

Real Calvinism

Dear ***,
Greetings in the name of Jesus.

I was recently drawn by a friend to your talk on Calvinism. You strike me as a genuine lover of God's word, which encourages me greatly. You also share many of my heroes of the faith (though I am not enamoured with Aquinas' mixture of Aristotelianism and Scripture and I challenge Kuyper's later distortions with his common grace theory and political utopianism). I am also pleased that you seek to defend a Calvinistic interpretation of doctrine, something I have contended for since the early 1970s.

The purpose of this letter is to try to be a humble Aquila to your Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). I seek your good and respectfully want to share the thoughts of an old man to a young man. Though we differ greatly on church issues, I will avoid contention on that score; I simply seek to help you do what you say you want to do – expound the truth of Scripture according to the method known as Calvinism. I have no hidden agenda; I merely seek to bless you through the exposition of truth.

Church expression

It is difficult, in a large amorphous church, to maintain a united expression of faith – though God demands it. Unless we do so, the people will become confused since there is no unity of teaching. Paul also tells us to 'think the same thing', so if the confessed direction of the leadership is Calvinistic, then the teaching expression should be also. This has always been the claim of your church, but in practice every shade of view on the doctrine of grace was proclaimed. I have personally witnessed an elder preach from your platform pure Pelagianism. Such conditions will confuse and damage your people.

Indeed, sermonical preaching is an unsuccessful way to teach the people because it fails to instruct well (it is also not the Biblical method). Forty minutes of propaganda or blessed thoughts (for much preaching is this in actuality) cannot scratch where people itch and bring about didactic doctrinal development. RL Dabney admitted, late in life, that his people probably absorbed less than 5% of what he had preached through sermons.

I would advise you to begin to catechise your people in a true Calvinistic catechism, in small groups (if not one to one). Richard Baxter transformed Kidderminster through this method of home visitation and catechising. Indeed, true Calvinists always practised this method of instruction and Calvin produced catechisms early on for this reason, both for the Genevan church and elsewhere (such as France).

So, my first point would be that a true Calvinist is chiefly concerned for the equipping of his people in the truth above all else. This requires catechising individuals and making strong, doctrinally aware disciples. This must then be followed by unity of doctrinal expression in teaching generally.

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rm 15:5-6

Your overriding theological system

This is where I have to challenge you in a significant way; please bear with me. You claim to be a Calvinist but the expression of your doctrine in the message I saw demonstrates that you are actually not a Calvinist at all, but are really an Amyraldian. This is very common in these corrupted times, but it is not the doctrine of Calvin, neither is it the

doctrine of the school he founded. The historic expression of Calvinism, as found in Calvin's mature thought, his follower Theodore Beza, theologians in his tradition such as Francis Turretin and William Perkins, preachers such as Augustus Toplady or the confessions of Reformed churches, differ from what you teach.

What you teach follows a corrupted form that claims to be Calvinism, which is common in the American New Calvinists, such as John Piper, and which stems from people like Andrew Fuller, who was affected by the New Divinity of his day, which stemmed from Grotianism and before that Amyraldism.

I am sure that you are aware of Amyraldism so I need not say much. Amyraldism, or Hypothetical Universalism (as Warfield like to call it) is not just a petty argument about the *ordo salutis*, but is a perversion of the chief points that Calvin established and which were confirmed formally in the Canons of the Synod of Dort when they fought off the Arminian Remonstrant challenge in 1618-19.

Moise Amyraut (following his mentor Cameron) sought originally to unite various church parties (chiefly the universalism of the Lutherans with the particularism of the Calvinists) proposing a hypothetical universalism in the decree but a particularism in practice. This enabled preachers to say that God loves all men, that Christ died for all men and that men could be saved if they had faith. However, in the end, men did not have faith and so God elected some to be saved. This, of course, is self-contradictory nonsense, but it became popular with people trying to unite Calvinism with Arminianism. It is the desire to preach a Gospel that makes God seem less harsh and also appeal to the hearts of men instead of commanding repentance.

Calvinists throughout Post-reformation history never did this until the late 19th century. The great Spurgeon weakened on this in later life but the chief damage was done by DL Moody. His campaigns had such a massive effect that, subsequent to him, even Calvinists began to preach the Gospel in an Arminian manner.

Throughout the 20th century this got worse and worse until Arthur Pink could say in the 1940s that none of the churches were sound in Gospel preaching at all. However, since he died in 1952 things have only worsened. Of course there have been exceptions,¹ but in general Arminianism has prevailed and what Calvinism there is has been corrupted. Even the Banner of Truth, quite early on, criminally and cynically perverted Pink's book, 'The Sovereignty of God' by deleting whole chapters and appendices that were considered an affront to Amyraldian sensibilities. [Get the Baker edition to see what was lost.]

We have no space here to develop this theme, but you can research it for yourself. The point is that modern Calvinism, in general, is nothing like the Calvinism of Calvin, or Turretin or the Belgic Confession or even the Westminster Standards. In order to be accurate and honest, most modern 'Calvinists' should call themselves 'Amyraldians'.

Textual issues

This now needs to be examined in more detail and I will first centre on some of your statements and texts. I am going to have to be very concise or this will become a thesis not a letter. I can develop all of these points considerably, or you can check my website [understanding-ministries.co.uk].

¹ Notably Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

The universalistic texts

Really, each of these needs exegeting in context but we have no space here.² But there is a general point relevant to all. If you take these texts and apply them universally (as you did) then they prove too much. What you then affirm is universalism; that everyone gets saved.

For instance,

For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:3-4

If this means that God really desires all men, everywhere, to be saved then all men will be saved. God's desires are never thwarted. A holy, perfect, consistent God achieves his will:

My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure, Isa 46:10

The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations. Ps 33:11

Whatever the LORD pleases He does. Ps 135:6

The desires of God are sovereign and men cannot thwart that. If 1 Tim 2:4 means what you say it means, then there is no hell. [Unless God has two contradictory wills, which we will examine later.]

As in all cases, the key is a proper study of the Greek text. The word '*pas*' does not always mean 'all'. It has a wide range of meanings, from 'all', to 'all of some things', 'some of all things', 'some of all kinds', 'all of some kinds' and so on. Clearly what Paul has in mind is all kinds of men, i.e. the elect from all kinds and stations of life (even rulers) which is the way Calvinists have expounded this verse for centuries, as you should know.³

Furthermore, Paul says that all sorts of prayers should be made for all men. If 'all' means 'everyone' in verse four then it means 'everyone' in verse one. But it is impossible for Christians to pray for billions of men.

You can't have your cake and eat it too. A universal explanation of this text results in universalism, absurdity and a denial of central Christian doctrines.

A similar case extends to Jn 3:16,

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

If 'world' means everyone in these verses, then, again, there is no hell because Jesus was sent to save everyone. If Christ saves the world (meaning 'all men'), then we are Universalists not evangelical Christians.

In fact, the word 'world' is used in many senses in Scripture, even within John's Gospel. In Jn 12:19 it means a comparatively small number of people in a small country.

God intends to save a world of elect people; the elect will form the new world where heaven and earth meet. He so loved the world he created as his expression that, in his great mercy, he saves some to form a new world of men. Again the elect are in view, not everyone.

The same argument applies to 2 Pt 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

² For more information on each text, and on other texts, see my paper, 'Analysis of the Universal Texts'.

³ Exegetical scholars tended to get this right but some evangelists, despite being Calvinists, sometimes got this wrong by letting their heart rule their head; Spurgeon is an example. Even Calvin was wrong in preaching extempore on 2 Pt 3:9, despite teaching more accurately in his polemic tracts.

If the mighty God does not want anyone to perish then none will perish. This cannot be a reference to all mankind but must be restricted to the elect. The restriction is to those God has promised eternal life; the ones God is longsuffering towards; the elect. Indeed, the context of this letter is about the promises to the elect and the disaster awaiting the reprobate whom Peter calls 'accursed children' (2:14); those who have 'forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam' (2:15); those for whom 'whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever' (2:17).

Are you really saying that the God who has 'reserved the blackness of darkness forever' for 'accursed children' who 'follow Balaam', wants such to repent? Peter shows two classes of people, the elect and the reprobate; one is loved, the other is hated; one is saved, the other is reserved to condemnation. Paul taught the same thing:

(For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. Rm 9:11-18

Your interpretation of the universalistic texts is flawed; if you apply them universally you end up with universalism and no hell. They must be restricted according to the Greek meaning of the words used; the context and the writer's known theology.

Doctrinal issues

This brings us to key Calvinistic doctrinal matters, which your view denies.

Election

We have covered this to some degree but I would call your attention to a critical precedent - that of the flood. At the time of Noah there were millions of people living on the earth but God decided to elect only eight from that number to be saved. Both Jesus and Peter draw our attention to this as an example of the salvation in Christ. It is clear that the number of the elect appear to be a small proportion of humanity overall, but it is also clear that God is not in the business of calling everyone. [I will specifically address this shortly.]

When folk preach that God loves everyone and wants to save everyone, we have serious problems with history; not only the pre-deluge history, but also all history.

Israel is an example of the elect and the whole OT teaching is to be applied to elect people in Christ. We learn from Israel's example (1 Cor 10:6). Now what is the chief feature of Israel that led God to call her? It was that Israel was the smallest of nations (Deut 7:6-8). None of the nations in the OT knew God, only in Israel was God to be found (Deut 10:15; Ps 147:19-20; Isa 51:2-3). Only a very few Gentiles became proselytes and thus saved, such as Ruth, Rahab or Naaman. So, millions upon millions of people in OT times were lost in sin and condemned without mercy.

Not only did millions of people never hear the Gospel, but God commanded the Israelites to commit genocide on these people for their sins. Men, women and children were to be slain as an act of divine judgment for idolatry and wickedness. How can anyone say that

God wanted to save these people. If you say God desires the salvation of everyone, then he desired the salvation of these folk too – but clearly he did not!

Then in post-cross times the same thing occurred. While the Gospel did go out into all the known Roman world, there were large swathes of the world that were lost for centuries. The Gospel penetrated China early but was later squashed and replaced with Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.⁴ It remained without a witness until Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission. India was without a witness, after Thomas and Bartholomew died, until Carey; Africa until Livingstone; American Indians until Brainerd; the South Sea Islanders until Paton and so on. In God's sovereign providence, billions of people had no chance to hear the Gospel.

This is not consistent with the claim that God wants to save everybody. The fact is that he does not. He desires to save the elect alone. If he wants to save everyone, does that include Satan and his demons, after all they are personalities and come under the scope of 'everyone'. God's decree is not about wanting to save all, but specifically saving the elect.

I do not need to prove unconditional election since you claim to believe in it; what I am trying to do is show you that your exposition of it is not Biblical or consistent with God's decree. The chief reason for this is that you deny reprobation; you must do this since you claim that God desires the salvation of all. If you deny double predestination, you thus corrupt the decree of election. Thus we must look further at reprobation.

Reprobation

We have already proved this but further texts add even more weight, such as:

The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. Prov 16:4
For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath. Job 21:30
God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Rm 9:22
They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 1 Pt 2:8
By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. 2 Pt 2:3
The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. 2 Pt 2:9
For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men. Jude 1:4

We cannot have a consistent view of God and yet propose to deny some of his attributes or posit a contradiction in God or his word. If God has elected some for salvation, then (by logic let alone revelation) God has also automatically selected others for judgment. All through the Scripture it is testified that God has chosen those who receive mercy and those who will suffer for their sin. Indeed, this is part of the great revelation of God's character, that heaven reveals his grace and mercy but hell reveals his justice and wrath towards wickedness.

God is terrible in majesty,⁵ awesome and to be feared even by his saints.⁶ Modern corrupted Calvinism errs greatly in seeking to portray God as benevolent to all, universally

⁴ The early Chinese language pictograms contain Biblical imagery for nouns.

⁵ Job 37:22 (KJV); cf. Heb 12:21.

⁶ Deut 6:2; Eccles 12:13; Ps 112:1, 147:11; Lk 1:50.

loving, desiring that all should be saved, weak on sin, without wrath and tolerant. Even OT saints knew this picture was false but NT saints have a fuller revelation and should know better. I don't think that the Canaanites, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and the pre-deluge sinners would share this universally benevolent view of God.

The denial of reprobation is actually a denial of some of the attributes of God and certainly a corruption of the decree. Yes God is full of mercy, yes God's grace is amazing, but it is so to the elect alone. Just as there is a heaven and a hell, so there is an equal demonstration of God's character in the decree. There is mercy, grace, love, patience, and succour to the elect; but there is also an expression of holiness, hatred of sin, justice, wrath, and condemnation to the reprobate.

God's love

God's love is only directed to the elect; this love began in eternity and is full and complete.

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Eph 1:4-5

The reason for this is that God only loves Christ, as part of the loving community within the Godhead. In the whole world there is only one Son who is loved:

And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt 3:17

Christians are those who have been placed into Christ by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13 – nothing like the Charismatic description of this doctrine). As a result of being one body in Christ they are loved like Christ is loved. This placing into Christ, selection as the elect, occurred in eternity. Union with Christ results in inclusion in God's love. However, the reprobate are outside this union and thus outside this love.

Neither is there any other sort of divine love. Those who state that God loves the elect especially and fully, but loves the reprobate in a lesser manner, reveal that they know nothing about God. Likewise those who state that God loves all men equally but stops loving the wicked when they go to hell. God only does a thing fully, perfectly and infinitely because he is God.

I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. (Eccles 3:14)

God only loves forever and fully; nothing can be taken from it. Thus those he loves, he loves fully and never stops loving. God can never love the reprobate at all.

Again we see that the modern, corrupt form of Calvinism (which claims to uphold God's sovereignty) actually blasphemes God's attributes.

God's hate

Those who are not amongst the elect are hated because of their sin. God cannot love sin. The idea that God loves the sinner but hates the sin is preposterous and also contrary to Scripture (Ezek 18:4, 20); this notion actually comes from the Japanese religion Shinto. God can only love that which is Christ. Thus we see over and over again statements that God hates the wicked, hates evildoers, and Scripture even names individuals and groups that God hates.

The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. Ps 5:5-6

The wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; Fire and brimstone and a burning wind *Shall be* the portion of their cup. Ps 11:5-6

As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." Rm 9:13

You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ... the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Rev 2:6, 15

You shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them. Lev 20:23

The Canaanite tribes⁷ were reprobate; they had been selected as an example of God's wrath against sin and allowed to bring their sin to fulness when God judged them via Israel (Gen 15:16). As a result, God says that he hated them and even abhorred them (a stronger word – a 'loathing that causes sickening').

The notion that God can have mercy on those he has chosen for destruction and whom he hates is absurd. But this is what is done every time an Amyraldian tells an audience that God wants all of them to be saved; that he loves them all.

This is a key issue; Amyraldians misrepresent God and contradict his revealed attributes. Arminianism ruins most of the attributes of God but when Amyraldians preach lies to a congregation (e.g. God loves you; Jesus died for you) they join Arminians in contradicting many of God's attributes also.

Limited atonement

The key thing about atonement is that it must be consistent with the decree of election. God does not save people that he has not elected. Indeed it would be absurd for Jesus to die for people that he knew were not going to be saved.

If you teach that Christ died for everyone, then you claim that the blood of Jesus, the most precious thing in the universe, was wilfully wasted.

I am not sure of your views on this since you claim to be Calvinistic but you also aver that God desires the salvation of all. If God desires the salvation of all, then Christ must have died for all. This is pure Arminianism. Some have tried to get round this with various contradictory statements and sophistry (such as Andrew Fuller, Amyraut or the Marrowmen) but they do not hold water.

It is no good saying that Christ's death was sufficient for all but only effective for some,⁸ because as a Calvinist you are not claiming that it is men who choose to be saved. Only a non-Calvinist makes that doctrine a platform for free will determinism so that he can preach a universal atonement which becomes sufficient for those who choose Christ. So, if you do hold that idea you automatically eject yourself from Calvinism. [Furthermore, it goes against God's attributes; Christ died only for those foreknown by God and no more.]

You see there is a limit on salvation since hell exists (not all are saved). That limitation must either be by the election and the particular redemption of some (Calvinism), or man's

⁷ 'Canaanites' is used in a universal sense. It refers to the ten nations including the Canaanites: Gen 15:18-21.

⁸ This was taught by Amyraldians and Andrew Fuller as a sophistry in order to claim to be Calvinistic and yet deny limited atonement. The Marrowmen developed worse sophistry by avoiding saying that 'Christ died for all' and instead said that Christ 'is dead for all'.

free will to choose salvation and all could be saved (Arminianism). Trying to be both is self-contradictory and leads to the futile statements of Amyraut, Fuller and the Marrowmen.

However, such futile speculation is pointless anyway since the simplicity of God means that Christ would only die for those God chose and no more. Furthermore, Christ himself points the way by showing us whom he prays for. He prays for the elect alone, those given to him by God, and does not pray for the world, 'I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours,' (Jn 17:9). Christ's intercession is as broad as his atonement; just as God's love is as broad as his decree of election.

The upshot of all this is that the decree of election and the decree of particular grace means that we cannot apply the Gospel promise to the reprobate. You cannot say that God desires the salvation of all and that God loves all because Christ did not die for all. [See further on the free offer.]

Irresistible grace

The basis of this key Calvinistic concept is that there are two calls in the Gospel not one. There is the external, outward call and there is the inward, spiritual call.

The external call is to all and sundry and is based on the command of God for men to obey him, to submit to the Gospel message, to believe in Christ and to repent. Of course men do not because they are spiritually dead and have no power to do good. [Hyper-Calvinists deny this universal preaching and deny duty-faith.⁹]

The internal, irresistible, spiritual call carries spiritual power; by it the Holy Spirit gives grace to the elect who hear it. The elect are regenerated and given faith to believe and power to repent. Belief and repentance are the basis of conversion, turning to God.

You appear to confuse these two calls. You claim that anyone can believe, anyone can repent and that God calls everyone because he desires the salvation of all. This is not Calvinism and it is not Biblical. You cannot tell a reprobate person that God is calling him to repent and that salvation can be his. Thus you cannot make promises of salvation to a broad congregation.

Gospel preaching must be Biblical and thus will not contain appeals that are unbiblical. These would include: invite Christ into your life; give your heart to God; God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life; anyone can be saved right now, etc. The Gospel proclamation to all is the command to believe and repent and an explanation of the work of Christ and the purpose of God. But this must not involve promises to those who are not elect.

Thus we can say that whosoever will can come: 'let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely', (Rev 22:17). However, we know that only those God draws will come;¹⁰ only those God enlightens will come;¹¹ only the elect will come.¹² Thus we preach 'flee to Christ', 'seek God's mercy', 'call upon God', 'believe in Christ' etc. We cannot say, 'Christ died for you', specifically, or 'God loves you'.

⁹ They also have other errors, such as eternal justification, eternal adoption, denial of progressive sanctification, denial of rewards etc.

¹⁰ Jn 6:44, 65.

¹¹ 2 Sam 22:29; Ps 13:3.

¹² 2 Thess 2:13.

Gospel preaching must also give time to allow for the Spirit to work conviction of sin. Thus all the modern attempts at forcing the issue are unbiblical and stem from the Pelagian, Charles Finney. Thus the invitation system, calling for people to raise a hand or come forward, or pray a dictated prayer, are all guaranteed to make superficial Christians who will fall away. [Just as Finney's did and all who followed his methods. The Billy Graham organisation admitted that up to 95% of 'converts' fell away. The Alpha Course is another example of promising salvation to people who are not converted but simply emotionally overwhelmed who have no sense of sin.]

Thus you confuse the external call of the Spirit with the internal, irresistible call.

Two wills in God

The idea of two wills in God amongst theologians is old and valid. There is only one divine will but from our perspective it appears as two. Thus God has a decretive will and a preceptive will. The first is always fulfilled, but the second is often disobeyed – when men fail to fulfil divine precepts (commandments).

However, Amyraldians¹³ have always posited a different expression of this resulting in two contradictory divine wills. Needless to say, this is blasphemy; God cannot contradict himself and cannot desire something contrary to his nature.

They do this by claiming that there is an invisible will (the eternal decree) whereby we cannot know who is elect; and there is a visible will, the command of the Gospel. The visible will is universal - God wants everyone to be saved; but the invisible will is particular – God only chooses some. The nonsense of this assertion is described as a 'paradox' in order to cloud the issue with semantics.

Thus this god is confused, powerless and hopeless. He wants something but cannot achieve it. He desires all to be saved but in reality has only chosen some.

This attempt to posit confusion and contradiction in God's will goes back to the Jesuit scientia media, which tried to unite God's absolute fore-knowledge of predestination with man's free will actions by positing a middle, mediate knowledge.¹⁴ This defends a Pelagian free choice. Lutherans and Arminians took this idea over and it influenced the Saumur School where Amyraut taught.

The irony in this claim of a visible will and an invisible will is that Scripture explains God's will very clearly and it is very visible. We are told exactly what God is doing in the decree; there is nothing hidden. What we don't know is the full impact of this will in effect; i.e. who is elect before conversion.

I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob,
'Seek Me in vain'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. Isa
45:19

The chief point is that the idea of two contradictory wills in God is not only false it is a blasphemy.

¹³ And modern supposed Calvinists, such as John Piper.

¹⁴ Where God does not predestine the actions of men but sets up circumstances knowing what they will do in reaction. It seeks to avoid the idea of God controlling bad things according to his eternal purpose, which Scripture clearly asserts (Isa 45:7; Amos 3:6 etc.).

The free-offer

The upshot of all these doctrinal deviations looked at so far is to enable the proclamation of a free-offer in the gospel; also called the ‘well-meant offer’ or the ‘sincere offer’. The mechanics of this is to enable supposedly Calvinistic preachers to preach an Arminian Gospel in practice and sound nicer to people.

The basis of this offer is all the heresies covered so far. This offer teaches that God wills all mankind to be saved. That God loves everyone. That Jesus died for every man. That anyone at all can be saved at any time by exercising free will. This is a completely Semi-Pelagian, Arminian Gospel – but it is being preached by ‘Calvinists’.

Many folk, including people in your pulpit, have frequently said that they keep reading the book of Acts in order to see how they should preach and teach. Indeed, your father has defended Acts as being suitable for doctrine (quite rightly, if interpreted correctly). I challenge you to read Acts and show me where your Gospel is preached by the apostles. It is found nowhere. Indeed, not only do the apostles never use God’s universal love as a foundation of the Gospel message, but the word ‘love’ never appears in the book of Acts at all; not once.

Another fudge used to support the free-offer was developed in 1924 in the American Christian Reformed Church. It was championed by rogue Dutch influences¹⁵ and formulated first by John Murray and Ned Stonehouse and then by Louis Berkhof. This, of course, is the idea of common grace.

In very brief terms, common grace was first developed as a novel doctrine (admittedly so) by Abraham Kuyper simply in order to achieve political purposes to justify allying with Roman Catholics to develop a Christian Dutch government and rule the world. Kuyper (who had previously defended strict Calvinism, such as in his excellent book ‘Particular Grace’) lost his moorings by concentrating on politics. He became Prime Minister, but not for long and he did not see his postmillennial, triumphalist vision occur (many, such as NFI, are trying to do it now with their Charismatic Postmillennial Dominionism).

However, his idea of common grace caught on and morphed into what we have today (which Kuyper would not have agreed with), which is:

- God loves everyone.
- God provides good things for all (food, rationality, sun, rain, seasons etc.); in reality this is the doctrine of divine providence.
- God looks on all sinners with grace and favour.
- This grace enables evil men to do good works and please God.
- This grace arises from the general love to all; but it does not lead to salvation.
- Some (Arminians) add that it also gives man sufficient power to accept or reject the Gospel (prevenient grace).
- God restrains sin in society so that it does not degenerate completely.

There is no such phrase in the Bible as ‘common grace’ and grace is not common. Grace only comes from the cross and is only directed to the elect and no one else. The good that men receive from God is not grace but is divine providence in providing the means to live (rain etc.); but this is merely to ensure that the elect can live. God’s power in the earth is directed to the elect alone;¹⁶ the reprobate receive the benefit of good living conditions as a side effect of this. Indeed, the good that the reprobate receive will add to their

¹⁵ Such as Schilder and Kuyper.

¹⁶ Eph 1:22.

condemnation for not thanking God for it. In any case this doctrine completely denies total depravity. Any Calvinist that supports common grace is denying the fundamental doctrine of his theology.

However, to return to our point, the modern idea of common grace (which never appeared before the late 19th century)¹⁷ undergirded the increasing Arminian corruption of Calvinistic preaching in the early 20th century. Today, it is accepted as axiomatic in many systematic theologies without question.

So, an Amyraldian theology of the decree, coupled with the modern heresy of common grace, led to the development of the free-offer of the Gospel, enabling ‘Calvinistic’ preachers to say that God loves everyone, Jesus died for everyone, God doesn’t hate anyone and desires all to be saved.

This is a corrupt Gospel, which Paul says is to be cursed (Gal 1:9).

A true understanding of the purpose of the Gospel is vital for preachers. It is that, by this means, God establishes his decree. God’s decree separates mankind into two types, the elect and the reprobate. The preaching of the Gospel is the means used by God to apply the decree; it separates out the elect and the reprobate. Thus preachers are fishers of men; they separate out the elect through their preaching and bring them out of the sea of the world.

This fulfils the ministry of Jesus, which he said was to separate people (Matt 10:35-36). Jesus work was not to unite all men but to enable the elect to escape the world. Thus the Gospel message has two functions: it gives grace to the elect so that they may be saved but it also hardens the wicked¹⁸ so that their condemnation is complete. Thus the Gospel comes as light to the elect but darkness to the reprobate.¹⁹

Conclusion

Arminians deny all the doctrines of grace. What modern Calvinists do, by adopting Amyraldian doctrines, is that they uphold total depravity (not if they teach common grace) and final perseverance, but they corrupt unconditional election, limited atonement and irresistible grace. They distance themselves from Arminians but actually adopt an Arminian position on the three central Calvinistic doctrines (four if they teach common grace)

You, of course, are free to teach whatever you want; however, if you wish to be accurate you cannot call yourself a Calvinist because you are not following Calvinistic doctrines. Your position is Amyraldian. If you wish to continue in that line then it would be better to admit this to prevent confusion to your sheep. However, my advice and prayer is to repent of the Amyraldian errors and rejoice in discovering genuine Calvinism, which is nothing but a nickname for Biblical, apostolic teaching (as Spurgeon said), and begin to catechise your people in a decent Calvinistic catechism (I have written a modern version to cope with modern issues which you would be welcome to use).²⁰

¹⁷ The term occasionally appeared in Reformed works but not in the modern sense. Calvin used it once or twice but never to intend that sinners can do good works and be in favour with God.

¹⁸ Rm 9:18; Ex 9:12.

¹⁹ Matt 13:14.

²⁰ The great Calvinistic catechisms, such as the Westminster Long and Short, the Heidelberg etc, are great on salvation but also teach paedobaptism and other unsuitable things. You could also use Keach’s or Spurgeon’s, but these are limited.

I trust that this rather long missive may lead to a heightening of your knowledge of God and a refreshing stimulus to your love of Jesus.

If you wish to discuss any part of this letter I am happy to meet with you at your convenience.

Yours in Christ,

Paul Fahy

To support my thesis, I append quotes from Calvin and from many Reformed theologians.

Calvin's view on these issues

It is important to understand that the Calvinist exposition that I am contending for was held by Calvin himself. There are a very few passages in his commentaries which appear to advocate a looser interpretation, but it must be remembered that Calvin spoke extempore without notes and occasionally he let his evangelistic desires overcome his theological sense. Calvin's actual view of the decree must be taken from his mature, considered thinking, i.e. his last edition of the Institutes and his polemical tracts on predestination.

Election & predestination

[Salvation is offered indiscriminately to all and this is] perfectly consistent for all that is meant by the promise is, just as his mercy is offered to all who desire and implore it, and this none do, save those whom he has enlightened. Moreover he enlightens those whom he has predestined to salvation. Thus the truth of the promises remain firm and unshaken, so that it cannot be said there is any disagreement between the eternal election of God and the testimony of grace which he offers to believers.²¹

Eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death. ²²

Before the first man was created, God in his eternal counsel had determined what he willed to be done with the whole human race... he adopted some for himself for salvation, he destined others for eternal ruin... the reprobate are the vessels of the just wrath of God... the reprobate remain in their blindness... While we are elected in Christ, nevertheless that God reckons us among his own is prior in order to his making us members of Christ. [i.e. Calvin was supralapsarian.] ²³

Reprobation

Solomon also teaches us that not only was the destruction of the ungodly foreknown, but the ungodly themselves have been created for the specific purpose of perishing (Prov. 16:4). ²⁴

The reprobate are hateful to God, and that with a perfect justice, since those destitute of his Spirit cannot produce anything that does not deserve cursing. ²⁵

²¹ John Calvin, Institutes, 3:29,17.

²² John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 3; 21 headed: Eternal Election, or Gods' Predestination of Some to Salvation and of Others to Destruction.

²³ John Calvin, Theological Treatises, Library of Christian Classics, 'Articles Concerning Predestination, p179.

²⁴ Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: Romans and Thessalonians, pp.207-208.

²⁵ John Calvin, Institutes 3:24,17

External call: love to elect but hardening of the wicked

The purpose of the external call towards the reprobate is that, they may turn a deaf ear; he kindles a light, but it is that they may become more blind; he produces a doctrine, but it is that they might be more stupid; he employs a remedy, but it is that they might not be cured. 26

God's call is a manifestation of love and power towards the elect but a curse to the reprobate hardening him and confirming him under wrath. Those, therefore, whom he has created for dishonour during life and destruction at death, that they may be vessels of wrath and examples of severity, in bringing their doom, he at one time deprives of the means of hearing his word, at another by the preaching of it blinds and stupifies them the more. 27

God's will

Nothing is less accordant with the nature of God that he should have a double will ... He does not in himself will opposites. 28

The will of God is immutable, and his truth is always consistent with itself. 29

Depravity

All the works performed by sinners are contaminated by impurity of heart. Let us then cease to give the name of righteousness to works which the mouth of the Lord condemns as polluted. ... the most splendid works performed by men, who are not yet truly sanctified, are so far from being righteousness in the sight of the Lord, that he regards them as sins. 30

Calvinists' view on these issues

It is equally important to see that the position I am defending is a central Calvinistic truth confirmed by theologians throughout church history. There is not space to supply hundreds of quotes on all issues, so I have selected quotes on the central matters of election and reprobation; whom does God love?

The Irish Articles [1615]

11. God from all eternity did, by his unchangeable counsel, ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass; yet so, as thereby no violence is offered to the wills of reasonable creatures ...

12. By the same eternal counsel God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death ...

14. The cause moving God to predestinate unto life, is not the foreseeing of faith or perseverance, or good works, or anything which is in the person predestinated, but only the good pleasure of God himself ... it seemed good to his heavenly wisdom to choose out a certain number toward whom he would extend his undeserved mercy.³¹

The Canons of Dort [1619]

That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree [singular] ... According to which decree, He graciously softens

26 John Calvin, Institutes, 3:24,13

27 John Calvin, Institutes 3:24,12

28 John Calvin, Institutes 3:24,17.

29 John Calvin, Institutes 3:2,12.

30 John Calvin, Institutes 3:14, 7-8,11.

31 From BB Warfield; Studies in Theology, Baker, 1991, p204.

the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in His just judgment.³²

The Helvetic Consensus Formula [1675]³³

Canon vi: we cannot give suffrage to the opinion of those who teach:

(1) that God, moved by philanthropy, or a sort of special love for the fallen human race, to previous election, did, in a kind of conditioned willing (i.e. willingness) first moving of pity ... purpose the salvation of all and each, at least conditionally , i.e., if they would believe. 34

Westminster Confession [1643-46]

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory,(1) out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perserverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto;(2) and all to the praise of His glorious grace.(3) (1)Eph. 1:4,9,11; Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:9. (2)Rom. 9:11,13,16; Eph. 1:4,9. (3)Eph. 1:6,12. 35

The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.(1) (1)Matt. 11:25,26; Rom. 9:17,18,21,22; 2 Tim. 2:19,20; Jude 4; 1 Pet. 2:8. 36

What is effectual calling? A. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace,(1) whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto(2)) he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit. 37

The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.(1) (1)Matt. 25:31 to the end; Rom. 2:5,6; Rom. 9:22,23; Matt. 25:21; Acts 3:19; 2 Thess 1:7-10. 38

Augustine of Hippo [354-430]

“He wills all men to be saved,” is so said that all the predestinated may be understood by it, because every kind of men is among them. Just as it was said to the Pharisees, “Ye tithe every herb;” where the expression is only to be understood of every herb that they had, for they did not tithe every herb which was found throughout the whole earth. 39

32 First Head, Article 6.

33 Composed by John Heidegger of Zurich in 1675 as a creed for the Swiss churches. (He was helped by Turretin.)

34 See A A Hodge, Outlines of Theology, Appendix.

35 WCF 3:5.

36 WCF 3:7.

37 WLC 67.

38 WCF 33:2.

39 Treatise on Rebuke & Grace, Chapter 44, Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 5.

Martin Luther [1483-1546]

The love and hate of God towards men is immutable and eternal, existing, not merely before there was any merit or work of 'free-will', but before the world was made; [so] all things take place in us of necessity, according as He has from eternity loved or not loved ... faith and unbelief come to us by no work of our own, but through the love and hatred of God. 40

William Perkins [1558-1602]

The decree of reprobation is that part of predestination whereby God ... determined to reject certain men unto destruction and misery, and that to the praise of his justice ... Further, whom God rejecteth to condemnation, those he hateth. 41

Francis Turretin [1623-1687]

Since his love cannot be vain and inefficacious, those whom he loves unto salvation he ought to love fully and even unto the end. ... The love treated in John 3:16 ... cannot be universal towards each and every one, but special towards a few. 42

The mercy of God ... has its own objects and vessels into which it is poured out (viz., the elect and believers upon whom he determined to have mercy from eternity, who are distinguished from others whom he decreed to pass by and are therefore called "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rm 9:22).43

The question concerns the special and saving love which tends to spiritual benefits, and by which God willed to have mercy upon them to salvation. We think this is particular to the elect alone, not universal and common to all. 44

John Owen [1616-1683]

We deny that all mankind are the object of that love of God which moved him to send his Son to die; God having 'made some for the day of evil', Prov 16:4. 45

It is, therefore, incorrect to translate, as in Psalm 145:9, 15-16 that God is 'merciful' not only to all men but to his whole creation ... These all feel the benefits of God's general goodness in his providential upholding of his creation ... [but] true mercy ... is the fount of all saving faith and repentance, we can distinguish this from all loose and mistaken concepts of 'mercy' displayed by the general work of God in providence. 46

But those who deny this hatred of sin and sinners, and the disposition to punish them, to be perpetually, immutably, and habitually inherent in God, I am afraid have never strictly weighed in their thoughts the divine purity and holiness. 47

Samuel Rutherford [1660-1661]

[Spoke of..] God's hatred of the reprobate and love and peace on the elect...[since God's love is] simple not contradictory. 48

40 Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*,

41 William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, Sutton Courtenay Press (1969) p250-251.

42 Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol 1, p400, 405.

43 *Institutes*. P&R Pub. Phillipsburg, 1992, p244.

44 *Institutes*, p396-397.

45 John Owen, *John Owen, Works*, Vol 10, p44 Banner of Truth Trust (1967), p227. Note all Owen's other arguments in this section.

46 John Owen, *Biblical Theology*, p74.

47 John Owen, *Works*, vol. 10, p. 514.

48 Samuel Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph of Faith*, p348-350.

James Henry Thornwell [1812-1862]

'Sinners are by nature odious and loathsome to God, and are under a righteous sentence of condemnation and death'. 49

The plain doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is that God has no purpose of salvation for all. 50

'The love of God is always connected with the purpose of salvation ... unconverted sinners have no lot nor part in it'. God is angry with them every day; "he hateth all workers of iniquity". The special love of God is confined exclusively to the elect. 51

BB Warfield [1851-1921]

But just because God is God, of course, no one receives grace who has not been foreknown and afore-selected for the gift; and, as much of course, no one who has been foreknown and afore-selected for it, fails to receive it. Therefore the number of the predestinated is fixed, and fixed by God. 52

The Biblical Writers are as far as possible from obscuring the doctrine of election because of any seemingly unpleasant corollaries that flow from it ... (in the election of some) others are passed by and left without the gift of salvation. ... God is represented as in his infinite compassion rescuing those chosen to this end in his inscrutable counsels of mercy to the praise of the glory of his grace; while those who are left in their sins perish most deservedly, as the justice of God demands. 53

John L Girardeau [1825-1898]

The love involved in election - a peculiar, free, inalienable, saving love of Complacency towards the elect ... The testimonies from Scripture clearly reveal the nature of God's electing love. It is expressly declared to be eternal. It is peculiar: it is directed to the people of God... the love of complacency, is a peculiar affection, supposing the existence in its sinful objects of a saving relation to Christ as mediator, Federal head and Redeemer. ... The Father ... elected some of mankind to be redeemed. This, while it was a sovereign act of his will, involved the exercise of infinite love and mercy ... those thus designated became the Father's elect ones, his sheep ... conceived as in Christ the elect became objects of a complacential love, measured only by the regard of the Father for his well-beloved Son ...

The love of complacency towards the elect ... supposes a peculiar relation of the elect to God's only-begotten Son, and is, according to scriptural representations, analogous to the love the Father bears to him ... It is this love, this peculiar, intense, unutterable love, which the scriptures declare to be manifested towards the elect in the actual execution of God's eternal purpose of salvation. ... In connection with this aspect of the subject of election, the Arminian doctrine is open to the charge of being entirely unscriptural ... the Arminian ... reduces the intense, inexpressible, unchangeable affection which God from eternity entertained for his own people to a general regard for all sinners of the human race - his love for his sheep to a love for goats. 54

William G T Shedd [1820-1894]

Sinful men are the objects of God's providential care, ... God manifests to the sinner all the benevolence that he is qualified to receive. He sends him physical and temporal

⁴⁹ Thornwell, *Works*, Vol 2, p158.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p161.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p162.

⁵² BB Warfield, *Introduction To Augustin's Anti-Pelagian Writings*; Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 5, p106. See also, *Augustine & The Pelagian Controversy*, Works Vol 4, (Baker, 1991), p408.

⁵³ BB Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, Baker 1991, p64-5.

⁵⁴ John L Girardeau; *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, Sprinkle Pub. Harrisonburg 1984, p54-66.

good: rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons ... but he cannot bestow upon a sinful and hostile man his approving love. 55

Dr. William Cunningham [1805-1861]

Calvin consistently, unhesitatingly, and explicitly denied the doctrine of God's universal grace to all men, -that is omnibus et singulis, to each and every man,- as implying in some sense a desire or purpose or intention to save them all ... That Calvin denied the doctrine of God's universal grace or love to all men, as implying some desire or intention of saving them all, and some provision directed to that object, is too evident to any one who has read his writings, to admit of doubt or require proof. ... The fact of Calvin so explicitly denying the doctrine of God's universal grace or love to all men, affords a more direct and certain ground for the inference, that he did not hold the doctrine of universal atonement. 56

Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all whom the gospel is preached, and that all who can be reached should be invited and urged to come to Christ and embrace him, deny that this flows from, or indicates, any design or purpose on God's part to save all men. 57

Augustus Hopkins Strong [1836-1921]

The imminent ['absolute' PF] love of God therefore requires and finds a personal object in the image of his own infinite perfections. It is to be understood only in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity ... So the love of God is shown in his eternal giving ... This he does eternally in the self-communications of the Trinity; this he does transitively and temporarily in his giving of himself for us in Christ, and to us in the Holy Spirit. 58

Men become subordinate objects of God's love only as they become connected and identified with it's principle object, the image of God's perfections in Christ. Only in the Son do men become sons of God. 59

God's love for us ... dates back to a time before we were born, - aye, even to eternity past. It is a love which was fastened upon us although God knew the worst of us. It is unchanging, because founded upon his infinite and eternal love to Christ. 60

God is not only benevolent but holy, and holiness is his ruling attribute. The vindication of God's holiness is the primary and sufficient object of punishment. This constitutes a good which fully justifies the infliction (of hell - PF) ... Love for holiness involves hatred of unholiness ... holiness conditions love. 61

The benevolence of God, as concerned for the general good of the universe, requires the execution of the full penalty of the law upon all who reject Christ's salvation. 62

Archibald Alexander Hodge [1823-1886]

God's love for holiness and hatred of sin is represented in Scripture as essential and intrinsic. He loves holiness for its own sake. He hates sin and is determined to punish it because of its intrinsic ill desert. He hates the wicked every day - Ps 5:5; 7:11. 63

55 Dogmatic Theology, Vol 1, Nelson, Nashville, 1980, p386-391.

56 William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh (1962), p398-399.

57 William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol 2, p396.

58 Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p127.

59 Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p137-138.

60 Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p433.

61 Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p597.

62 Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p598.

The facts prove that God's general benevolence is not inconsistent with allowing some to be damned for their sins. This is all that reprobation means. Gratuitous election, or the positive choice of some does not rest upon God's general benevolence, but upon his special love to its own. 64

A W Pink [1886-1952]

That God loves everybody, is, we may say, quite a modern belief. The writings of the church-fathers, the Reformers or the Puritans will (we believe) be searched in vain for any such concept. Perhaps the late DL Moody ... did more than anyone else last century to popularise this concept. 65

Herman Hoeksema [d. 1965]

God cannot be merciful to the reprobate wicked... His mercy toward his people must be founded in his sovereign election, according to which he beholds them eternally as perfectly righteous in the beloved. 66

One must choose between these two: either Jesus purposed to save all men and He is only a possible saviour who does not actually save; or Jesus came to save the elect unto eternal life and then he actually saves... It follows from the nature of the atonement, that he died, not for all, but for the elect, that is, for a certain number in whose stead He died and for whom He arose. Atonement is satisfaction. And satisfaction is the actual payment of our debt with God. If Christ paid the debt for all, all are righteous and saved, which is absurd. If, nevertheless, you maintain that He died for all men without distinction, you must deny the truth of atonement, namely, that He actually satisfied fully for all our sins. However, such is not the truth. Christ's death is a real and full satisfaction for the sins of those for whom he died. Hence He only died for the elect. You must choose between an actual satisfaction for the elect only and the denial of this satisfaction through the blood of Christ. You can express this same truth in another way. Jesus' death was vicarious; He died instead of those whom He represented, whose head He is. Now either He vicariously represented all men and then all are surely saved, which no one believes, or He represented a certain number and these are the elect. And, secondly ... the sinner is dead. He must be raised to life. He must be born again. Therefore, the actual realisation of the salvation which Jesus merited cannot depend on his will, for he will not and cannot will. 67

Arthur C. Custance

If God does not love everyone indiscriminately, what then is his attitude towards those who are not the objects of his love? Does He hate them? ... we have a few passages of Scripture which seem to state in no uncertain terms that God does hate some of his creatures. We are tending increasingly to ignore the other side of God's love towards his creatures. Sermons more and more emphasise the love of God to the exclusion of his justice, and to speak of God's hate is completely unacceptable to our sensitive ears.⁶⁸

John H Gerstner [1914-1996]

We must sadly admit that the majority of Reformed theologians today seriously err concerning the nature of the love of God for reprobates ... Most Reformed theologians

63 Outlines of Theology, Nelson, New York, 1883, p156-7.

64 Outlines of Theology, Nelson, New York, 1883, p228-9.

65 A W Pink, The Sovereignty of God, Baker, p200. The Banner of Truth edition ruthlessly extracted large portions of this work which condemn such universal notions as God loving everyone (up to 40%, including key appendices) without any notification or explanation.

66 Reformed Dogmatics, Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids 1985, p116.

67 Jesus saviour and the Evil of Hawking Him, Tract of First Prot. Ref. Church; 1986, p13-14.

68 The Sovereignty of Grace. P & R Publishing, New Jersey (1979) p294, 297.

also include, as a by product of the atonement, the well meant offer of the gospel by which all men can be saved. 69

Such a "love," [to the reprobate] on God's part, so far from being love, would be the refinement of cruelty. As we have already seen, offering a gift of life to a spiritual corpse, a brilliant sunset to a blind man, and a reward to a legless cripple if only he will come and get it, are horrible mockeries. 70

David J Engelsma

That which is objectionable in the 'free offer of the gospel,' or 'well meant gospel offer' ... and the reason why a Reformed man must repudiate it, is its teaching that the grace of God in Jesus Christ, grace that is saving in character, is directed to all men in the preaching of the gospel. Inherent in the offer of the gospel is the notion that God loves and desires to save all men; the notion that the preaching of the gospel is God's grace to all men, an expression of God's love to all men, and an attempt by God to save all men; and the notion that salvation is dependent upon man's acceptance of the offered salvation, that is, that salvation depends upon the free will of the sinner. 71

The scriptures know of only one grace of God and one love of God, His grace and love in Jesus Christ. This is the grace and this is the love revealed in the gospel.

The doctrine of the offer, therefore, teaches that the love of Christ is universal ... this is the denial of the Reformed, biblical doctrine of election and the sell-out of the Reformed faith to Arminianism. For the meaning of the doctrine of election is that the love of God in Christ is eternally directed towards some definite particular men, willing their salvation and efficaciously accomplishing it. Election is simply the choosing love of God (Deut 7:6-8; Rm 8:28-29). Universal love is universal election, and that was the position of the Arminians. 72

Reformed preaching will not approach the audience with the declaration: 'God loves all of you.' It will not say to every man: 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.' It will not proclaim to all hearers: 'God is gracious to all of you and sincerely desires your salvation.' This message is a lie. Not only are these statements false, but they are also the bane of effective missions. Never did the apostles take this approach or proclaim this message to the unconverted. Such a message is incipient universalism, which assures the sinner that all is well with him in his sin - God loves him, and Christ died for him! - so that there is really no need for him to repent and believe. Arminianism, which blusters of its concern to save the lost, peters out in universalism, which blesses all religions, as well as the irreligious ... Biblical preaching assures the sinner of God's love for him personally only in the way of his faith in Christ crucified... a preacher does not call a man to believe some *thing*, but calls him to believe on someone. He presents Christ and calls the hearers to believe on that Christ. 73

Tom Wells

The difficulty over the free offer may be put like this: since God has chosen to save some and pass others by, how can it be said that he offers salvation to those he has decided not to save? Doesn't this make God of two minds, wanting all to be saved on the one hand, and desiring only his elect to be saved on the other? Anyone who cannot

69 John H Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), p125.

70 John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 124.

71 *Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994) p41-42.

72 *Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994), p45.

73 *Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994), p87-88.

see that there is some difficulty here must have done very little thinking about theology.
74

W. Gary Crampton

When Calvin speaks of the universal call of the gospel, he does not mean to say that God 'earnestly desires' that all who hear the invitation will be saved ... God only desires the salvation of the elect ... The same God who wills to save the elect also wills not to save the reprobate.⁷⁵

74 Tom Wells, Notes on the Free Offer Controversy, p5. Quoted from Protestant Reformed Theological Journal, vol XXXV, no. 2, p37.

75 W. Gary Crampton, What Calvin Says, p73.