

Calvinism

Vs

Hyper-Calvinism

Many reformed people claim to be ‘a five-point Calvinist’, some go further and also affirm the Canons of the Synod of Dort where the five points were first hammered out in opposition to the five claims of the Arminian Remonstrants. However, one has to question whether they are truly five-point Calvinists in light of what they then claim to believe.

As a result of novel ideas which arose within the last hundred years or so, many reformed folk believe that: God loves everyone equally, that God gives ‘common-grace’ to everyone and that the preaching of the Gospel is a ‘well-meant offer’ of pardon to all who hear it. In this they concur with the theology of a weakened and increasingly apostate evangelicalism. Further, more and more now accuse historic Calvinists as being Hyper-Calvinists when they oppose these notions.

All sound believers will have no problems with the normal theological definition of Hyper-Calvinism i.e. a denial of the Gospel call to all and denial of faith as a duty for all. This error so fatalistically exalts God’s decree that it fails to see the need to actively evangelise sinners. God is sovereign in salvation, so man can do nothing. It does not seek to persuade sinners of their responsibility to repent and only those who show some signs of already being elect are witnessed to. Those who deny these things are unbiblical.

To undergird their position, many are now re-defining Hyper-Calvinism to include consistent Calvinists.¹ By adding to this definition they condemn those who deny a sincere offer in the general call of the Gospel, those who deny common grace and those who deny a genuine love of God towards the reprobate. Such are also libelled as ‘Hyper-Calvinists’. The key question then is: are these three teachings Biblical or not?

Now to give an academic apology for these three doctrines would take too long here. Several writers, including myself, have written works which demonstrate the truth of the propositions. In this critique we can only provide short summaries as part of the case against this trend.

My claim, in this paper is that this redefining of Hyper-Calvinism is not Biblically sound, is inconsistent with Calvin and is inconsistent with the Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht (or Dort, Dordt).

¹ For example, see the article by Phillip R Johnson which appeared in *Sword and Trowel* magazine 2002, No 1.

Is this new definition of Hyper-Calvinism to be trusted?

The standard theological definition of Hyper-Calvinism relates to those who teach that the Gospel is only offered to those who are already regenerated and convicted of sin. This error is evidenced in the Gospel Standard articles of faith: *'We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance ... we reject the doctrine that men in a natural state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God ... that the gospel is offered indiscriminately to all.'*²

The New Dictionary Of Theology gives a typical definition (although schismatic and misrepresentative in its examples³) and poses no great problem to High Calvinists who have no qualms with the genuine meaning of the word 'offer' but deny a 'well-meant, free-offer'. High Calvinists agree that minimising the responsibility of sinners and undermining their duty to believe are errors.

The prefix 'hyper' comes from the Greek word *hyper* meaning 'over', 'beyond', and thus means, exceeding, excessive, above normal. In connection with the word 'Calvinism', the meaning is that there is a branch of theology which considers itself to be Calvinism, but is actually excessive, going far beyond limits set by Calvin. The crucial matter then is, are Johnson's additional definitions in line with Calvin himself; are they Biblical and do they comply with the formal historic Calvinistic statements – such as those of the Synod of Dort? This paper shows that the new definition is unbiblical as well as in conflict with Calvin, orthodox theologians and Calvinistic standards. The additional three definitions of error are actually orthodox, Calvinism.

The key Calvinistic issues under threat

Reprobation

While many so called 'four-point Calvinists' deny the doctrine of reprobation and double predestination, we are not sure where the supporters of the new definition stand on this crucial foundation to the present argument. Some have claimed that, *'it is possible to be a supralapsarian, and to hold to a kind of "double-predestination" without embracing hyper-Calvinism'* (p11, emphasis mine). Either one believes in double-predestination or does not; there are no varieties. Logic demands that if God chooses the elect, then he has also selected the reprobate – at the very least by default, although scripture shows that there is a clear choice involved in the reprobate.

The Bible distinctly teaches this 'terrible' doctrine. Whatever our concerns about it, we must simply accept what is openly taught in scriptures like:

- *The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.* (Prov 16:4)
- *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.* (Rm 9:17-18)
- *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering 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)

² Articles of faith of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies.

³ In the full text from *The New Dict. Of Theology*, IVP.

The Bible teaches reprobation (or double predestination) because it is impossible to teach election or limited atonement without implying reprobation. There is one decree – to select a group of mankind to be included in Christ. This, of necessity selects another group who will not be so included. There are not two decrees in double predestination. As the Canons of Dort teach: *That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree [singular] ... According to which decree, He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in His just judgment.* (First Head, Article 6). Indeed the nature of reprobation is detailed more carefully here than in many theological works. [See First Head, Articles: 6,10,15,16,18, the negative part of the First Head, Article 8.]

I trust no one will argue that Calvin does not teach reprobation as it is repeatedly and clearly mentioned in the *Institutes*, especially in Book 3:24. Two quotes will suffice:

*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.*⁴

*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.]*⁵

Understanding and accepting this doctrine is critical to the argument in hand. There is a portion of the human race whom God has created to be vessels of wrath and who were chosen for this destiny in eternity. God does not mean good to such but confirms them under wrath. Calvin and all orthodox reformed standards plainly teach this. One cannot call oneself a Calvinist and not hold to double predestination without ignorance or dishonour. Johnson cannot maintain his definitions without rejecting Biblical reprobation.

The free offer of the Gospel

Scripture does not use the word 'offer' as a description of the Gospel call. The Gospel is preached, not offered. However, throughout history individual theologians and confessions have used the term. That writers, including Calvin, use the phrase 'offer' is without dispute; Gospel preaching is often described in these terms, but the question is - what is meant by these words at the time of writing? The word 'offer' originally meant 'to present' or 'to show',⁶ as in portraying Christ as the saviour from sin. Today, the verb means 'to proffer with an intention of doing something', 'providing something', or even 'to make available for sale', 'to consider for possible exploitation'. The noun means 'an expression of readiness to do or give something if desired'. The word is not helpful in this modern sense in evangelism.

William Cunningham, in his standard work, *Historical Theology*, explains the true theological meaning,

Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all whom the gospel is preached, and that all who can be

⁴ 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.*

⁵ John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, Library of Christian Classics, 'Articles Concerning Predestination, p179.

⁶ From the Latin 'offere', to present or exhibit.

*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.*⁷

True Calvinism may use the phrase but not in the sense that God loves all men and desires earnestly to save all.

Calvin adopted this position, as scholars have noted,

*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.*⁸

Calvin saw no contradiction between the decree to save some and the universal offer. God loves and elects some to salvation, while he destines others to wrath to demonstrate his justice. 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.*⁹

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.'*¹⁰ God's call is a manifestation of love and power towards the elect but a curse to the reprobate hardening him and confirming him under wrath. *'Those, therefore, whom he has created for dishonour during life and destruction at death, that they may be vessels of wrath and examples of severity, in bringing their doom, he at one time deprives of the means of hearing his word, at another by the preaching of it blinds and stupifies them the more.'*¹¹

The 'offer' of life in the preaching of the Gospel is only effectual to the elect. The Gospel call, far from being a sincere offer of life, is a hardening to the reprobate. God hardens wicked men's hearts, but he does this by means so that they harden their own hearts. Pharaoh is a good example of this, as Paul explains in Rm 9:17-18. It was the prophetic words and actions of Moses which caused Pharaoh to harden his own heart (Ex 8:15, 32, 9:12, 30-35). Man's responsibility does not imply natural ability. God commands men to believe and repent even though they cannot, just as Jesus commanded men to walk when they could not. But in the command the elect receive power to do what they cannot do while the reprobate are hardened, just as cripples commanded by Jesus began to walk.

The Gospel call is not good to everyone. This is why Jesus stated, several times harkening back to Isaiah, that some were blinded and deafened by godly preaching.

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)

This was explicitly stated and understood in the Old Testament:

⁷ William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol 2, p396.

⁸ W. Gary Crampton, *What Calvin Says*, p73.

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:29,17.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:24,13

¹¹ John Calvin, *Institutes* 3:24,12

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)

The very reason for speaking in parables was to hide truth from the reprobate:

"Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." (Matt 13:10-12).

Paul explains this doctrine in these terms:

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.... For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:3-4,6)

There is a veil over the spiritual perception of the reprobate so that they cannot perceive the truth of the Gospel. God uses Satan to blind men's minds with temptation and selfishness so that Christ's light is hidden. Only when God shines his light into our darkness can we see the light of Christ's glory. This God does for the elect only.

So, the Gospel call is hidden from men who are not elect to salvation. How does the free-offer fit into this Biblical framework? How can the free-offer be a sincere offer of life to all if Jesus states that many cannot see it and are hardened? How can the free-offer be good to the reprobate if the Bible tells us that they are hardened unto damnation by it?

The problem with the modern use of the word 'offer' is that it contains the notion that God loves all men without exception and proffers salvation to all. The imagined purpose behind this is that God wants to save everyone if they will receive the truth. This obviously contradicts Biblical (and Calvinistic) doctrines of predestination, limited atonement and irresistible grace. Many have taken this further and now teach a universalistic atonement where Christ dies for all (for this is the logical result of the initial error). If election is true, and only some were decreed to be saved in eternity, how can salvation be honestly offered to all? If Christ did not die for everyone, how can salvation be offered to everyone since some will have no atonement available? If God is a faultless, omnipotent being, how can there be a hell if he wants everyone to be saved?

This is precisely the theology rejected by Calvin. When he condemned the teaching of Pighius, he described his error as uttering, *'The mercy of God is extended to everyone, for God wishes all men to be saved; and for that end he stands and knocks at the door of our heart desiring to enter'*. This error Calvin condemned.¹² *'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.'*¹³

It is impossible that God wants or wills everyone to be saved if he has already chosen only a portion of the human race, in eternity, for salvation. It is blasphemy to suggest that God lives a lie, or fails to achieve his desired ends. Yet this is precisely what the free-offer of

¹²Treatise on *The Eternal Predestination of God*, in *Calvin's Calvinism*, Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. [Reprint of the Henry Cole translation (1856)], p152.

¹³ John Calvin, *The Eternal Predestination of God*, in *Calvin's Calvinism*, p49-51. Note that Calvin here condemns many modern 'Calvinists' who espouse this teaching that is 'puerile' and 'absurd'.

grace does. God's revelation cannot contradict what God is and what he purposes; yet the free offer teaches that in eternity God selects only some to be saved, but then in time offers freely to all his love, grace and salvation. Worse still for five-point Calvinists who preach it, the free, well-meant offer proffers a salvation for which there is no foundation of atonement, since Christ never died for the reprobate. This is a travesty.

The word 'offer' does not exist in the Canons of Dort, in the sense that defenders of the well-meant offer suggest, and only appears twice in a completely different context. There is no portrayal of the Gospel message in the sense of a sincere offer to all men. However, the concept of the well-meant offer is rejected as an Arminian heresy.

[They err] *Who teach: That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, namely, the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. And that in this way God on his part shows himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since he applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion. For the experience of all ages and the Scriptures do both testify that this is untrue. "He showeth his Word unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his ordinances they have not known them," Psalm 147:19, 20. "Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own way," Acts 14:16. And: "And they (Paul and his companions) having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit suffered them not," Acts 16:6, 7.*¹⁴

The word 'offered' appears four times: once referring to Christ offered as a sacrifice on the cross, once as Gospel preaching and twice in connection with error, viz.

[The error] *of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception.*¹⁵

*Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of that salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also.*¹⁶

Does God have two wills, a secret one to save only some and a revealed one to truly offer salvation to all?

Of course there is no indication in scripture of a double will in God – there is one, single divine purpose running throughout history, to provide a covenant people as a bride for his Son and a testimony of glory to his invisible nature.

For certain 'Calvinists' to suggest that God truly offers life to everyone posits massive theological problems regarding God's nature. Firstly, how can salvation be offered to those

¹⁴ *Canons of the Synod of Dort*, Third / Fourth Head (Corruption of man and conversion), Rejection of Errors, 5.

¹⁵ *Canons of the Synod of Dort*, Second Head (Of the Death of Christ, and the Redemption of Men Thereby), Rejection of Errors, 6.

¹⁶ *Canons of the Synod of Dort*, Third / Fourth Head (Corruption of man and conversion), Article 14

for whom Christ did not die, unless the offer is a lie. For this reason many have abandoned limited atonement, a key strand of Calvinism. Secondly, it means that God is deceiving the reprobate by offering a salvation which they can never have. Thirdly, it means that God does something imperfectly – he offers people something which cannot be fulfilled; he also loves certain people but that love then fails. Trying to get around this, the notion of a secret as well as a revealed will in God has arisen whereby he can offer salvation (revealed will) but only give it to some (secret will regarding the elect). In this case God both loves and hates the same people; either perfectly at the same time (thus positing confusion in God), or imperfectly in various qualities (he loves the reprobate with a lesser love than the elect) or at different times (loves the reprobate in time but hates them in hell).

God's attributes include unity, immutability and simplicity. God cannot be divided, cannot change and cannot suffer contradiction. What he is in himself and what he is in his revelation are indivisible. Yet many reformed teachers these days suggest that God has two wills, two affections, two purposes and two attitudes to the reprobate. He wills their salvation, then he doesn't. He loves them, then he doesn't. He desires their salvation, then he damns them. He offers them salvation, but without any power so he knows there is no chance of them receiving it. God also changes from love to hate, from offering salvation to sentencing wrath, from desire to desertion. What kind of God is this?

Seeing all this confusion, the notion of a double will in God was anathema to Calvin:

Nothing is less accordant with the nature of God that he should have a double will ... He does not in himself will opposites.¹⁷

The will of God is immutable, and his truth is always consistent with itself.¹⁸

Contrary to the modern confusion about divine attributes, the Biblical God is,

... in one mind, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me. (Job 23:13-14).

I am God, and there is none like Me ... My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ... I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. (Isa 46:9-11)

The particular love of God

There is a close connection between the idea that God loves everyone and that he provides a common grace for everyone. John Murray summarises this in his works,

There is a love in God that goes forth to lost men and is manifest in the manifold blessings which all men without distinction enjoy, a love in which non-elect persons are embraced.¹⁹

This is why the new definition of Hyper-Calvinism links the new items together; they each dovetail into each other. God loves everybody so he gives a type of grace to everyone, desires their salvation and sends a sincere free-offer that whoever responds will be saved. This offer goes out in the Gospel call which all men have a duty to respond to. This sort of Gospel is what John Duncan called 'a blurring of the edges of Calvinism' that approached Arminianism. Does God tell us that he loves all men?

The Bible shows us that God is perfect. When he loves, he loves fully and perfectly. The God of the free-offer loves everyone, and yet fails to achieve his desired ends since many of those loved end up being damned; sentenced by the same God. This God is not the God of the Bible who loves the elect from eternity to the uttermost; *Whatever God does, It shall be*

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes* 3:24,17.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes* 3:2,12.

¹⁹ John Murray, *Collected Writings*, Vol 1, p67-68.

forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. (Eccles 3:14). God only loves forever, as this verse explicitly teaches. It is impossible for God to love men for a while, offer them life, desire their salvation and then hate them in hell.

There is not one scripture that clearly states God's love for everyone, but there are many that state that he hates certain types of people and certain individuals (Ps 5:5; 11:5; Hosea 9:15; Mal 1:2-3; Rm 9:13 etc.). In the face of this, it is foolish or disobedient to state that God loves the wicked when his word states clearly that he does not. Neither can we ameliorate the word 'hate'. The original is usually a strong word which does not mean 'to love less'; in fact the word *hate* regarding Esau is the same word used in Jn 15:25 - a hate strong enough to lead to murder!

John 3:16 is of no support for the modern contention since if 'the world' means everyone in it, then there can be no hell since that same world is not condemned and is saved in the next verse. 'World' cannot mean every human being in Jn 3:16, just as it doesn't in Jn 12:19, and there is not a single other text which implies that God loves everyone.²⁰

The idea of a universal divine love is of no help in evangelism anyway. It was originally posited in order to make Calvinism more attractive to critics (as it still is today). If God loves everyone, why should sinners bother repenting and following Christ? A God of love won't do anything un-loving (like condemning them) will he? If God does not love fully, but only partly, then the modernised evangel should tell sinners this. 'God loves you a little bit, so give your life to him. If you don't, he will send you to hell. If you receive Christ, he will love you much more.' How can telling people that God loves them inculcate the divine fear which is the beginning of wisdom? The apostles never used this method, in fact, the word 'love' doesn't appear in the Acts at all; rather they taught that man was in sin, and man had a responsibility to repent and honour the God who created him by believing in Christ the Saviour.

Calvin followed the apostles and categorically stated that God, *by an eternal decree fixed the number of those whom he is pleased to embrace in love, and of those whom he is pleased to display his wrath.*²¹ God only loves the elect, while his wrath rests above those who are not elect. Obviously, Calvinism does not imply that God loves everyone. On the contrary, God hates the reprobate:

*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.*²²

The Canons of the Synod of Dort are also infused with particularism. The blessings of the elect are detailed throughout and are contrasted with the wrath destined for the reprobate wicked. There is no sense of a love of God poured out upon mankind in general. See: *First Head (Predestination), Article 10*: the text describing that God loved Jacob before he was born (Rm 9:11-13) is used to illustrate God's love for the elect. *Second Head, Article 9*: everlasting love is towards the elect only. *Third & Fourth Head, Article 7*: the sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God is only communicated to the elect.

Common Grace

That God, in his mercy, providentially arranges earthly matters is without question. The earth is his and God's purpose is to draw out, from mankind, the elect to be given to his

²⁰ The word 'love' in the NIV translation of Ps 145 does not appear at all in the Received Text or the Majority Text.

²¹ John Calvin, *Institutes* 3:29,17.

²² John Calvin, *Institutes* 3:24,17

Son. In order to do this God gives rain, sun, seasons and so on in order that men may live. He restrains Satan's plots to take over the earth through the domination of certain men and nations, just as he sometimes restrains social sin within society. But this restraint is only within the confines of his plan. Sometimes his restraint is withheld and nations degenerate under his judgment. God restrains the plans of Satan so that they do not curtail God's plans for the elect, but there is no improvement of sinners by some general favourable grace.

The Bible calls this sustaining of the earth by various names (usually described by theologians as 'providence') but not 'common grace'. God's good gifts of providence do not arise from a love or favour to all men, but from a desire to see the elect born, raised and converted. The reprobate do not partake of any grace, neither do they receive 'good-will' from God, nor are all men restrained from corruption; yet they benefit from the good gifts necessary for the development of the elect. God's providence of rain and sun is not an indication of love or grace to men; just as earthquakes and tornadoes do not imply God's hatred of those who suffer. Often believers suffer natural hardships along with sinners. Providential circumstances work hardness and confirmation in sin to the reprobate, but work grace and Christ-likeness in believers. Trials produce patience in believers.

The modern idea of common grace was required, especially by John Murray and RB Kuiper, in the face of apparent good works in men such as: patriotism, marital fidelity, filial piety, love of children and honesty. If man is depraved, how can he show these virtues? There are two choices: either these virtues are, in fact, seen as abominations by God, emanating from depraved humans unable to do any good,²³ or they are good works which arise from a common grace given by God to all men which is active within them. The Christian Reformed Churches Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924 declared that God had a favourable attitude towards humanity in general and that his common grace enabled men to perform civic good works, but not savingly good works. God was supposed to work grace into the hearts of all men, but did not regenerate those hearts, and then later condemns them to hell! Where is there any scriptural support for such nonsense?

On the contrary, scripture shows us that even the 'good' works of the wicked are abhorred by God:

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, if this is true of the elect, how much worse the reprobate?)

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)

²³ Augustine originally called these 'splendid sins'.

Even the home of the reprobate is cursed; he can't plough or offer a sacrifice without offending God! Calvin correctly states that,

*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.*²⁴

Grace is God's unmerited favour to those in Christ. The compound word 'common-grace' never appears in scripture and the notion that God's grace could be common is an insult. Neither is the word 'grace' ever employed towards the wicked. There is one grace and this grace only arises from the cross, without the cross there can be no grace to men, yet grace wrought by atonement can never be applied to the reprobate. If common grace is not merited by Christ's work on the cross, how is it merited by wicked men? If God can show favour to men without the cross, why was the cross necessary? There is no answer – thus many universalise the cross.²⁵

Calvin did make a few unwise statements in this connection, founding the gifts and abilities of some men in art and civil governance upon a *general grace of God* or a *special grace*.²⁶ However, this grace includes no desire to save nor helps people receive the Gospel. It is God's kindness in earthly matters. Calvin gives no scriptural support for this idea and the same passages often contain statements that this 'grace' is better termed 'providence' or a restraining 'bridle'.²⁷ These cannot be twisted to overturn his clear, frequent and strong words on man's total depravity and inability to do good.

'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 sense that modernising 'Calvinists' ascribe to it.

²⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes* 3:14, 7-8,11.

²⁵ John Murray claimed that the reprobate do benefit from the redemptive work of the cross. *Collected Writings*, Vol 1, p63. Five point Calvinists cannot accept this universalising of the cross, but upholders of common grace have no choice but to do so.

²⁶ See *Institutes*, 2.2.13, 14, 17.

²⁷ As in *Institutes* 2.3.3. I am indebted to David J. Engelsma here from *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* XXXV, no.2, p56-57. Thornwell, in his analysis of the *Institutes*, insists that Calvin rejects any idea of co-operating grace (*Works*, Vol 1, p621, Banner of Truth, 1986).

The five points of Calvinism (TULIP)

It is impossible to make the free-offer and a love of God for all men fit into the Calvinistic system. In simple terms:

1. *Total Depravity*: God cannot love something which is sinful and depraved.²⁸ Neither can he offer salvation to a person whom he knows cannot respond because he is dead in sin.
2. *Unconditional Election*: God cannot offer a conditional salvation to those he has unconditionally rejected. There is no will to respond in the reprobate, their will is bound.
3. *Limited Atonement*: God cannot offer salvation to those for whom Christ did not die, whom he did not choose. If he did, he knows the offer is a lie.
4. *Irresistible Grace*: for some the free-offer is stated to be a grace or a part of a common grace. Yet this grace is resistible, it can be rejected. What is the point of God sincerely offering salvation to those he knows will resist it since he has not given them effectual grace?
5. *Perseverance*: the Gospel of God is also an expression of the power of God. The Gospel carries in it the seed of perseverance; the converted will pursue holiness and will be preserved to the end since they are in Christ. The free-offer contains no power to persevere. It is an offer to fail.

Does history teach that ‘Hyper-Calvinism is as much a threat to true Calvinism as Arminianism’; that ‘every revival of true Calvinism ... has been hijacked, crippled or ultimately killed by Hyper-Calvinism’?²⁹

Firstly, we have to establish that God is sovereign in history. The fact that revivals peter out is due to the ordering of the one who rules over the nations. No revival ever failed primarily due to Hyper-Calvinism or any other error. Its time was over in the ruling providence of God. However, certain characteristics prevailed in the dissipation of many revivals.

Usually no evidence is given for this bold statement to enable us to consider it's worth. From a general view of church history, especially post-Reformation history, my understanding is that many revivals foundered when enthusiasm,³⁰ mysticism and exuberance took over rather than an intense form of Calvinism. Folk in revivals tended to get too excited rather than too staid. This was certainly the case in the 1859 Irish revival, the 1904 Welsh revival and aspects of the Great Awakening, which led to Jonathan Edwards's corrective works. The revivalist spirit led to great excesses in the Methodist camp meetings in 19th century America and spawned the Holiness and Pentecostal movements where religious exuberance gave way to gross errors in practice. Revivals at the time of CG Finney were marked by a wild character as well as doctrinal error, yet the contemporary Calvinist Asahel Nettleton saw great fruit to his ministry without these errors.

In actual fact, the theories which many modern ‘Calvinists’ seek to defend (free-offer, love of God to all) were themselves the poison which hampered true religion in history. The

²⁸ Regarding the Christian prior to conversion, God sees him a being placed in Christ in potential terms. God is outside time and sees the human race divided up into those for whom Christ's death has a value, and those who are viewed in their sins. God can love and have a good disposition to such a person even though they have not yet been justified according to Eph 1:4-5. The reprobate are always seen as ‘wicked’.

²⁹ This was specifically claimed in Johnson's article.

³⁰ An old term employed to describe excessive religious zeal, super-spirituality.

ideas first arose around the time of the Synod of Dort when certain men tried to make peace by marrying Calvinism with Arminianism; first by John Cameron and then especially by his follower Moises Amyraut. Amyraldianism proposed two decrees of election: one potentially to save everyone conditional upon faith (Arminianism), the second to certainly save a few by granting faith (Calvinism). This hypothetical-universalism was confused and completely self-contradictory. God loves everyone and wants to save everyone, but they won't believe because they are sinful, so God chooses the elect and gives them faith. Andrew Fuller revitalised this same conception later, but abandoned key Calvinistic doctrines as well, such as the prior need of regeneration to impart faith, which he called a '*mistake by old Calvinists*'.³¹ Theologians throughout history were raised up by God to condemn this error when it polluted God's work: Francis Turretin (who co-wrote a confession of faith specifically against this idea), John Owen, John Kennedy and BB Warfield to name but a few.

The modernising reformed position is very similar to Amyraldianism and is tarred with the same brush. It is his position which has damaged revivals (e.g. doctrinal confusion in the Netherlands after the Second Reformation, damage during Puritan England, Fullerism, Arminianising tendencies in 19th century crusade movements and the weakening of the modern resurgence of interest in Calvinism since the 1950's).

³¹ See *Works of Andrew Fuller*, Vol. 2, p335-345. The teachings of Fuller brought chaos to UK churches. Traditional Calvinists were even excommunicated for refusing to adopt Amyraldian ideas. Fuller is now having a new lease of life since many modern 'Calvinists' have championed his works.

Conclusion

The modern church is in meltdown. Church membership is dwindling all over Britain while in western churches that still have large attendances, there is a near fatal undermining of truth in very many ministries. All this has arisen in the last sixty years as a result of the polluting of the Gospel with Arminian influences and a denial of the high truths of the word of God. At a time when Calvinism should have stayed true and consistent, many churches began to water down the 'harder' edges of reformed theology to be more attractive to sinners, with an emphasis upon the free-offer and a love of God for all men. In doing so it left the path established by our wiser forefathers in the faith.

That modern reformed leaders now defend this course of action is illustrative of the current state of affairs in itself. The rot is now so well established that these errors are considered to be orthodoxy and those who maintain true Calvinism are labelled as heretics.

What is ironic about the modern attack on consistent Calvinists is that, so called 'reformed' leaders denigrate the High Calvinism that was characteristic of sound theologians throughout history. They traduce the Calvinism of the reformers, the Puritans and the foremost Evangelical leaders, yet often hold significant errors that are relatively modern and unorthodox. For instance the idea that God loves everyone, is a notion virtually unknown until the 19th century, apart from amongst Arminians. Even worse ideas are accepted, such as the Dispensationalism of many American reformed teachers who are lauded in modern reformed circles in the UK.³²

Modern Christian teachers, may hold whatever doctrines they like; but they have an obligation to be honest to their hearers. Calvin expressly states that God hates the reprobate. If modern Evangelicals wish to deny this, then they should refrain from calling themselves Calvinists and declare that they are Amyraldians or Arminians, since this idea is a key strand of those positions.

This paper seeks to offer readers the truth. Let them see for themselves that if we preach error in holding these doctrines, then Calvin was in error and Turretin (perhaps the greatest post-Calvin systematiser of reformed theology) was a heretic. I stand with such. Where do you stand?

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³² The MacArthur Study Bible, though well designed and excellent in background knowledge, is completely suffused with Dispensational ideas. In some passages, key reformed doctrines are overturned in order to comply with a Dispensational system.

Appendix One

Some respected theologians and preachers implicitly denigrated by the new definition of Hyper-Calvinism³³

Ancient writers

Augustine of Hippo

*And what is written, that “He wills all men’ to be saved,” while yet all men are not saved, may be understood in many ways, some of which I have mentioned in other writings of mine; but here I will say one thing: “He wills all men to be saved,” is so said that all the predestinated may be understood by it, because every kind of men is among them. Just as it was said to the Pharisees, “Ye tithe every herb;” where the expression is only to be understood of every herb that they had, for they did not tithe every herb which was found throughout the whole earth.*³⁴

Reformation writers

Martin Luther

- *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.*³⁵
- *The love and hate of God towards men is immutable and eternal, existing, not merely before there was any merit or work of ‘free-will’, but before the world was made; [so] all things take place in us of necessity, according as He has from eternity loved or not loved ... faith and unbelief come to us by no work of our own, but through the love and hatred of God.*³⁶
- *But I say it is not so; the will of mankind works nothing at all in his conversion and justification.*³⁷

John Calvin

Theodore Beza

John Knox

*[Commenting upon texts which some assert imply common grace to all] Such general sentences of necessity must be so restrained, that difference may be kept between the Elect and the Reprobate; else we shall do nothing in explaining Scriptures but confound light and darkness.*³⁸

Jerome Zanchius

Peter Martyr Vermigli

Johannes Piscator

William Perkins

The decree of reprobation is that part of predestination whereby God ... determined to reject certain men unto destruction and misery, and that to the

³³ There is not space here to write extensive quotations from every writer mentioned.

³⁴ *Treatise on Rebuke & Grace*, Chapter 44, Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 5.

³⁵ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, quoted in Pink’s *Sovereignty of God*, p106.

³⁶ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*,

³⁷ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, ‘On Free Will’: Item 263.

³⁸ John Knox, *Works*, Vol 5, p415.

*praise of his justice ... Further, whom God rejecteth to condemnation, those he hateth.*³⁹

Post Reformation writers

John Fox

John Bunyan

*Is the salvation of the sinner by the grace of God? Then here you may see the reason why one backslider is recovered, and another left to perish in his backsliding. There was grace for Lot, but none for his wife; therefore she was left in her transgression, but Lot was saved notwithstanding. There was grace for Jacob, but none for Esau; therefore Esau was left in his backsliding, but Jacob found mercy notwithstanding. There was grace for David, but none for Saul; therefore David obtained mercy, and Saul perished in his backsliding. There was grace for Peter, but none for Judas; therefore Judas is left to perish in his backsliding, and Peter is saved from his sin.*⁴⁰ [Thus there is no grace, not even common grace, for the reprobate.]

Herman Witsius

Francis Turretin.

- *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.*⁴¹
- It is interesting that Johnson refers to R.L. Dabney's article, 'God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy' to support his case. In this Dabney has to resort to the most circuitous and complex reasoning to make his point. In it, however, Dabney shows that Turretin (whom he esteems highly) took a different view. *'He [Turretin] urges that the only merciful volition of God in Scripture is that towards the elect; and "the rest he hardeneth;" that it is inevitably delusive to represent an omniscient and omnipotent Agent as having any kind of volition towards a result, when, foreseeing that the sinner will certainly not present the essential condition thereof - faith - he himself distinctly purposes not to bestow it. [God's providential leaving the heathen without the Gospel also shows that]... it is derogatory to God's power and sovereignty to represent any volition of his ... as failing in a multitude of cases. ... Turretin urges the inconsistency of "an ineffectual and imperfect will (in the Almighty) "which does not bring to pass the thing willed".*⁴² Even Dabney has to admit, *The plain Christian mind will ever stumble on this fatal question, how can a truthful and consistent God have two opposite wills about the same object?*⁴³
- In a later article, Dabney finds himself contradicting his earlier one. Arguing against those who base all God's actions on benevolence as being impious to God, he states that God actually hates the sinner and those who insist that God loves all consistently must become universalists and must either deny the existence of hell or the omnipotence of God, a God who could not convert a Judas even though he loved him.⁴⁴
- Johnson quotes Ezek 33:11 to support his case. Readers are invited to note the exposition of this by Turretin which refutes the slant Johnson applies to it. Part

³⁹ William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, Sutton Courtenay Press (1969) p250-251.

⁴⁰ John Bunyan, *Saved By Grace*, Postscript, p57-58.

⁴¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol 1, p400, 405.

⁴² R.L. Dabney, *Discussions*, Vol 1, p283-4, Banner of Truth (1967).

⁴³ *Ibid*, p307.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p 470, 473-4.

follows: *'The passage then simply teaches that God is pleased with, or approves, the conversion and life of the sinner ... rather than the death of the sinner, and therefore enjoins it as a duty that men be converted if they expect to be saved.'*⁴⁵

- Along with Heidegger and Gereler, Turretin composed the *Formula Consensus Helvetici* in 1675 for the Swiss churches. This was written to combat the Amyraldianism that arose out of Saumur. They write: *'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.'*⁴⁶

Franciscus Gomarus

Gisbertus Voetius

John Gill

The framers of the *Canons of the Synod of Dort*.

The framers of the *Westminster Standards (Confession, & Catechisms)*

- 'Offer' or 'offered' in the Standards means to preach or proclaim, based upon the original meaning of the word, as seen in the illustrative texts used. It is usually found in connection with the discussion on effectual calling.
- When the Shorter Catechism speaks once of 'freely offering' it defines this by applying it to the effectual calling of the elect.⁴⁷
- The love of God (included under the term 'goodness of God') is described as being infinite, eternal and unchangeable.⁴⁸ Thus this love cannot be temporarily offered to the reprobate, but only the elect - *Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God ... hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory out of His mere free grace and love.*⁴⁹

The Belgic Confession (which has no sense of love or free-offer to reprobates).

John Owen

- *That desires and wishings [e.g. unfulfilled wish of the salvation of the reprobate] should properly be ascribed unto God is exceedingly opposite to all his sufficiency and the perfection of his nature; they are no more in him than he hath eyes, ears and hands.*⁵⁰
- *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.*⁵¹
- [Concerning the error of a universal love in God to all men which desires their salvation] *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. ...*

⁴⁵ Translated by Thornwell, *Works*, Vol 2, p168. Giger's translation (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol 1, p408) is not as clear.

⁴⁶ Quoted from , WGT Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, T&T Clark (1872) p472-3.

⁴⁷ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 31

⁴⁸ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 4; *Confession* 2:2, 4:1, 5:4.

⁴⁹ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3:5

⁵⁰ John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, Banner of Truth Trust, p289. Also *Works*, Banner of Truth Trust (1967), Vol 10, p401.

⁵¹ John Owen, *Works*, Vol 10, p44 Banner of Truth Trust (1967). Owen also condemns here the idea that God's will; can be resisted by men or that God may fail in his intentions.

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 16:4.⁵²

- *It is, therefore, incorrect to translate, as in Psalm 145:9, 15-16 that God is 'merciful' not only to all men but to his whole creation ... These all feel the benefits of God's general goodness in his providential upholding of his creation ... [but] true mercy ... is the fount of all saving faith and repentance, we can distinguish this from all loose and mistaken concepts of 'mercy' displayed by the general work of God in providence.⁵³*
- *But those who deny this hatred of sin and sinners, and the disposition to punish them, to be perpetually, immutably, and habitually inherent in God, I am afraid have never strictly weighed in their thoughts the divine purity and holiness.⁵⁴*

Samuel Rutherford

[Spoke of..] *God's hatred of the reprobate and love and peace on the elect...[since God's love is] simple not contradictory.⁵⁵*

Augustus Toplady

Jonathan Edwards

George Whitefield

Modern writers

Abraham Kuyper

Despite using the term 'common grace' as describing God's temporal blessings of providence on the earth, Kuyper rejected any notion of a well-meant-offer of salvation arising from a love to all men. He even penned an entire book explaining, in detail, that grace is particular. Confusion sometimes arises since Kuyper used two different words for 'grace' in Dutch, meaning two different things.

Augustus Hopkins Strong

R.L. Dabney (See Turretin)

James Henry Thornwell

Although Thornwell was sublapsarian, he called the idea of common-grace '*the superficial theory*' resorted to by people confused on election. He also insisted that Providence was sovereign and the Lord did not deal with all men alike; the election of some was just as particular as the providential blessings of some.⁵⁶ Far from God loving all men, Thornwell says that, '*Sinners are by nature odious and loathsome to God, and are under a righteous sentence of condemnation and death*'.⁵⁷

- *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.⁵⁸*
- *The plain doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is that God has no purpose of salvation for all.⁵⁹*
- For Thornwell, God's providence is applied to all people in a benevolent fashion (Ps 145:9) but his love is only applied to the elect, '*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*

⁵² John Owen, *ibid*, p227. Note all Owen's other arguments in this section.

⁵³ John Owen, *Biblical Theology*, p74.

⁵⁴ John Owen, *Works*, vol. 10, p. 514.

⁵⁵ Samuel Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph of Faith*, p348-350.

⁵⁶ Thornwell, *Works*, Vol 2, p146.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p158.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p164.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p161.

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.*' The wicked are only 'loved' in the sense of patience and long-suffering to those who are doomed to destruction.⁶⁰

BB Warfield

Another infralapsarian (sublapsarian), who was still clear on the issues.

- *But just because God is God, of course, no one receives grace who has not been foreknown and afore-selected for the gift; and, as much of course, no one who has been foreknown and afore-selected for it, fails to receive it. Therefore the number of the predestinated is fixed, and fixed by God.*⁶¹
- *What lies at the heart of his [Calvin's] soteriology is the absolute exclusion of the creaturely element in the initiation of the saving process.*⁶²

John L Girardeau

Dr. William Cunningham

Cunningham was the principal and professor of church history at New College, Edinburgh in the 19th century, whose works on the history of theology are considered authoritative.

- *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.*⁶³

CH Spurgeon

Although Spurgeon was sometimes confused and watered down High Calvinism for the sake of a preached text (e.g. 1 Tim 2:3-4;⁶⁴), at other times he strongly defended it:

*Foolish and impudent are all those discourses about the rights of men to be placed on the same footing; ignorant, if not worse, are those contentions against discriminating grace, which are but the rebellions of proud human nature against the crown and sceptre of Jehovah.*⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Ibid, p162.

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² Warfield, *Calvinism*, Works, Vol 5, p359.

⁶³ William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh (1962), p398-399.

⁶⁴ *Met. Tab. Pulpit*, Vol 26, quoted by Iain H. Murray in *Spurgeon vs Hyper-Calvinism*, c11. In fact, *pantas anthropous* does not mean 'all men' as Spurgeon insists. *Pantas* (from *pas*) has a range of meanings, defined by context, from 'all without exception', 'any individual in a class', 'any one of a totality' to 'all sorts of' (See Louw-Nida and Friberg Lexica). The greater context of the analogy of faith must limit the word in the text to prevent scripture contradicting itself. 'All' does not mean every man in John 3:26 or Mark 5:20. *The universal term 'all' must always be referred to classes of men, and not to persons*'. (Calvin on 1 Tim 2:5.) Calvin also condemned Pighius for asserting what Spurgeon suggested in this text in his treatise on *The Eternal Predestination of God*, p103-105, RFP A ed.. Augustine used the same reasoning as Calvin in his treatise on *Rebuke and Grace*.

⁶⁵ Quoted in *Peace & Truth*, 2002, 2, p23.

JC Philpot

AW Pink

If people read his *Sovereignty of God* in the unexpurgated American Baker edition, they will see that he taught double predestination and did not believe that God loved all men.

*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.*⁶⁶

Arthur Custance (See: *The Sovereignty of Grace*, p294, 297)

Lorraine Boettner

Gordon H Clark

John H Gerstner

*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.*⁶⁷

Tom Wells

*The difficulty over the free offer may be put like this: since God has chosen to save some and pass others by, how can it be said that he offers salvation to those he has decided not to save? Doesn't this make God of two minds, wanting all to be saved on the one hand, and desiring only his elect to be saved on the other? Anyone who cannot see that there is some difficulty here must have done very little thinking about theology.*⁶⁸

A detailed search (which time does not allow) would reveal many more. Essentially, all who hold a supralapsarian view of the decrees (an honourable Calvinistic position) and double predestination are affected. For many sound theologians, this controversy was not an issue in their day and so they wrote little on it, yet we feel certain that they stand with us.

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⁶⁶ A W Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, Baker, p200. The Banner of Truth edition ruthlessly extracted large portions of this work which condemn such universal notions as God loving everyone (up to 40%, including key appendices) without any notification or explanation.

⁶⁷ John H Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p125.

⁶⁸ Tom Wells, *Notes on the Free Offer Controversy*, p5. Quoted from *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, vol XXXV, no. 2, p37.