

# New Calvinism is not like Calvin

## Preface

I have mentioned the New Calvinism movement in a few papers, pointing out that it has severe deviations from consistent, historic Calvinism. It is nothing but a modern corruption, based on dumbing down, added to ecumenism in order to amass large congregations. In this paper I want to identify the specific areas of contrast with the true sort of Calvinism that John Calvin himself developed and which was advanced by his successors. In fact, the movement has less to do with Calvin himself than Jonathan Edwards and Andrew Fuller mediated by John Piper.

To avoid re-writing certain issues, I have adapted some sections from earlier papers. [See 'resources'.]

## Introduction: A short history

### It is recent

New Calvinism is a recent American phenomenon, but it is having a growing impact on young pastors in the UK.<sup>1</sup> In a nutshell, it is an attempt of some to establish a movement on more solid doctrinal foundations than is common in mainstream Charismatic evangelicalism.

Some have suggested that the movement is now declining in America, but Time Magazine has included it in third place in a list of ten ideas changing the world right now.

In America it emerged from dissatisfaction with Arminian experiences; in fact very many members came out of the Jesus People Movement revival of the early 70s that have grown tired of cults and aberrant teaching, seeking a better foundation but wanting to maintain a lively church life. Instead of turning to Dispensationalism or Liberalism these folk have elected to lean upon Calvinism to establish their orthodoxy. However, they also choose to soften certain edges of Calvinistic doctrine to popularise their Gospel preaching; true Calvinism would alienate many in their congregations.

### John Piper

A chief instigator is John Piper, a long time soft-Calvinist, whose books on desiring and enjoying God not only led to fame but also became a focal point for all these people. The fact that Piper loved God so clearly, that he was rooted in conservative theology, plus his openness to Charismatic practices led them to trust his Calvinistic credentials and seek to know more of his theology.

### Wayne Grudem

Some cite the popularity of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* (IVP) as a factor leading to New Calvinism. Charismatics have had few solid dogmatics, and none that were widely popular. Grudem's systematic filled this gap being a confessional Calvinist but also espousing Sign and Wonders Charismaticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as Joel Virgo, leader of CCK in Brighton, one of the country's largest Charismatic churches. Virgo, in turn, influences many young people.

### **It is disparate**

It is not a homogenous, solid movement but rather a very varied, disparate collection of churches and conventions containing many views that often contradict each other. Frequently the connections are due to personalities rather than convictions. Thus some of the leaders have very rigid, institutional large churches; others lead very informal large churches; others lead collections of small house churches, while yet others are pastors in community churches.

The movement has been better described as a series of interconnected smaller movements, that are self-generated by coalitions, networks, and conferences; including 'Together for the Gospel', the 'Gospel Coalition', the 'Acts 29 network', and 'Sovereign Grace Ministries'.

### **It claims to be Calvinistic and Puritan**

They affirm a distinction from Arminianism, but in practice many of their Gospel tenets and practices are very close to Arminianism. Calvinistic books and Puritan preachers have become fashionable in America in recent years, and the movement leans upon this, claiming to follow in the footsteps of these worthies. However, we will see that this is false.

### **It is semi-Charismatic**

New Calvinists reach out to Charismatics and develop various forms of moderate Charismatic practices in their churches, such as Charismatic worship with rock bands, in order to be attractive to the young, presenting worship as an entertainment. Indeed, several key leaders in the movement, such as CJ Mahaney, were, for many years, radical Charismatic pastors who came to a point where they needed firmer doctrinal foundations than are found in most Charismatic churches.

### **Characters**

New Calvinism, being a diverse movement, encompasses a wide variety of preachers in their conferences. These include:

- **John Piper:** Desiring God Ministries. Student of Fuller Theological Seminary which advocated a liberal theology and a weakened view of Scripture. Indebted to Daniel Fuller who denied the full and inerrant inspiration of Scripture. Also inspired by CS Lewis who was not evangelical.
- **Mark Dever:** senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington DC.
- **Tim Keller:** leader of Redeemer church in New York. Co-founder (with DA Carson) of The Gospel Coalition. Promoter of many heretical teachings and practices. His books have appeared in the top 10 of the New York Times best-seller list.
- Gabe Lyons; founder of Q Ideas, a 'learning community' to mobilise Christians to advance the common good in society.
- **Albert (Al) Mohler:** President of Southern Baptist Theological College, Louisville, USA. Has worked several times with, and supported, the compromised Billy Graham, who spoke at his inauguration. A signatory of the ecumenical Manhattan Declaration. Endorses hip-hop culture. Has been on the board of Focus on the Family, the chief self-esteem organisation.
- Joshua Harris: pastor of Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland after CJ Mahaney in 2004.
- Michael Goheen: Director of Theological Education at Missional Training Centre, Phoenix. Professor of Missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- **CJ Mahaney:** formerly a Charismatic church leader in partnership with Larry Tomczak of Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland and co-founder of People of Destiny International. After an acrimonious split with Tomczak he became interested in

Calvinism and Reformed theology. Senior Pastor of Sovereign Grace Church in Louisville. In 2011 took voluntary leave of absence after charges of abuse levelled against him by a former Sovereign Grace pastor, then re-instated. Former president of Sovereign Grace Ministries; he resigned in 2013 after lawsuits regarding abuse. Popular leader in New Calvinism.

- **Mark Driscoll**: Pastor of Mars Hill Church, Seattle. Founder of Acts 29 church planting network, which has planted 400 churches. He is the world's most downloaded pastor. Founder of Resurgence, a theological co-operative producing church resources. Spoke to 400 evangelical men at the London Men's Convention at the Albert Hall, London, in May 2011. Driscoll is renowned for perverse, vulgar language, using sexual innuendoes and telling crude stories. His church website even provided links to two pornographic websites. He once preached in church wearing a t-shirt saying, '*Body piercing saved my life*'. Other T-shirts said, 'Jesus is my homeboy', 'Mary is my homegirl', a skull and cross bones, and an image of drag queen Jesus (!). I feel uncomfortable even recording this in writing. He has mocked Biblical characters ('*John the Baptist is a freak*'). He once said that Genesis is '*filled with redneck comedy ... like all of Genesis takes place in a trailer park*'. In his book *Vintage Jesus* (2008) he says that '*Jesus ... needs Praxil ... then he ignores his own mom ... Jesus needs sensitivity training*' and much more in this vein. Driscoll is thus irreverent and blasphemous. Wayne Grudem and John Piper praised this book. Driscoll has also supported tattoos saying, '*Jesus loves tattoos*' and his church supports tattoo artists.
- James MacDonald: senior pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, Chicago.
- Matt Chandler: lead pastor at The Village Church, Dallas, president of Acts 29 Network.
- Frances Chang; former teaching pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California. Founder of Eternity Bible College.
- **Kevin DeYoung**: pastor in the Reformed Church in America denomination.
- **Ligon Duncan III**: Presbyterian church leader. President of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.
- John Armstrong: retired pastor and church planter. Adjunct professor of evangelism at Wheaton College. Prolific author. Founder of ACT 3. Compromised by New Perspective on Paul doctrine.
- John MacArthur: senior pastor of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California; founder of 'Grace To You'. President of The Master's College and The Master's Seminary. MacArthur is a confused Reformed-Dispensationalist who does not even understand that his Dispensationalism is at odds with Calvinism; he has also equivocated on Limited Atonement and denies double predestination. For a long time he denied the eternal generation of the Son until confronted.
- Phil Johnson: subordinate leader in John MacArthur's church. Executive Director of Grace To You.
- On the outermost fringe are RC Sproul [senior minister at St Andrew's, Sanford, Florida; founder of Ligonier Ministries; probably the most conservative Calvinist in this list]. Don Carson [Carson is theological professor and a very helpful writer but has made some un-Reformed statements and unwise associations]. Wayne Grudem [noted Charismatic-Reformed theologian].<sup>2</sup>

Main characters are in bold.

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<sup>2</sup>. Armstrong supports the New Perspective on Paul.

## Organisations

- Together for the Gospel
- Desiring God Ministries (John Piper).
- The Gospel Coalition: founded by Tim Keller and DA Carson. Claims to be a Reformed collection of American leaders dedicated to the Biblical Gospel.
- Acts 29 church planting network (Driscoll, Chandler).
- Sovereign Grace Ministries (CJ Maheny).
- 9 Marks (Dever).
- Q Ideas (Lyons).
- Together for the Gospel conference (Mahaney, Duncan, Mohler, and Dever).
- Redeemer City to City church planting network (Keller).
- Churches Helping Churches (founded by Driscoll and MacDonald).

## The essence of New Calvinism is:

- A disparate movement with no single key leader.
- A weakened form of historic Calvinism that softens 'harsh' doctrines.
- A universalising of the Gospel, despite an emphasis on election.
- An openness to moderate Charismatic church practices and doctrines.
- A moderate ecumenism.
- Embracing the world and its cultural forms.
- Embracing historic mystical ideas.
- Seeks to change the world.

## Two distinct forms

### *Neo-Puritanism*

The leaders of this aspect are John Piper and Mark Driscoll (though Driscoll hardly exhibits the character of historic Puritanism<sup>3</sup>). The focus of this movement is supposed to be the sovereignty of God in salvation with an emphasis on evangelism. The most influential theologian quoted is Jonathan Edwards as mediated by Piper's writings.

An evaluation of their churches and methods show that in reality it is not Puritanism but the principles of the Church Growth movement that represents their ideology. For example, the Puritans adhered to the regulative principle in church services (see later) but they advocate seeker-sensitive approaches<sup>4</sup> and Charismatic practices – the complete opposite of the Puritan position.

### *Neo-Calvinists*

The leaders of this aspect are Tim Keller and Gabe Lyons. The focus of this group is the sovereignty of God over creation emphasising the cultural mandate and the restoration of creation. For Keller, the preaching of the Gospel and the establishment of the church is not

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<sup>3</sup> For instance he has been repeatedly criticised for vulgarity of speech and speaking on inappropriate subjects in crude ways, even referring to intimate relations with his wife. He is called, 'The cussing pastor', who goes out of his way to celebrate drinking beer, tattoos and who hosts rock concerts in his church building.

<sup>4</sup> Driscoll has denied this but his church practice demonstrates it. If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck and walks like a duck, it is a duck even if you call it a swan.

the most urgent church function, rather it is making this world a better place. The historic theologian they look most to is Abraham Kuyper (see later).

This sharp distinction between God's sovereignty over salvation as compared to his sovereignty over creation is arbitrary and unnecessary. It is a human fiction that leads to error. God is sovereign over everything and we do not need to pit one aspect against another and build a theology on that difference.

The essential thing about the divine decree is that God has an eternal plan to create and redeem a people for his Son to be the reflection of his divine character. Thus God is sovereign over everything that contributes to that end: creation, history, salvation, judgment, the end of the world and so on. Everything is subsumed under the revealing of the sons of God.

## **Essential foundations**

### **Key point 1: Word & Spirit**

A succinct way to describe New Calvinism would be their emphasis upon the Word and the Spirit; you often hear them talk about being 'Reformed Charismatics'. They believe that they are Bible-centric but have allied this to an emphasis upon the spiritual experience that is the foundation of Charismatic theology. Thus they are non-cessationists, contradicting traditional Reformed theology.

They would distance themselves from Pentecostals that are Wesleyan Arminians. They may distance themselves from Dispensationalists (though, in practice, they are often linked with Dispensationalists and at least one leader is a confessed Dispensationalist; that is how confused they are). They also diverge from traditional Calvinistic proclaimers of sovereign grace who disparage Charismaticism.

### **Key point 2: Sovereign grace**

Another key point is a proclamation of sovereign grace, but not the same sovereign grace that Calvin espoused. They like to emphasise grace and yet fail to understand what it is. God's sovereign grace is manifested through the doctrines of grace (the five points of Calvinism). However, New Calvinists actually deny some or all of these points, and thus deny God's sovereign grace in reality.

### **Key point 3: cultural relevance**

One of the things they pride themselves on is being relevant to the world today. They see traditional Reformed churches as being out of touch with the modern age and easily dismissed by modern people. Thus they seek to embrace methods which make them attractive to contemporary folk, such as seeker-sensitive strategies (several would deny this but they do it in practice). The truth is that they are worldly.

They are also very quick to utilise any new technology that can help their marketing strategies, such as Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, YouTube and such like. In fact, most of them utilise PowerPoint and film clips in their preaching. Hardly any church leader preaches without an IT technician helping him. Sometimes they will incorporate drama or characters dressed up in strange gear to illustrate a point. All of this serves to require being entertaining as a technique of preaching.

## Doctrine

### God's sovereign glory

New Calvinists claim to seek God's glory and Piper in particular talks about glorifying God and enjoying him (based upon the Westminster Larger Catechism).<sup>5</sup> However, we can only glorify God when we speak and act according to his revealed word. The New Calvinists do not do this.

For example: Tim Keller claims that God, '*does not seek his own glory but the glory of others*'.<sup>6</sup> This is utterly contrary to Scripture. God is the only perfect, infinite being and thus he must seek his own glory. There are no others that have perfection; to seek their glory would be to diminish God. 'Give glory to the LORD God', (Jos 7:19). 'I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another', (Isa 42:8).

Many New Calvinists affirm (along with many evangelicals) that the essential glorious attribute of God is love. This is not true at all. The phrase, 'God is love' (1 Jn 4:8, 16) is referring to the communal loving fellowship that exists at the heart of the Trinity. However, the essential attribute of God is not love but holiness. Only holiness is attributed to God in a threefold proclamation.<sup>7</sup> The context of the whole Bible reveals that the essential attribute of God is his holiness. Thus God, who can only act perfectly good, can express himself in acts that are far from loving in the eyes of men; such as the genocide of the Canaanites, the death of Agag, or the creation of hell. These are not perceived as loving acts, but in the holiness of God they are perfectly good and just.

### Denial of reprobation

New Calvinists claim to teach election. They wax lyrical about the fact that the saints are called by God in eternity and chosen in Christ. However, they deny double predestination and reprobation, both of which are clearly taught by Calvin and are mentioned in Reformed standards.<sup>8</sup>

It is extremely strange that they deny reprobation if they accept election. At least it is more consistent to deny sovereign unconditional election as Arminians do. Think about it logically; if you have one lump of dough and choose (elect) one piece of it, then you have rejected the rest of it. If you have ten marbles and choose all the green ones, you have also deliberately rejected all the blue, yellow and red ones. You cannot have election without reprobation.

The doctrines of election and reprobation together form double predestination. Traditional, consistent Calvinism has always taught double predestination. Whether or not some individual supposed Calvinists demurred on this, historic, confessional Calvinism has taught it. The chairman of the Westminster Assembly (William Twisse) was outspoken in his adherence to double predestination. The greatest English original Reformers and Puritans, such as William Perkins and William Ames taught it openly.

Did Calvin himself teach it? Without any doubt he did. Now occasionally someone will produce a quote from Calvin that seems to deny this, such as a short comment in his

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<sup>5</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism 1. Q. What is the chief and highest end of man? A. Man's Chief and highest end is to glorify God,(1) and fully to enjoy him forever.(2) (1)Rm 11:36; 1 Cor 10:31 (2)Ps 73:24-28; Jn 17:21-23.

<sup>6</sup> *The Reason for God*, p218.

<sup>7</sup> Isa 6:3, 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!' Rev 4:8, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'

<sup>8</sup> Such as Westminster Confession of Faith, 3:6 and 7.

extempore preaching in Peter's letters. Everyone gets carried away in Gospel preaching and our words in this improvised context should not be our measure; we must measure Calvin by his careful written statements in theological and polemical writings. These clearly affirm a belief in double predestination.<sup>9</sup> Some examples follow.

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.<sup>10</sup>

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.]<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup>

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).<sup>13</sup>

The Biblical case for reprobation appears from cover to cover in the Bible. Only fools, compromisers or people that do not read their Bible carefully can fail to see this; such as:

For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath. **Job 21:30**

The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. **Prov 16:4**

*What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.

**Rm 9:22-23.**

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. **Jude 4**

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. **1 Pt 2:8**

The chief Reformed standards also affirm that God only loves the elect and hates the reprobate, such as *The Canons of the Synod of Dort*: First Head (Predestination), Article 10; Second Head, Article 9; Third & Fourth Head, Article 7.

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<sup>9</sup> See Calvin's Calvinism, "Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God & the Secret Providence of God"; RFPA, SGU, Eerdmans and other publishers. There are also clear statements in the last edition of his Institutes of the Christian Religion.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> John Calvin, Theological Treatises, Library of Christian Classics, 'Articles Concerning Predestination, p179.

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, Institutes 3:24,17.

<sup>13</sup> Calvin's *New Testament Commentaries*: Romans and Thessalonians, pp.207-208.

### *Other quotes*

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.<sup>14</sup>

The plain doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is that God has no purpose of salvation for all.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

New Calvinists deny both the obvious words of the Bible, the clear statements of Calvin and the words in the confessions by denying reprobation. In denying this they are besmirching God's glory and also calling God a liar. God is glorified in his reprobation of those condemned just as much as his election of saints. It is not for man to change this to make it more palatable to sinners.

### **Affirmation of two contradictory wills in God**

As with many of the points in this paper it would require a whole paper to cover this issue properly. I will try to do it concisely.

This idea is a response to the following questions: Does God really desire and intend the salvation of all people? How does this agree with the clear teaching that God only saves the elect? If God wants to save everyone, why isn't everyone saved? New Calvinists either aver or imply that God has two contradictory wills in order to be able to say that God does desire the salvation of all people but he only elects some (this is basic Amyraldism).

Some defend their universalism by affirming a paradox in the will of God to maintain that two opposite things are both true; thus God loves everybody but then he later hates some; he both loves and hates the same people. This denies God's attributes, such as his immutability. A true paradox only seems to be contradictory or senseless; in the end its reasoning is true, but surprising. The affirmation of Amyraldians is a paradox that is actually contradictory – thus is not a paradox at all but an irrational statement.

Others distinguish two loves in God: he loves the elect unconditionally but he loves mankind generally with a lesser love. This also denies God's attribute of perfection. Teachers have no excuse for making such things up that have no Biblical foundation and

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<sup>14</sup> William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, Sutton Courtenay Press (1969) p250-251.

<sup>15</sup> JH Thornwell, *Works*, Vol 2, p161.

<sup>16</sup> Thornwell, *Works*, Vol 2, p162.

<sup>17</sup> William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh (1962), p398-399.

ruin God's attributes; it is blasphemy to do this. How can men teach that God loves everyone when his word clearly says, 'The wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone', (Ps 11:5-6); there are very many such statements. The Bible shows that God hates individuals (Rm 9:13), certain types of sinner (Ps 5:6), groups of heretics (Rev 2:8, 15) and so on.

However, many, such as John Piper, openly advocate and defend the idea that God has two wills that are at odds with each other. Piper says that there is a secret will in God, which only wills the elect to be saved, but that there is a revealed will in God which asserts that he loves all men, sends Christ to die for them and desires the salvation of all. Of course this posits a contradiction in God that he loves those his word says he hates; he desires the salvation of those he has damned; that he favours those he has not chosen; that he gives grace to those he decreed would never receive it and so on.

They do this to make an apologetic for their erroneous ideas about the universal Free Offer (see later). They describe these as a) the secret will of God to elect some to life (though this is not a secret); and b) the revealed will of God to preach the Gospel to every man.<sup>18</sup>

This scheme is to enable them to preach that God loves everybody and that Jesus died for everybody. Yes God only elects some, but we don't know who they are, that is a secret, so we preach that God loves all. This is basically an Arminian Gospel stuck on to a Calvinistic theology.

However, the problem with this is simple. How can God command his servants to preach lies? Why would he tell us to preach something that he knows is not true? Why would God tell us to preach his love and atonement for the very people that he had selected to eternal damnation? Why would God encourage us to tell a reprobate person that God loves him, when God knows that he certainly does not love him? Why would God will some to eternal life, and then will his mercy and love to be preached to those he has condemned?

When a preacher proclaims to a crowd that God loves them all and that Jesus died for them all, he is blaspheming God, pure and simple. He is lying about God's attributes and dishonouring him publicly. No wonder few people are being saved today and why so many supposed conversions are spurious.

#### *What is the correct method?*

We are to follow the methods used by the apostles and that is to demand the repentance of everybody (Acts 17:30). [It is interesting that conviction of sin and repentance are not emphasised by New Calvinists.] Every man is to be told to bow the knees to his creator and repent for his sin and rebellion. In this proclamation God takes over; only the elect will actually repent; only the elect will be given grace by the Spirit to believe. Only the elect will be given conviction of sin. That is the nature of grace – it is to the elect alone.

We do not preach lies but the truth. Everyone who comes to Christ will be saved; but only the elect will actually respond. Everybody who wills can come but only the elect are given the will to come.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sound theologians have often proposed two wills in God as seen from the human perspective; God's will is simple and unified but to us it appears to be complex. The best explanation is God's decretive will (what God eternally decrees) and God's preceptive will (what God commands). For example: election is decreed and only those chosen will repent; however, God commands that all men must repent, even though the reprobate cannot. God hardened Pharaoh's heart but he commanded Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. The difference is that there is no contradiction between these two aspects of God's will; God's attributes are not compromised by them.

The apostolic method is true; the New Calvinist method of basing Gospel preaching on two contradictory wills in God is false. The apostolic method glorifies God; the New Calvinist method blasphemes God.

### *Calvin's view*

Nothing is less accordant with the nature of God that he should have a double will ... He does not in himself will opposites.<sup>20</sup>

### *Other quotes*

Even the favourite of New Calvinists, Abraham Kuyper, condemned this idea of Piper's (which he got from Andrew Fuller):

[To] ascribe to God something actually absurd by placing at the same time, in the very same decree, yes and no, ... should be resisted with all our strength.<sup>21</sup>

God cannot be said without absurdity to will and not will the same thing in the same sense; but God may be said to command a thing which he does not decree shall be done.<sup>22</sup>

The essence of God, being a most absolute, pure, simple act or substance, his will consequently can be but simply one: whereof we ought to make neither division nor distinction.<sup>23</sup>

## **Amyraldism**

What is Amyraldism? It is one of the errors that arose from the Saumur theological school in France about 60 years after Calvin died. It takes its name from the professor at this school Moises Amyraut (or Moses Amyrald, 1596-1664), but the idea first appeared with his teacher, the Scot John Cameron.

It seeks to combine universalism with particularism in salvation. Its theological name is Hypothetical Universalism; which means it teaches a hypothetical universalism that is, in the end, denied by divine election. In a nutshell it teaches that God loves everyone and that God desires to save everyone (two chief Arminian doctrines) but in the end, since sinners do not believe this offer, only the elect are actually saved.<sup>24</sup> Thus it enables preachers to preach that God loves everyone and that Jesus died for everyone, even though only the elect will actually respond. Basically, it is a complete nonsense and irrational (which is why it is hypothetical). However, most of the Calvinists (and New Calvinists) around today are actually Amyraldians (see 'Free Offer').

<sup>19</sup> The idea that if God commands man to do something then he must have given him the ability to do it was the basic premise of Pelagius in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, who was condemned by Augustine. This idea was carried on in Semi-Pelagians (such as Arminians) and revivalists (such as Finney). The Gospel commands men to do what they cannot do because of total depravity. However, God gives his chosen people power. In the same way Jesus commanded sick people to do what they couldn't do (such as for cripples to walk); he then gave them power to miraculously achieve the command (cripples then walked). This illustrates the power of the word of Christ in the Gospel. Those dead in sins start living. New Calvinists, deluded by Arminian teachings, do not understand this.

<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, Institutes 3:24,17.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Kuyper, Particular Grace, RFPA, (2001) p80.

<sup>22</sup> JH Thornwell, Works, Vol 2, p164.

<sup>23</sup> John Owen, Works, Vol 10, p44 Banner of Truth Trust (1967).

<sup>24</sup> Thus there are two elections; the first is hypothetical - of everyone, which does not succeed because men do not believe; then a second election of a few that does.

Amyraldism was rejected by Calvinists and condemned by theologians such as Francis Turretin, John Owen, John Kennedy and BB Warfield<sup>25</sup> to name but a few. The Helvetic Consensus<sup>26</sup> was written specifically to condemn the errors of Saumur.

### **Many of them deny limited atonement**

This is a crucial issue and one that proves these people are not Calvinists but Amyraldians and Free Offer men.

Atonement is connected to God's love. When people preach that God loves everyone and that Jesus died for all men they are denying two critical points of the five Calvinistic points of the doctrine of grace – unconditional election of some and limited atonement (or particular redemption) of some. God cannot love those he has selected to reprobation or he denies his own attributes. Jesus cannot die for those that God has chosen to be condemned or his work is imperfect and wasted and he ceases to be 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. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past. Eccles 3:14-15

If God loves someone he loves them forever; from eternity past to eternity future. He cannot stop loving someone or he ceases to be God. If God condemns someone to reprobation, they are forever reprobated. That cannot change or God ceases to be God.

Jesus only dies for the elect; for the same people that he intercedes for – his sheep, his people, his little flock, the few that are chosen. The effect of Jesus' death is as broad as those he loves, as inclusive as those he prays for: '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). Jesus does not pray for the world but only for the elect. Likewise he only dies for the elect.

### *John Piper's universalism*

*Most people who, who are having a hard time, they're not all Arminians, having a hard time with limited atonement. That is the atonement that effects something special for a limited group.*

*I think I know what they all mean, and I'm going to quote Millard Erickson's theology because I think he's right. He says:*

*'God intended the atonement to make salvation possible for all persons. Christ died for all persons but this atoning death becomes effective only when accepted by the individual. While this is the view of all Arminians, it is also the position of some Calvinists, who are sometimes referred to as sublapsarians.'*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In 'The Plan of Salvation'.

<sup>26</sup> The Helvetic Consensus [Formula Consensus Helvetic] (1675) was drawn up by Johann Heinrich Heidegger, after discussion with others, to combat the false doctrines arising from the French Academy of Saumur, especially Amyraldism. In opposition to Dort, the Saumur school taught: a) the hypothetical universalism of Moise Amyraut (Amyraldism; that is Calvinism without Limited Atonement). b) The denial of the verbal inspiration of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament (taught by Louis Cappel). c) The rejection of the immediate imputation of Adam's sin (Josué de la Place). To counter the confusion in the churches, particularly amongst theological students, the Swiss produced this document affirming historical Calvinism. It was added as an appendix to the Helvetic Confession. In later times political necessity caused its decline.

<sup>27</sup> *Christian Theology*, chapter 39, p829. Piper quotes it incorrectly, the proper quote is given here. Erickson rejects Limited Atonement and argues against it the rest of the chapter. Erickson writes, 'In addition, we must consider statements like 2 Peter 2:1, which affirms that some for whom Christ died do perish.' (*Christian Theology*, chapter 39, p834). 'We conclude that the hypothesis of universal atonement is able to account for a larger segment of the biblical witness with less distortion than is the hypothesis of limited atonement.' (*Christian Theology*, chapter 39, p835.)

*If that's the view of all Arminians I totally agree with it. No qualifications. So if you say "did christ die for all people" and I say "what do you mean for all people?" and you answer "I mean did he die in such a way so that anybody anywhere who believes will be saved by that blood."*

*I say "absolutely he did."* That's John 3:16 pure and simple. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son in such a way that whoever believes will not perish, I believe that totally without qualification. Every individual person on planet earth who believes in Jesus has their life covered by the blood of Jesus. So you preach that, you stand up on Sunday morning and you say Christ died in such a way so that anybody in this room who believes, your sins are covered by the blood of Jesus.<sup>28</sup>

Piper's view of the atonement is that, 'Christ died for all persons but this atoning death becomes effective only when accepted by the individual.' This is pure Arminianism. Piper knows this but agrees with it anyway. He holds this view so that he can preach the Free-Offer, 'you preach ... on Sunday morning and you say Christ died in such a way so that anybody in this room who believes, your sins are covered by the blood of Jesus'. This is not Calvinism. Calvinism teaches that the atonement is only effective for the elect and that none of Christ's blood is wasted on those who reject him by divine predestination.

### *Some Calvinistic quotes*

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.<sup>29</sup>

All things whatsoever arise from, and depend upon, the Divine appointments [decrees] whereby it was preordained who should receive the Word of Life, and who should disbelieve it, who should be delivered from their sins, and who should be hardened in them, who should be justified and who should be condemned. This is the very truth which razes the doctrine of freewill [and the free offer] from its foundations, to wit, that God's eternal love of some men and hatred of others is immutable and cannot be reversed.<sup>30</sup>

But I say it is not so; the will of mankind works nothing at all in his conversion and justification.<sup>31</sup>

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.<sup>32</sup>

We do not agree with the opinion of those who teach that God purposes the salvation of all men individually, provided only they believe, by reason of his philanthropic benevolence [love], or because he is moved by a certain love of the fallen race of mankind that is prior to his purpose of election; by a certain 'conditional will', or 'primal compassion' as they term it, - that is, by a wish or desire on his part that is inefficacious.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> John Piper; Acts 29 conference; *The Whole Glory of God – Imputation – Impartation of His righteousness*, Part 2.28.

<sup>29</sup> William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, Sutton Courtenay Press (1969) p250-251.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, quoted in Pink's *Sovereignty of God*, p106. [Yes this is Lutheran, but the truth is Calvinistic.]

<sup>31</sup> Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, 'On Free Will': Item 263.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol 1, p400, 405.

<sup>33</sup> *The Formula Consensus Helvetici*. Quoted from , WGT Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, T&T Clark (1872) p472-3.

That God hath any natural or necessary inclination, by his goodness, or any other property, to do good to us, or any of his creatures, we do deny. ... 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup>

God's hatred of the reprobate and love and peace on the elect...[since God's love is] simple not contradictory.<sup>36</sup>

The plain doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is that God has no purpose of salvation for all.<sup>37</sup>

'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. The general benevolence of God is common [which he calls providence in this context] but it implies no purpose of salvation at all. <sup>38</sup>

Because God is God, of course, no one receives grace who has not been foreknown and afore-selected for the gift.<sup>39</sup>

Amyraldism and the modern Four-Point Calvinism or Free Offer is a denial of limited atonement.

#### *Modern 4-Point Calvinism (the free offer)*

We touch on this in the sections on Amyraldism and Common Grace.

It is the claim that God gives universal grace and universal atonement, but in the end only saves the elect. Essentially, this is the view that was propagated after 1924 in American Presbyterian churches,<sup>40</sup> and then through dogmatics such as Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, that

- God loves everybody.
- God desires the salvation of everybody.
- Jesus died for everybody (usually the Fuller and Marrowmen explanation that Jesus' death was sufficient for all but only effective for some, which is just sophistry).
- The preaching of the Gospel contains exhortations to all to believe in Christ on the basis that all men are invited to believe and all men can believe. Thus reprobates are treated as elect.

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<sup>34</sup> John Owen, Works, Vol 10, p p227; Banner of Truth Trust (1967). Note all Owen's other arguments in this section.

<sup>35</sup> A W Pink, The Sovereignty of God, Baker, p200.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Rutherford, Trial and Triumph of Faith, p348-350.

<sup>37</sup> Thornwell, Works, Vol 2, p161.

<sup>38</sup> Thornwell, Works, Vol 2, p162.

<sup>39</sup> 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.

<sup>40</sup> By Ned Stonehouse and John Murray.

- It usually includes the notion that God has two contradictory wills (secret and revealed).

Thus we can see that this is merely a rehashing of traditional Amyraldism.

Four-pointers, having been deluded by Arminian practices and teaching, believe that the only way to preach the Gospel is by telling audiences that God loves them and that Jesus died for them. This is a lie. However, genuine Calvinism does not restrict Gospel preaching (as do Gospel Standard Strict Baptist Hyper-Calvinists) but preaches the Gospel indiscriminately to all, but without blaspheming God.

New Calvinists comprise both straightforward Amyraldians and Free Offer men who advocate a universalism in the atonement and God's love. This is a denial of crucial points of Calvinism.

Real Calvinists are not four-pointers. William Cunningham is a good example of a solid Reformed theologian who disagrees with Four-Point Calvinism:

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.<sup>41</sup>

Another Calvinist argues that Calvin was not either (as we have already noticed, he embraced reprobation):

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.<sup>42</sup>

Calvin understood and taught that an indiscriminate presentation of the Gospel is perfectly consistent with reprobation:

[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.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, the Gospel preached to the reprobate only serves to make them more cursed, hardly an example of divine love:

[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.<sup>44</sup>

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

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<sup>41</sup> William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol 2, p396.

<sup>42</sup> W. Gary Crampton, *What Calvin Says*, p73.

<sup>43</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:29,17.

<sup>44</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:24,13

the means of hearing his word, at another by the preaching of it blinds and stupifies them the more. <sup>45</sup>

**This is in full accord with Scripture:**

And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." **Isa 6:9-10**

**See also: Ps 69:23; Isa 44:18; Jer 5:21; Ezek 12:2.**

He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them. **Jn 12:40-41**

**See also Matt 13:10-16; Lk 19:42.**

**Indeed, Calvin calls the free offer puerile when condemning Pighius for it:**

The fiction of Pighius is puerile and absurd, when he interprets grace to be God's goodness in inviting all men to salvation ... [Pighius] holds fast the fiction that grace is offered equally to all.<sup>46</sup>

*Other quotes*

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 also include, as a by product of the atonement, the well meant offer of the gospel by which all men can be saved.<sup>47</sup>

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 see that there is some difficulty here must have done very little thinking about theology.<sup>48</sup>

**Denial of total depravity**

Some New Calvinists assert this doctrine but others either explicitly or implicitly deny it.

Tim Keller teaches that Jesus came to '*fulfil you completely*'.<sup>49</sup> This presumes that man is lacking something special and needs filling up with it. It is part of the mystical teaching that Keller has absorbed which claims that man has God within him and needs to be fulfilled by finding him through mystical exercises [see later on mysticism]. Thus salvation in Jesus is just being fulfilled. This is arrant nonsense and a denial of Total Depravity. Man does not need filling up, he needs new life because he is dead in sins.

**Conditional justification**

This is a key issue: John Piper fails to understand Biblical justification and puts the emphasis upon human works instead of Christ's merits, summarised by theologians as his active and passive obedience. [That is, his active obedience in fulfilling the law perfectly, and his passive obedience in submitting to his death on the cross.]

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<sup>45</sup> John Calvin, Institutes 3:24,12

<sup>46</sup> John Calvin, The Eternal Predestination of God, in Calvin's Calvinism, p49-51.

<sup>47</sup> John H Gerstner, Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, p125.

<sup>48</sup> Tom Wells, Notes on the Free Offer Controversy, p5. Quoted from Protestant Reformed Theological Journal, vol XXXV, no. 2, p37.

<sup>49</sup> *The Reason For God*, p173.

Piper says,

Present justification is based on the substitutionary work of Christ alone, enjoyed in union with him through faith alone. Future justification is the open confirmation and declaration that in Christ Jesus we are perfectly blameless before God. This final judgment accords with our works. That is, the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be brought forward as the evidence and confirmation of true faith and union with Christ. Without that validating transformation, there will be no future salvation.<sup>50</sup>

Here he states plainly that future justification is based upon works. This is a confusion of justification and sanctification. Furthermore, there is no future justification. Justification is a once for all declaration of righteousness made in heaven so that God can legally adopt us as sons. The doctrine of perseverance is based upon the fact that justification covers the whole of life.

Let's take some other quotes from Piper to show that this is not simply miss-statement.<sup>51</sup>

God justifies us on the first genuine act of saving faith, but in doing so he has a view to all subsequent acts of faith contained.

God does not have in view any works of man when he justifies him. We are justified solely on the basis of Christ's merits alone.

We could be confident that because of our faith we already stand righteous before him. Wrong. Again it is because of the merits of Christ's obedience that we stand righteous before God. The faith exercised as the means to gain justification is not a human work but a gift from God.

We must also own up to the fact that our final salvation is made contingent upon the subsequent obedience which comes from faith.

Nothing in our salvation is contingent upon our actions. Salvation is from God. It is 100% controlled by God and provided by God; it is dependent upon man in nothing. The idea that salvation is a combination of our faith, works and God's grace is both the theology of Arminianism and Roman Catholicism.

We are justified on the basis of our first act of faith because God sees in it (like he can see the tree in an acorn) the embryo of a life of faith.

Again Piper puts the emphasis on man's work as in Arminianism. God does not see our initial faith as an embryo of future good works by us. Saving faith is a gift from God not a work of man. But even this does not justify us; we are justified by the work of Christ not our faith. Faith is the God-given means to appropriate Christ's righteousness.

This is why those who do not lead a life of faith with its inevitable obedience simply bear witness to the fact that their first act of faith was not genuine.

Piper does not understand justification and saving faith at all. He is Arminian in this respect.

I think that what Piper is trying to say here is that genuine Christians will do good works and demonstrate their true faith but professing Christians will not. But the way he has expressed this is so theologically sloppy that he has actually promoted heresy. If he cannot see this, on such a fundamental issue, then he should not be a teacher. It is unequivocal that Piper is confused about justification and expresses his teaching on it in such a way as to promote serious heresy. His expressions actually teach final salvation by works.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://contrast2.wordpress.com/2009/11/06/john-pipers-justification-according-to-works/>

<sup>51</sup> The quotes are from his website: [http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/doctrines\\_grace/tulip.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/doctrines_grace/tulip.html)

Piper continues doing this in holding to a conditional covenant:

*'All the covenants of God are conditional covenants of grace ... They offer all-sufficient future grace for those who keep the covenant.'*<sup>52</sup> In other words, to those who work and fulfil the conditions. This is heresy. Firstly, the New Covenant is not conditional on any work of man but on the work of Christ alone. Secondly, faith is the entrance into this covenant and this faith is a gift; and thirdly, faith is the continuance in the covenant; 'as it is written, "The just shall live by faith"' (Rm 1:17).

In pursuing his argument he writes nonsense, such as: *'It is possible to meet a condition for receiving grace and yet not earn the grace. Conditional grace does not mean earned grace.'*<sup>53</sup> This contravenes basic English. Meeting a condition to receive grace is a work; conditional grace implies work. If I work to get this grace, then it is earned and thus ceases to be grace (something unmerited). Piper even tries to redefine 'works' to avoid this saying that *'The term "works," refers to the warfare of righteousness unempowered by faith....in future grace.'*<sup>54</sup> This is just more semantic nonsense. It is similar to the tactics used by Andrew Fuller (esteemed by Piper) who constantly changed the meaning of words to fool his readers into appropriating the opposite of what they thought. Anyone who plays with words like this, instead of plain teaching, is not to be trusted.

## **Espousing Common Grace**

### *Abraham Kuyper*

The modern idea of Common Grace is derived from Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), the Dutch theologian and politician, a favourite of many New Calvinists. There were ideas about a general grace before,<sup>55</sup> but by this was usually meant God providence in sustaining the world so that the elect may be born and live. Kuyper brought about something radical and new, something he accepted was a deviation from traditional Calvinism.

He developed his ideas specifically to enable an alliance with Dutch Roman Catholics in order to pursue his political dreams of a world governed by the Dutch Reformed Church. Modern Charismatics are seeking something similar in their Latter Rain global revivalism where apostles and prophets will rule the world. The utopianism (see later) of New Calvinists also follows Kuyper in this. Kuyper had to find a way to accommodate believers and unbelievers working in harmony together in building the kingdom. His answer was Common Grace. His definition of this was not as radical as modern forms but it led directly to them.

Following Kuyper many good theologians were marred by a developing Common Grace, such as Herman Bavinck, John Murray, Ned Stonehouse, RB Kuiper, and Louis Berkhof. Having been insidiously ingrained in American Reformed churches, it became included in the confessions after 1924 in the Christian Reformed Churches Synod of Kalamazoo. It was never a confessional item until then.

### *Modern Common Grace*

This modern teaching avers that:

- God restrains evil in society.
- God provides good things for all (food, rationality, seasons etc.).
- This grace enables evil men to do good works and please God.

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<sup>52</sup> *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in....Future Grace*, p248.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p79.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p220.

<sup>55</sup> This was sometimes carelessly called 'common grace', but they did not mean the Common Grace that is found today.

- This grace arises from a 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. Items 3 & 4 are the chief problems, while 2 & 3 need qualifying.

Although this general grace does not save, it is claimed as evidence that God loves everyone, since he provides for all. This is to mistake providence for grace. In his providence God provides all the things that man requires to live (Acts 17:25), but even then the purpose is to safeguard the elect who live amongst the wicked (Eph 1:22). But this providential ordering of the world is not grace. Indeed, the reprobate who receive good gifts of providence (air, sunshine, food) are cursed by it; the condemnation is increased because they do not give thanks for it.

There is no such phrase in the Bible as 'common grace'; indeed the thought is preposterous – grace can never be common. Grace from God to men is the outworking of the cross and the beneficiaries are only those whom God calls and draws to Christ. Thus grace always results in salvation and eternal life. It is never given to the reprobate.

Good gifts are given to all but God has different purposes in this for the elect and the wicked. God's gifts increase the condemnation of those who spurn him. These gifts become destruction to those who do not love God (Rm 11:9; Prov 3:33; Ps 73:18, 92:7). Indeed, wicked men use God's gifts to increase their sin. The gifts God gives such merely prove that God is just in cursing them.

If sun, rain, food and life are grace and love to all, then what about sickness, famine, hurricanes and so on? If common grace results from love to all, then the evil things that befall us (that God is sovereign over) would result from his condemnation and hate to all. The truth is that God sends good and bad things to all, but in these he always does good to his people (Rm 8:28), but hardens the reprobate and increases their condemnation (Prov 23:4).

Common grace ignores the Bible's teaching on total depravity; natural man can do no good at all (Rm 3:10ff), including believing in the Gospel. It is also the breeding ground for the Free Offer. In fact the Bible explains that even apparently neutral or good works are seen by God as sin and are cursed:

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. **Prov 15:8**

The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just.  
**Prov 3:33**

The way of the wicked is as darkness. **Prov 4:19**

The expectation of the wicked is wrath. **Prov 11:23**

The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. **Prov 12:10**

The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD. **Prov 15:9**

The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD. **Prov 15:26**

The mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. The LORD is far from the wicked. **Prov 15:28-29**

The ploughing of the wicked, is sin. **Prov 21:4**

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. **Isa 64:6**

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. **Matt 7:18**

For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. **Eccles 7:20**

They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good. **Ps 14:1**

Calvin agreed with this:

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.<sup>56</sup>

Again, people can latch on to a few ambivalent statements by Calvin where he refers to a general grace of God or a special grace.<sup>57</sup> However, this general grace includes no desire to save, nor helps people receive the Gospel, not does it lead to a favour of God to the reprobate, not does it aid sinners to please God in the flesh. It is merely God's kindness in earthly matters – i.e. providence.

Similarly, 'Common grace' only appears in the Third and Fourth heads, Heresies 5 of the canons of Dort, and only then as a description used by heretics for the 'light of nature'. There is no description of common grace in the modern sense.

New Calvinism completely accepts the false teaching of Common Grace that stemmed from a deviation of the truth for a political end.

#### *Keller's common ground*

Although the chief result of Common Grace teachings in New Calvinism regard the universalising of Gospel preaching (Free Offer), many also follow the motivation of Kuyper in building bridges with non-Christians in order to change the world and culture. We look at this in more detail in 'neo-Kuyperism' later but here I wish to give some examples where Keller copies Kuyper exactly.

Keller says:

[Christians should] make common ground with non-Christians to do work that serves the world ... to accomplish enormous good.<sup>58</sup>

[Christians should be] engaging the popular culture in all its aspects.<sup>59</sup>

Through his common grace God blesses all people so that Christians can benefit from and co-operate with non-Christians.<sup>60</sup>

[Understanding common grace leads Christians] to freely and humbly work with others who may not share our faith, but can be used greatly by God to accomplish enormous good.<sup>61</sup>

Keller goes so far as to accuse Christians that practice Biblical separation as idolaters, in order to reverse the scriptural teaching on being separate from the world. However, the Bible is clear:

Separate yourselves from among this congregation. **Num 16:21**

<sup>56</sup> John Calvin, Institutes 3:14, 7-8,11.

<sup>57</sup> See Institutes, 2.2.13, 14, 17.

<sup>58</sup> Keller, Every Good Endeavour (2012), p192.

<sup>59</sup> Keller, Every Good Endeavour, p170.

<sup>60</sup> Keller, Every Good Endeavour, p191.

<sup>61</sup> Keller, Every Good Endeavour, p192.

Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel. **Ezra 6:21**

When they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. **Neh 13:3**

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ... Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." **2 Cor 6:14, 17**

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **1 Jn 2:15**

Common grace, in its original form, was a new unbiblical theory designed to enable believers to work in partnership with unbelievers (especially Catholics) in order to produce a better world, to build the kingdom by false means. New Calvinists are continuing Kuyper's false work.

### **Denial of the uniqueness of Christ and the Gospel**

Some New Calvinists, such as Tim Keller, deny the exclusive claims of Christ and teach that God has a sort of 'back door' option for sincere heathens. In other words, pagans can be saved without hearing about Christ, or receiving the Gospel, as long as they are sincere. This Universalist doctrine, espoused by John Wesley,<sup>62</sup> is now popular with American preachers such as Robert Schuller, Leighton Ford and Billy Graham.<sup>63</sup> Albert Mohler (a chief New Calvinist) has fully supported Billy Graham many times despite this great sin. It is a non-Christian doctrine.

Keller openly stated this in an NBC interview with Martin Bashir. Asked that if all the millions of Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Jews who died without Christ are going to hell, Keller said that he does not know and that there was perhaps a trap door that he does not know about. This is a flat denial of the claims of Christ (Jn 3:36, 5:23, 14:6).

All Calvinistic confessions are very clear on this, such as:

*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, [Matt 25:31 to the end; Rm 2:5,6; 9:22,23; Matt 25:21; Acts 3:19; 2 Thess 1:7-10].*<sup>64</sup>

Keller also teaches that men's rejection of Christ is cultural ('defeater beliefs' which make the Gospel implausible). This is an unbiblical idea. Scripture affirms that total depravity is the cause of rejecting Christ. Men love their sin and hate God (Jn 8:45-47). We do not need

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<sup>62</sup> John Wesley; *'they will be saved during their unbelief... on the footing of honest Heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance.'* (Works, Vol 6, p233). He said many similar things.

<sup>63</sup> Billy Graham said in an interview that people may not even know the name of Jesus but are saved if they turn to whatever light they have. When questioned, he further said that not only do people not need to meet Jesus, but they do not need to see a Bible either in order to go to heaven. Evangelical Times, Feb 1998; extract from an interview with Robert Schuller on his TV show May 1997. Many publications carried this interview, so shocking was its statements. Also McCall Magazine (Jan. 1978) Graham stated, *'I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries were lost--were going to hell. I no longer believe that. I believe that there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God--through nature, for instance.'* See also his book *'How To Be Born Again'* (Word Books Publisher, 1961). On pages 56 and 57 he alludes that you can be saved without knowing Christ just by seeing God's attributes in Nature.

<sup>64</sup> Westminster Confession 33:2.

a cultural methodology to persuade sinners. His ideas lead to seeker-sensitive methods to make the Gospel culturally attractive.

The essence of many New Calvinists is a man-centred Gospel. Keller, in particular, describes the Gospel in-line with man's aspirations and hopes; as these change so the Gospel changes. Jesus is the answer to cultural questions. The Gospel must be presented attractively, hooked into the cultural narrative etc.

All New Calvinist attempts to make the Gospel more attractive to the world are a denial of the Gospel as well as pure Calvinism. Indeed, some of them are just pagan philosophies.

### **Denial of hell**

Many New Calvinists would affirm the doctrine of hell, but some deny it.

One example is Tim Keller who has preached sermons denying that hell is a place of eternal torment, nor a place of future condemnation, but the present feelings of self-rejection felt by people.

### **Acceptance of key Pentecostal / Charismatic doctrines**

#### *Baptism in the Spirit*

We can only touch on such a big subject here. Interested readers can see my paper on it for more information.

The Charismatic / Pentecostal teaching on this subject is confused, varied and contradictory. There are up to twenty different explanations of what it is, how it is achieved and what the results are, in different traditions. This is a poor foundation for such an important doctrine. In fact, the modern idea about a second blessing, and the popularisation of the name for this experience being a 'baptism in the Spirit', started in Wesleyan Arminianism, which was inculcated into the Holiness Movement and then the Pentecostal Movement. It has no foundation in Calvinism.

The basis is an acceptance of a second blessing after conversion that is essential to have power in witnessing and to give supernatural gifts (why do you need it only for the supernatural gifts and not the ordinary gifts?). However, no apostle commanded disciples to seek a special mystical experience called, 'the baptism in the Spirit'. Despite giving precise details on growing in grace, this mystical experience is never mentioned in the NT letters. The book of Romans that tells us everything vital about the Gospel and experiencing grace never mentions it at all. How odd?

However, 1 Cor 12:13 does explain what the promised baptism in the Spirit is.

For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

The promise of the baptism in the Gospel and Acts refers to the uniting of all believers into Christ in one body, something the Holy Spirit did at the cross and applies to each believer when they are saved. It is part of the indwelling of the Spirit and the sealing of the Spirit.

All the benefits and graces of salvation are in Christ. When a believer is united to Christ by the Spirit then all the benefits of salvation are given to be appropriated by faith. No further mystical experience is necessary; everything is in Christ. A believer may have more experiences and may gradually appropriate more blessings but these are all given in Christ at salvation:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ. **Eph 1:3**

If a second blessing is required to be able to witness and have gifts, then this verse is a lie and not all blessings have been given. But God's word does not lie; it is truth; therefore, the Charismatic doctrine is false.

New Calvinists accept the traditional Pentecostal / Charismatic false teaching on the baptism in the Spirit.

### *Tongues*

New Calvinism is not cessationist, thus following Charismatic theology.

Now this needs to be explained since not all Reformed people are hard cessationists and I personally am a modified cessationist.<sup>65</sup>

Full cessationism is the denial of any of the supernatural spiritual gifts that were evident in the early church: tongues, interpretation, healing, miracles, prophecy etc. This is the traditional majority Reformed view.

My view is that only some of the supernatural gifts ceased. However, the others that continue are not what Charismatics think they are. The chief example is that of tongues and interpretation. There is no doubt that these definitely died out soon after the church started after the cross. No one differs on this, not even Pentecostals; they just affirm that they started again later. Tongues only appear in Acts and 1 Corinthians; there is no evidence of them appearing after the church was established since that was what they were for. They served to authenticate the earliest Gospel preachers. Thus they are not mentioned in the later NT books because they were not needed.

This also explains the difference between original tongues and the modern versions. Biblical tongues were the speaking of known earthly languages by people who did not naturally know this language in order to proclaim the glory of God to folk that did know it. This is clearly explained in Acts 2; there is no doubt about it. These tongues were always interpreted for the benefit of those listening that did not know the language; those that did know it were astonished – which was the point.

Biblical tongues were never gibberish at all. The modern version is always gibberish of one sort or another, something that is common in mystical occult and oriental cults. Charismatics first have to explain why their tongues are different from the tongues in shamanism and witchcraft; this is something they cannot do because they are the same.

Neither are the modern gibberish tongues angelic, since we are never told that we can actually have the tongues of angels<sup>66</sup> and, in fact, angels are hardly likely to have any material language since they are immaterial spirits without physical tongues. Being spirits they would commune telepathically. When they appeared on earth as men they spoke known languages to Abraham and so on.

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<sup>65</sup> That is: I deny that tongues and interpretation are available today; these have ceased. Prophecy, in the Charismatic interpretation, has also ceased but NT prophecy as encouragement is active. Miracles and healings can occur when God chooses to use them but are very few and far between and are not an automatic right. The other supernatural gifts, as claimed by Charismatics, are simply interpreted in better ways, such as the word of knowledge being teaching not prescience.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor 13:1; 'if (Gk. *ean*) I speak with the tongues of ... angels', is poetic hyperbole. His point is the need for love, not focusing on tongues which the Corinthians had been doing.

So Charismatic tongues are not Biblical tongues and Biblical tongues ceased in the first century, probably before 70AD.

New Calvinists accept Charismatic tongues, but do not usually demand that everybody should speak them.

### *Other spiritual gifts*

Firstly, everybody accepts that there are genuine ordinary spiritual gifts in the churches, such as teaching, evangelism, mercy, helps, hospitality etc.

### PROPHETS

The other supernatural gifts claimed to be in use in Charismatic churches are not the gifts we see in the NT. Firstly, Charismatics view prophecy in the manner of OT authoritative prophets and make them a form of authoritative church leader. This is false; in fact leadership of the church is by a team of equal elders and no one else.

Then Jesus clearly demonstrates that John the Baptist was the last of the OT type prophets and those in the kingdom are even better, having the indwelling Spirit. We do not see the OT prophetic signature, 'Thus says the Lord' appearing in the NT at all. Prophecy in the NT is different; it is encouraging, edifying and exhorting the Lord's people. We cannot say that NT prophecy never has a forth-telling aspect, that is in God's hands, but generally prophecy is an encouraging or admonishing ministry to the saints (1 Cor 14:3). It is a special type of teaching/preaching that has significant spiritual power to change people. In fact the Puritans (something New Calvinists claim to follow) taught that prophecy was inspirational Bible preaching. Martyn Lloyd-Jones would call this '*logic on fire*'.

A further point is that New Calvinists affirm the doctrine of fallible prophecy. This was developed by Signs & Wonders Charismatic heretic's, such as the Kansas City Prophets and others, to explain why so many public prophecies failed to occur.<sup>67</sup> Some authors have suggested that real prophets can be wrong in their predictions 90% of the time and still be authentic. This is unbiblical nonsense. God's word is clear:

When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. ... the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. **Deut 18:22, 20**

### THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE WORD OF WISDOM

The Biblical word of knowledge and the word of wisdom are not like the Pentecostal forms. Firstly, Charismatics don't really mention the word of wisdom and if they do they can't agree on what it is. Secondly, the word of knowledge is not prescience in order to achieve healings. This sort of manifestation was an occult deviation chiefly exhibited in Latter Rain aberrations, and particularly by William Branham, a seriously false heretical prophet in the 40s and 50s. In fact, both gifts are manifestations of eldership ministry. The word of knowledge refers to teaching and didactic instruction, the word of wisdom is Biblical counselling, or practical instruction. These are the two arcs of eldership ministry, teaching and counsel.

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<sup>67</sup> The 'greatest Charismatic prophet', Paul Cain, a Latter Rain heretic and now disgraced for gross sin over many years, has been proved to be wrong on numerous occasions. In fact I don't know that he ever got a major prophecy right. He was certainly wrong in his proclamation that global revival would begin in London in 1990. This failure led to John Wimber's disenchantment with the Kansas City Prophets who were later expelled from the Vineyard churches.

## HEALINGS & MIRACLES

Thirdly, no one can say that healings have ceased forever, but certainly their chief manifestation was to authenticate Gospel ministers in the early church. We see this with Paul and Peter in Acts. The book of Hebrews explains this in, 'So great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?' (Heb 2:3-4). Miracles and healings were to confirm that this message was from God.

Two further things to say on this. Everyone has to accept that such miracles and healings did not last long. They pretty much died out with the apostles, though we see some less trustworthy examples in the church fathers up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century or so. There are the occasional examples in later church history but again these cannot be confirmed and often are manifestations of ministry that is not Biblical (such as the Roman Catholic mystics).

Secondly, the supposed miracles and healings manifested today are no such thing. They are found to be false whenever they have been tested and are usually just pain alleviation produced by adrenaline and endorphin rushes as a result of the hypnotic emotional meetings they appear in. In some cases they are simply fraudulent. Furthermore, none of the Charismatic healings are anything like Biblical healings. We do not see blind people seeing, the deaf hearing, the dead walking and the crippled leaping. In fact most Charismatic 'healings' can only occur within hyped-up meetings, not in the streets like Jesus and the apostles. If Charismatic claims were true and tested the world's newspapers would be full of them on every front page.

## INTERIM CONCLUSION

Unlike traditional Reformed theology that either dismisses supernatural gifts or is very wary of them, New Calvinists are Charismatic in their open acceptance of them. Thus they call themselves, 'Reformed Charismatics'. This is not Calvinistic.

## Truth is experiential theology

Theology for many New Calvinists is about experiencing God, whatever that means. Biblical theology is propositional and rational; that is, we learn doctrine by studying the propositions revealed by God in his word. Biblical theology is about truth that is learned first, by study and faith, and then put into practice in one's walk with God. The New Calvinist method sounds more like Catholic mysticism, which many of them support (see 'experience'). True theology is neither mystical and non-intellectual, nor is it physical (we do not experience God physically).

Various New Calvinist groups affirm this non-propositional, subjective means of gaining knowledge of God. For instance The Gospel Coalition's *Theological Vision for Ministry*, 1.3, which teaches that truth is gained through living in correspondence to God, a covenantal relationship. This is plain Romanist mysticism. For them truth is in the person and released through actions, not objectively read in God's word. Thus truth subjective, not objective; experimental not propositional; dynamic and changing not rational and absolute. Truth even ceases to be linguistic, based upon actual words inspired by God, and becomes a subjective reality that changes according to the human subject, personal interpretation and personality, that is beyond definition.

This relative and subjective experience of a covenant relationship leads one to ask, what is truth? When truth ceases to be God's actual words defining absolute truths, then truth becomes anything at all according to individual experience. This is dangerous ground.

## Denial of the Reformed Confessions

Firstly, there are some contradictions between certain standards that are all popularly considered to be Reformed.<sup>68</sup> The *1689 Baptist Confession*, while generally following Westminster, is opposed to paedobaptism and teaches credobaptism. The *Savoy Declaration*, while generally following Westminster, is opposed to Presbyterian church polity, teaching congregationalism. Therefore, there has to be some flexibility here.

There also has to be some scope for deviation from historic confessions, either when they were plain wrong or when times have changed to affect the nature of some statements (e.g. the emphasis on oaths and vows). However, these deviations will be on secondary issues, such as the implicit Erastianism in parts of the Westminster standards, paedobaptism and church government in Presbyterian confessions, the unbiblical covenant of works in Westminster (not taught by Calvin) and so on. However, what is not acceptable is to deny cardinal aspects of Reformed confessions, such as contradicting the doctrines of grace (the five points), the kernel of historical Calvinism. To be Reformed one has to submit to the Calvinistic conception of the doctrines of grace at the very least

New Calvinism fails this basic test; it is not Reformed on the five points of Calvinism. Indeed, they just pick and choose what they like and deny the rest. Thus New Calvinism is not confessional Reformed theology.

### *New Calvinism's deviations from the five points*

- Total depravity: it gives assent to this but denies it in practice in teaching common grace and the ability of people to believe.
- Unconditional election: it gives assent to this but denies it in practice in denying reprobation and affirming that God loves everybody.
- Limit atonement: it flatly denies this by affirming that Jesus died for everybody and the limitation of those saved is not in eternity by God's decree but by the free will choice of men in time.
- Irresistible grace: it affirms this but denies it in practice when it places the emphasis in the Gospel upon men choosing Christ.
- Final perseverance: this is generally affirmed but some deny it. However, the perseverance affirmed is often by human effort rather than a proper understanding of grace. Furthermore, compromised Gospel preaching and antinomian teaching on sanctification means that there is a strong possibility that many who think that they are believers are actually only superficial professing converts who will fall aside.

## Summary of doctrinal position

Basically, the essential theological position of New Calvinism is Amyraldism but mingled with an acceptance of Charismatic gifts and church expression (see later). This is far from true Calvinism.

Mixed with this is the desire to change the world, often with triumphal, postmillennial overtones (i.e. Dominionism; see 'neo-Kuyperism' later). Regarding the law they tend to support New Covenant Theology (see 'experience'). Regarding history they tend to be non-confessional. Essentially, regarding doctrine they dishonour God's glory.

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<sup>68</sup> Dutch Presbyterian Reformed leaders insist that the term 'Reformed' only applies to Continental Presbyterian standards, such as Dutch and Swiss. However, most people accept that 'Reformed' applies to Baptists as well as Presbyterians, and to standards from other countries.

## Apologetics

### Denial of ex-nihilo creation

Not every New Calvinist does this but some do. One example is Tim Keller who insists that Genesis cannot be interpreted in a way that conflicts with science. His method is to interpret Genesis as poetry and therefore speaks about the Genesis creation narrative in figurative and not literal terms. God guided natural selection as a mechanism to produce creation. Therefore death occurred before the fall of Adam, a denial of Scripture (Rm 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21).

It is typical of Keller that he uses Roman Catholic doctrinal statements to support his theistic evolution: *'the Catholic Church, the largest church in the world, has made official pronouncements supporting evolution as being compatible with Christian belief'*.<sup>69</sup>

Keller has written his defence of theistic evolution in many places<sup>70</sup> but even he has been forced to admit that his thinking is confused and is a 'messy approach'.<sup>71</sup>

Piper is very confused about creation.

The earth is billions of years old if it wants to be, whatever science says it is, it is!<sup>72</sup>

His comments in the interview that this is taken from are obtuse, superficial and contradictory. He seems to hold an unusual view of the old Gap Theory<sup>73</sup> so that he can embrace the views of modern science.

His absolute acceptance of modern science is also worrying. Scientific theories change all the time as old theories are overthrown. Would he believe in Eugenics, once accepted as scientific fact? Does he believe in Evolutionary theory, often stated as a scientific fact? Does he accept the scientists who state that homosexuality is genetic?

## Experience

### They affirm Puritan doctrine but neglect Puritan sanctification

Some critics would accept that the better New Calvinists are strong on substitutionary atonement and salvation doctrines but are very weak on sanctification. Actually, I think that they are weak on both.

The Puritans, while they may have had some confusion here and there, were very strong on practical Christianity. Zeal for God had to be evidenced in a holy life. Of all men, the

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<sup>69</sup> Keller, *The Reason For God*, p87.

<sup>70</sup> Such as: 'Creation. Evolution and Christian Laypeople', The Bio Logos Foundation. 'The Reason For God' (2008).

<sup>71</sup> Keller, Interview with Anthony Sacramone ('First Things') in 2008.

<sup>72</sup> <http://testallthings.com/2010/12/28/john-pipers-heretical-view-of-creation/> The whole quote is: '*Or he might take Sailhamer's view, which is where I feel at home. His view is that what's going on here is that all of creation happened to prepare the land for man. In verse 1, "In the beginning he made the heavens and the earth," he makes everything. And then you go day by day and he's preparing the land. He's not bringing new things into existence; he's preparing the land and causing things to grow and separating out water and earth. And then, when it's all set and prepared, he creates and puts man there. So that has the advantage of saying that the earth is billions of years old if it wants to be—whatever science says it is, it is—but man is young, and he was good and he sinned. He was a real historical person, because Romans 5 says so, and so does the rest of the Bible.'*

<sup>73</sup> Which posits a gap of millions of years between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2.

Puritans manifested their godliness and spirituality in sanctified lives. New Calvinists appear to me to do the opposite.

### *Antinomianism*

Some critic's claims of antinomianism are a mistaken understanding relating to the stance of some New Calvinists on New Covenant theology. Though these New Calvinists deny that the Ten Commandments are the standard of God for human behaviour, averring that Christ is, they are actually law keepers in practice. Indeed, some do not even watch television (such as John Piper). I do not criticise this. Those that obey Christ will obey the Commandments.

However, some are very obviously antinomian. Keller has equated Biblical ethics with pagan idolatry and said that all law-keeping is legalism and stated that, '*Law-keeping religion is really slavery*'.<sup>74</sup> Over and over again Keller expresses his dislike of moral Christians.<sup>75</sup>

The basis of such teaching is the claim that the New Covenant denies any law keeping since it says that we are not under law but under grace. This is a misunderstanding. That the New Covenant includes law is obvious (see below). The point is that the believer is not under the Old Covenant, is not under Mosaic Law. The Moral Law of God is eternal. It was in existence before the Law of Moses and it is subsumed now in the New Covenant and applied by the Holy Spirit in believers where Christ is the standard of human behaviour.

New Calvinists understand 'not under law' as being not under the control of any regulation at all. This is nonsense since Christ himself says,

If you love Me, keep My commandments. **Jn 14:15**

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. **Jn 14:21**

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. **Jn 15:10**

While Christ's apostles said,

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters*. **1 Cor 7:19**

If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. **1 Cor 14:37**

You know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. **1 Thess 4:2**

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **1 Jn 2:3-4**

He who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. **1 Jn 3:24**

The worst sort of New Calvinist antinomianism is found in Keller and Driscoll, but it is common amongst them and it is the opposite of real Calvinism, which strongly affirmed obedience to God's law. It is also the opposite of Puritanism, which they claim to adhere to. Driscoll has said that he hates religious people who have rules to obey and teaches that grace and works are antithetical; this is the opposite of Puritanism.

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<sup>74</sup> *Galatians for You*, p132.

<sup>75</sup> E.g. Keller calls born again Christians fanatics, '*intense moralists or, as they were called in Jesus' time, Pharisees.*' *The Reason for God*, p57.

### *New Covenant theology*

This is a very mixed separate movement. It is essentially an American Baptist movement that seeks to contradict the traditional tendency to Old Covenant legalism present in most forms of Reformed theology due to its Covenant Theology. We cannot discuss this at length, but this movement comprises some good teaching and some bad; some good teachers and some bad. It is not uniform but diverse.

In a nutshell, the best teachers seek to focus the believer upon Christ and the need to hear him; that Christ is the standard of human behaviour and not a set of written rules; that only the Spirit can conform us to Christ, not human effort. Thus they would tend to deny that the Ten Commandments are the absolute standard of human conduct. This much is true.

Now the best teachers strive against antinomianism in their teaching and do not deny the value of the Ten Commandments; however, there are many others whose teaching is so loose that it has directly led to outright antinomianism and a complete denial of the Moral Law. Thus it is common to hear foolish preachers say such things as, 'a Christian is never ever guilty'. [Note that Paul said that Peter stood condemned, *kataginosko*, Gal 2:11.]

The important thing to remember in this argument is that the New Covenant has abrogated, or cancelled, the Mosaic Law but it has not cancelled the eternal Moral Law. The traditional covenantal scheme of splitting the Mosaic Law into three components (moral, ceremonial, civil) is false; often all three are found in one verse. We do not take bits of the Mosaic Law as we please. But while insisting that we do not follow the Old Covenant, the Mosaic Law, and that all aspects have been rescinded, God has not rescinded the eternal Moral Law, which is partially enshrined in the Mosaic Law and illustrated in its rituals and commands. When we fulfil the New Covenant by the Spirit in Christ, we are following the Moral Law, some of which is inscribed in statutes in the Mosaic Law some are not (e.g. 'to hate is to murder').

It is a lack of clarity in these matters that has led some New Covenant teachers to drift into antinomianism, or more often, neonomianism. New Calvinists tend to be New Covenant theologians and to follow the worst of them – this is why they show evidence of antinomianism.

### *Christian hedonism*

This is a chief feature of John Piper's theology, and it is very confused. That any theology could be called 'hedonistic' is a denial of basic principles of Scripture. Piper's best selling book is, 'Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist' (1986).

Hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure; sensual self-indulgence, the satisfaction of desires. This is not a suitable word to use in any theology. At the very least, even if the associated truths of this teaching are good, this directs the believer away from Christ and unto himself. Personal satisfaction becomes a goal and this is the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit.

Despite claiming to be influenced by the Puritans, Piper admits that he takes these ideas from CS Lewis and Blaise Pascal, not the Bible. His essential point is that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. This appears to obviate the Scripture's call for the fear of God to be the beginning of wisdom. Fear and pleasurable satisfaction seem to be at odds to me. Piper puts the stress on our satisfaction – then God is glorified. In reality the stress should be on our need to glorify God, and then we are satisfied.

His basic thesis is that the pursuit of happiness in God is the key dynamic in the life of the Christian, bringing power. In other words, this is a new development in the doctrine of sanctification, which centres on a subjective happiness, albeit based on God. To glory in God is certainly a good thing; we are called to delight in God, which is the basis of worship. But elevating this principle to be a golden rule above all others and taking a principle of worship and applying it to be the fundamental basis of the Christian walk is an error.

First off, the Bible never centres upon our happiness, certainly not in this life. Personal happiness is simply not in the frame at all. What is enjoined is duty – obedience to God’s law. In fact we are, many times, promised suffering and tribulation here because we do not belong to this world which fights against us (Jn 16:33; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pt 5:9; Rev 7:14).

Piper strives to make one principle the centre of sanctification. In this he errs just like the many previous single formulae in historical movements like those in Higher Life or the Holiness Movement.<sup>76</sup> The pursuit of one single duty while ignoring the many others is a mistake. For instance, the Bible puts a great deal of emphasises upon loving one another as being one of the key duties of the believer. Emphasising delighting in God to the exclusion of loving one another is clearly unbalanced. We must do both (and many more).

Piper quotes many Scriptures but none of them corroborate his thesis. For example he uses texts, in support, which actually refer to eternity not now, such as Ps 16:11. He also singles out ‘joy’ in passages where the context enjoins several duties, not one (e.g. Ps 37:1-8).

Piper’s idea suggests a subjectivity in sanctification which is not healthy and this subjectivity has led, over the years since, to a greater fascination with mysticism in Piper (such as endorsing Contemplative Prayer, currently a big American fad and part of the modern syncretism with Romanism). The mystical element in Piper’s vision also led him to increasingly embrace the errors of the Charismatic Movement and to subsequent involvement in the Toronto Blessing.

His system leads not only to mysticism (something Piper actually anticipated in the 80s) but it leads to self-centredness. The motivation for joy in God (in Piper’s argument) is made to be the benefit I get out of it in the end. The blessings of the Christian life result from having this delight in God. Delighting in God is a Christian duty, with many others, that should be pursued as part of knowing God better; it should not be pursued so that I can get more benefits. When hedonism is centralised, then rational, doctrinal understanding is downgraded and this is a recipe for disaster. When subjectivity is emphasised, confronting error becomes irrelevant.

The Christian life is a balance of many duties.

At the end of the day, does Scripture command this Christian Hedonism; is it clearly enjoined in apostolic teaching? The answer is no; it is not. This alone settles the matter. In fact, both the Lord himself and the apostles gave lists regarding what to do and what not to do in sanctification (e.g. Matt 5-7; 1 Tim 6.11-12; Gal 5.22-23). These lists are the opposite of Piper’s single factor formula for the Christian life.

Even in the 80s, Piper knew that this idea (*‘my vision’, ‘my theology’*) was radical, dangerous and not safe (his words). The publishing blurb for *Desiring God* calls it a *‘paradigm-shattering work’*. It was because it is novel and erroneous.

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<sup>76</sup> E.g. Hannah Whitall Smith’s book *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* (1875).

## Mysticism

Tim Keller and John Piper have participated in the mystical ‘Lectio Divina’ mediation system to ‘experience the faith’; Keller then led his church in it. Other New Calvinists have championed various Roman mystical techniques.

The ‘lectio divinina’ (‘Divine reading’) is a mystical method of reading Scripture involving meditation.<sup>77</sup> It is based upon emptying the mind of what is known rationally about a text and accepting subjective impressions (feelings) that jump out as a result of this method. This is pure mysticism which is the opposite of objective, rational Bible study demanded by the Bible itself.

Keller’s endorsement of mysticism goes back decades. In a 1998 lecture<sup>78</sup> he said, ‘two streams that are filled with good, helpful material on meditation—the Catholic stream and the Quaker stream.’ In fact, Catholic mystics were promoting occult methods of syncretism while the root of Quaker theology and church life is entirely mystical with no reference to Scripture and a denial of total depravity (‘inner light’ doctrine). Thus Keller promotes the mysticism of Quaker Richard Foster, who founded Renovaré.

Regarding Catholic mystics Keller said that their writings were filled with ‘great stuff’. The full quote is, ‘The best things that have been written are by Catholics during the Counter Reformation. Great stuff! Has he no notion that the Counter Reformation was the persecution filled Catholic reaction to try to destroy the Reformation; the very thing he has vowed to uphold?’

Keller’s church was taught how to practise ‘The Way of the Monk’, a Catholic mystical method of prayer and meditation, with workshops devoted to it.<sup>79</sup> The congregation was even encouraged to create ‘your own monastery’. Some church members complained in writing but received no reply to their letters and subsequently left the church.<sup>80</sup>

Another resource used is called ‘Biblical meditation’ directed at personal transformation but is trained by Catholic inspired professor and spiritual director in the Renovaré Institute (Jan Johnson).<sup>81</sup> Her method involves Ignatius Loyola’s<sup>82</sup> ‘Spiritual Exercises’ engaging with Scripture using all five senses (including taste, touch and smell!).<sup>83</sup> Undergirding the ‘Exercises’ is belief that ‘the Bishop of Rome is the Vicar of Truth in the world’.<sup>84</sup> Thus Ignatius made his followers submit to an oath of obedience to the pope.

Keller promoted the use of a ‘prayer rope’ (a sort of simple rosary) as a method of aiding prayer. In addition he used the ‘Chaplet of the Divine Mercy,’ a particular method of using a prayer rope.

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.redeemer.com/connect/prayer/lectio\\_divina.html](http://www.redeemer.com/connect/prayer/lectio_divina.html)

<sup>78</sup> *What is meditation?*

<sup>79</sup> <http://surphside.blogspot.com/2009/06/tim-kellers-redeemer-presbyterian.html>

<sup>80</sup> <http://surphside.blogspot.com/2009/06/tim-keller-following-in-warrens.html>

<sup>81</sup> <http://youtu.be/c9hGRVYCEqs>

<sup>82</sup> Loyola founded the Jesuits, the great enemies of the church that persecuted, tortured and killed thousands of evangelical believers in the Inquisition. They also enforced the outlawing of having a personal Bible since the Bible was on the Roman Catholic *Index of Forbidden Books*.

<sup>83</sup> ‘The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola are a month-long program of meditations, prayers, considerations, and contemplative practices that help Catholic faith become more fully alive ... It presents a formulation of Ignatius’ spirituality in a series of prayer exercises, thought experiments, and examinations of consciousness—designed to help a retreatant.’

<http://www.nwjesuits.org/JesuitSpirituality/SpiritualExercises.html>

<sup>84</sup> *Sanctity Through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. [http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Spiritual\\_Exercises/Spiritual\\_Exercises\\_002.htm](http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Spiritual_Exercises/Spiritual_Exercises_002.htm)

The Catholic mystical method of ‘contemplative prayer’ (or ‘centring prayer’), is another favourite of New Calvinists.

All this mysticism is diametrically opposed to true Calvinism.

### **Promotion of worldliness**

Many of the New Calvinists are staunch defenders of the seeker-sensitive church strategy of Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. In this the church is made to appear as much like the culture of those you seek to attract as possible, usually youth culture.

Thus the church service ceases to have hardly any Biblical content (see regulative principle and contemporary music). The services are dominated by loud, raucous rock bands or rap artists playing in a dimly lit room, like a nightclub, with spotlights on the performers. The ‘worship’ becomes a form of entertainment that grows more and more fleshly as years go by. To this are added light shows, dramas, dancing and anything else to attract the world. This is worldliness in the extreme.

We could spend pages describing the wordiness seen in leadership behaviour and church services, but this would just get tedious. I will just give a typical example from a supposedly staunch Calvinist church.

John MacArthur has long claimed to be a historic Calvinist, but in fact is a Dispensationalist who does not even teach the full five points of Calvinism. He has been very confused on election in the past, is still confused on Limited Atonement and the love of God, he denies some of the attributes of God and for a long time denied the eternal generation of the Son. In recent years, despite writing books to criticise Charismatic practices, has become involved with New Calvinism and shared platforms with Charismatic New Calvinists such as CJ Mahaney.

His Grace Community Church put on ‘the Resolved Conference’ in 2008 and videos of this are available on YouTube. The worship times are completely Charismatic with loud rock band accompaniment. On one song (‘Here I am’), as well as a loud professional performance just like a rock or rather a country-rock concert, there is a loud drum solo which dominates the proceedings. After the song finishes there are whoops and cheers like a rock concert and nothing like true worship.

At this point, pastor Jonathan Rourke (dressed in a tee-shirt) tells the audience that they are going to perform the end of the song again and calls up CJ Mahaney to participate in banging on drums with him in an amateur fashion, to the whoops of the crowd and raucous laughter. Mahaney is dressed casually in a black tee-shirt and makes jokes as he goes on stage. Both pastors joke about as the musicians prepare. All this laughter, flippancy and tomfoolery followed the crowd just singing about the glory of God. The fooling around then ends on a longer drum solo and the audience laughing and whooping. The worship leader then says, ‘*I need a drink*’.

How can anyone think that this behaviour glorifies God? It is treating God with contempt and is not worshipping in Spirit and in truth. This is nothing but outright worldliness, which is Satan’s objective. Remember, this is in one of America’s most famous supposedly conservative Reformed churches.

All in all the experience of New Calvinism, both in the individual and in church services, leads to worldliness. It is the opposite of real Calvinism.

## Church

### **Commercialism**

A key criticism is that the movement centres itself on worldly principles to organise and expand the church, just a like a business venture. The idea is to get big, stay big and then to become bigger.

This results in bringing market principles into church strategy (see later). These are applied to outsiders in order to attract the right people to come in. In turn you need the right people in your organisation. This means that if someone in leadership has different ideas and hinders progress, then they must be removed – just as they are in cut-throat businesses. Some of the New Calvinist leaders have actually been disciplined for excessive authoritarianism and spiritual abuse, including a forced sabbatical from ministry.

### **Contextualisation**

This is the principle of being all things to all men in order to win some. While Paul's idea of this is right (adapting one's speech and presentation method to be understood by all types of people) New Calvinists interpret this as adapting the message itself to the culture. Paul never changed his message, he adapted his presentation method. New Calvinists change the message itself. It is compromise, pure and simple.

One example of this is the denial of divine creation ex nihilo by Tim Keller (see apologetics) where Genesis is twisted to make it sound less miraculous and more in harmony with science. But there are many versions of this; essentially it is seen in seeker-sensitive practices, designed to make sinners comfortable and at home in church. [See 'Contemporary music in the church' for an example of this.] This is because the basis of contextualisation is the attempt to change the Gospel to make it relevant to outsiders of various types and ethnic backgrounds.

### **Pragmatism and an undue focus on markets, statistics and surveys**

Most New Calvinists adopt a very pragmatic approach to church, chiefly in order to attract newcomers. This is basically: 'do whatever works, whether it is Biblical or not, whether it is righteous or not, whether it is godly or not'.

Thus such folk constantly talk about the 'market-place' instead of the Bible. They ask questions such as, '*What are the questions people are asking?*' '*Where are the natural bridges we can cross?*' '*How can we speak the language of the market place so that unbelievers hear us?*'

Leaders in this movement unashamedly use marketing methods based on consumerism to dominate their mission strategies. This makes the Gospel a product to be pushed effectively as a bargain offer; evangelism is to consumers who buy into a product. George Barna even claimed that Jesus and the apostles were market-sensitive, seeking to minister to people's felt needs. Thus leaders study what people want, and what their interests are, to centre their evangelistic ministry around that instead of obeying Scripture.

Many have been influenced by Rick Warren in this area who teaches that he tries many new methods to develop the church and just abandons the ones that don't work; he then teaches the ones that did work in conferences.

The foundation of this new model has been management and marketing guru Peter Drucker. Warren says of him, '*Peter Drucker ... [is] my mentor. I've spent 20 years under his*

*tutelage learning about leadership from him ... I read everything Peter Drucker writes. His book "The Effective Executive" is a favourite I re-read every year.'*<sup>85</sup>

The methodology of Drucker is commercial management techniques and marketing ploys. Church merely becomes another business needing to be managed like a commercial enterprise with an effective organisation. Pastoral care to eliminate character weaknesses is ignored but empowerment ('self-authority', a New Age term) to achieve is encouraged. The focus on human strength is the opposite of Biblical teaching; the strength of the old nature is a hindrance which needs to be mortified rather than encouraged and empowered. Biblical saints were used by God in their weakness (cf. Paul, 2 Cor 12:10) rather than their strength. Grace is all about God's strength in human weakness achieving divine plans.

Drucker does not believe in moral absolutes, or God's law - *'The social universe has no "natural laws" as the physical sciences do. It is thus subject to continuous change'*.<sup>86</sup> He is also a dominionist believing that America's future success depends upon the churches and the current church growth programmes are a renaissance and a turning point for the human spirit. As his methods worked for business corporations, so they will now ensure the success of the churches.

His way of setting goals for the church relates to 90s principles of Customer Care; adopting a worldly market approach to the church. Thus the three most important questions are: 'What is our business?', 'Who is our customer?', and 'What does the customer consider value?'<sup>87</sup> This treats the church just like any commercial organisation and applies the principles of growth that one would find in a large successful firm.

For example: in identifying your market clearly and finding out what your market values, in order to give them this in church life, you determine that your market is young people that like rap music. You, therefore, provide rap music in church worship (which the New Calvinists do; rapper Lecrae is treated like a famous preacher).

What we do not hear about in Warren's methods is the Bible. There is no scriptural basis to his ministry or his church and there appears to be no fear of God in anything Saddleback Church does. There is no foundation of truth in this work but rather the fulness of worldly (pagan) wisdom, the very thing that God abhors. Marketing is the driving force behind Warren's strategy; like marketing executives, a product is tested to see if it works; if it does it is then marketed worldwide.

In all of this no one cares about what the methods God commands us to use in the Bible.

What is ironic is that people copy the pragmatism of someone else but it fails to work in their church. This is because people are different, regional cultures are different; nationalities are different and so on. What works for someone in California may not work in Brixton. I know a large UK Charismatic church that has copied foreign strategy, after strategy, after strategy – and none of them worked. Even from a worldly sense copying someone's strategy is foolish, let alone being unbiblical.

There is nothing Calvinistic about such worldly methods.

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<sup>85</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 23 May 2005, [pewforum.org](http://pewforum.org).

<sup>86</sup> Oct. 1998 issue of Forbes Magazine, p154.

<sup>87</sup> Important Lessons from Peter Drucker <http://www.changingchurch.org/perspec/vol24/druck.htm>.

### *God's mathematics*

An aside here is to note that God's idea of success is not ours. Church pragmatists are obsessed by large memberships and building a large building for them in order to gain kudos and notoriety. This is the opposite of God's method.

When the plan of salvation was being worked out, Israel was chosen as its then representative; and the basis of this choice was because it was the smallest nation (Deut 7:7). There were only eight people saved from the flood out of millions (1 Pt 3:20). Jesus stated that only few are chosen (Matt 7:14, 20:16, 22:14) and called his people a 'little flock' (Lk 12:32).

God is interested in quality, not quantity; godliness and righteousness, not human success; obedience to his word not worldly (i.e. satanic) ideas.

### **Revivalist methods**

New Calvinism is very mission oriented, especially the neo-Puritans. While this ideal is to be applauded, the manner in which mission is accomplished is not. Despite the claims to be Calvinist and Puritan, the methods used in preaching the Gospel are mainly from Arminian sources, such as 19<sup>th</sup> century revivalism, the very opposite of historic Calvinism.

This results from the confused doctrinal basis, which is Amyraldian, and results in methods that cultivate hyper-emotionalism and free will choice of individuals in the congregation. Thus various types of altar calls (developed by the Pelagian revivalist Charles Finney) are commonplace. This puts the emphasis of conversion upon changing a person's will by emotional pressure, rather than telling the truth and letting God's Spirit work in his own way and his own time.

Furthermore, the idea that someone is saved just because they fall over backwards after prayer or laying on of hands is absolute nonsense. Yet this Pentecostal method is commonly accepted in modern Charismatic churches and Alpha Courses, and adopted by some New Calvinists.

The Bible knows nothing of altar calls, 'anxious seats', the invitation system, being saved by raising a hand or standing up in a service, repeating a dictated prayer, mass evangelism and so on. Needless to say, this is not Calvinism.

### **A Neo-Kuyperian perspective - arrogance and triumphalism**

#### *Reformed utopianism*

This can be described as conquering culture for Christ. Nothing is out of bounds; we can take anything from the world and can Christianise it. Indeed, we can work together with non-believers in achieving kingdom goals to change society. Charismatics have a song about this called 'World Changers'; a song that emerged from the Charismatic church that CJ Mahaney used to lead with Larry Tomczak.

This doctrine stems from the teaching of Abraham Kuyper, which is considered in the section on history (see also Common Grace).

Keller talks about the '*healing of the world*' and '*what puts the world right*' and that the primary purpose of salvation is cultural renewal, to make this world a better place. But God has no plan to put this world right or make it a better place.

In his book *The Prodigal God*, Keller says, '*the ultimate purpose of Jesus is not only individual salvation and pardon for sins, but also the renewal of this world, the end of disease, poverty,*

*injustice, violence, suffering and death*'.<sup>88</sup> In his book *Generous Justice* he states that his purpose is to, 'look to the Bible in building a more just society'.<sup>89</sup> In fact Keller refers to liberation theology writers, such as Gustavo Gutierrez; the founder of liberation theology and a Dominican priest.<sup>90</sup> Liberation theology is a heresy, chiefly found in Latin American countries, that makes the church's purpose the restoration of an equitable (socialist) society.

The destiny of this world is to be burned to ashes and, after the Day of Judgment, rebuilt as a new world where heaven reigns. We have no mandate to try to improve and rebuild this fallen world which God will soon destroy with fire. Our job is to snatch people out of this world for Christ and build them into the church, which has no part in this world.

### **Denial of the regulative principle**

Calvinism espouses the regulative principle as a crucial doctrine. This is the affirmation that only what God has recorded in his word, as properly interpreted according to apostolic doctrine, can be introduced into church worship.

This does not mean taking items from anywhere in the Bible and adopting them or we could then sacrifice sheep and goats. It means understanding what the New Covenant is and applying that to church. Thus all Old Covenant forms are cancelled as the NT revelation makes clear, especially in the book of Hebrews. As we have seen instrumental music is a part of the Old Covenant system and so the apostles never used musicians in church services.

The traditional principle of Arminian churches is the normative principle. This means that anything is acceptable in worship as long as the Bible does not expressly forbid it. In reality it means that virtually anything goes. The Bible does not forbid smoking, for instance; therefore we could all smoke in church meetings.

New Calvinism, like Charismatic churches, which they copy, follows the Arminian normative principle. This allows them to do whatever they like – and they do. Thus Mark Driscoll gets people to dress up in crazy costumes and join him on stage while preaching.

Following the normative principle is not Calvinism.

### *Example: contemporary music in church*

In trying to conquer culture for Christ, New Calvinists take contemporary worldly culture into the church. So modern music forms are adopted and Christianised so that people in the world can more easily feel part of this new religious culture. It is a merging of the world and the church.

Firstly, there is no instrumental music used in any NT church and no apostle condoned it. Being part of the Old Covenant, there is no place for instrumental music in church life. For 1200 years music was not widespread in the church but only adopted here and there locally. When instruments started to appear about 200 years after the apostles they were condemned by the church fathers as promoting fleshly emotionalism.

Denial of musical instruments was not only the practice of Calvinism but even Martin Luther called organs (which had only been introduced in the 150 years before him) '*Ensigns*

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<sup>88</sup> *The Prodigal God*; p110.

<sup>89</sup> *Generous Justice*; Hodder & Stoughton, (2010), back cover.

<sup>90</sup> *Generous Justice*, p7.

of Baal'. Calvin allowed no instrumental music in his church and the Puritans got rid of Catholic organs. Even as late as Spurgeon, Calvinists had no instrumental music.

So the first point is that true Calvinism does not use any form of instrumental music in church; let alone rock music.

Yet New Calvinists not only follow Charismatics in using contemporary music but also have rock music, loud drums, hip-hop and rap. Added to this are the elements of seeker-sensitive church services, such as dimmed ambient light like a nightclub, flashing strobe lights and spotlights on musicians. These are evident in certain church services and especially in New Calvinist conferences, such as the Desiring God National Conference, The Passion Conference etc. Piper also invited the rap artist Lecrae to perform during a morning church service. Yet the idea of a worldly performance as part of the church's liturgy is blasphemous.

#### THE PASSION CONFERENCE

For an example we examine the content of the four-day Passion Conference in 2013 in the Georgia Dome, Atlanta City. This was advertised as a gathering for 60,000 18-25 year-olds and their leaders – the Jesus generation. Speakers included New Calvinists such as John Piper.

The technicians skilfully re-created the club scene despite being in a huge dome. For the worship the lights were turned way down low and streams of psychedelic lighting and lasers played round the audience. Strobes accentuated emotionalism with swirls of intense bright light. To this was added a very loud rock band and fast beating music to whip up the crowd. All this was no different from Rave culture. The leaders of this 'worship' included women. One of these, Kim Walker-Smith, claimed to have a vision of Jesus, which she described, in which Jesus laughs hysterically (at which point the audience laughs). Added to this mix was raucous inane rap music preaching to a mass of writing bodies. One youth pastor, Judah Smith even blasphemed several times on stage with his hands in his pocket. Piper's message took place in the dark except for a spotlight on him. The atmosphere had to be continued in darkness! Light would have shattered this emotionalism.

This is pure worldliness and a snare of Satan, nothing less.

As the Kuyperian teaching on Common Grace enables the church to work in the world in partnership with sinners, so the neo-Kuyperian teaching on culture enables the world to come into churches. All of it serves to make the church worldly – and thus captive to Satan. These are satanic concepts and doctrines of demons.

#### **Ecumenism**

Firstly, we see ecumenism in the many New Calvinist conferences where leaders share platforms with non-evangelicals like Douglas Wilson and Rick Warren.

Secondly, there is the affinity of some with Rome. Now many New Calvinists deny that Rome is a true church, and yet they embrace Rome in a number of ways, such as adopting Catholic mystical practices. However, certain leaders go further.

Keller calls the Romanism a 'church', thus dignifying a cult with the title of a Christian church. This is not just using its official title, 'The Roman Catholic Church', but affirming that it is a genuine ekklesia. He categorically states that any institution which assents to the ecumenical creeds is truly Christian, whether Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox. Well Queen Mary assented fervently to these creeds when she burned Calvinists. Does that make her a Christian? Popes formally assented to these creeds when they led debauched,

treacherous, wicked lives decreeing the deaths of thousands of Protestants. Were they Christian? This is too foolish to even consider as rational. It is also a flat denial of Calvinistic standards.

Indeed, Keller has publicly stated, '*I don't want to defend just one kind of Christianity*'.<sup>91</sup> Keller also has a great affinity with hard-line Roman Catholics, some of whom were mentors to him (see 'bad alliances'). Keller constantly and lovingly quotes Catholics such as: Alvin Platinga, Peter Kreef, Simone Weil, Oscar Romero and Mary Flannery O'Connor.

### **Psychoheresy**

Several New Calvinist churches employ psychological counsellors, trained in the world's systems, and offer recovery groups to deal with personal issues rather than elders applying spiritual wisdom to spiritual problems.

Psychological techniques are used which aim to diagnose our hearts (and the heart of others). Concepts such as idol-exchange as the process of sanctification are used, which is promoted by Christian Counselling and Educational Foundation, and David Powlison.

Thus Keller finds that certain heretics are really suffering from 'empty love-tanks' who need building up. He also states that '*the gospel creates a whole new self-image which is not based on comparison with others*' ... *both the superior complex and the inferior complex are, at root, born of insecurity and inferiority... How can I analyse which I am? ... Apart from the gospel, I will be forced to be superior or inferior... because of the nature of my self-image,*<sup>92</sup> and encourages readers to psychoanalyse themselves.

Other examples of Keller's psychobabble are:

What we are all looking for is an ultimate Self-forgetfulness verdict that we are important and valuable.<sup>93</sup>

[The problem of man is] emptiness at the centre of the human ego.<sup>94</sup>

[Man needs] self-worth and purpose big enough to give us meaning.<sup>95</sup>

In this context he also refers to CS Lewis, Lauren Slater (a psychologist), Kierkegaard (an existentialist philosopher), Freud,<sup>96</sup> and shows an admiration for Madonna's self-awareness.

## **Historical background**

### **Jonathan Edwards**

Edwards is a favourite of the New Calvinists, possibly because he is the chief American historic Calvinist, but more likely it is due to his fame as a revival preacher with great power. Edwards said much that was good but sometimes his philosophical side led to compromises in his theology. In fact history books often identify him as a philosopher rather than a theologian. These compromises developed in his successors into significant

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<sup>91</sup> Keller, interview with Anthony Sacramone, journalist with the Roman Catholic journal 'First Things'.

<sup>92</sup> *Galatians for you*, p159-162.

<sup>93</sup> *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, p37.

<sup>94</sup> *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, p14.

<sup>95</sup> *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, p15.

<sup>96</sup> *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, p20.

rationalist errors. The chief interpreter of Edwards in the New Calvinists is John Piper; most people understand Edwards through Piper's presentations of glorifying God.

### **New Divinity (New Haven Theology)**

New Divinity began as a development of New England Theology, a tradition following the rational system of Jonathan Edwards. His followers continued this method of theoretical reasoning, but gradually began to drift from his pure Calvinism.

It arose out of the ideas of Edward's friends Samuel Hopkins [1721-1803], and Joseph Bellamy [1719-1790] who introduced the governmental view of the atonement.<sup>97</sup> Further deterioration continued under Timothy Dwight [1752-1817], (Edward's grandson and President of Yale College). The power of reason and human will became prominent thus diminishing man's depravity, alongside a new emphasis on law-work.

Later, Nathaniel Taylor [1786-1858] took the rationalistic erosion yet further and initiated what became known as 'New Haven Theology'. This taught that man has the power of free-will and self-determination. Total depravity and the imputation of Adam's sin was abandoned, thus sin became the accumulation of errors rather than the fruit of a sinful nature. Then a universalistic system of atonement and rejection of penal substitution was taught alongside a complete denial of God's predestination. Man was seen as an innocent, free, moral agent with the power to sin or to save himself.

Within a hundred years of Jonathan Edward's death in 1758, the strong Calvinism that had permeated New England had fallen into a theology of works-righteousness the very opposite of Calvinism. Alongside the death of Taylor in 1858 was the death of Edward's Reformed influence and the promotion of human ability. Sadly, Jonathan Edward's legacy was not good fruit.

### **Fullerism**

Fuller [1754-1815] was influenced by the earlier Amyraldism of Saumur, and the Marrowmen, but also contemporary trends such as Anglican Latitudinarianism and the developing errors in American New Divinity. He reacted against both stern Hyper-Calvinism, which neglected Gospel preaching and missions (Fuller felt it: '*had little or nothing to say to the unconverted*'), and also the apathy of many Reformed Baptists. To counter this and to garner support for William Carey, he wrote, '*The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*' [1785], which became a popular source for modern New Calvinists who are also centred upon mission. Fuller's teaching is also currently being specifically championed by such Calvinistic folk as John Piper, Peter Masters, Michael Haykin, Tom Nettles, Errol Hulse, Robert Oliver, Crawford Gribben, The Banner of Truth Trust and Sword & Trowel Magazine.

What people fail to see in his rambling theological works, which include changing the meaning of words to confuse, is that Fuller produced several errors that are actually more extreme than Amyraldism. Fullerism is essentially a hybrid of Amyraldism and Governmental Theory (Grotianism), mixed with a liberal treatment of Scripture and even some Pelagian and Socinian elements.

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<sup>97</sup> The Governmental Theory was first codified by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), based upon Abelard's earlier Moral Influence theory of the atonement. It proposed that: 1) Christ did not die as a substitute for man's sin, but suffered as a perfect example of a man who honoured the law. 2) This death is then accepted by God to satisfy the law that sin demands death. 3) An emphasis upon moral law as the natural governing feature of human actions known to the conscience, not as the rule of God's will. 4) God controls the world by moral influence rather than predestination. 5) Men are encouraged to obey natural, moral law rather than God decreeing the salvation of particular sinners. This influenced Fuller and New Haven Theology.

Key foundations of Fuller's theology are that man has a natural ability to respond to God, that there is no election of some to life and some to condemnation; that Christ died for everyone without exception and that the Spirit calls all men equally. Thus it destroys four of the five cardinal points of Calvinism. Even Fuller himself admitted, '*I allow that the principles here defended may be inconsistent with the doctrines of grace*'.<sup>98</sup> This is much closer to Arminianism than Calvinism or even Amyraldism.

Fuller taught an unbiblical view of law and atonement. He elevated the powers of man, denying the effects of the Fall and total depravity. He had extreme views about salvation and even denied the penal, substitutionary death of Christ and imputation (of Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness). Consequently, he denied unconditional election, justification by faith and effectual calling. For Fuller, justification is by human righteousness obeying the (un-revealed, universal) moral law; man repents from his own volition on seeing the cross as merely a good example. Even sanctification is by human endeavour without any involvement of the Holy Spirit. He even taught an early form of the Free Offer - faith as the duty of man to improve himself by his own efforts.

Fuller's theology is just about the worst type of works-righteousness that can be imagined coming from someone who called himself a Calvinist. What is worse is that he used disingenuous methods in his writings to give false impressions. Space does not allow us to develop his serious errors here; for more information consult the sources mentioned later.

These sort of errors are commonly found in New Calvinism; errors that are closer to Arminianism than Calvinism. John Piper has spoken very highly of Fuller.

### **Abraham Kuyper**

We have already covered some of the history of this man who was marred by worldly ideals. Before he became a politician he had been an ardent champion of historic Calvinism producing one of the strongest defences of double predestination and the five points in his book *Particular Grace*, which originally appeared as a series in a newspaper.

As well as formulating the original form of Common Grace in order to defend his co-operation with Roman Catholics to produce a Dutch utopia, he had other errors.

One was 'Presumptive Regeneration'; that is, the idea that the covenant exists in the congregation so that everyone is regenerate until evidence emerges to show otherwise. Thus professing believers and the children of all were considered saved, hence paedobaptism. This is somewhat common in many Dutch Reformed churches. The upshot of this is that Gospel preaching is not seen as a necessity in the church since everyone was already saved. Neither is there any need for spiritual admonishment.

Another was the cultural mandate. This is the notion that the church is called to subdue the world, filling it with Christians and ruling it in the name of Christ. It was an early form of triumphal dominionism, now seen more clearly in radical Charismatic churches. It was his view of the cultural mandate that led him to enter politics in order to fulfil his dream (which was quickly dashed). Many Reformed churches (especially in South Africa) have followed this and when 'Kuyperism' is mentioned it is normally this error that is in mind. You could say that the cultural mandate played a part in establishing Apartheid in South Africa.

Kuyperism is also behind the modern version seen in Christian Reconstructionism. This is an American movement started by Rousas Rushdoony in the 1960s that seeks to

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<sup>98</sup> Fuller, Works, Vol 2, p367.

Christianise society and rule it by the Mosaic Law (Theonomy). It is a form of dominionism. Some New Calvinists, such as Tim Keller, are associated with this movement.

In fact it is not the church's goal to rule the world at all. The church is called to preach the Gospel and save people out of this world to be citizens of a better world. The real cultural mandate will come into effect after the Second Coming and the restoration of all things in a new earth where heaven reigns. It is not for now.

Many New Calvinists speak of Kuyper as their chief influence.

### **Ignorance of history**

There is widespread ignorance of Calvinistic history amongst New Calvinists and sometimes utter confusion. Few seem to have any grasp of Amyraldism, and thus they unknowingly embrace it. They seem to mostly have no idea what the historic Calvinistic confessions say or they would realise that they are not Calvinists. They appear to have no knowledge about the importance of the Synod of Dort because they embrace ideas which Dort cursed. This is to say nothing of their denial of what Calvin actually wrote, as we have seen in this paper.

As an example of ludicrous ignorance, in a recent post on Mark Driscoll's church website ('Resurgence') entitled 'Time Magazine names New Calvinism 3<sup>rd</sup> most powerful idea', we see this; in a description of Driscoll's thoughts on New Calvinism versus old Calvinism he says,

1. **Old Calvinism was fundamental or liberal** and separated from or syncretised with culture. New Calvinism is missional and seeks to create and redeem culture.
2. **Old Calvinism fled from the cities.** New Calvinism is flooding into cities.
3. **Old Calvinism was cessationistic** (sic) and fearful of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. New Calvinism is continuationist (sic) and joyful in the presence of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Old Calvinism was fearful and suspicious** of other Christians and burned bridges. New Calvinism loves all Christians and builds bridges between them.

This is arrant nonsense.

- Point one makes no sense. True Calvinism cannot be both fundamental and liberal, as they are opposites. Perverted Calvinism could be liberal but that was not true Calvinism.
- You cannot state that Calvinism both separates from culture and 'syncretises' (i.e. unites) with culture. The truth is that Calvinism taught men how to obey God's word. It centred itself on teaching the whole Gospel of God to men. However, these men then did their jobs effectively, as unto God, and some of these affected culture. Thus there were Calvinistic artists, musicians, writers, rulers and politicians.
- Point two just reveals Driscoll's ignorance. Calvinism was very strong in major cities. The main centre of Calvinism in the Reformation was the city-state of Geneva. But Calvinism was also strong in other Swiss cities such as Berne and Basle. Calvinism was also strong elsewhere such as in the city of Strasbourg. For a time it was even strong in Paris, despite the prevalence of Romanism in France. As it spread it dominated both towns and rural areas. Thus in England Calvinism was powerful in cities like London, Oxford and Cambridge, but also in rural areas where Calvinist pastors worked faithfully, such as Haworth in Yorkshire.
- It is true that Calvinism is cessationist regarding supernatural spiritual gifts but it is a lie that it was 'fearful of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit'. I explain in this paper that most, if not all, of the Charismatic gifts manifest today are fakes and have

more to do with the occult than the Holy Spirit. But true Calvinist preachers in the past were genuine men of God full of the Spirit. They were electrifying in their preaching with great power inspired by the Spirit. These men changed the course of history and changed nations and even created new nations because the power of God was with them. No New Calvinist ever had such power. The power of the Spirit in historic Calvinists was spiritual and changed men's hearts. The Charismatic power in New Calvinists is emotional and does no good.

- It is another plain lie to say that 'Calvinism was fearful and suspicious of other Christians and burned bridges'. Calvin himself went out of his way to try to build bridges with other leaders. Calvin even treated the doomed heretic Michael Servetus with kindness, seeking his repentance so he could avoid execution. Despite many abusive attacks on him by Servetus (including calling him a murderer & a sorcerer), Calvin helped him prepare his defence by providing books from his own library. Calvin even pleaded to the magistrates that the sentence be mitigated and prayed with him in jail. Earlier Swiss Reformers had even tried to forge an alliance with Lutheranism, such as Zwingli at the colloquy of Marburg (which Luther ruined, not Zwingli). Reformed leader Martin Bucer was known for his bridge building character.
- Driscoll seems to have no historic understanding of Calvinism at all.

## Bad alliances and sources

### Rick Warren

John Piper has invited Rick Warren<sup>99</sup> to his conferences as a mainline speaker. For example his 2010 Desiring God National Conference saying that Warren, '*is deeply theological, he's a brilliant man ... he is theological and doctrinal and sound*'.<sup>100</sup> If Piper thinks Warren is sound, then Piper has no spiritual discernment at all. Piper also defended Warren's book, 'The Purpose Driven Life', in Warren's studios at Saddleback Church, California. This is in opposition to the widespread condemnation of this book by conservative Calvinist theologians. In April 2011 Piper organised a regional Desiring God Conference in Warren's church.

### Andrew Fuller

John Piper thoroughly endorses the works of Andrew Fuller without realising the serious theological compromises of the man, which amounted to confused Amyraldism, near

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<sup>99</sup> Pastor of Saddleback Church, California. Having studied under Peter Wagner at Fuller, Warren is closely associated with the church growth strategies of Wagner, Wimber, Hybels, Hayford etc. He expresses the desire to build new types of churches that are culturally relevant to baby boomers. He was closely connected to Wimber and now to the apostolic and prophetic movement, led by Wagner, that followed him. He was a key speaker at Yonggi Cho's church growth conference in 1997; Cho mixes occult concepts with Christian teaching. Warren was also a key speaker at Schuller's Institute for Successful Church Leadership. Schuller has denied the uniqueness of Christ in salvation. Warren embraces seeker-sensitive practices and pragmatic worldly ideas such as church marketing techniques – this is worldliness and relying upon human strength. His book 'Purpose Driven Church' is a strategy for marketing outsiders and attracting them in. he also endorses strategies to change human culture. He endorses Ken Blanchard who embraces mystics, visualisation, promotes New Age concepts and even passes on the teachings of Buddha, the Dalai Lama and Yogananda. Warren also endorses Leonard Sweet, another New Age teacher who speaks of God and Jesus in New Age terms (energy). He quotes Mother Theresa and the Catholic Bible. He endorses Bernie Siegel, another New Age leader. Warren has endorsed many other mystics and Interfaith authors. Believing that doctrinal unity can be sacrificed to foster spiritual fellowship, Warren's pastor-training programs welcomes Catholics, Methodists, Mormons, Jews and ordained women. Many Reformed leaders have strongly criticised Warren's books and ministry as being severely compromised.

<sup>100</sup> Video - Invitation to Warren to attend Desiring God Conference 2010; copied to <http://www.sharperiron.org/filings/3-31-10/14433>.

Pelagianism and near liberalism. It is no wonder that churches under Fuller's influence later became Socinian.

### **Daniel Fuller**

John Piper studied at Fuller Theological Seminary (1968-1971) which is a near-liberal institution, denying the inerrancy of the Bible. Here he was very impressed by Daniel Fuller, whom he described as the most influential living teacher in his life. Piper says of Fuller, '*His major work, The Unity of the Bible...., is explanatory background to most of what I write.*'<sup>101</sup> Many New Calvinists appreciate Daniel Fuller.

Daniel Fuller denies justification by faith; he wrote: '*I would say that Moses was justified by the work, or obedience, of faith.... (There are) many passages in Scripture in which good works are made the instrumental cause of justification.*'<sup>102</sup> He claimed that Calvin had to twist Scripture in order to prove justification by faith.

### **Liberalism**

Some New Calvinists refer to liberal scholars with appalling regularity. Michael Goheen repeatedly refers to Leslie Newbigin for example (often quoted by Emergent Church leaders). Newbigin did not believe in the authority of the Bible.

Keller was highly influenced by a teacher in a Lutheran catechism school who was, '*a social activist... filled with deep doubts about traditional Christian doctrine*'. He taught a '*spirit of love in the universe, who mainly required that we work for human rights and the liberation of the oppressed*'.<sup>103</sup> This must have left a lasting impression since Keller's works are filled with these two characteristics; near hatred for traditional doctrinal conformity and an overriding agenda for Utopian social action. This comes out noticeably in his book, *Generous Justice*.

### **Roman Catholicism**

Though the movement in general denies the validity of the Roman Church, individuals are very heavily influenced by Roman Catholic priests, philosophers and mystics.

For example Tim Keller's chief mentor is Alvin Platinga, an analytic philosopher, formerly Professor for Philosophy and Director of the Centre of Philosophy and Religion at the Catholic Notre Dame University from 1982 until 2010. In some of his works (such as the article, '*Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs: Leading the Secular to Christ*') he takes idea after idea from Platinga.<sup>104</sup> This reliance upon Roman Catholicism, in theology and practice, has led to increasing ecumenism in his church and the adoption, not only of Catholic doctrine, but also Catholic mystical practices.

Keller also quotes from many other Catholic authors. One of these is the Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft another is Catholic author Mary Flannery O'Conner. Keller quotes this novelist to show that one way of being bad is by being very good and keeping all the rules!<sup>105</sup> This writer was a sacramentalist and a pantheist (*'the world is charged with*

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<sup>101</sup> Daniel P. Fuller, *A Response on the Subjects of Works and Grace*, Presbuterion: A Journal for the Eldership, Volume IX, Numbers 1-2, Spring-Fall 1983, 76.

<sup>102</sup> Fuller, *A Response on the Subjects of Works and Grace*, 79. Quoted from John W. Robbins; *Pied Piper*. The Trinity Review.

<sup>103</sup> *The Reason for God*, Hodder & Stoughton, (2008), pxi.

<sup>104</sup> Platinga states that Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ and wonderful allies, something Keller endorses. [http://www.case.edu.au/images/uploads/03\\_pdfs/keller-deconstructing-defeater.pdf](http://www.case.edu.au/images/uploads/03_pdfs/keller-deconstructing-defeater.pdf) page 3.

<sup>105</sup> *Reason for God*, chapter: Religion and the Gospel.

God’);<sup>106</sup> yet he uses this woman as his chief example of the way of grace. Other Catholics Keller is enamoured with include: Simone Weil (a Catholic mystic), Czesław Miłosz (Polish poet)<sup>107</sup>, Archbishop Oscar Romero (El Salvador martyr), GK Chesterton (novelist convert to Romanism), Malcolm Muggeridge (journalist convert to Romanism).

Keller also praised the ecumenical movement for having ‘*contributed an emphasis on Christians using their work to further social justice in the world*’<sup>108</sup> and is a signatory of the *Manhattan Declaration*, which is a policy statement supporting the unification of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in charitable social works. In his book *The Reason For God*, he states that the Roman Church is ‘*the largest church in the world*’ and equates all Roman Catholics (and Eastern Orthodox) with Christians.

### **CS Lewis**

Lewis is an interesting character and some of his books have a certain value, but he was not an evangelical at all and thus one would not expect to see Reformed men lean very heavily on him. The opposite is the case, several key New Calvinists declare their heavy debt to Lewis. Keller is so enamoured of Lewis that he has been labelled as ‘the modern Lewis’.<sup>109</sup>

### **Richard Foster**

Foster is a Quaker theologian; Quakerism is not a Christian religion by a mystical cult. Its offshoots (Radical Quakers and the Shakers) became even more extreme blending Biblical ideas with the occult.<sup>110</sup>

Foster particularly focused Christians on Quaker ideas about mysticism, with his book ‘The Celebration of Discipline’ (1978), selling over 2 million copies. In those days it was incumbent on every Christian to read it. This helped pave the way for the modern expressions of New Age and mysticism in the churches. It also opened the door for Catholic mysticism when Foster commended the ‘Spiritual Exercises’ of Ignatius Loyola (founder of the Jesuits), and other mystics, which is popular amongst New Calvinists today. Tim Keller has given a series of lectures to teach his congregation about Foster’s mystical methods of mediation and contemplative prayer.

### **Social action and left-wing politics**

Individual believers have to make up their own mind regarding politics. In my view neither left nor right wing politics have a monopoly on the truth, and whipped parliamentary parties are a bane to democracy. However, some political views are opposed to the Gospel.

One of these is communism. Keller was, heavily influenced by the neo-Marxist critical theory of the Frankfurt School;<sup>111</sup> which explains his later commitment to neo-Marxist social action rather than traditional evangelism. His hatred of Calvinism is due to associating it with racial segregation in the Deep South of America and apartheid in South Africa; neither of which result from Calvin’s teaching at all but men’s perversion of it.

Keller pursues his neo-Marxist utopianism in directing people to strive for a better society and combines this with the neo-Kuyperism of others to teach a modern triumphalism. He also presents the Gospel as the provider of personal freedom and unity in diversity instead

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<sup>106</sup> *New World Encyclopaedia* entry.

<sup>107</sup> *Reason for God*, p75.

<sup>108</sup> *Every Good Endeavour*, p20.

<sup>109</sup> Lewis was confused on the Gospel, had numerous heterodox beliefs, had some very odd beliefs and was a High Anglican Church semi-Catholic.

<sup>110</sup> Culminating in Anne Lee describing herself as the Messiah.

<sup>111</sup> *The Reason for God*, pxi-xii.

of redemption through the blood of Christ to give forgiveness of sins. Thus Keller's goal is that Christians become, '*true revolutionaries*' devoted to social justice and to changing the world to the extent of eliminating poverty.<sup>112</sup>

Rather than giving us freedom in a worldly sense, the Gospel makes us willing slaves of Christ and servants of one another.

It is common in New Calvinism to see ecumenism at work and this is the opposite of Calvinism which demanded that churches separate from error.

## Summary of errors

- An attempt to mix Semi-Pelagian Arminianism with Calvinism (universalism with particularism). Compromise on most of the five points.
- Universalism in the atonement is common.
- Denial of double predestination yet affirmation of election.
- Amyraldian in Gospel presentation. A compromised Gospel presentation affirming God's love for everyone and that Jesus died for everyone, yet claiming to affirm election.
- Teaching two contradictory wills in God.
- Since the Charismatic expression of church is a compromise with the world, New Calvinism brings people into this worldiness, especially in fleshly emotionalism, passivity, mysticism and occultism in worship. This worldliness comes to its fulness in the ministry of Mark Driscoll, which is often profane as well as worldly.
- The movement is often seen to be very worldly in outward church expression. The impact of the 'performance' is a significant aspect of this ministry.
- There is a tendency to a commitment to pragmatism rather than truth. This leads to a wrong leaning upon commercialism and reliance upon market research and statistics.
- Postmillennial utopianism, the desire to change and perfect the world.
- Their view of culture is neo-Kuyperian; that is the desire to change the world and its culture into a Christian fashion. Everything in modern culture needs to be used and captured for Christ. This is part of their general utopianism, which is unbiblical. An example of this is the utilisation of modern forms of music in worship, such as rock bands, because they are considered as neutral art forms which reaches out to a certain audience. This focuses mission on sinners instead of Christ.
- Embracing a corrupting ecumenism.
- Worldiness.

## Objections by traditional Calvinists (Reformed theologians)

- The movement contradicts Calvin and his followers (whom they claim to follow) in many areas.
- The movement does not follow historic Reformed confessions of faith, and in fact, contradicts them in many places.

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<sup>112</sup> *The Reason for God*, pxiii. 'Social justice' is a term derived from the Frankfurt School.

- The movement contradicts the faith and practices of the Puritans (whom they claim to follow).
- The movement contradicts cessationism.
- The movement utilises revivalist methods, which were pioneered by Arminians and Pelagians.
- The movement contains people who are Amyraldian, New Covenant, Semi-Pelagian, and Dispensational, which are contrary to Reformed theology.
- Denial of the regulative principle of worship.
- Embracing radical New Covenant Theology with a denial of the responsibility to the Moral Law.
- Antinomianism is repeatedly observed.

## Quotes

[New Calvinism] describes a seriously distorted Calvinism falling far, far short of an authentic life of obedience to a sovereign God. If this kind of Calvinism prospers, then genuine biblical piety will be under attack as never before.

Peter Masters; 'The Merger of Calvinism with Worldliness', *Sword & Trowel* 2009, No. 1.

## Conclusion

Being measured against traditional, consistent Calvinism (that is, the Calvinism of Calvin) New Calvinism stands out as being a deeply heretical religion in both doctrine and practice. It shocks me to find that few very important Calvinists, if any, have condemned this movement systematically. The only books on it are superficial and too accommodating.

Many over-tolerant Reformed people have said that at least, the New Calvinists celebrate the five points of Calvinism. However, the fact is that most of them do not. Some of them deny all the five points, others deny two or three points while the best amongst deny Limited Atonement and Reprobation (i.e. they support three and a half points).

In fact, the best one can say is that most of them are Amyraldians; but even this is too kind. They are not the kind of Amyraldians that led godly lives and focused upon Christ, being excellent pastors, such as Richard Baxter and John Davenant or the Marrowmen. They are not even the sort of men that thought seriously about theology like John Cameron and Moses Amyraut. They are more the sort of Amyraldians that had additional unorthodox views, like their hero Andrew Fuller who approached Socinianism. In fact, Fuller even denied the need for regeneration before conversion – a crucial Calvinistic doctrine.

New Calvinism is a hotchpotch of erroneous ideas and practices that usurps the name of 'Calvinism', but which is a toxic mix of errors, added to some good bits of Reformed truth. This is always the most dangerous type of error. Outright radical heresy is more likely to put seekers of the truth off; but put some poison in amongst good food and you have a deadly snare.

Having said that, there are features of New Calvinism which are downright scandalous; how can people not see this? The appalling behaviour and speech of Driscoll; the blasphemies of Driscoll and others; the partnerships with men who deny that Christ is the

only salvation; close associations with men who deny the inerrancy of the Bible; the embracing of Catholic mysticism; the denials of parts of Scripture (such as Genesis 1-3) and the obvious worldliness. May God have mercy on his people if they cannot see that this is a serious problem. Also, shame on Reformed church leaders who have not shone a light on this movement and warned their people of its dangers.

The general direction of New Calvinism is worldliness and this means that it has been captivated by Satan, the ruler of this world through sin. Following New Calvinism will bring corruption.

## Resources

### *Relevant papers by Paul Fahy*

- Tim Keller – What’s so wrong?
- A short assessment of John Piper.
- Error and its disciples.
- Errors of the Saumur School.
- Letter to a closet Amyraldian.
- Summary of the tenets of Mysticism.
- The End-Time erosion of justification by faith.
- Charismatic catastrophe.
- The problem of Fullerism (booklet).
- Does God have two contradictory wills?
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- A catechism on tongues.
- Why tongues are not available today - a synopsis.

### *Other resources*

These deal with aspects of New Calvinism, or a fairly general assessment, but I am not necessarily endorsing all that is said. Frankly, there is not a really thorough evaluation of the movement that I am aware of in print. One key problem is that most modern confessional Calvinists are compromised four-point Calvinists, and thus they are tarnished by errors taught by the New Calvinists. Though they criticise New Calvinism, they are far too soft on key issues.

- Michael Beasley; *The Fallible Prophets of New Calvinism*, The Armoury Ministries (2013).
- Greg Dutcher; *Killing Calvinism*, Cruciform Press (2012).
- Jeremy Walker; *The New Calvinism Considered*, Evangelical Press (2013).

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