something without exhibiting or presenting it, as when contraband is "brought near" to Customs officers, but hidden (not exhibited) in false suitcase bottoms, etc. On Mr. Brentnall's definition the smugglers have "offered" the contraband to the excise men, even though the latter have not seen it! And so "offer" could on these terms mean that Christ could be "brought near" to the auditors in a hidden way, without them ever seeing or understanding what the message was. Obviously, Mr. Brentnall is wrong to drive a wedge between "bring near", and "exhibit" or "present". Surely in Latin usage the full meaning was to "bring near *in order* to exhibit or present". And as Latin was the language of academic theologians in the centuries up to about 150 years ago, they would have used "offer" in that sense. Bear in mind that the OED (unabridged edition) gives "offer" as having a meaning element in such terms during the 16th and 17th centuries in the English language, it is not difficult to deduce that that is how it was generally understood by the Puritans who framed the Westminster Standards. Now, we believe that this "offer" is freely to be presented to all men, with a command to repentance, and exhortations to believe and

flee from the wrath to come. Where in all that there exists any idea that the “offer” contains a sincere declaration from God that God loves all men, and wants all men to be saved, is a mystery to us. (Mr. Brentnall *de facto* confesses that he believes that God wants all men to be saved, in his criticism of David Engelsma found on page 32 of “Peace and Truth” 1996. 1. There he states that Prof. Engelsma’s view “implies that neither we nor God desire the salvation of those not called inwardly.”)

In his editorial in “Peace and Truth” 1996.3, Mr. Brentnall avows that the gospel is free “from guile, affectation, dissimulation, pretentiousness and duplicity, so as to be utterly sincere, honest, open and straightforward”. We agree wholeheartedly. But we fail to see how Mr. Brentnall’s stand on “paradox”, and his avowed stand with Dabney can possibly fit all these criteria. We ask: is it not “duplicity” to say to auditors that God *desires* to save all of them, and to hold, secretly, the unspoken reservation that it may not be God’s *intention* to save all of them? How such preaching can possibly be “utterly sincere”, and free from “guile” and “duplicity” is a question for which we never get any other answer besides pleas for “paradox”.

Mr. Brentnall takes his stand, he says with Howe and Dabney. But Howe was popular with that Puritan wing which had distinct Amyraldian *traits*. Such as Calamy, Seaman, Arrowsmith, Vines, and others had tried to steer the Westminster Assembly into adopting Amyraldian views on vital doctrines, but in God’s Sovereign Providence they were out-gunned by Gillespie and Rutherford, down from Scotland. But the Amyraldian wave went surging on through the English churches, (extensively in the Presbyterian wing, which altogether got thoroughly strung up on it). Amongst such Howe was evidently popular, and significantly his **complete** works were **first** published by the grandson of the Amyraldian Calamy, who also included his “*Life of Howe*” as part of the set! The younger Calamy also “conducted (Richard) Baxter’s History of His Life and Times” through the press, and later his own abridgment of the same. (Cf. Schaff-Herzog’s Encyclopaedia, in loc.) All indicative of Calamy’s predilections, indeed, and those of his Amyraldian English Presbyterian reading public at the time.

I have been told, personally, by an Amyraldian scholar in England, when I challenged him as to his views, that I should read Dabney! (This same scholar also expressed admiration for the “Marrowmen” despite their adoption of the Limited Atonement doctrine.) Fact is, Dabney himself says “the candid mind (sic) feels that there should be a truth somewhere in that direction in which the ‘Hypothetic Universalist’(Amyraldus) was groping”. (Dabney op cit. p.284) So! But we find the whole of Dabney’s essay to be shot through and through with one idiosyncrasy piling on top of another, rounded off by a shockingly erroneous and crass exegesis of certain key scripture texts. Mr. Baird has pointed out some crucial errors apposite to his response. It is hoped, (DV) to present in a future issue of this journal a full critical analysis of the complete catena of idiosyncrasies that comprise Dabney’s work here. When Mr. Brentnall says of Dabney and Howe, “Their position is my position” he puts himself squarely within the same idiosyncrasies, and ultimately, exposes himself to the same criticism. This we find regrettable, and we would, respectfully, urge Mr. Brentnall to reconsider the whole matter with the utmost care. It is thus, with the PRC, Dr. John Gerstner, Dr. Schilder, Dr. Greijdanus, the founding fathers of America’s CRC in 1857, Turretin, Owen, Calvin, yea, the whole Reformed host from Geneva, Dordt, and Westminster, we oppose the injection of Quasi-Amyraldian/Marrow-paradoxism into the stream of Reformed Theology, and urge a return to the pure Reformation streams of the waters of life.