

Amyraldianism : Is it Modified Calvinism?

According to the Westminster Standards, God's intention and design in sending his Son into the world, was to redeem his elect. In III.vi of the Westminster Confession we read: "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ... Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only". Similarly, VIII.viii declares, "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same." In the same vein, the Shorter Catechism asks the question, "Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? and answers, "God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer" (A20).

In opposition to this doctrine, some 17th century theologians devised a scheme of "hypothetical universalism", believing in doing so that they were not only recovering the teaching of Scripture, but recovering the teaching of Calvin from its corruption by Theodore Beza, much as R.T.Kendal, and more lately Alan C. Clifford, have argued.¹

¹ R.T.Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (New York: OUP, 1977); A.C.Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790 - An Evaluation* (OUP, 1990). See also Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin, 1969). Kendall's thesis has been challenged by Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York, OUP, 2000). Muller argues cogently and persuasively for a great deal of continuity between Calvin and "the Calvinists" who followed him. In a somewhat similar vein, Carl R. Trueman has highlighted the line of theological and epistemological continuity from the Reformation to John Owen, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, UK, 1998). Trueman regularly interacts with Clifford's thesis and exposes it to trenchant criticisms. Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982) is a more popular, but no less effective, refutation of Kendall's central thesis. See also B.B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Banner of Truth). Many of the English delegates at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) advocated universal, if hypothetical, redemption. Bishop Davenant taught that "Christ died for all on condition that they believe, and he will intercede for all if only they believe", Jonathan D Moore, 'Christ is Dead For Him': *John Preston (1587-1628) and English Hypothetical Universalism* (Cambridge Phd, 2000, soon to be published by Eerdmans), 165; see especially 151-184 where Dr Moore helpfully and insightfully expounds the hypothetical universalism of Ussher and Davenant. It should be noted that Amyraldianism is not identical with hypothetical universalism. Hypothetical

Amyraldianism has often been described as “Moderate” or “Four Point Calvinism”, as if the only difference between it and Calvinism is its espousal of universal (if hypothetical) atonement, as distinct from Calvinism’s definite or particular atonement.² To think this, however, would demonstrate a failure to understand the theological presuppositions of “hypothetical universal atonement”, and their inevitable implications for our understanding of the intra-Trinitarian relationships of the Triune God.

The principal advocate of hypothetical universalism in the years immediately preceding, and following, the Westminster Assembly was Moise Amyraut (Moses Amyraldus, 1596-1664). Amyraut was professor of theology at the French protestant Seminary at Saumur and was greatly influenced by his teacher John Cameron. George Smeaton maintained that Amyraut’s teaching “was a revolt from the position maintained at the Synod of Dort (1618), under the guise of an explanation; for the propounders of the theory would not allow that they were out of harmony with its decrees.”³ Dr. Alan C. Clifford, a passionate modern advocate of Amyraut, argues to the contrary that Amyraut and Amyraldians have been “Maliciously misrepresented” by “scholastic high Calvinism” for holding views on God’s decrees and the extent of Christ’s redemption that they believed to be faithful to The Bible, Calvin and the Canons of Dort.⁴ Responding to Iain H Murray’s review of *Calvinus: Authentic*

universalists such as Usher and Davenant, by and large held to the orthodox understanding of the order of the decrees, something Amyraut vigorously opposed, see Moore, *John Preston*, 59ff (I am grateful to Dr Moore for helping me to appreciate the fact that hypothetical universalism was an issue in England prior to Amyraut’s publications. The whole question of English Hypothetical Redemption has been carefully and fully discussed by Dr Moore in *John Preston*).

² For a thorough discussion of Calvin’s teaching on the extent of the atonement see Jonathan Rainbow, *Redemptor Ecclesiae, Redemptor Mundi: An Historical and theological Study of John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Extent of Rdedemption*, (PhD Diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1986); Roger R. Nicole, “John Calvin’s View of the Extent of the Atonement”, *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (Fall 1987): 197-225. See also Robert A Peterson Sr, *Calvin and the Atonement* (Christian Focus ed. 1999). Peterson rejects Rainbow’s thesis that Calvin “clearly taught limited atonement” (119). He argues that “the question of Calvin’s view of the extent of the atonement is somewhat anachronistic” (120), as it only became an issue within the Reformed churches in the following generation. William Cunningham maintained “there is fair ground for a difference of opinion as to what his (Calvin’s) doctrine upon this point really was”, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Banner of Truth Trust ed. 1967), 396-402.

³ G.Smeaton, *The Apostles` Doctrine of the Atonement* (Banner of Truth, 1991 ed), 540.

⁴ A.C.Clifford, *Sons of Calvin : Three Huguenot Pastors* (Charenton Reformed Publishing, Norwich, 1999), 14. Carl Trueman makes the observation that Richard Baxter, whose view of the extent of the atonement approximated that of Amyraut, was greatly influenced by the “scholastic method”: “In the light of the claims about the necessarily deleterious effects of Scholasticism and Aristotelianism on

*Calvinism, A Clarification*⁵, Dr. Clifford stated, “Of course, Murray is a victim of the high-orthodox Owenite neurosis that Amyraldianism involves compromise with Arminian error”. He further maintains that “Murray's difficulties derive from erroneous scholastic departures from an earlier and more biblically balanced Calvinism”.⁶ This conviction leads Dr. Clifford to assert, “I emphatically do believe ‘that a man cannot be a true Calvinist if he fails to believe with Amyraut in a redemption which is both universal and particular.’”⁷ It is difficult, however, to see how Dr. Clifford can be so emphatic in the light of Calvin’s response to Heshusius, a Lutheran divine, regarding the Lutheran dogma of consubstantiation: “...the first thing to be explained is, how Christ is present with unbelievers, as being the spiritual food of souls, and, in short, the life and salvation of the world? And as he (Heshesius) adheres so doggedly to the words (‘this is my body’), I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ which was not crucified for them? And how they can drink the blood which was not shed to expiate their sins?”⁸ It is surprising,

Owen’s theology...it is worth noting...that the appropriateness of using scholastic method or of Aristotelian causality and logic within the theological task is never a point at issue between Owen and Baxter; indeed, it could not possibly be otherwise, as both men used these within their theology.” (Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 27; 34ff). See also Appendix One in *Claims of Truth*, 233-240, where Dr Trueman responds to Alan Clifford’s claim that Aristotelian teleology fundamentally skewed Owen’s doctrine of atonement.

⁵ Alan C Clifford, *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism, A Clarification* (Charenton Reformed Publishing, Norwich, 1996). Murray’s review is in *The Banner of Truth Magazine*, November 1996, pp.17-20

⁶ See Clifford’s review of Murray’s review, *A Review Reviewed* on the Norwich Reformed Church web page. This claim, which is basic to Kendall’s thesis and the strictures of T.F. and J.B.Torrance, has been effectively answered and refuted by Muller in *The Unaccommodated Calvin*

⁷ Clifford, *A Review Reviewed*. Dr. Clifford, to vindicate his contention, writes, “At the risk of being tedious, I quote Calvin again: ‘The sacrifice [of Christ] was ordained by the eternal decree of God, to expiate the sins of the world(#31).’God commends to us the salvation of all men without exception, even as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world’(#65)...What could be clearer?’ The question is, however, what did Calvin mean by such statements? Commenting on 1Jn.2:2, “(Christ) is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world”, Calvin writes, “here the question may be asked as to how the sins of the whole world have been expiated? I pass over the dreams of the fanatics, who make this a reason to extend salvation to the reprobate...Those who want to avoid this absurdity have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world but effectively only for the elect...Although I allow the truth of this, I deny that it fits this passage. For John’s purpose was only to make this blessing common to the whole Church. Therefore, under the world ‘all’ he does not include the reprobate, but refers to all who would believe and those who were scattered through various regions of the earth. For, as is meet, the grace of Christ is really made clear when it is declared to be the only salvation of the world”. Commenting on 1Tim.2:4, “(God) wills all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”, Calvin further writes, “the apostle’s meaning here is simply that no nation of the earth and no rank of society is excluded from salvation, since God wills to offer the Gospel to all without exception”. My point here is not to argue that Calvin unequivocally taught definite or particular atonement (or simply ‘atonement’ that truly was ‘atonement’!); my point is rather less tendentious, but perhaps even more important: Calvin’s language is nuanced and needs to be carefully and contextually exegeted. See Carl Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 227-232

⁸ John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises* (Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, 1849), Vol.ii,527. Dr

therefore, that Dr. Clifford should be so bold as to disqualify the vast majority of the Westminster divines, as well as John Owen, John Flavel, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, the Southern Presbyterian Old School theologians and the Princetonians⁹ (to mention but a few) from calling themselves true Calvinists! If, however, as the Westminster divines themselves believed that “All synods or councils since the apostles’ times...may err, and many have erred”¹⁰, we must face the possibility that such a galaxy of renowned theologians, fallible men at their best, may have got it wrong, and that Amyraut is the true heir to Calvin’s theological legacy.

Amyraut’s views were the subject of some discussion at the Synod of Alencon in 1637. When Amyraut explained his views he was “honorably discharged”, though the Synod also “pronounced mild censure” on some of the language he used to express his views.¹¹ Roger Nicole maintains that it would be difficult wholly to absolve Amyraut’s explanations from the charge of “dissimulation”, as “it seems fairly obvious that their (Amyraut and Paul Testard) printed utterances were ill in keeping with the Canons of the Synod of Dort, to which they pledged allegiance”.¹²

The essence of Amyraut’s teaching was that God, out of love for mankind, sent his Son to die for the sins of all mankind, having appointed all human beings to salvation, provided they repent and believe. Since, however, God foresaw that no-one would or could believe, he chose to give a saving measure of the Holy Spirit to an elect. For Amyraut, then, grace is universal in that it provides salvation for all, but particular in its application to the elect. So, as Robert Reymond states, “The upshot of

Clifford attempts to exegete Calvin’s words to square with his view that Calvin taught a universal atonement (A.C.Clifford, *Atonement and Justification*, 87).

⁹ It should be said that Dr Clifford considers Shedd and Dabney to more approximate Amyraut on the extent of the atonement than Owen; indeed he says that Shedd’s discussion of the common/special grace distinction in his Dogmatics 2.470, is “typically Amyraldian” (*Atonement and Justification*, 90-91). Dr Clifford also contends that Hodge’s view of the atonement is “virtually Amyraldian” (*Atonement and Justification*, 90), highlighting comments in his *Systematic Theology* (London 1960 ed.), Vol.11, 558. Notwithstanding Hodge’s comments there, he earlier gives six arguments against the Amyraldian scheme, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.11, 322-324. Indeed, Hodge devastatingly writes, “The theory, therefore, which assumes that God purposed the salvation of all men, and sent his Son to die as a means to accomplish that end, and then seeing, or foreseeing that such end could or would not be attained, elected a part of the race to be the subjects of efficacious grace, cannot be admitted as Scriptural” (323). He further writes, Augustinians deny that “He (Christ) died equally, and with the same design, for all men” (Vol.11,558). Dabney considers the Amyraldian scheme to be “perfectly illusory”, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids ed.1972), 235

¹⁰ Westminster Confession XXXI.1V

¹¹ Roger Nicole, “Brief Survey of the Controversy on Universal Grace”, in *Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 314-315

¹² Roger Nicole, “Brief Survey”, 315

the Amyraldian arrangement is that *the actual discrimination comes not at the point of Christ's redemptive accomplishment but at the point of the Spirit's redemptive application*"¹³. There is, therefore, a certain particularism in the Amyraldian scheme, but a particularism that does not flow from God's saving intention in sending his Son to seek and save the lost.¹⁴ Amyraut argued that he was being faithful to the Canons of Dort¹⁵, and more importantly, to the testimony of Scripture and saw himself as advocating a mediating position between "high- Calvinism" and Arminianism.

It is not my primary intention to argue that Amyraut, and subsequent Amyraldians, have misunderstood Calvin. My main concerns are:

First, to explain what the essential features of Amyraldianism are; and, Secondly, to show that the Amyraldian scheme is inconsistent with the theological profession of churches committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith as their Subordinate Standard of Faith.

Amyraut's teaching highlighted a number of theological distinctives:

First, the motive impelling God to redeem men was love to all men in general, without any distinction whatever.

Second, from this "general benevolence", God sent his Son to make the salvation of all men possible. In his *Brief Traite de la Predestination et de ses Principales Dependences* (1634)¹⁶, Amyraut argues, "Since the misery of men is equal and

¹³ Robert L Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1998), 477

¹⁴ In his *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1974), John Macleod describes John Cameron, the Scottish professor who greatly influenced Amyraut "as an innovator" whose teaching produced "confusion". He further describes Cameron's teaching as "mongrel compromising teaching"! (62). John Owen, more generously, calls Cameron "a learned Protestant" (*Works*, 8.529)

¹⁵ The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) sought to resolve theological problems that were troubling the Dutch churches. The Synod was a gathering of delegates from the international Reformed community. Its Canons, or decrees, were a response to the Remonstrance of 1610, which sought to challenge the sovereignty and particularism of traditional Calvinist teaching. In particular, the Canons affirmed sovereign predestination, definite atonement, total depravity, effectual grace and the perseverance of God with his elect (See W.R Godfrey, *Tensions within International Calvinism: The Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619* (PhD diss., Stanford, 1974).

¹⁶ According to Brian Armstrong, Amyraut wrote his treatise "in order to relieve the mind of a recent convert from Catholicism to whom the predestinarian teaching was repugnant" (*Amyraut Heresy*, 170-171). It should be noted that however opposed the Puritans were to Amyraut's teaching, it was not considered a "heresy" as such. i.e. it was not considered fatal to the faith.

universal...So the grace of redemption which He (God) has procured and offered to them (man) ought to be equal and universal, provided that they are also found to be equally disposed to receive it... would God offer salvation to all and exclude some from partaking of that offer?"¹⁷ So, he continues, "The sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered was EQUALLY FOR ALL; and the salvation which he received from His Father...was destined equally for all."¹⁸

Third, by a *decretum universale hypotheticum* (universal hypothetical decree) God offers salvation to all if they believe in Christ.

Fourth, all men have a natural ability to repent and believe, but as this natural ability was counter-balanced by a moral inability, God gave efficacious grace to an elect to secure their salvation.

Roger Nicole, succinctly expresses Amyraut's teaching:

"Amyraut held that God, moved by compassion for the plight of fallen mankind, designed to save all men and sent his Son Jesus Christ as a substitutionary offering for the sins of all men and of every man - this is Amyraut's *universalism*. This sacrifice is not effectual unto salvation, however, unless God's offer of grace is accepted by man in repentance and faith, which, acceptance is the fruit of God's special grace, conferred on those only whom he has chosen - this is the *hypothetical* aspect of Amyraut's view."¹⁹

In Amyraldianism, therefore, Christ's atonement has a universal design, but only a particular application. His atonement was designed and intended for all indiscriminately, but applied to, and enjoyed only by, the elect. This saving blessing

¹⁷ Chapter VII of Amyraut's *Brief Traite*, quoted in Stephen Lewis, "Moise Amyraut 1596-1664: Predestination and the Atonement Debate" in *CTS Journal Volume 1, Number 3* (Winter 1995: a Publication of Chafer Theological Seminary).

¹⁸ M. Amyraut, *Brief Traite de la Predestination et de ses principales Dependances* (Saumur, Par Jean lesnier & Isaac Desbordes, 1634), ch.7, 78, quoted in G.Smeaton, *The Atonement*, 541. The whole section in the original French reads, "Le sacrifice qu'il a offert pour la propitiation de leurs offences, a ete egalemeut pour tous; & le Salut qu'il a receu de son Pere pour le communiquer aux homes en la sanctification de l'Esprit & en la glorification du corps, est destine egalemeut a tous, pourueu, di-je, que la disposition necessaire pour le recevoir soit egale de memes".

¹⁹ Roger Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut (1596-1664) and the Controversy on Universal Grace: First Phase (1634-1637)*, (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966), 3-4

comes as the fruit of Christ's high-priestly intercession.²⁰ Amyraldians make much, therefore, of Peter Lombard's formula, "Christ died sufficiently for all, but only efficaciously for the elect" (*Sufficienter pro omnibus, efficaciter pro electis*).²¹ It should not be thought, however, that this phrase necessarily teaches what Amyraut and subsequent Amyraldians say it does. It has a perfectly proper Reformed lineage²². The infinite "sufficiency" of Christ's death to cover the sin's of the world is rooted in the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Infinite sufficiency is intrinsic, therefore, to the saving acts of the God-Man. John Owen, while vigorously contending for definite or particular atonement, nonetheless recognises, and indeed glories in, the "infinite value" of Christ's sacrifice: "The first thing we shall lay down is concerning the dignity, worth, preciousness, and infinite value of the blood and death of Jesus Christ...The Scripture...is exceeding full and frequent in setting forth the excellency and dignity of his death and sacrifice, calling his blood, by reason of the unity of his person, 'God's own blood,'...It was, then, the purpose and intention of God that his Son should offer a sacrifice of infinite worth, value and dignity, sufficient in itself for the redeeming of all and every man, if it had pleased the Lord to employ it to that purpose; yea, and of other worlds also, if the Lord should freely make them, and would redeem them."²³ The fundamental issue, however, as Owen

²⁰ See the extended Note 112 in Carl Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 187

²¹ Carl Trueman quotes the source of the original citation, Peter Lombard, in *Claims of Truth*, 200

²² Dabney, *Lectures*, 527. See also William Cunningham's brief discussion in *The Reformers*, 397. The Synod of Dort, Article 3 of the Second Canon, states, "The death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world." Dr Clifford maintains, "Here is the suggestion that, notwithstanding the limited efficacy of the atonement, its universal sufficiency is as much part of its design". He continues to concede, however, "Allowing for some degree of ambiguity at this point, the second canon does not necessarily teach that the atonement's sufficiency is merely a consequence of its 'infinite worth and value'. Therefore Dort really teaches a limited efficacious atonement, not a limited atonement as such" (*Atonement and Justification*, 73). It is difficult to accept Dr Clifford's conclusion. Although this Third Article is clear enough as to its intent, when read in conjunction with the Fourth Article, it becomes absolutely clear that the infinite value of Christ's death is solely related to Christ's Person, not to any universal intention: "This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is...not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God's anger and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved" (This translation of the Canons, based on the only extant Latin manuscript among those signed at the Synod of Dort, was adopted by the 1986 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church).

²³ John Owen, *Works*, 10.295. There is an interesting minute of the Westminster Assembly on this issue. Commenting on the Synod of Dort's use of *sufficienter*, Edward Reynolds stated, "The Synod

makes clear, relates to God's intention in sending his Son to make atonement for sin.

Amyraut's scheme is open to a number of objections²⁴. Before we consider these objections, an obvious, though important point should be raised. It is an historical fact, that neither Beza, not his contemporaries or immediate successors, were apparently aware that their writings exhibited any significant defection from Calvin's theological legacy, as argued by Amyraut and present-day Amyraldians (and Barthians). Perhaps even more to the point, the developing Reformed churches could not be expected to mirror exactly Calvin's expressions or formulations. As Douglas Kelly reminds us, "The burgeoning Protestant churches for their mission and survival required conservation and institutionalisation. Dr Strohm has spoken of this necessary development as 'rationalization, moralization and confessionalization'".²⁵ Such a sense of history and of historical and intellectual development must nuance any study of Calvin and the tradition that followed him.²⁶ Theology is not an ossified science; by its very nature it encourages reflection and development. A failure to understand the historical contextualization of theological enquiry and exposition, often leads to an

intended no more than to declare the sufficiency of the death of Christ; it is *pretium in se*, of sufficient value to all, - nay ten thousand worlds. There are two Adams, - one a fountain of misery, and the other of mercy....To be salvable is a benefit, and therefore belongs only to them that have interest in Christ". *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* eds. A.F.Mitchell and J. Struthers (Edinburgh and London, 1874), 153-154. In his *Letters and Journals*, Volume 2 Page 324 On October 24th 1645, Robert Baillie makes the fascinating comment as the doctrine of the atonement is being debated in the Assembly : "Unhappilie Amiraute's Questions are brought in on our Assemblée. Many more loves these fancies here than I did expect. It falls out ill that Spanheim's book is so long a-coming out, whileas Amiraute's treatise goes in the Assemblée from hand to hand; yet I hope that this shall goe right." It is fascinating to think that while the divines were discussing the Atonement, Amyraut's views were being openly considered. It makes the Confession's statements on the extent of the atonement self-consciously anti-Amyraldian.

²⁴ See Dabney's summary of objections, *Lectures*, 519-520,524ff. Dabney's conclusion is striking and highlights the less than monolithic response within orthodox Calvinism to the issue of the relation of Christ's death to the world beyond the elect (although, all are agreed that God's intention in sending his Son was to redeem the elect and the elect only): "This seems, then, to be the candid conclusion: that there is no passage in the Bible which asserts an intention to apply redemption to any others than the elect, on the part of God and Christ; but that there are passages which imply that Christ died for all sinners in some sense, as Dr.Ch.Hodge has so expressly admitted. Certainly the expiation made by Christ is so related to all, irrespective of election, that God can sincerely invite all to enjoy its benefits, that every soul in the world who desires salvation is warranted to appropriate it; and that even a Judas, had he come in earnest, would not have been cast out" (*Lectures*, 527). See also Wilhelmus a Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (Grand Rapids ed. 1992), 1.222ff, 599ff

²⁵ Douglas F. Kelly, *A Response to Professor Christoph Strohm's 'Calvin and Calvinism': A Discussion in Methodology* (Paper posted on the Internet)

²⁶ See the opening chapter in Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*. Carl Trueman makes the same point, *Claims of Truth*, 85, Note 116.

atomising of theological enquiry, where isolated texts are culled to buttress a particular theological position. Simply to contrast theological statements from different eras, without first seeking to understand the respective theological and sociological contexts, produces superficial contrasts.

1. Amyraut's scheme presupposes a certain mutability in the divine purposes. His scheme in effect tells us that God's purpose may fail to be accomplished. Amyraut teaches that God purposed the salvation of all men and sent his Son to secure that salvation. But, seeing that this purpose could not be fulfilled, he then, secondarily, determined by his efficacious grace to secure the salvation of an elect. Can we dare suggest that God intends what he never purposes? Are we to believe that God adopts means for an end that is never to be attained? If we say this, we not only impugn the wisdom and power of God, we all but un-God God! If all men are not saved, it is because God never purposed their salvation cf. Jn.6:38-40. If God truly foreordains all that comes to pass, then events correspond to his purposes. None can thwart his purposes cf. Isa.14:26-27.

2. The Bible clearly teaches us that the Saviour's work was perfectly efficacious, that is, it rendered certain the accomplishment of the end it was designed to accomplish. It was intended to save his people, and not merely to make their salvation possible (Matt.1:21). God's intention in sending his Son into the world was not to make salvation possible for all, or to place sinners in a state of salvability. The death of Christ was a real satisfaction to divine justice and necessarily freed from condemnation. It was a ransom paid and accepted. The Saviour's cry, "It is finished!" signalled the accomplishment of the saving work given to him by the Father. And that accomplishment was not making salvation possible for all indiscriminately, if they would believe; it was the securing of salvation for those, and only those, for whom he laid down his life (John10:11; 6:38-40). In the Amyraldian scheme, the Saviour's death achieved nothing; it merely placed all men and women in a position of potential salvability. There was no actual substitution. No effective propitiation. No accomplished redemption. If there had been a true propitiation for sin, and a true

redemption from sin, and a true substitution in the place of sinners, either redemption was universal, and all would be saved; or particular and definite, and the elect would be saved. To argue otherwise is to do at least two things: First, to empty the great biblical truth of propitiation (to instance but one) of any meaningful significance. Is the Lord Jesus Christ a true propitiation or merely a potential propitiation? Did God truly lay on him all our iniquities, crush him and cause him to suffer (Isa.53:6,10), or no? Second, Amyraut's teaching renders the glorious New Testament doctrine of union with Christ a charade. Jesus died as the Representative Head of a people given to him by his Father (cf.Roms.5:12-19). When he died, all whom he represented died with him and when he rose from the dead they rose with him. The Amyraldian scheme cuts at the heart of Christ's federal or representative Headship. A favourite text of Amyraldians makes the point, 2Cor.5:14, "For Christ love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died". The "all" for whom Christ died, died (i.e. died in him, in covenant union with him). Who are these "all"? Clearly, they are the "all" who have been savingly united to Christ and who now "no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2Cor.5:15). To argue any other way is to make a mockery on the doctrine of union with Christ. This text, far from giving any support to Universalism, Arminianism or Amyraldianism (and I am not suggesting these are in any way theological blood-relations!), does the very opposite. It is a text that clearly and unambiguously teaches definite or particular atonement.

The real substitutionary significance of Christ's death, as opposed to its merely potential substitutionary significance, lies at the heart of the Saviour's *αντιλυτρον υπερ παντων*, 1Timothy2:6). To argue otherwise, writes Robert Reymond, "is to wound Christianity as the redemptive religion of God fatally at its heart, for (unless one is prepared to affirm the final universal salvation of all men) one cannot have an atonement of infinite intrinsic saving value and at the same time an atonement of universal extension. One can have one or the other but not both."²⁷

²⁷ Reymond, op. cit., 478

James Packer described it as “the logic of penal substitution”.²⁸

3. The Scriptures further teach that the atoning work of Christ secures the gift of all other blessings cf. Eph.1:3; Roms.8:32. He purchased for his people all saving gifts necessary to their salvation, including faith and repentance. In the Amyraldian scheme, however, God’s purpose to give the grace of effectual calling “is represented as disconnected with Christ and His purchase, and subsequent, in order, to His work, and the foresight of its rejection by sinners. Whereas Scripture represents that this gift, along with all other graces of redemption, is given us in Christ, having been purchased for His people by Him. Eph.1:3; Phil.1:29; Heb.12:2”.²⁹ John Owen makes the point well: “This condition of faith is procured for us by the death of Christ, or it is not. If they (Cameron and Amyraut) say it be not, then the chiefest grace, and without which redemption itself (express it how you please) is of no value, doth not depend on the grace of Christ as the meritorious procuring cause thereof...”³⁰ The Amyraldian scheme would rend asunder the work of Christ, insisting that his death did not secure for those for whom he died all other saving blessings. This, of course, has to be the Amyraldian position. To say otherwise would lead to unqualified universalism. In the Amyraldian scheme, the sinner’s salvation rests ultimately, therefore, on the sinner’s faith, not on the Saviour’s satisfaction for sin. If Jesus Christ made a perfect satisfaction for sin, that satisfaction covered the sin of unbelief and procured the saving grace of faith.

4. The Bible also asserts that Christ came to redeem his people, and only his people cf. Matt.1v21; Jn.10v11,14-16; Eph.5v25. “As the end precedes the means, if God sent his Son to save his people, if Christ gave himself for his Church, then his people were selected and present to the divine mind, in the order of thought, prior to the gift of Christ”³¹. So, writes Owen, “Christ did not die for any upon condition, *if they do*

²⁸ See J.I.Packer’s excellent monograph, *What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution* (Tyndale Biblical Theology Lecture, 1973; published in the Tyndale Bulletin 25/1974). Packer’s essay is a superb exposition of the divine intent in Christ’s atonement.

²⁹ Dabney, *Lectures*, 236

³⁰ John Owen, *Works*, 10.234-235

³¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II,324

believe; but he died for all God's elect, *that they should believe*, and believing have eternal life.”³²

William Perkins responded to the argument that by taking human nature at his incarnation, Christ identified with humanity in general and not the elect in particular, in a strikingly insightful way: “(e)very woman doth partake the humane nature of every man, yet is not every man each woman's husband, but hers alone, with whome by the covenant in matrimonie, hee is made one flesh: and in like sort Christ did by his incarnation...take also upon him mans nature, and that common to all Adams progenie, yet is he the husband of his Church alone, by another more peculiar conjunction, namely the bond of the spirit and of faith”.³³

Amyraut argued strongly, however, that certain Scriptures showed that the saving work of Christ was intended to save all, and that some for whom Christ died may ultimately perish (e.g. Isa.53:6, Jn.3:16, Roms.5:18, 2Cor.5:14, 1Tim.2:6; Roms.14:15, Hebs.10:29 and 2Pt.2:1). The latter two passages, Hebs.10:29 and 2Pt.2:1, are often raised to oppose definite atonement. It is probable that these verses refer to what apostates professed to be, rather than to what they actually were.³⁴

Furthermore, the so-called “all” or “world” passages, must be understood within the terms of their contexts.³⁵ For example, commenting on 1Tim.2:4, God, “wants all men

³² John Owen, *Works*, 10.235

³³ William Perkins, *The Workes of that famous and worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins. Newly corrected according to his owne Copies. With distinct Chapters, and Contents of every Booke, and two Tables of the whole: one, of the Matter and Questions, the other of choice Places of Scripture* (London: John Legatt & Cantrell Legge, Corrected ed., 1616-18) 3 vols, I:108; quoted in Jonathan D. Moore, *John Preston*, 34. Moore's chapter on William Perkins and Elizabethan Particularism is a careful and thorough consideration of the early Puritan understanding of the death of Christ.

³⁴ Philip Hughes' comment on Hebs.10:29 is to the point: “Week after week the apostate has partaken of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, thereby professing to look to Christ for the washing away of sin. But his faith has been simulated, not genuine, and his secession from the community of believers reveals that, far from thankfully trusting in the blood of Christ for forgiveness, he has profaned it, or, literally, counted it as common.” *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, 1977), 423. For a helpful exposition of 2Pt.2:1, see John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Banner of Truth ed. 1967), X,362ff. See also Dabney's response in *Lectures*, 525-526

³⁵ John Owen, somewhat exhaustively, considers all of these “universal” texts, *Works*, 10.359ff. J.I.Packer comments on Owen's exposition: “Owen's work is a constructive, broad-based biblical analysis of the heart of the gospel, and must be taken seriously as such. It may not be written off as a piece of special pleading for a traditional shibboleth, for nobody has a right to dismiss the doctrine of the limitedness of atonement as a monstrosity of Calvinistic logic until he has refuted Owen's proof that it is part of the uniform biblical presentation of redemption, clearly taught in plain text after plain text”, *Introductory Essay To John Owen's The Death Of Death In The Death Of Christ* (Dallas, nd),

to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”, Calvin comments, “Since the preaching of the Gospel brings life, he rightly concludes that God regards all men as being equally worthy to share in salvation. But he is speaking of classes and not of individuals...”³⁶. My point here is simply that Calvin did not interpret “all” and “world” univocally.

5. Paul teaches in Roms.8:29-30, that foreknowledge precedes predestination. God’s foreknowledge in this passage is not his knowing of all things before they actually come to be (though this, of course, is true). Paul clearly states that those he foreknew he predestined, and those he predestined he called, and those he called he justified, and those he justified he also glorified. Since all men are not predestined, called, justified and glorified, two things follow: First, Paul is speaking about “people”, not events. Secondly, he is not speaking about “all” people, but only those whom God will justify and then glorify. In Roms.8:29, Paul is speaking about God’s intimate, personal “knowing” of his chosen. Just as Adam “knew” Eve, so God knows lovingly and personally, his chosen people in Christ. If the mission of Christ is the divinely appointed means of securing the end of predestination, then predestination to eternal life precedes the gift of Christ. This unbreakable chain of grace exposes the fatal error of the Amyraldian scheme.

6. Finally, the love which sent God’s Son into the world to be the propitiation for sin, was not a general benevolence, but a saving, particular grace. There is, of course, a general benevolence in God. He has a providential care for all that he has made.³⁷ More than that, we know that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, whoever they are.³⁸ It is undeniable, however, that God has a selecting love towards his elect, a love that intends their salvation and secures their salvation. Passages such as Roms.5:8, Eph.5:25 and 1Jn.4:10 could not more clearly tell us that the love which

13.

³⁶ See also Calvin’s comment on 1John2:2

³⁷ Cf. Matt.5:44-45, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous.”

³⁸ Ezek.33:11

“gave” the Lord Jesus Christ was a particularistic love. It was directed to those for whom propitiation would be made. In other words, God’s love secured its intent and purpose, the actual saving of his elect.³⁹ No less is this understanding supported by a careful exegesis of the two classical references to God’s “universal love” in Jn.3:16 and 1Jn.2:2. In his profoundly insightful exposition of Jn.3:16, Benjamin Warfield makes the following comment:

“ (the “world”) is not here a term of extension so much as a term of intensity.

Its primary connotation is ethical, and the point of its employment is not to suggest that the world is so big that it takes a great deal of love to embrace it all, but that the world is so bad that it takes a great kind of love to love it at all, and much more to love it as God has loved it when he gave his son for it...the passage was not intended to teach, and certainly does not teach, that God loves all men alike and visits each and every one alike with the same manifestations of his love: and as little was it intended to teach or does it teach that his love is confined to a few especially chosen individuals selected out of the world. What it is intended to do is to arouse in our hearts a wondering sense of the marvel and mystery of the love of God for the sinful world – conceived here, not quantitatively but qualitatively as, in its very distinguishing characteristic, sinful.”⁴⁰

The significance of Warfield’s exposition is that it seeks to take seriously both the literary and theological contexts out of which John wrote his Gospel. He recognises that “world” means what the dominating context says it means. The same concerns will also shape our understanding of 1Jn.2:2, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”. The context (John arguing against “proto-gnostic opponents”⁴¹) would suggest that John is establishing the truth that Christ’s death was not for the Jews only, or for any other exclusive group. On the

³⁹ D.A. Carson has a mostly helpful section in his *The difficult doctrine of the love of God*, “The love of God and the intent of the atonement”, where he considers God’s intra-Trinitarian love, God’s love displayed in his providential care, God’s invitation and command to all human beings to repent and believe, God’s special love towards the elect, and God’s conditional love towards his covenant people as he speaks in the language of discipline (Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 2000), 84ff

⁴⁰ Benjamin B. Warfield, “God’s Immeasurable Love”, in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia, 1952), 516

⁴¹ D.A. Carson, *The difficult doctrine of the love of God* (IVP England, 2000), 87

contrary, “The propitiation which Jesus himself is extends in its virtue, efficacy and intent to all in every nation who through the apostolic witness came to have fellowship with the Father and the Son (see 1John1:5-7).Every nation and kindred and people and tongue is in this sense embraced in the propitiation.”⁴² It can hardly be doubted that John is also establishing that in the whole world there is but one propitiation for sin. In John Murray’s words, “The utmost bounds of human need and the utmost bounds of divine grace know no other propitiation – it was for the whole world.”⁴³

In his deeply insightful exposition of the Atonement⁴⁴, Hugh Martin argues that the first principle of Christ’s propitiatory priesthood “is effective in setting aside the theory of universal or indefinite atonement.”⁴⁵ In considering the nature of Christ’s priesthood, Martin establishes the obvious truth that “For whomsoever a Levitical priest sacerdotally officiated, he was completely successful – completely successful in averting the evil, or procuring the privilege, which his official action contemplated. And if the same thing is not admitted concerning the priesthood of Christ, then we are logically landed, in the *first* place, in this most offensive result, That Christ’s Priesthood is relatively inferior to that of Levi; and, in the *second* place, in this prodigious paralogism also, - that is, if the Levitical priesthood was typical of Christ’s, - namely, That uniform and complete success in the one is, by Divine wisdom, erected into a type and symbol of extensive failure in the other!”⁴⁶ If Levitical priests accomplished typically, yet perfectly, all that their office required of them, on behalf of God’s covenant people, are we to imagine that God’s Son, the perfect High Priest, represented many from who evil was not averted and for whom blessing was not secured? As Paul would have said, μη γενοιτο!

⁴² John Murray, *Redemption - Accomplished and Applied* (Banner of Truth ed. 1961), 73

⁴³ Murray, *Redemption*, 73

⁴⁴ Hugh Martin, *The Atonement: In Relation to The Covenant, The Priesthood, The Intercession of our Lord* (Knox Press edition, Edinburgh 1976).

⁴⁵ Hugh Martin, *The Atonement*, 63

⁴⁶ Hugh Martin, 66. “It is not the way of the Divine wisdom to set up failure as typical of success” (footnote to page 66)

The Amyraldian error is built therefore upon a false distinction. Those who hold this view argue that there is a distinction between “impetration” (i.e. intent) and the “application” (i.e. extent) of the work of Christ. Such a distinction is wholly untenable.⁴⁷ The intent and extent of Christ’s work are inseparable⁴⁸. Commenting on WCF V111.viii, “To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, John Murray writes, “This excludes any form of universal atonement. The redemption purchased includes...the purchase of an everlasting inheritance, and this is therefore said to be communicated to all for whom redemption was purchased. If all were included then all would be partakers of the everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, a position clearly denied in the Confession elsewhere.”⁴⁹

At its heart, the Amyraldian scheme is therefore irrational, imputing what appears to be a decretal confusion within the Godhead. B.B.Warfield posed this question: “How is it possible to contend that God gave his Son to die for all men, alike and equally; and at the same time to declare that when he gave his Son to die, he already intended that his death should not avail for all men alike and equally, but only for some which he would select (which...because he is God and there is no subsequence of time in his decrees, he had already selected) to be its beneficiaries?”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See the fine article by A Craig Troxel, *Amyraut at the Assembly* in *Presbyterion* 22/1, 1996, 43-5

⁴⁸ John Owen, *Works*, 10.222-236

⁴⁹ John Murray, *Studies in Theology* IV (Edinburgh, 1982), 256. Alex.F.Mitchell argues to the contrary: “Those who in modern times have pronounced most confidently that the more restricted view is exclusively intended (in Chapter 111.V1 of the WCF), seem to me to have unconsciously construed or interpreted the words, ‘neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, *and* saved, but the elect only’, as if they had run, ‘neither are any other redeemed by Christ, *or* effectually called, *or* justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only’. But these two statements do not necessarily have the same meaning.” (Mitchell and Struthers, *Minutes*, Introduction lvii). It is interesting, to say no more, that George Gillespie proposed that the chapter on God’s Decree be so framed that “every one may enjoy his own sense” *Minutes of Oct.20, 1645* in Mitchell and Struthers, 151). Edward Reynolds further argued, “Let us not put in disputes and scholastical things into a Confession of Faith; I think they are different decrees in our manner of conceptions” (*Minutes of Oct.20, 1645*), 151. B.B.Warfield was, however, adamant, that the Confession’s final statements definitively rejected Amyraldian views, adopting “language which was openly framed to exclude them” (B.B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (New York, 1931), 143. Warfield’s chapter on *The Making of the Westminster Confession, and Especially of its Chapter on the Decree of God*(*The Westminster Assembly*, pp.75-151) , is worthy of careful study. He vigorously rejects Mitchell’s exposition of 111.V1.

⁵⁰ Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation, op.cit.*, 94, quoted in Reymond *op.cit*, 478

It is undeniable that one of the major concerns of Amyraldians is to provide a “reasonable” ground for the universal offer of the gospel. Edmund Calamy, one of the Westminster divines, who defended a form of universal redemption, expressed his conviction that “If the covenant of grace is to be preached to all, then Christ redeemed, in some sense, all – both elect and reprobate”.⁵¹ This position was challenged and refuted within the Westminster Assembly. George Gillespie for one rebutted Calamy’s position:

“He (Calamy) conceives the ground of this universal offer is the institution of Christ dying...he(re) is the mistake(e). The *voluntas decreti* (will of the decree) and *mandati* (of the commandment) are not distinguished...A man is bound to believe that he ought to believe, and that by faith he shall be saved. It is his duty. The command doth not hold out God’s intentions...”⁵²

This highlights the traditional Reformed understanding of relating God’s revealed will to his decretive will in the free offer of the gospel. Commenting on 2Pt.3:9, Calvin writes, “This is His wondrous love towards the human race, that He desires all men to be saved...It could be asked here, if God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God, by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of his loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps those...whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world.” “This means”, says John Murray, “that there is a will to the realisation of what he has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which he has not been pleased to decree. This is indeed mysterious...”⁵³ This ties in with Ez.33:11. Clearly the will or desire that is revealed is not of the same “kind” as the will or desire that eternally decrees. Truly, we see through a glass darkly, but what are perplexities to us are resolved in God. It is a wonderful testimony to the truth of God’s revealed word that it

⁵¹ *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, op cit 155

⁵² Quoted in Troxel, *op cit*, 53. See also William Cunningham’s judicious comments in *The Reformers*, 401-402

⁵³ Murray, 4.131

leaves us out of our depth. There are, of necessity, insoluble mysteries, because we are dealing with divine revelation! It should not in the least surprise us that when Paul climaxes his astonishing exposition of the gospel of the grace of God at the end of Roms.11, he breaks out in self-confessed doxological humility, “O the depth of the riches...”. True theology always takes us out of our depth. Theological reflection’s first resting place is always doxology.

Amyraldians actually make their understanding of the nature and extent of the atonement dependent on their understanding of the universal proclamation of the gospel. But surely, wrote John Murray, “The nature, intention and extent of the work of Christ on the cross should be primary in one’s theology, especially in determining its appropriate proclamation”.⁵⁴ It is not, however, theological method that is principally at issue, important though a biblical methodology is. What is principally at issue is God’s intent in sending his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ “to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but also for the sins of the whole world”.⁵⁵ The Scriptures could not be clearer: God sent his Son to lay down his life for his sheep – not for his sheep and countless goats!

While it would be right to admire the desire of Amyraut to exalt the greatness of God’s love; the truth is, that in seeking to do so he radically diminishes God’s love, power, effectiveness and unity. “The choice here is not between limited and unlimited atonement, but between an effective atonement, limited in breadth to the redeemed, and a universal atonement limited to the point of ineffectuality.”⁵⁶ What do we mean when we say that by his atoning death, the Lord Jesus Christ made atonement for sin?

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Calvin’s comment on this (often disputed) verse is worthy of repeating: “here the question may be asked as to how the sins of the whole world have been expiated. I pass over the dreams of the fanatics, who make this a reason to extend salvation to all the reprobate...Such a monstrous idea is not worth refuting...John’s purpose was only to make this blessing common to the whole Church. Therefore, under the word “all” he does not include the reprobate, but refers to all who would believe and those who were scattered through the various regions of the earth. For, as is meet, the grace of Christ is really made clear when it is declared to be the only salvation of the world”.

⁵⁶ Roger Nicole, “Amyraldianism”, in *The Encyclopaedia of Christianity* ed. Edwin M Palmer (Wilmington, 1964), 191

Did he, truly? Or did he only place sinners, elect and reprobate alike, in a state of salvability, waiting the discriminating, effectual operation of the Holy Spirit to give the elect saving faith? The Scriptures at least are clear: “After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven”.⁵⁷

The focus of this study has concentrated on the Amyraldian errors in relation to God’s decrees and the work of Christ. There is, however, perhaps an even more serious and fundamental error at the heart of Amyraldianism. The Amyraldian scheme appears to introduce a disjunction within the intentions and operations of the Trinity. In the Amyraldian scheme, what the Father intends and purposes, the Son and Spirit fail to accomplish! God the Father’s intention (universal redemption), is not effectively realised in the work of the Son and the Spirit. Roger Nicole maintains that Amyraut’s scheme introduces “an intolerable disjunction in the divine purpose. This disjunction in fact threatens the unity of the Trinitarian relationship, for it would show Christ intending to die for those whom the Father has not given to Him, and whom the Holy Spirit will not regenerate.”⁵⁸ Amyraut’s scheme flies in the face of the theological commonplace *opera ad extra Trinitatis indivisa sunt* (the external works of the Trinity cannot be divided). The Trinity operates in perfect personal harmony. From the Covenant of Redemption, where Father, Son and Holy Spirit acted in holy concert, the purposes of the triune God have been perfectly and agreeably fulfilled. In the Amyraldian scheme, Amyraldianism confesses a Trinity at odds with itself. This is the foundational error of Arminianism.⁵⁹

Roger Nicole has argued that “Amyraut thought he could establish a bridge that would make it easier for Roman Catholic people to embrace the Reformed faith. He seemed to remain oblivious to the fact that most bridges carry two-way traffic: he

⁵⁷ Hebrews 1:3

⁵⁸ Roger Nicole, “Amyraldianism”, 191

⁵⁹ In this connection, the discussion on “The Importance of the Trinity” by Carl Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 129-150, is worthy of careful consideration.

unwittingly made it easier for Reformed people to turn to Romanism. He may deserve to be called, as Professor Georges Serr expressed it, ‘the gravedigger of the French Reformed Church’.⁶⁰

Amyraldianism is not confessional Calvinism, even in a so-called “modified” state. This was certainly the opinion of Pierre du Moulin, perhaps the most able of Amyraut’s “Calvinistic” opponents. He wrote, *Even though the doctrine of Monseieur Amyraut changes the very nature of God, of the Law and of the Gospel; makes God changeable and hesitant in his decisions and incapable of bringing his plans effectually to pass; forges for us a form of saving faith different from that of which the Gospel speaks; teaches that the reprobate can be saved if they so wish; that the Law offers us only earthly promises; provides two different predestinations to salvation and two redemptions; and teaches that all men have the natural capacity to believe and to convert themselves; nonetheless, in spite of such enormous differences, the partisans of this new doctrine affirm that they differ from us only with regard to method and certain expression.*⁶¹ However exaggerated du Moulin’s assessment is considered to be, he points up the “enormous differences” that divide Calvinism from Amyraldianism. It is right that Amyraldianism has its own name. It may continue to lay claim to the mantle of Calvinistic orthodoxy, but its claim will always exceed its grasp. Authentic Calvinism continues to assert with the compilers of the Westminster Confession, “To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them; and revealing unto them, in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation”.⁶²

⁶⁰ Roger Nicole in *WTJ*, 54, No.2 (Fall 1992), p396. Pierre Courthial makes a similar point: “The period after 1633 was the period of the decline of Calvinism in France. As a Provencal proverb says, ‘the rotting of a fish begins with the head’, and under the regrettable influence of theologians of the Academy of Saumur, such as Moise Amyraut (1596-1664), Louis Cappel (1585-1658), and Joshue de la Place (1596-1655), the faith of a growing number of pastors and churches was impregnated with Arminianism”, “The Golden Age of Calvinism in France, 1533-1633” in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World* ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids, 1982), 76

⁶¹ Pierre du Moulin, *Ecclaircissements des doctrines Saumeriennes* (Geneve, 1649), Preface quoted by Jean-Marc Berthoud in a review of *Calvinus. Authentic Calvinism* by Alan C Clifford in *Christianity and Scociety*

⁶² Westminster Confession of Faith V111.V111

Hypothetical universalism reduces the propitiation of the Son of God to a potentiality. The cross actually achieves nothing, it only makes sinners potentially salvable. Definite atonement, or better simply “atonement”, truly glories in the “finished work” of Christ. Yes, the Saviour “ever lives to intercede for us”, but his intercession is but the continual presentation of his perfect atonement before his Father’s throne. At the close of his magisterial treatment of the death of Christ, John Owen wrote these words, “...for a close, I desire the reader to peruse that one place, Rom.viii.32-34; and I make no doubt but that he will, if not infected with the leaven of the error opposed, conclude with me, that if there be any comfort, any consolation, any assurance, any rest, any peace, any joy, any refreshment, any exultation of spirit, to be obtained here below, it is all to be had in the blood of Jesus long since shed, and his intercession still continued; as both are united and appropriated to the elect of God, by the precious effects and fruits of them both drawn to believe and preserved in believing, to the obtaining of an immortal crown of glory, that shall not fade away.”⁶³

Soli deo gloria.

Ian Hamilton, Cambridge Presbyterian Church, April 2003

⁶³ John Owen, *Works*, 10.421