

**UNIVERSALISM
AND
THE REFORMED CHURCHES**

A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism

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Preface

The subject of this essay concerns the inroads made by the doctrine of universal Divine benevolence in respect to the plan of redemption in Presbyterian Churches throughout the English speaking world and in Reformed Churches generally. It is expressed in a system of doctrine known as modified Calvinism, which in its latest form is qualified as being modern; that is, modern modified Calvinism.

The essay has as its immediate background a controversy which has existed between this Church and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (known also as Free Church) since 1963. A closer history of the matter is given in the *Vindication* published by our Presbytery on the 12th February 1965. From the outset this controversy has concerned the following two forms of modified Calvinism, which are inseparable in respect to their underlying principles:

1. The doctrine of the book of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* as explained hereafter under the heading, "A History of Modified Calvinism."
2. That in the free offer of the gospel, God desires the salvation of all men, even the reprobate, as proposed by the Professors Murray and Stonehouse in their booklet, *The Free Offer of the Gospel*.

Both are condemned in our Church: the first, because the book of *The Marrow* was condemned by the 1720 and 1722 Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland which are embraced by virtue of the constitution of our Church, and the second, because its series of inherent ambiguities and contradictions are contrary to the principle of interpretation of Scripture.

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Free Church) at its 1971 Synod published a paper in justification of the doctrine identified in this essay as modern modified Calvinism, and has thereby made it an officially received doctrine in that Church.

While the basic principles of modified Calvinism, old and modern, are explained in this essay, this treatment is not claimed to be an exhaustive or an exclusive one. It is acknowledged that a controversy of similar nature preceded this one, under the heading of "common grace" within the Christian Reformed Church in the United States. That controversy led to the establishment in 1924 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in that country.

Modern modified Calvinism is identified herein as a system of doctrine, rather than as an intrusion of the principles of Arminianism in the Reformed Churches. Like Arminianism, it is a system of doctrine in its own right. Both are forms of doctrine which derive from the principle of self-salvation (autosoterism) and universalism. Autosoterism, which assumes that man has ability in total or in part to save himself, in the history of doctrine, goes hand in hand with the universalism that God loves all men, even the reprobate, and desires to save them. In the discussion of this essay, modified Calvinism is not treated as a controversy within the Calvinistic system. Rather the controversy is one between two different and opposing systems of theology. For this reason the essay is presented under the heading, "Universalism and the Reformed Churches: A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism."

This essay, therefore, has four basic purposes, as follows:

1. To trace the development of modified Calvinism as it was found in the Schools of Davenant and Amyraut from the early part of the seventeenth century to its present modern modified form.
2. To demonstrate that modern modified Calvinism is a system which is based on a concept of the nature of God other than that which belongs to Calvin's Calvinism, and is completely destructive of his system, which has been the bulwark of the Reformed Churches, the foundation of their Confessional Standards, and the source of their dynamic for over four hundred years.
3. To show that modern modified Calvinism, when brought into a Reformed Church constitutes an addition to her doctrinal standards and the principles of the Word of God.
4. To set forth the consequences of modern modified Calvinism in the doctrine of the Church and the society in which we live.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul, in his farewell message to the Church at Ephesus, gave warning in the following terms, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29, 30). The Church has not been free of this danger in any age and in this no less than in any other.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, universalism, in the form of modified Calvinism, has been the "Trojan Horse," which from within, has brought about the decline and fall of the great Churches which arose out of the Reformation.

In England, Scotland, Canada, the United States and Australia, all those Churches, apart from a few small remnants, now embrace the liberal theology which denies the absolute authority and inerrancy of Scripture. The first step which led down the broad pathway to that from true religion, was taken when the pulpits and courts of those Churches modified the Calvinism of their Confessional Standards by allowing the principle of universalism that God desires the salvation of all men. Modified Calvinism first became official in those Churches, when their courts passed a declaratory act, which allowed doctrines which were less precise and which softened the particularism of the Calvinism of their original standards. It is also to be regretted, that even most of the remnants of those Churches are now also subject to the same modifying principles of universalism.

The root problem in the failure of the once reformed churches is not liberalism or Arminianism, but modified Calvinism. It is modified Calvinism which leads the church into Arminianism and then to liberalism.

It may well be asked, how can this be so? The process has been a gradual one which has extended from a period of twenty years to one or two generations or more. Both modern modified Calvinists and Arminians are identified in that they accept the notion that God desires the salvation of all men, and preach a gospel which is divorced from the true nature of the law, which is given to bring sinners to Christ. The former seldom offends the latter by their preaching. Rather, as a public witness, instead of defending the Word of God on the basis of the Calvinism of the Confessional Standards, which were once the foundation of their Churches, modern modified Calvinists prefer to join forces with Arminians in an unrealistic confrontation with liberalism and Roman Catholicism. In this way the distinctions between Calvinism and Arminianism are done away with.

The next stage of the process is that the emphasis of the pulpit passes to that in which God's benevolence, being held to be universal, is made the greatest and most important of His attributes, to the exclusion of His justice and wrath against the wicked. Love, not the fear of God, is made the beginning of wisdom. The totality of the fall, election, predestination and reprobation become unpopular and discredited doctrines.

When the Church moves to that point, it is not long before the justice and wrath of God are said to belong to the God of the Old Testament and not the New Testament. To the logic of the natural mind the Scriptures which speak of the attribute of God's justice are inconsistent with the idea of an all loving God. The natural man has then come to the place of liberal theology. He then assumes that Scripture is but a record of man's searching after God, and so he develops his critical theories, which entirely dispose of the true nature of the authority and

inspiration of Scripture. This has been the process in the history of the Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, during which time, modified Calvinism led to Arminianism and liberalism as surely as night has followed day. Thus the root cause of the failure of once Reformed Churches, is not Arminianism or liberalism, but modified Calvinism.

There can only be a revival of true religion in our day when first, the concepts of modern modified Calvinism are overthrown in those Churches which claim to be Reformed. Then and only then, will the Reformed Churches have returned to the Calvinism of their original standards, and be in the position to deal with the doctrinal and philosophical errors of our age, including Arminianism and liberalism. Then will Calvin's Calvinism and the purity of the Church and her doctrine be restored.

(1)

A History of Modified Calvinism

The churches of the Reformation arose within national boundaries and generally adopted their own confessional standards or those to which they had contributed. For example, the Dutch Church adopted the *Belgic Confession* and the *Canons of Dordt*; the Swiss Church, the *Helvetic Confession* and the Scottish Church, the *Westminster Confession*. These Confessions each declared the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God which had been systematized and taught in Geneva by the great reformer John Calvin. As long as they remained true to the Word of God, the courts of those Churches were diligent in the defense of their Confessions and would not allow any principle which modified Calvin's system.

As the children of Israel grew tired of God's provision of manna in the wilderness, so the Church in times of decline, has grown tired of God's truth and preferred a doctrine more comfortable to the natural mind of man. In that state of mind, men conclude that they have a natural ability to please God and so believe that they can contribute to their salvation, or that they possess something that is desirable to God and deserving of His love and favour.

Every modification of Calvin's system of theology has taken place under the notion that God desires the salvation of all men. This notion lay at the root of the system of Arminius who was Professor of Theology at Leyden in Holland in 1603. His five points of doctrine in opposition to Calvinism were condemned by the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19.

In England the notion of a universal desire in God for the salvation of all men was also the root principle of the Davenant School at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This school taught that there is in the redemption purchased by Christ, an absolute intention for the elect and a conditional intention for the reprobate in case they do believe. It was the forerunner of the system of Moses Amyraut on the Continent, who better systematized the same principles under a doctrine of hypothetical redemption.

In 1645 an obscure writer, Edward Fisher, wrote the first part of a book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and its second part, which appears to be an attempt to correct the antinomianism of the first in 1649. Though it bore the imprimatur of Puritan license, little more is known of the origin of the book, other than it carried the recommendatory letters of Caryl, Burroughes and Strong who were members of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1649), and was also supported by Arrowsmith, Sprigge, Prettie and others, all of whom were of the Davenant School persuasion. The terms of the book are in every respect consistent with the theology of that school.

The following sentences are a sample of its contents:

1. "Christ hath taken upon Him the sins of all men."
2. Of Christ, "The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind."
3. "Whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, He did it for you."
4. "Go and tell every man without exception, that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him."

In the Westminster Assembly (1645-49) the particularistic divines, led by the Scottish Commissioners, Rutherford and Gillespie, debated the question of limited atonement on the 22nd October 1645 with a strong body of Davenant divines, nine of whom are recorded by name in the minutes which record the debate in the Assembly. Both parties were agreed that the atonement contains an absolute intention for the elect only, but were not agreed that the atonement contained a conditional intention for the reprobate. (See Appendix: The Five Points of Amyraldianism.)

The minutes reveal that the debate was entirely amicable. This attitude of the Assembly to the Davenant School was confirmed later in the same year on 4th December, when the Assembly defended the reputation of Moses Amyraut against the complaints of one Andrew Rivett.

While the Assembly did not include in its formularies any statement which entered the opinions of the Davenant School, it did not include any which specifically excluded them. It is clear that the Davenant School divines accepted the final formularies of the Assembly without protest, believing that their doctrines, while not included, were not excluded, and expecting that they would pass into the law of the Church by Act of Parliament.

The record shows that English Presbyterianism from its inception was broad in its doctrine of redemption. Not only were the doctrines of Arrowsmith and Calamy allowed, but also those of Richard Baxter went unchallenged. It may be said that the School of Davenant in England, was a basic reason why Calvinism did not take permanent root in England, in the same way that the School of Amyraut contributed to the decline in the theology of the Huguenot Church in France.

History provides ample evidence, that when a Church modifies her Calvinism, she loses her conviction and hold of the truth.

In spite of the 28 years of the persecuting and killing times which began with the restoration of Charles II to the English throne, and in spite of the weaknesses imposed on the Scottish Church by the Revolution Settlement in 1689/90, and the disturbed political situation which ensued during the first part of the eighteenth century in Scotland, the Scottish Church maintained a fully particularistic doctrinal position. This however, was disturbed during the second decade of that century when certain of her ministers, Hog, Boston, Erskine and others brought into their pulpits the doctrine of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which, about seventy years before, had received wide support among the Davenant School divines.

The Calvinism of the Church was preserved, when the General Assembly, in its Acts of 1720 and 1722, condemned the book of the *Marrow* on several grounds, one of which was that its terms advocated a universality of redemption as to purchase. The Acts were a declaration of the doctrine of the Church as it was held at the time.

From the day of their enactment to the present, these Acts have been assailed by every shade of theological opinion, from liberal to evangelical fundamentalism, either on the ground that the *Westminster Confession* and *Catechisms* do not specifically condemn the doctrine of the book of the *Marrow*, or on the specious ground, that the terms of that book do not teach a universality of redemption as to purchase. Of the many references in Free Church literature which support the *Marrow*, the most extensive is given in John McLeod's *Scottish Theology* in which he oversimplifies the controversy by treating it as one involving a misunderstanding about the meaning of terms.

The whole difference between the positions of the Church of Scotland and the Westminster Assembly in this matter, relative to the formularies of the latter, as we have already shown, was that the Westminster Assembly on the one hand, did not specifically exclude a conditional intention in the redemption purchased by Christ, whereas, the Church of Scotland on the other hand, in its application of the formularies, excluded it.

Unless this difference is understood, the proper significance of the Acts of the Church of Scotland Assembly in 1720 and 1722 cannot be realized.

It is significant that the assembly of the Church of Scotland relied on these Acts when it deposed John MacLeod Campbell in 1831 for preaching doctrines similar to the Amyraldian system. MacLeod Campbell's defense was largely comprised of an attempt to prove the 1720 and 1722 Acts invalid by virtue of the fact that they had not been subjected of the Barrier Act of 1697 which requires:

That before any General Assembly of this Church shall pass any acts which are binding rules and constitutions to the Church, the same acts be first proposed as overtures to the Assembly, and being by them passed as such, be remitted to the consideration of the several Presbyteries of this Church, and their opinions and consent be reported by their Commissioners to the next General Assembly following, who may then pass the same in Acts, if the more general opinion of the Church thus had agreed hereunto.

Since the Assembly in its Acts of 1720 and 1722 had not altered the doctrine of the Church, but had simply declared it, as it was then held, there was no case to pass on to Presbyteries, in terms of the Barrier Act. The submission of MacLeod Campbell thus failed. Had he been successful in this, Amyraldianism could not have been excluded under the Constitutional Standards of the Church of Scotland by such means.

The *Westminster Confession*, chapter 3, sections 6 and 8, and the *Larger Catechism*, No. 59, which are relative to this controversy, are positive statements of the Scripture doctrine concerning the application of the redemption purchased by Christ. In no sense do they have a negative reference.

Chapter 3 section 6, *Of God's eternal Decree*, in part reads as follows:

Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His (the) Spirit working in due season; are adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

These statements from the Westminster formularies are exclusive if taken 'a priori' in the absolute sense that redemption has no other reference than to the elect. William Cunningham in his *Historical Theology* takes this position, and we agree. However, unless the courts of the Church declare that position, there is no authority which is particularistic apart from private opinion.

In view of the debate in the Assembly, the manner in which the formularies were applied in England, the argument of the Schools of Davenant and Amyraut, and the ambiguous system of modified Calvinism since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the question of application of the Westminster formularies to the doctrine of universal redemption as to purchase, and the terms of the *Marrow* can only be decided by a Declaratory Act of the Church. Herein lies the proper application of the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1720 and 1722.

The Marrowmen, like their modern counterparts, attempted to hold to the particularism of Calvinism and at the same time preach the gospel in the universalistic terms of the *Marrow*. They therefore reinterpreted the terms of the book from that of its original context within the School of Davenant, and declared against the obvious, that it did not have reference to universal redemption. Boston took upon himself such an exercise, when under an assumed name, to hide his identity, he issued an edited version in 1726.

The doctrinal manifesto of the Associate Presbytery of the Seceders from the Church of Scotland in 1742 stated the following impossible contradictions:

1. “No such doctrine as universal redemption as to purchase is taught in the *Marrow*.”
2. “That God the Father—His making a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind ... does not infer a universal redemption as to purchase.”

The *Marrow* theology is thus committed to the following ambiguities:

1. “Christ has taken upon Him the sins of all men,” and being a “deed of gift and grant unto all mankind,” is not a universal purchase of the death of Christ, therefore it logically follows that,
2. He said deed of gift and grant of Christ to all mankind is effective only to the elect, i.e., an infallible redemption gifted to all secures only a portion of its objects.
3. A deed of gift and grant to all is only an offer. In other words, Christ is gifted to all, without that He died for them.
4. Since the gift of Christ to all is not a benefit purchased by the atonement, the substance of the free offer of the gospel, does not consist of Christ as redeemer, but only as a friend.

Thus it was the Marrowmen in the first half of the eighteenth century who first injected into the stream of Scottish theology the ambiguous and contradictory system which has been the subtle vehicle or Trojan horse which for two hundred and fifty years has worked to the downfall of the Calvinism of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches throughout the world.

Modern modified Calvinism is but a refinement of the same system. Like the Marrowmen, as demonstrated hereafter, it presents the gospel in universalistic terms. It does so by introducing a system of interpretation of Scripture which brings in a doctrine of divine precepts and decrees, which not only perpetuates the errors of the *Marrow*, but extends the ambiguities and contradictions of that system.

As previously intimated, modern modified Calvinism is now the received doctrine of most Presbyterian and Reformed Churches which represent themselves as holding to the doctrines of the Calvinistic Reformation. Its position is clearly stated by Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology*, also in the booklet by Professors Murray and Stonehouse, *The Free Offer of the Gospel* which was first published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America in 1948.

Lest we be misunderstood when we deny the universality of the love of God, let it be clearly understood, that we are not controverting the fact that God is good to all, for, “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust” (Matt. 5:45). Rather, we are concerned with refuting the doctrine which teaches that God’s goodness in sending temporal blessings upon all, is indicative of His love and long-suffering in redemption toward the non-elect, and a desire in Him that they might be saved. We maintain that the gospel is given for the purpose of separating the elect from the reprobate, and in the providence of God, in the case of the latter who hear it, for their greater condemnation.

(2)

Modern Modified Calvinism: Its Ambiguities and Contradictions

The center and core of the Calvinistic system is that the sole purpose and end of creation, the fall of angels and men, and the plan of redemption is the glory of God and the manifestation of His perfections. This teaching of the Scripture is expressed in the terms of our *Confession*:

Chapter 3: *Of God's Eternal Decree.*

Section 3. By the decree of God, *for the manifestation of His glory*, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

Section 4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

The natural man has always refused to receive unconditionally the teaching of Scripture, that all mankind is wholly alienated from God, except for those chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world. With him is identified the evangelical fundamentalist who modifies the teaching of Scripture in either or both the following ways by teaching that:

1. All men are possessed of a natural ability, and are able to please God and contribute to their own salvation.
2. All men are the objects of God's love and favour to the extent that He desires their salvation.

It is the second of these teachings which is openly taken by those who are classified herein as 'modern modified Calvinists.' It cannot be denied that the notion that God desires the salvation of all men is a modification and softening of the statement of the *Confession* quote above, or that the designation, 'modern modified Calvinist' is applicable.

Modern modified Calvinists attempt to justify their position by claiming on the one hand, that they hold the particularistic terms of the standards of their Church and the Reformation, while on the other, they modify and soften the terms of those standards by bringing in the notion that God desires the salvation of all men in the free offer of the gospel.

Two things motivate modern modified Calvinists. First, the desire to adhere to the traditions of their Church and the Reformation, hence their attachment to their Confessional standards, while modifying them under that which constitutes their second motive, namely, the naturalistic concept under which they present the gospel.

The outworking of their system is seen in the following list of ambiguities and contradictions to which their theology is committed:

1. God desires the salvation of all men, but has Himself ordained that the non-elect shall perish.
2. Though God desires to save all, He does not grant to all the gifts of faith and repentance by which they must be saved.
3. The nature of God's love is changeable. In life He loves the non-elect, even though He has made them the objects of His everlasting displeasure and wrath. In death, God's love to the non-elect ceases, and only His wrath remains.
4. God does not inwardly call by His Spirit all those He earnestly desires to save and so He had a desire which is at variance to His will as an efficient cause to the doing of all His good pleasure.
5. God Himself expresses an ardent desire for the fulfilment of certain things which He has not decreed in His inscrutable counsel to come to pass. This means that there is a will to the realization of what He has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which He has not been pleased to decree.

Modern modified Calvinists attempt to hide the fact of the contradictions and ambiguities of their system behind the mystery of Divine Sovereignty. Any attempt at exposure of their falsity is immediately said to be an unwarranted intrusion into the secret counsels of the Divine Mind.

(3)

The Problems of Modern Modified Calvinism in the Defense and Propagation of the Faith

The immediate problems raised by this system are fourfold.

1. In the first place its proponents present themselves as the true representatives and exponents of the Reformed faith, whereas in truth, they represent it in a state of error and decline.

2. In the second place it produces a preaching which cannot, because of its contradictions and ambiguities, logically uphold the principles of the Reformed faith, but rather destroys them. In place of the principles of faith, it concentrates on preaching up the fruits of reform in terms of attitudes, feelings and dispositions toward Christ. In this regard it is most deceptive to the hearer because its terminology concerning the fruits of the Spirit is Reformed, but divorced from the principles of the Word of God which are given to produce them. As discussed later, it separates the law from the gospel and holds out a Christ who belongs to every man.

3. In the third place there is the matter of the effect of the doctrine on man's behaviour. Many good men have unwittingly embraced this system not knowing whence it would lead them. Others may have willfully pursued it. Since "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 61:7), we can but judge the system and its fruits, and leave the judgment of persons and their motives to God. It is nevertheless a scriptural principle concerning man, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). This is borne out in the trends in the moral behaviour of modern man, which are a direct result of the permissive philosophies under which he lives. If by the grace of God, man is brought to adhere with singleness of purpose to the moral law of God, then he will be upright before God and man. In religion, man's behaviour is a reflection of his concept of the God he worships. If he adopts a concept which ascribes duplicity to the mind of God, his system of doctrine will also be contradictory and ambiguous. If then he lives by that doctrine, it would seem to be inevitable that such a man will be contradictory and ambiguous in his behaviour towards his fellows and before his God. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Modern modified Calvinism cannot, therefore, contribute to the solution of the problems of our age, it can only add to their confusion.

4. In the fourth place, modern modified Calvinism robs the Calvinistic and Reformed faith of its defenses, because it has no logical answer to the schools of Arminius, Davenant, and Amyraut. This is because the universalistic interpretation of Scripture texts on which that system rests is coincident with those systems. While the modern modified Calvinist generally attempts to divorce his universalism from the implications of universal redemption as to purchase, the Arminian in that area of his theology, has an apparent consistency. The Arminian, having assumed that God loves all men and desires their salvation, concludes that Christ has purchased a redemption for all men. In the face of the illogical position

of modern modified Calvinism in respect to the atonement and the other contradictions and ambiguities which belong to that system, Arminianism and any other form of autosoterism (self-salvation) must go unchallenged.

(4)

Universalism's Interpretation of Scripture

Modern modified Calvinists appeal to Scripture on the basis of a universalistic interpretation of the following and such like texts. Their authority for this interpretation in turn, rests largely on a misinterpretation or misreading of Calvin's commentary on Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 18:23: Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God and not that he should return from his ways and live?

Ezekiel 18:32: For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, Wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.

Ezekiel 33:11: As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

I Tim. 2:4 God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth.

II Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets ... how oft would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Modern modified Calvinists give a meaning of double connotation to the Ezekiel texts. That is, the same words are taken particularistically in one sense and universally in another. In the first place the Ezekiel texts are said to be addressed in particular to the House of Israel, "For why will ye die, O House of Israel?" (Ezek. 18:31). In the second place, their reference to the death of the wicked and their repentance is said to refer to a desire in God for the salvation of all men.

I Timothy 2:4 is said to refer to a desire in God that all men should be saved. The long-suffering of God and unwillingness that any should perish mentioned in II Peter 3:9 are also referred to all men. The lament of Christ over Jerusalem, Matt. 23:37 and Luke 13:34, is also said to be indicative of our Lord's desire that all men should be saved.

We, however, exclude the universalistic application of these texts by interpreting them within the terms of the covenant of redemption and grace, which is given exclusively for the redemption of the Church. As we shall shortly discuss, John Calvin gives each of these texts an exclusive and particularistic interpretation on the basis that God's will is simple. This, in fact, is the foundation of Calvin's system of theology.

In brief, the proper and Calvinistic interpretation of the above texts to which we adhere is as follows:

The Ezekiel texts are addressed exclusively to the House of Israel. The first part of the text, I Timothy 2:4 is to be interpreted by the second. Knowledge of the truth is a gift of God, and can therefore refer only to the elect. II Peter 3:9 belongs to those to whom the first epistle of Peter is addressed, namely, “the elect according to the foreknowledge of God” (I Peter 1:2). Thus the long-suffering of God to usward, and His unwillingness that any should perish belongs to those of the same address, i.e., “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us” (II Peter 2:17).

The incident of our Lord’s weeping over Jerusalem recorded in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 is given to demonstrate His true humanity in that, “in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto his brethren” (Hebrews 2:17). The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the nature of man, in order that He might fulfil the terms of the Covenant of Redemption made in the Trinity from all eternity. It was in His human nature that He brought those fallen in Adam, but given Him by the Father, into relationship with Himself as sons and daughters of God; made them His brethren and heirs with Himself in His Father’s kingdom. In that nature while on earth, He perfectly fulfilled the moral law and its demands on behalf of the elect. It was His divine nature which made the works of His human nature to be of infinite worth. Furthermore, all the works of Jesus in the human nature were the works of the person of the Son of God as Mediator.

Scripture reveals no other relationship whatever between the human nature of Christ in heaven and man on earth, other than that which is established by His work of intercession in that nature on behalf of the elect. The fact that God is good to all has nothing to do with the humanity of Christ, rather it is a work of the Divine nature which does not lament over them who will not repent. The texts Matt. 23:37 and Luke 13:34, therefore, give no indication of a desire in God for the salvation of all men.

If it is held that there is a desire in the glorified human nature of Christ for the salvation of the non-elect, then it must also be held that there is a contradiction in His work of intercession, i.e., He intercedes for some whom He loves and not for others. In His prayer of John 17:9, the Lord Jesus interceded, “I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me.”

Modern modified Calvinism ascribes a universal love of God which it incorrectly assumes from the texts quoted above, to the personality of God through the human nature of Christ. This, in effect, is a subtle compounding of the works of the two natures of Christ, i.e., the desires and passions of Christ’s human nature are ascribed as the works of His divine nature. The proof of this false compound is shown in the duplicity in which God is said to love and hate the non-elect at the one time.

Universalism has no place within the Covenant of Redemption and Grace.

The bulwark of our position is found in the theology of the Covenant of Redemption and Grace, which comprehends the whole of God’s dealings with mankind since his original fall into sin. We hold that all that is contained in the administration and dispensation of that Covenant is a purchase of the death of Christ, and that God’s providence within that Covenant is both temporal concerning all men and spiritual in respect to the separation of the elect

from the reprobate. We acknowledge that God in His providence, in which He governs all His creatures and all their actions, bestows temporal blessings on all men, restrains evil in the world and promotes good.

This temporal framework and dispensation of God's providential government has the purpose and end that the elect may be redeemed from the mass of fallen mankind. The goodness toward the non-elect does not mean that He bears toward them a favourable disposition, rather they are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. If the long-suffering of God is referred to the non-elect, it becomes a long-suffering to no purpose.

The books of the Old and New Testament Scriptures constitute the Book of the Covenant. All Scripture therefore has reference only to the Covenant of Redemption and Grace, and from start to finish must be interpreted particularistically within its terms. The reprobate have no place in the covenant dispensation apart from their temporary enjoyment in this life of temporal blessings, and hereafter, everlasting condemnation. Since God made the covenant of Grace with Christ as the Mediator and with the elect in Him, none are loved outside of Christ. It serves no purpose whatever to assume that there is a love for the non-elect who are outside of Christ.

If Scripture is properly interpreted within the terms of the Covenant of Redemption and Grace, there is no reference to a universal love of God. Once that reference is admitted, the Reformed theology of the covenant is given over to ambiguity and contradiction.

(5)

The False Appeal of Modern Modified Calvinism to the Theology of John Calvin

To this point we have discovered that modern modified Calvinism has its historical origins in the so called evangelicalism of the Marrow, which was originally promoted by the Davenant School divines. We have also referred to its system of interpretation of certain texts of Scripture. We now turn to study the manner in which that system attempts to take on an apparent authority by a misinterpretation of Calvin’s commentary on the Book of Ezekiel.

Let us treat this section under the following six headings:

1. An outline of the case.
2. The writings which support the modern modified Calvinist position.
3. The misrepresentation of Calvin’s commentary on Ezekiel 18:23 refuted from his *Institutes*.
 - a. Calvin’s refutation of a duplicity of wills in God. (The first question answered).
 - b. The meaning of the word “wishes” or “wills” relative to God’s preceptive and decretive wills.
 - c. Calvin’s treatment of Ezekiel 18:23 in his *Institutes*. (The second question answered).
 - d. Calvin’s doctrine of Ezekiel 18:23 further confirmed by his treatment of I Tim. 2:4 and II Peter 3:9 in his *Institutes*.
4. Calvin’s doctrine that God’s purpose in sending the Gospel is to harden the hearts of the reprobate.
5. Calvin’s refutation of the notion that there is an inconsistency between God’s eternal election and the free offer of the Gospel to all men.
6. The intrusion of modern modified Calvinism into the secret counsels of God’s will.

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1. An Outline of the Case

Modern modified Calvinists work from the assumption that Calvin allows that there is a sensible and reasonable will in God which He wishes the salvation of all men. They affirm that Calvin is inconsistent when he declares that God’s will is simple and undivided, because he also teaches that God’s decretive will is that by which He ordains only a certain number to

salvation. In other words, if God wishes all to be saved and at the same time devotes the reprobate to eternal destruction, to them God's will cannot be simple. They accept the position that God's will is complex, but attempt to avoid the contradiction of having two contrary wills in God by ascribing God's eternal election and predestination to His decretive will, and His supposed desire for the salvation of all men, to His preceptive will. In other words, they ascribe a duplicity of sensible and reasonable wills to God, one decretive and the other preceptive, and then try to keep them separate.

Having made the assumption of two sensible and reasonable wills in God, one decretive and the other preceptive, the contradiction which inevitably lies between precept and decree *within the Divine mind* is then denied, because it is said to be a mystery which lies hidden in the sovereign counsel of God's will.

It is by this facility of a complexity or duplicity in God, that modern modified Calvinists hold their system of double connotation. Then Scripture is interpreted to teach that God has elected only a certain number to eternal life, and at the same time in the free offer of the gospel, desires the salvation of all men.

It is through the notion of two separate sensible and reasonable wills in God, which is the foundation of their system, that they claim to hold to the Reformed Standards, and at the same time, base their preaching of the gospel on a universal love of God. It is by this duplicity which they imagine they find in an inconsistency in Calvin that they interpret certain Scriptures as having a double connotation, e.g., Ezekiel 18:23, 32, and 33:11, and others universally, e.g., I Timothy 2:4, II Peter 3:9, and Matthew 23:37. In other words, like every sectary, they bring a system to the Scripture in order to interpret it, rather than interpreting Scripture with Scripture.

Over and against this system lies the central principle of Calvin's doctrine of the absolute sovereignty and providence of God, which teaches that the will of God is simple and undivided. It is about that principle that Calvin builds his whole system of theology, and on it he rests his defence.

Because modern modified Calvinism does not allow that God's will is simple, but builds its own system on a notion of complexity concerning God's will, it involves the removal of the central principle of Calvin's Calvinism, and therefore constitutes the overthrow of his system.

2. The Writings Which Seem to Support the Modern Modified Calvinist Position

Professor Murray is regarded by modern modified Calvinists as a leading modern authority concerning their position. In his book, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*, he refers to Calvin's commentary on Ezekiel 18:23 in the following terms:

Calvin was engaged before his work was arrested by the hand of death ... in his exposition of the prophecy of Ezekiel. His work ended with Ezekiel 20:24. He did not even complete his exposition of the chapter. At Ezekiel 18:23, in dealing with the discrepancy between God's will to the salvation of all and the election of God by which He predestinates only a fixed number to salvation, he says: *If anyone again objects this is making God act with duplicity, the answer is ready, that God always wishes the same*

thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us. Although, therefore, God's will is simple, yet great variety is involved in it, as far as our senses are concerned. Besides, it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish. While we look now through a glass darkly, we should be content with the measure of our own intelligence. (Calvin's statement is italicised).

It is at this point that Professor Murray in his book makes his major departure from Calvin's theology when he writes,

The present writer is not persuaded that we may speak of God's will as 'simple' after the pattern of Calvin's statement. There is the undeniable fact that, in regard to sin, God decretively wills what He preceptively does not will. There is the contradiction. We must maintain that it is perfectly consistent with God's perfection that this contradiction should obtain. But, it does not appear to be any resolution to say that God's will is 'simple.'

Professor Murray has noted in the same place that: "It is more probable that the Latin verb 'velle,' translated on three occasions above by the English term 'wishes' should rather be rendered 'wills.'" Although that would make our task much easier, in order to be the more convincing, let us retain the word "wishes" in lieu of the word "wills" in the context of our explanation.

From a superficial reading of the above quotation from Calvin's commentary, it would appear that Calvin's doctrine is that God desires the salvation of all men and at the same time ordains that the reprobate shall perish.

If such is the case, then Professor Murray has revealed an inconsistency in Calvin's theological system when he disagrees with Calvin's statement that the will of God is simple.

Two leading questions must therefore be answered, if the apparent position of Calvin is to be distinguished from the real. These are:

1. Does Calvin effectively deny that there is a duplicity of wills in God?
2. What does Calvin mean by the words, 'God wishes all to be saved'—does he apply them universally, so that it may be assumed that there is a desire or wish in God for the salvation of all men?

Before proceeding to answer these questions, let us complete the discussion of the writings which support the modern modified Calvinist position.

The departure from Calvin's theology becomes clearer when we consider the study by the Rev. Professors Murray and Stonehouse which was presented as a report of a committee to the fifteenth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America in 1948. In the introduction to the study they have written:

It would appear that the real point in dispute in connection with the free offer of the gospel is whether it can properly be said that God desires the salvation of all men.

It should have been apparent that the aforesaid committee, in predicating such 'desire' of God, was not dealing with the decretive will of God; it was dealing with the free offer of the gospel to all without distinction and that surely respects, not the decretive will of God, but the revealed will. There is not ground for the supposition that the expression was intended to refer to God's decretive will.

It must be admitted that if the expression were intended to apply to the decretive will of God, then there would be, at least, implicit contradiction. For to say that God desires the salvation of the reprobate and apply the former to the same thing as the latter, namely, the decretive will, would be contradiction; it would amount to averring of the same thing, viewed from the same aspect, God wills and God does not will.

Again, the expression, 'God desires,' in the formula that crystallises the crux of the question, is intended to notify not at all the 'seeming' attitude of God, but a real attitude, a real disposition of loving-kindness inherent in the free offer to all, in other words, a pleasure or delight in God, contemplating the blessed result to be achieved by compliance with the overture proffered and the invitation given.

Let us restate, in other words, the real matter in dispute. It is, whether in the Reformed doctrine of redemption, the desire and pleasure of God concerns only the salvation of the elect whom He has chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world, or, whether it also refers to the non-elect whom God has made the objects of His everlasting displeasure and wrath.

There are three important facts to notice from the above quotations.

Firstly, the Professors have posited in God a sensible and reasonable will concerning His precepts for the salvation of all men. If any should object that the Professors have not used the words, 'sensible and reasonable,' then that which they have written is meaningless. Furthermore, if there is a sensible and reasonable desire in God which respects His preceptive will that all men shall be saved, such desire is internal to the mind of God. It would be contrary to Scripture and to reason to suppose that there is a desire in God which is without sensibility and reason, and which does not belong to His internal mind. The Professors have put the matter beyond doubt in the following quotation from their study:

The expression 'God desires' in the formula that crystallises the crux of the question, is intended to notify not at all the 'seeming' attitude of God but a real attitude, a real disposition of loving-kindness inherent in the free offer to all, in other words, a pleasure or delight in God, contemplating the blessed result to be achieved

by compliance with the overture proffered and the invitation given.

Secondly, if there is a sensible and reasonable desire in God for the salvation of all men, and that desire is internal to His mind, then unless there are two minds in God, that desire must belong to the same mind which executes His eternal decrees.

Thirdly, the Professors have attempted to avoid the obvious contradiction which must exist if the desire of God for the salvation of all men has reference to God's decretive will, by referring that desire to His preceptive will. In other words, the Professors believe that by confining the desire of God for the salvation of all men to His preceptive will, it does not involve a contradiction with God's decretive will by which He purposes to save only some. Now as we have clearly pointed out, a desire in God for the salvation of all men must belong to the same mind which executes His decrees. The Professors, therefore, have failed to avoid the internal contradiction in God. Rather, they have by positing a desire in God's preceptive will, created it.

If a duplicity is implied, it matters not, in this case, if it is held that there are two minds in God or only one. If it is proposed that God desires the salvation of all men, and at the same time purposes to save only some, there must be a contradiction in the Divine Mind.

The Professors have not comprehended within their theology the fact that a desire in God, whether it be made to belong to His decretive will or His preceptive will, is a state or act of the Divine Mind. If it is held that the Divine Mind is rational, then all the desires of God must be consistent with His purposes and decrees. The non-fulfilment of desire in God implies that there is an internal contradiction or want of blessedness in the ever blessed God. The Scripture teaches that God will fulfil all His good pleasure. God in the human sense does not desire or want of anything, but decrees all things according to the pleasure of His own will.

The obscurity and confusion of the modern modified Calvinist system, in the understanding of many, stems from the fact that the idea persists that the desire of God, which He is said to have for the salvation of all men is external to Himself, because it is posited in His preceptive will. The basic error, in this respect, is simply the positing in the mind of God a desire concerning His precepts. God's preceptive will which is given for man's rule of duty, is in no way declarative of what God desires or what He intends to do. To say that God desires the salvation of those whom He does not purpose to save, by granting them the gifts of repentance and faith, is to make God insincere and a monster in the worst sense. The free offer of Christ in the gospel, which God's ministers are commanded to preach unto all men, is not a declaration of whom He desires to save, any more than it is one concerning the particular individuals whom He purposes to redeem.

3. The Misrepresentation of Calvin's Position Refuted from his *Institutes*

In "the Epistle to the reader" at the beginning of his *Institutes*, Calvin instructs that his commentaries are to be interpreted in the light of the summary of religion which he has given in all its parts in the *Institutes*. This injunction is completely ignored by modern modified Calvinists.

As already shown, the point at which Professor Murray and other modern modified Calvinists have misinterpreted Calvin is in his commentary on Ezekiel 18:23. "Have I any pleasure at all

that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways and live.”

Having demonstrated the fact that modern modified Calvinism has established a duplicity of will in the mind of God, as necessary to their system whereby they give a double meaning to Scripture, but have failed to avoid the contradictions created thereby, let us consider how the theology of Calvin’s *Institutes* is in total refutation of such a system.

To this end we now answer the two questions, which are raised on page 23 herein, in the light of Calvin’s *Institutes*.

The answers to these questions are interdependent. If Calvin does not effectively deny that there is a duplicity or complexity of wills in God, to which the first question refers, then a desire in God for the salvation of all men cannot be excluded. Such a desire in God, to which the second question refers, implies a duplicity of wills in God.

The validity of this essay stands or falls by the answers given to these questions. If Calvin satisfactorily refutes the notion of duplicity of wills in God, there cannot be a double connotation given to the interpretation of Scripture, by which it is held, that God desires or wishes the salvation of all men, and at the same time, has decreed the certain and everlasting destruction of the reprobate. If, however, Calvin does not give satisfactory answers, then modern modified Calvinism has won the day. God does desire the salvation of all men, under which circumstance there can be no logical answer to the doctrines of universalism, while the theological system as put forward by John Calvin in his *Institutes*, has no relevant application in the Church of our day.

(a) Calvin’s Refutation of a Duplicity of Wills in God (The First Question Answered)

The answer to the first question, ‘does Calvin effectively deny that there is a duplicity of wills in God,’ is given in Book 1, chapter 18, section 3. Here Calvin establishes his doctrine of the simplicity of God’s will in the face of those who object against him: “If nothing happens without the will of God, He must have two contrary wills, decreeing by a secret counsel what he has openly forbidden in His law.”

In giving answer, Calvin cites cases in which God accomplishes His will when men act contrary to His precepts, e.g., “The sons of Eli hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them” (I Samuel 2:25). He then writes:

The gospel, by the mouth of Luke, declares, that Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired “to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:28). And in truth, if Christ was not crucified by the will of God, where is our redemption? Still, however, the will of God is not at variance with itself. It undergoes no change. He makes no presence of not willing [decretively] what He wills [preceptively], but while in Himself the will is one and undivided, to us it appears manifold, because from the feebleness of our intellect, we cannot comprehend how, though after a different manner, He wills [preceptively] and wills not [decretively] the very same thing.

In this we have the teaching of Scripture, in which we cannot understand how God decretively willed the death of His own Son for our redemption, when He had already preceptively willed, “Thou shalt not kill or bear false witness.”

Calvin here gives no hint of duplicity in the mind of God, rather as he has stated, within God Himself, His will is one and undivided. In dealing with another objection of similar content in Section 4 of the same chapter, he writes, “They perversely confound the command of God with His secret will, though it appears by an infinite number of examples, that there is a great distance and diversity between them” (from footnote, French translation).

It is interesting to note, that both Calvin and his opponents both rejected the notion of duplicity in God. His opponents accused him that his system promoted that position, and he ably refuted them.

In setting Calvin’s position on the simplicity of God’s will over and against that of modern modified Calvinists, it is important to understand that they actually take the position which Calvin’s objectors raised against him. On the one hand modern modified Calvinists say that nothing happens without the will of God; on the other as we have seen, they propose a duality of wills in the mind of God, the contradiction of which they cannot avoid, when they refer a desire in Him for the salvation of the non-elect to His preceptive will at the same time as they ascribe to His decretive will His ordination of their destruction.

Remember, Professor Murray has written that he “is not persuaded that we may speak of God’s will as ‘simple’ after the pattern of Calvin’s statement,” and the Professors together have written, “We should not entertain ... any prejudice against the notion that God desires or has pleasure in the accomplishment of what He does not decretively will.” Professor Murray has also written:

There is the undeniable fact that, in regard to sin, God decretively wills what He preceptively does not will. There is the contradiction. He must maintain that it is perfectly consistent with God’s perfection that this contradiction should obtain. But it does not appear to be any resolution to say that God’s will is ‘simple.’

That there is often an outward contradiction between God’s precepts and His decrees, we do not deny, but, as we have clearly demonstrated, the Professors have made the contradiction *internal to the mind of God*, not only in regard to sin, but to the supposition of a desire in God for the salvation of all men.

(b) The Meaning of “Wishes” or “Wills” Relative to the Preceptive and Decretive Wills

Since the text of Ezekiel 18:23 specifically declares that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, it is obvious that Calvin does not place desire in the word which is translated “wishes.”

The English word “wishes” by dictionary definition means to desire, to long for, to desire eagerly or ardently (Webster). Its use in the translation of Calvin from the Latin is therefore unreliable, and as Professor Murray has noted, should be translated “wills.” In respect to the

second part of Calvin's statement it is totally incorrect. Used in the sense God *wishes*, it would say contrary to Scripture, that God desires or longs for the death of the wicked.

Our next task is to show that the word "wishes" or "wills" has nothing to do with a desire which modern modified Calvinists posit in God's preceptive will. To this end we must consider the use of the word "will" as it differs in its application in respect to God's preceptive will and His decretive will.

In respect to God's decrees the word "will" means that by which God "foreordains whatsoever comes to pass" (*Shorter Catechism*, No. 7). In respect to God's precepts it refers to that which the Scriptures principally teach, namely, "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man" (*Shorter Catechism*, No. 3).

By definition in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, God executeth His decrees in the works of creation and providence (*Shorter Catechism*, No. 8). "God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions" (*Shorter Catechism*, No. 11).

The essential difference between God's preceptive will and His decretive will is that the former comprises man's rule of duty, and the latter concerns God's purposes in all things whatsoever come to pass in time and eternity. God's decretive will therefore, embraces all the actions of men and angels, good and bad. Since God has declared in His Word, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10), all God's desire, pleasure and purpose in respect to His preceptive will, including its fulfilment and non-fulfilment, is contained in His decretive will.

In other words, God's preceptive will is not active, but is a rule of duty. All the activity of the Divine Mind concerning His precepts belongs to God's decretive will. The crux of the whole matter is Calvin's doctrine that the will of God is simple.

The confusion of modern modified Calvinism stems from the positing by that system of the activity of desire in God's preceptive will, which is then said not to have respect to God's decretive will. The positing of the activity of desire in God for the salvation of the reprobate in God's preceptive will separate from the activity by which He ordains them to destruction in His decretive will, does nothing but create duplicity and contradiction in the mind of God.

Since God's satisfaction and not His pleasure is in the death of the reprobate, there can be no ground for the modern modified Calvinist notion that God desires their salvation. In other words, the fact of God's satisfaction in the death of the reprobate is quite contrary to the idea that He desires their salvation.

To recapitulate the above argument, the decretive will of God concerns all things, whatsoever, that come to pass, including the actions of men and angels in the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of His preceptive will. Thus all the desire, pleasure and purposes of God concern only God's decretive will.

The placing of desire in God for the fulfilment of His preceptive will, which in the purposes of His decretive will is not fulfilled, therefore creates a false duplicity in the mind of God.

The decretive will of God includes the satisfaction of His justice in the death of the wicked, but not His pleasure, which is in His own glory and perfections. Since God's decretive will

concerns all the activity of the Divine mind, it involves a contradiction therein to say that God has satisfied His justice in ordaining the death of the reprobate and at the same time desires their salvation.

(c) Calvin's Treatment Of Ezekiel 18:23 in his *Institutes* (The second question answered)

An answer to the second question, "What does Calvin mean by the words, 'God wishes all to be saved,' does he apply them universally?" is found in Book 3, chapter 24, sections 15 and 16 of his *Institutes*.

In the previous Section, No. 14 of his *Institutes*, Calvin has given two reasons as to why the reprobate perish. They are:

(1) The refusal of the reprobate to obey the Word of God when manifested to them, will be properly ascribed to the malice and depravity of their hearts, provided it be at the same time added,

(2) that they were adjudged to this depravity, because they were raised up by the just but inscrutable judgment of God, to show forth His glory by their condemnation.

Opponents of Calvin have always objected to his doctrine that the reprobate perish through God's ordination. In the next two Sections, Nos. 15 and 16, Calvin shows that the objection is based on a false application of such texts as Ezekiel 18:23, I Timothy 2:4, and II Peter 3:9. It is the same false application which modern modified Calvinists use to support their doctrine that God desires the salvation of all men. The following is Calvin's refutation of the notion that the Ezekiel text has such a universal reference:

Since an objection is often found on a few passages of Scripture, in which God seems to deny that the wicked perish through His ordination, except in so far as they spontaneously bring death upon themselves in opposition to his warning; let us briefly explain these passages, and demonstrate that they are not averse to the above view.

One of the passages adduced is, 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live' (Ezekiel 18:23).

If we are to extend this to the whole human race, why are not the very many whose minds might be more easily bent to obey urged to repentance, rather than those who by His invitations become daily more and more hardened? Our Lord declares that the preaching of the gospel and miracles would have produced more fruit among the people of Nineveh and Sodom than in Judea (Matt. 11:20-24).

How comes it, then, that if God would have all to be saved, he does not open a door of repentance for the wretched, who would more readily have received grace?

Hence we may see that the passage is violently wrested, if the will of God, which the prophet mentions is opposed to His eternal counsel, by which He separated the elect from the reprobate.

Now if the genuine meaning of the prophet is inquired into, it will be found that he only means to give hope of pardon to them who repent. The sum is, that God is undoubtedly ready to pardon whenever the sinner repents. Therefore, He does not will his death, in so far as He wills repentance. But experience shows that this will, for the repentance of those whom He invites to Himself, is not such as to make Him touch all their hearts.

Still, it cannot be said that He acts deceitfully; for though the external word only renders those who hear it and do not obey it, inexcusable, it is truly regarded as an evidence of the grace which He reconciles men to Himself.

Let us therefore hold the doctrine of the prophet, that God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner: that the godly may feel confident that whenever they repent God is ready to pardon them; and that the wicked may feel that their guilt is doubled, when they respond not to the great mercy and condescension of God. The mercy of God therefore, will ever be ready to meet the penitent; but all the prophets, and apostles, and Ezekiel himself, clearly tell us who they are to whom repentance is given.

In the above quotation Calvin refers to the fact that our Lord upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum for their unbelief and told them that if the mighty works that had been done in them, had been done in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, the latter cities would have repented. From this Calvin shows that God has declared that in His providence there are those who, if they had heard the gospel would have more readily repented than those who on hearing it, daily grow more hardened against it.

In the light of this, Calvin has asked the question: "If we are to extend the Ezekiel text to the whole human race, why does God send the gospel to those whose hearts are more hardened by the hearing of it, and not to those who would be more easily persuaded to receive it?"

It is clear from Calvin's answer, that he does not refer the text to the whole human race. In effect he has replied: If it is said that God desires or would have all men to be saved, the Ezekiel text is violently wrested because such a notion makes the will which the prophet mentions, namely God's pleasure that the wicked should repent, opposed to the eternal counsel by which He has separated the elect from the reprobate.

He goes on to say among other things, that the genuine meaning of the text is that God has given it to give hope of pardon to those who repent. Since God is ready to pardon the sinner whenever he repents, He does not therefore will his death, in-so-far as He wills repentance, because it is clear, that all the prophets and Ezekiel teach that He gives repentance only to the elect.

Under the previous heading 1 of this essay, it is shown that:

1. the desire and pleasure of God concerning the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of His preceptive will belongs to His decretive will,
2. the word “wishes” or “wills” in both parts of Calvin’s statement also belongs to the decretive will of God,
3. the words “God wishes” are totally incorrect when used in respect to the death of the wicked, but nevertheless, God wills their death when He ordains that the reprobate perish.

The text of Ezekiel therefore does not speak of God’s wish in respect to the wicked generally, but of God’s pleasure in their repentance, which in the context of other Scripture can only refer to those who are loved of the Father and chosen in Christ.

The modern modified Calvinist’s appeal to Ezekiel 18:23 rests on the subtlety, that because God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He must also desire the salvation of all men. From this they further compound their error with a doctrine which posits a desire in God for the salvation of all men which respects not His decretive will but His preceptive will, with its consequent implication of duplicity in the mind of God. The second branch of the Ezekiel text, however, indicates that God’s pleasure is in those who turn from their wicked ways and live. That God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked is indeed universal in respect to all those fallen in Adam, and even the fallen angels. That, however, is the limit of that part of the expression in respect to those, who in the doctrine, *Of God's eternal Decree*, chapter 3 of the *Westminster Confession* are ordained “to the praise of His glorious justice.”

As previously noted, Calvin has instructed that his *Commentaries* are to be understood in the light of his *Institutes*. From these as shown above it is clear that when Calvin uses the expression, “God wishes or wills all to be saved” in his commentary on Ezekiel 18:23, he means it only in respect of those to whom God gives repentance, namely the elect.

This brings again to the fore the central principle of Calvin’s theology, that the will of God is simple and undivided, as opposed to that of modern modified Calvinism which teaches that God’s will is complex.

(d) Calvin’s Doctrine in Ezekiel 18:23 Further Confirmed by his Treatment of I Timothy 2:4 and II Peter 3:9 in his Institutes

In I Timothy 2:4 we read: “God our saviour; who will have all men to be saved,” and in II Peter 3:9: “The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish.”

From these portions of the texts, modern modified Calvinists take further warrant for their notion that God desires the salvation of all men. It is relevant to add, that if God who is omnipotent, will have all men to be saved, and is not willing that any should perish in the universalistic sense, then we are committed to a doctrine of universal redemption. Calvin, however, does not allow such a notion, because he interprets the first branch of the sentence of both verses by their second branches which read,

I Timothy 2:4: “and come unto a knowledge of the truth,” and II Peter 3:9: “but that all should come to repentance.”

Calvin clearly teaches that the mode by which God will have all men to be saved, and the means by which He is not willing that any should perish are knowledge of the truth and repentance, both of which are gifts which God bestows on the elect only. In respect to I Timothy 2:4, he writes, “the mode in which God thus wills is plain from the context; for Paul connects two things, a will to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” He goes on to tell us, that...

[when] God will have all men to be saved ... He assuredly means nothing more than that the way of salvation was not shut against any *order* of men ... He who selects those whom He is to visit in mercy does not impart it to all. But since it clearly appears that He is there speaking not of individuals, but of *orders* of men, let us have done with longer discussion ... If this is true, that if He were not disposed to receive those who implore His mercy, it could not have been said, “Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts” (Zech. 1:3); but I hold that no man approaches God unless previously influenced from above. And if repentance were placed at the will of man, Paul would not say, “If God peradventure will give them repentance” (2 Tim. 2:25). Nay, did not God at the very time when He is verbally exhorting all to repentance, influence the elect by the secret movement of His Spirit, Jeremiah would not say, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented” (Jer. 31:18).

It is clear from Calvin’s treatment of the above texts, within the context of his doctrine of the simplicity of God’s will, that he does not apply them universally, nor does he in any sense allow that there is a desire in God for the salvation of all men.

4. Calvin’s Doctrine that God’s Purpose in Sending the Gospel is to Harden the Hearts of the Reprobate

In Book 3, chapter 24, Section 13 of his *Institutes*, Calvin refers to several cases in which God purposes by the preaching of His Word, to send upon the reprobate an even greater blindness. For example in Isaiah 6:9, 10, we read where the Lord tells the prophet, “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” Calvin comments:

Here He directs His voice to them, but it is that they may turn a deaf ear; He kindles a light, but it is that they might become more blind; He produces a doctrine, but it is that they may become more stupid; He employs a remedy, but it is that they may not be cured. And John referring to this prophecy, declares that the Jews could not believe the doctrine of Christ, because this curse from God lay upon them (John 12:37, 40).

The doctrine that God's purpose in sending the Gospel to the reprobate is to harden their hearts in order that they may not believe and be saved, is a complete refutation of the notion of modern modified Calvinists that God desires the salvation of all men.

5. Calvin's Refutation of the Notion that there is an Inconsistency between God's Eternal Election and the Free Offer of the Gospel to All Men.

In his comments on Calvin's treatment of Ezekiel 18:23, Professor Murray makes the point,

... there is the undeniable fact that, in regard to sin, God decretively wills what He preceptively does not will. There is the contradiction. We must maintain that it is perfectly consistent with God's perfection that this contradiction should obtain.

We acknowledge that there is an apparent contradiction due to the weakness of man's senses, between man's transgression of the moral law and God's providence in which He governs all His creatures and all their actions. This is not denied but supported by Calvin.

Professor Murray, however, has used this apparent contradiction to justify another which his system creates when it states that God desires the salvation of those whom He has foreordained to eternal destruction.

We have shown that modern modified Calvinists have posited a sensible and reasonable desire in God for the salvation of the reprobate, which belongs to the same mind as executes His decrees. Also, that they cannot avoid the inherent contradiction of their system, that God loves and desires the salvation of those whom He has made the objects of His everlasting displeasure and wrath. There is, therefore, in their system a contradiction or inconsistency between God's eternal election and their concept of the free offer of the gospel to all men in which God is said to desire the salvation of all men. This Calvin refutes in Section 17 of the same book and chapter of his *Institutes* as follows:

Let us now see whether there be any inconsistency between the two things—*viz.* that God, by an eternal decree, fixed the number of those whom he is pleased to embrace in love, and on whom he is pleased to display his wrath, and that he offers salvation indiscriminately to all.

I hold that they are perfectly consistent, for all that is meant by the promise is, just that 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 predestinated to salvation. Thus the truth of the promises remains firm and unshaken, so that it cannot be said there is any disagreement between the eternal election of God and the testimony of his grace which he offers to believers. But why does he mention all men? Namely, that the consciences of the righteous may rest the more secure when they understand that there is no difference between sinners, provided they have faith, and that the ungodly may not be able to allege that they have not an asylum to which they may betake themselves from the bondage of sin, while they

ungratefully reject the offer which is made to them. Therefore, since by the Gospel the mercy of God is offered to both, it is faith, in other words, the illumination of God, which distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked; the former feeling the efficacy of the Gospel, the latter obtaining no benefit from it. Illumination itself has eternal election for its rule.

6. The Intrusion of Modern Modified Calvinism into the Secret Counsels of God's Will and its Law of Opposites

Modern modified Calvinists charge those who deny that God has a favourable disposition towards the reprobate with an unwarranted intrusion into the secret counsels of God's will. The charge, however, is an attempt to provide a screen against the proper examination of their system of exegesis.

Within their concept of the secret counsels of God's will, modern modified Calvinists attempt to equate the wrath and curse which God has declared against the reprobate with that of His fatherly displeasure under which the elect may fall by their sins, having made this equation, they then assume that because God loves the elect and exercises His fatherly displeasure concerning them when they fall into sin, that He must also love the reprobate. In other words, if God can be said to exercise both love and wrath toward the elect, He must also have a love for the reprobate.

If they who are the objects of God's redeeming love can also in some sense of the word be regarded as the objects of His wrath, why should it be impossible that they who are the objects of His wrath should also in some sense share His divine favour.

Let us now investigate the fallacy of this reasoning.

In the first place it must be stated that there are not two kinds of wrath in God concerning sin, one for the elect, and one for the reprobate. The text of Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," is true both of the elect and reprobate. There is nevertheless a total difference between God's disposition towards the elect and reprobate. While God's anger is perfect, and this emotion is expressed in God's disposition toward elect and reprobate, that disposition is conditioned absolutely by the factors of God's electing, predestinating love and Christ's death.

On the death of Christ rests the judicial removal of the wrath of God against the elect for their sins. Since the atonement has reference to particular sins and not sins in general, it is not a reservoir or storehouse of forgiveness. It therefore creates no difficulty to hold that God has expressed His displeasure against His people for their sins. This is clearly the position of Scripture as seen in the following quotation from Calvin's *Institutes*, Book 3, chapter 4, section 32:

David says, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thine hot displeasure" (Psalm 6:1). There is nothing inconsistent with this in its being repeatedly said, that the Lord is angry with His saints when He chastens them for their sins (Psalm 38:7). In like manner, in Isaiah: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee though thou wast angry with me, thine

anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me” (Isaiah 12:1). Likewise in Habakkuk, “In wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2), and Micah, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him” (Micah 7:9).

Two things determine the disposition of God toward the elect. Firstly, He has chosen and loved them out of His mere good pleasure from all eternity, and secondly, He has sent His only Son into the world that He through His own perfect righteousness and death would reconcile them unto Himself.

Two things determine God’s disposition toward the reprobate. One; the fact of His wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and two; the fact that He has by an act of His will ordained them to be the objects of His everlasting displeasure and wrath. Though they may taste of the temporal blessings which God bestows upon them in their earthly life, they are, as the Scripture teaches, given the Gospel for the reason as Calvin comments on Isaiah 6:9, 10. “He directs his voice to them, but it is that they may turn a deaf ear; he kindles a light, but it is that they may become more stupid; he employs a remedy, but it is that they may not be cured.” From this it should be clear that God’s disposition toward the reprobate is such that they have no part whatever in the purposes of God in the free offer of the Gospel except for the greater hardening of their hearts.

Modern modified Calvinists have in effect adopted the so called law of opposites, which assumes that there is a love-hate relationship in God concerning the same object. Their notion, that because God has in some sense expressed a wrath against the elect, He must also love the reprobate because He loves the elect, is entirely gratuitous. It is without warrant in any part of the Scripture and constitutes an addition thereto. There is no equation in any sense whatever between God’s disposition of wrath toward the reprobate and that of His fatherly disposition toward the elect. Since the wrath of God in the case of the latter is entirely conditioned by God’s eternal electing love and Christ’s death, it can never be said, in any sense, that any are loved outside of Christ.

Modern modified Calvinism intrudes into the secret counsels of God’s will on two counts:

1. By false interpretation of Scripture it misinterprets the mind of God so teaching that which Scripture does not teach.
2. It attempts to define the inner workings of the divine mind when it says that there is unfulfilled desire in God’s mind for the salvation of all men which respects His preceptive or revealed will, but which is contrary to His decretive will. By so doing they have created a duplicity in the divine mind.

Calvin does not profess knowledge concerning the internal mystery of divine sovereignty. Where there is an apparent contradiction between God’s precepts and His decretive will he teaches that it is because it cannot be understood by the weak finite mind of man. It is the inability of men to understand the simplicity of God’s will though it appears to have “great variety as far as our senses are concerned” which in Calvin’s theology constitutes the mystery of the sovereign counsel of God’s will.

This is not as modern modified Calvinists would have it. To them there is an actual complexity or duplicity within the divine mind as contained in the second count (2) above. The mystery of divine sovereignty is made a covering for the inherent contradictions of their system. When

they are confronted with the contradiction that God does not fulfil His desire for the salvation of all men in the accomplishment of His purposes, they say that it is a mystery which lies hidden in the sovereign counsel of His will.

It should be clear from the above, that it is modern modified Calvinists who have made an unwarranted intrusion into the secret counsels of God's will, and by it they hold a false doctrine concerning God's sovereignty.

(6)

The Mystery of God's Sovereignty, and Providence and its Moral Nature

In Book 1, chapter 18, of his *Institutes*, Calvin teaches that the thoughts and actions of all men, including the wicked, are determined by the secret counsel of God's will. Scripture reveals that God ordains man's disobedience for His own glory. He has nevertheless given to man the moral law as his rule of duty, and will at the last day, have him give an account of himself thereby. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22).

We have now to demonstrate that God does not transgress His own moral law or nature when in His sovereignty and providence He ordains that wicked men commit evil deeds in the accomplishment of His purposes. "Jesus of Nazareth, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22, 23).

Let us illustrate the truth of the matter from the story of Joseph and his brethren, which is recorded in the Book of Genesis from the thirty seventh chapter onwards. It is the teaching of that book that when Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave into Egypt, they deceived their father and brought him great sorrow; they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, in order to save much people alive.

In this God governed the thoughts and actions of Joseph's brothers in that they did evil, but He was not the author of their sin. If bare permission is made to account for their thoughts and actions, then God is not sovereign, because He is made dependent on circumstance and second causes. Concerning the actions of men, elect and reprobate, we must hold with Martin Luther, that God works in every man according to his nature, for good or for evil, but is not the author of their sin.

The desire of God is always in His decree and the end which it achieves. His desire in the wicked actions of Joseph's brothers was to save much people alive. This did not involve a desire in God that those men should act contrary to His own moral nature, any more than He desires or has pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Scripture teaches, "without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), so that it must follow that God does not desire that wicked men without grace, obey His precepts. By His grace, God requires and desires the obedience of those whom He has effectually called by His Spirit. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). When they who are His children grieve His Spirit by their disobedience, He forgives them their transgressions in and through the intercession and merits of His Son. The desire of God concerning the fulfilment of His moral law, is inseparable from its fulfilment by His grace. If such is not the case, then He is not the fountain of all goodness.

For God to desire that men shall act outside His grace in obedience to His precepts, would violate His own moral order. For God to desire the salvation of men and not grant them the means of grace, which is essential to save them would make Him a monster. For men to

imagine that they can please God without grace, makes them Pelagians. The Scripture teaches that without faith it is impossible to please God, for faith is a gift of God.

While “God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30), the wicked are not mocked by their inability to obey; for they possess no such desire. Rather, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14). “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). If wicked men desist from committing evil, it is because God in His providence governs and restrains them, not because they have acted out of obedience.

When God desires that men obey Him, He grants them repentance and faith. To all God’s entreaties and promises there is annexed a condition, which the sinner is commanded to obey, but only the Spirit of God can accomplish. While God’s entreaties and promises are addressed to all men, they are not an expression of a desire in Him for universal repentance and salvation. Rather as Calvin has expressed it:

He only means to give hope of pardon to those who repent. But experience shows that this [His] will, for the repentance of those whom He invites to Himself, is not such as to make Him touch all their hearts. The mercy of God therefore, will ever be ready to meet the penitent; but all the prophets, and apostles, and Ezekiel himself, clearly tell us who they are to whom repentance is given.

The lesson is this; Scripture does not teach, that God desires that wicked men, without grace, should obey His precepts.

God’s desire, delight and pleasure is in the redemption purchased by His Son, and in the application of it to all those whom He has chosen in Him from all eternity, by the work of His Spirit. In other words, God’s desire in repentance, faith, and redemption concerns the elect only, and does not extend, as modern modified Calvinists would have it, to the reprobate.

The mystery of divine sovereignty and providence may be stated in the following terms:

God, whose will is simple and undivided, without being the author of sin, ordains according to the secret counsel of His own will, all things whatsoever come to pass, and while holding all men and angels both good and evil accountable to His moral law, works in every man according to his nature, but is never the author of sin.

If it could be said that God’s will is complex, and He desires the fulfilment of that which He does not decree, then surely it is implied that unfulfilled desires have rendered God less than perfectly blessed, and that God could conceivably desire things that are contrary to His holy will.

(7)

Modern Modified Calvinism and its Amyraldian Order of Decrees

Modern modified Calvinism requires a particular order of decrees. The decree to make a free offer of the Gospel with a desire in God for the salvation of all men requires that the decree of redemption must precede the decree of election. This is the same order as the Amyraldian order of decrees.

It was out of His mere good pleasure that God elected some to everlasting life (*Shorter Catechism*, No. 20). In order, therefore, the decree of election must precede the decree of redemption.

In the doctrine of modern modified Calvinism, the decree of redemption could not follow the decree of election, because a desire in God to save all could not exist. When the decree of redemption follows that of election, the desire of God can only have respect to the elect, as is the case in Calvin's Calvinism. In his system the free offer of the Gospel is a means to an end, namely, the fulfilment of God's purposes in the separation of the elect from the reprobate. In modern modified Calvinism, the free offer has no end, because it is said to contain a desire in God for the salvation of all men, which is never fulfilled.

Modern modified Calvinism is therefore an inconsistent form of Amyraldianism. Its identity with that system may also be seen in the first three of the five points of Amyraldianism listed in the Appendix.

(8)

The Preaching of the Gospel

The true basis for the preaching of the Gospel is stated by William Cunningham in the following terms:

The sole ground or warrant for men's act, in offering pardon and salvation to their fellow-men, is the authority and command of God in His Word. We have no other warrant than this; we need no other; and we should seek or desire none; but on this ground alone we should consider ourselves not only warranted, but bound, to proclaim to our fellow men, whatever be their country, character, or condition, the good news of the kingdom, and call them to come to Christ that they might be saved.

Three errors at least persist.

1. Some otherwise orthodox divines have based the free offer to all on the logic, that since Christ's death was of infinite worth, it is sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect. While the idea of sufficiency for all may be a valid deduction, it has no theological application. If the preaching of the Gospel is based on the idea, that the atonement is sufficient for all, but effective only for the elect, there is the implication that Christ died for all, with an absolute intention for the elect, and a conditional intention for the reprobate, as with the Amyraldian system.
2. and 3. There are two kinds of universalists, those who base the offer of the Gospel on a universal atonement, and those who, as modern modified Calvinists, attempt to embrace the orthodox and universalistic positions at the one time, by basing their offer of the Gospel on a notion of a universal love of God, and a desire in Him for the salvation of all men.

Let us recapitulate some of the things which belong to the gospel of modern modified Calvinism.

1. Since there is a loving-kindness in God toward every man, the doctrine of total depravity is overthrown, because in every man there is something desirable to God.
2. Because of that loving-kindness of God toward every man, Christ is said to belong to every man.
3. The basis of the preaching of the gospel of modern modified Calvinism is comprised of three notions which have nothing to do with bringing a sinner to Christ. They are:
 - a) God loves every man.
 - b) He desires to save every man.

c) Christ belongs to every man.

1. Since the proclamation of the gospel in this system involves telling all men that God loves and desires to save them, and since the redemption purchased by Christ satisfied all the demands of the law on behalf of the elect only, the law is divorced from the preaching of the Gospel.

2. Thus the outward call of the Gospel does not include the preaching of the law, which is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. Since it is assumed that Christ belongs to every man, sinners are not brought to Christ by showing them their transgressions, but by an offer of the Gospel which tells them that Christ is there for the taking. They are thus invited to receive Christ without conviction of sin, and therefore without a need of the Great Physician. The love of God, not His fear, is made the beginning of wisdom. In other words, it is a Gospel which offers Christ to all without conditions.

3. Sinners are not, therefore, shown the true nature of the estate into which they are fallen. It is by the preaching of God's Word that the Spirit of God convicts of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come, without which the sinner will not turn and be converted.

4. The Gospel of modern modified Calvinism consists of a shallow believism, because it is not rooted in the commandment and the preaching of the law. It forgets that the whole purpose of the Gospel is that men may be conformed to the image of Christ in His human nature. Conformity to Christ is through conformity to His law, by the preaching of His Word and the work of His Spirit.

5. Since men are not brought to Christ by showing them their transgressions, the notion of total depravity, a term often used by modern modified Calvinists, consists mainly in not maintaining a right attitude or disposition towards Christ.

6. Modern modified Calvinism gives much exhortation to the exercise of the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It cannot, however, lay the principles by which the Spirit of God produces these fruits in the heart, because of its ambiguous and contradictory system of doctrine. Its doctrine of sanctification is, therefore, a doctrine of works, in other words, an attempt to imitate Christ.

Calvin's Calvinism is in distinct contradiction to this system. Firstly, the free offer of the gospel rests on the commandment of God. Secondly, it is offered on condition of repentance and faith as set out in the *Larger Catechism* No. 32:

The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant in that He freely provideth and offereth a Mediator, and life and salvation by Him; requiring faith as the condition to interest them in Him, promiseth and giveth His Holy Spirit to all His elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces.

Thus we say that the offer of the Gospel is made to them which hunger and thirst, "Ho, every one that thirsteth" etc., "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness."

The gospel of Calvin's Calvinism is based on the commandment because no sinner will hunger and thirst after righteousness unless he has seen his lost and undone condition. That he cannot do until he has had the law of God laid to his conscience and has learned that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans 1:18). Without this preparation the gospel is of none effect, because the mercy of God in Christ is set over and against sin's penalty. It is by the preaching of these means that the Holy Spirit is come to convict of sin and of righteousness and judgment to come (John 16:7, 14). Only when these things are wrought in the heart of the sinner, in some degree, will he comprehend the true nature of his fallen estate and flee to Christ. Having learned that he possesses no righteousness of his own, he will hunger for the righteousness of Christ. In the gospel call and invitation he will find that in Christ there is "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Only when the sinner has closed with God's offer of mercy in Christ, however haltingly, has he a hope and a right to assume that the wrath of God is removed from him and that Christ has died for him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Nevertheless, he will see in the declarations of God's wrath against sin and unrighteousness a warning against his committing of sin and his grieving of the Holy Spirit.

As previously stated, the modern modified Calvinist concept of the free offer of the gospel affirms that God, in loving every man, desires to save them, and so offers Christ on the basis that He belongs to every man. In denying that this concept implies a universal redemption as to purchase, it cannot say that all that is offered in the gospel is a purchase of the death of Christ. It has been said by some, that Christ is not offered as a Redeemer, but only as a friend.

Calvin's Calvinism teaches that all that was purchased by the death of Christ is offered to sinners. Thus the offer of mercy includes the embracing of Jesus Christ and in Him the partaking of the benefits of justification, adoption, sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from them. (Refer *Shorter Catechism* No. 29-32). Justification and peace of conscience are the first things which the regenerate sinner enjoys. Regeneration is sanctification commenced in the soul, and by it he is made a child of God. It is relevant to note that John the Baptist, regenerate from his mother's womb was the greatest prophet of repentance in preparation for the ministry of the Lord Jesus in the world and in the hearts of men.

Calvin has shown that there is no inconsistency between the fact "that God by an eternal decree, fixed the number of those whom He is pleased to embrace in love, and on whom He is pleased to display His wrath," and the fact "that He offers salvation indiscriminately to all" upon certain conditions. He says,

I hold that they are perfectly consistent, for all that is meant by the promise is, just that His mercy is offered to all who desire and implore it, and this none do, save those whom He has enlightened.

This offer, though it is made upon conditions of repentance and faith, is wholly free and without price, because it is God who also gives repentance and faith.

When the offer according to the Scripture is made outwardly to them that hunger and thirst, it is in its inward effect, a calling out of those who receive the effectual operation of God's Spirit. It also fulfils God's purpose in separating the elect from the reprobate. Those who

refuse the offer and call are not mocked, for they have no such desires. There can therefore be no question of insincerity on the part of God, if there is not in Him a desire for the salvation of all men.

Our opponents, who have done away with the commandment as the basis of the offer and the condition of faith and repentance, must of necessity conclude that there is an intention in the offer for the salvation of all. Under their offer they are saying, "Here is Christ, take him," "Go tell every man Christ is dead for him," so that under their conception of the offer, God to be sincere, must desire the salvation of all men.

In attempting to preserve the sincerity of God in their notion of the offer, they have made him to be insincere, because He, in desiring to save all, does not grant all men the means of repentance and faith. It is the height of insincerity to stand on the pier and watch a man drowning, while desiring that he might be saved, yet not throwing the lifeline which is held in hand.

An accusation laid by modern modified Calvinists against those who maintain the true preaching of the gospel, is the nonsense statement, that they offer the gospel only to the elect, who before they are effectually called are known only to God. They also claim that the annexation of a condition to the free offer is an attempt to measure repentance and faith. To call men to the exercise of faith and repentance is not to measure them, but to command them. Faith the size of a mustard seed cannot be measured, yet it will move mountains. The weakness of faith is not to be despised either, for our Lord has declared, "A bruised reed he will not break," but will strengthen it that it may become as cedar in the courts of our God. The smoking flax he will not quench, but will blow it into a flame.

The doctrine of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia concerning the free offer of the gospel is fully stated in *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* which is annexed to the *Westminster Confession* and Catechisms. That statement is contrary to the concept of the gospel held by modern modified Calvinists and was actually rejected by the Marrowmen for the same reason.

(9)

Modern Modified Calvinism and Covenant Theology

Modern modified Calvinism begins its destructive work in reference to Covenant theology in the Old Testament, because it does not acknowledge that the intent of the Gospel, except in special individual circumstances, was only to the House of Israel, and had no reference whatever to the heathen nations. Until such time as the Lord Jesus “came to His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11), the Gospel was addressed to the Jew first; afterwards it was addressed to the Gentile.

In the administration of the Gospel in the Old Testament, Israel as God’s Covenant people, represented the organised visible Church. The need for Ezekiel’s prophecy was that God’s people, who bore the sign and seal of the Covenant, had turned from the promises and obligations of the Covenant to idolatry. God had overthrown their land and led them into the captivity of Babylon, and had sent them the prophet Ezekiel to call the nation, in their calamity, to repentance.

Israel in the New Testament administration is still the Church. The middle wall of partition has been broken down, so that there is in Christ no difference between Jew and Gentile. While the Gospel was addressed to the Jew first in the Old Testament, it was in the New, addressed to the Gentile at the last commandment of our Lord, which He gave immediately before His ascension, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

The principle of the address of the Book of Ezekiel, however, has not changed. The address of that book was, and is, only to the House of Israel, God’s covenant people; and is without content or intent, concerning those who are not in the plan and purposes of God, numbered among the elect. To derive from the Book of Ezekiel the notion, that God desires the salvation of the reprobate, is to propose a doctrine which has nothing to do with the covenant of redemption and grace. There is nothing contained in the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which does not have reference to the fulfilment of that Covenant. Both Testaments in fact, comprise the “Book of the Covenant.” The preaching of the Gospel is simply a display of the Covenant of grace.

Modern modified Calvinism therefore, is destructive of covenant theology because it introduces an extra-Scriptural ground, namely a universal benevolence in God, as a basic reason for the preaching of the Gospel. It thereby makes covenant theology only an adjunct, if not redundant, and not the whole ground and purpose for the preaching of the Gospel.

(10)

The Rule of Interpretation of Scripture

If we are to take our interpretation of Scripture from the meaning of words and passages, which appear to teach a universalism, as the Professors Murray and Stonehouse do in their study *The Free Offer of the Gospel*, we should also apply the same method to such texts as:

John 3:16, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”

I John 2:2, “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.”

By the same method of interpretation, such texts teach a universal atonement, as indeed some today who claim to be Calvinists, are now teaching. Their claim to particularism, like that of the Amyraldians rests on the idea that the atonement is sufficient for all, and that its effectiveness is in its application. In other words, Christ died for all men, but the effectiveness of the atonement is in God’s eternal election. This differs little, if at all, from the doctrine of hypothetical redemption of the schools of Davenant and Amyraut. Ultimately, modern modified Calvinists, who in their inconsistency do not presently take the position of universal atonement, must in time logically move to that position. Tradition, not Calvin’s Calvinism, is the only thing preventing them.

We have seen that the interpretative method of modern modified Calvinism involves giving to Scripture texts a double meaning, thus involving its system of theology in a series of ambiguities and contradictions. Such method of interpretation does not stand up to examination in the light of the principle of interpretation of Scripture which is stated in the *Westminster Confession*, Chapter 1, *Of the Holy Scripture*, Section 9:

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself, and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

“Which is not manifold, but one,” simply means not with more than one meaning.

Robert Shaw in his exposition of the *Westminster Confession* has written concerning the above statement: “No Scripture can have two or more meanings properly different, and nowise subordinate one to another, because of the unity of the truth, and because of the perspicuity (clearness) of the Scripture.”

The Position of the *Westminster Confession*

(a) The Disposition of God toward the Reprobate

The Literature Committee of our Presbytery during the year 1971, published a pamphlet to show that the *Westminster Confession* teaches that the disposition of God toward the non-elect is one of hatred and wrath. The following is a quotation from that pamphlet.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* is a declaration of the main heads of doctrine and principles of the Word of God to which it is at all times subordinate. Its doctrines and principles are founded on proof texts from which it is to be interpreted and understood, else the *Confession* is placed above Scripture for authority.

Let us quote from chapter 3 of the *Confession, Of God's Eternal Decree*, and take note of the supporting proof texts.

Section 3: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others to everlasting death."

The proof texts are found in Romans chapter 9 verses 22 and 23:

"What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory."

Section 7: "The rest of mankind, God was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to disfavour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice."

Proof texts, Romans chapter 9 verses 17, 18, 21, and 22:

Verse 17, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth ... Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

As already indicated, the above Scripture texts which are quoted in the *Westminster Confession* give proof of its doctrine concerning the non-elect. In the context of Romans chapter 9 from which they are taken, the nature of God's disposition toward the reprobate is clearly stated. Verse 13 in context speaks of God's hatred. It is also used as a proof text in Section 7 of the same chapter of the *Confession* in which God's purposes concerning the elect are distinguished. Verse 22 speaks directly of His wrath, in that the non-elect are referred to as "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

In the above it has been demonstrated:

1. That Scripture clearly defines the disposition of God toward the non-elect as one of hatred and wrath, and
2. That since the same Scriptures are applied in the *Confession* as proof of its doctrine, the *Confession* must also be interpreted after the same manner. That is, the non-elect, who are predestined to everlasting death according to the statements of the *Confession*, are under God's disposition of hatred and wrath.

If the principle of the interpretation of the *Confession* by the Scripture is not adhered to, the validity of the proof texts in the *Confession* is destroyed. (end of quote).

While the pamphlet accurately stated the doctrine of the *Westminster Confession* in respect to the disposition of God toward the reprobate, it was insufficient to refute the position of modern modified Calvinists, because of their method of interpreting Scripture which gives it a double meaning and the so called law of opposites from which they assume that God also loves that which He hates.

(b) The Fatherly Disposition of God toward the Elect

The relevant doctrine of the *Confession* is stated in chapter 11: *Of Justification*, sections 4 and 5.

Section 4: "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect, and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification. Nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time apply Christ unto them."

Justification by definition of the *Shorter Catechism*, No. 33, "is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

Therefore, justification is not complete until the imputed righteousness of Christ is received by faith alone. In other words, it is not complete until the benefits of adoption and sanctification which are not to be confused with it, but are never separated from it, are applied in effectual calling by the Holy Spirit.

Section 5: “God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.”

To the justified all suffering in the providence of God is the act of a loving Father, which has the purpose of correcting their faults and improving their graces. This compares with the sufferings of the reprobate, all of which are but instalments of the eternal penalty. For this reason we have stated that there is no equation in any sense between the wrath of God for the reprobate and His fatherly displeasure which may be expressed in respect to the elect.

The Addition to the *Westminster Standards* by Modern Modified Calvinism

The Free Church at its 1971 Synod in Sydney adopted a Report which gives full support to the doctrine that God loves all men and desires their salvation, and thus made that doctrine an officially received doctrine in their Church in Australia.

That Report not only misinterprets the Scripture and Calvin's exegesis of it; it wrongly quotes the writings of A. W. Pink in his book *The Sovereignty of God*, where he explains the will of God in the same terms as Calvin, when he defends the principle of the simplicity of God's will, which the writers of the Report cannot support. The Report overlooks the fact that A. W. Pink in the eleventh chapter of his book has written the following:

One of the most popular beliefs of the day is that God loves everybody, and the very fact that it is so popular with all classes ought to be enough to arouse the suspicions of those who are subject to the Word of Truth. God's love toward all His creatures is the fundamental and favourite tenet of Universalists, Unitarians, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Russellites, etc. To tell the Christ-rejecter that God loves him is to cauterise his conscience, as well as to afford him a sense of security in his sins. The fact is, that the love of God, is a truth for saints only, and to present it to the enemies of God is to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.

The Free Church Synod Report is such that it attempts to completely refute the doctrine of Calvin's Calvinism as defended in this essay. In its summary the Report quotes the Procurator as saying, "The point at issue is an open one on which individuals may hold their own views." Such, however, cannot be the position in the Free Church because the doctrine that God loves only the elect and desires their salvation only, is forcefully rejected by the Synod Report. Since the Free Church Synod has adopted the Report, only one position is possible in that Church, namely, the one it wrongly upholds.

Sufficient has been brought forward in this essay to demonstrate beyond all shadow of doubt, that the doctrine in question is contrary to Scripture and is destructive of Calvin's Calvinism. It is also clear that the *Westminster Standards* contain no statement whatsoever from which it may be assumed, that God loves the reprobate and desires their salvation.

The Free Church Synod Report of 1971 therefore constitutes a Declaratory Act of the Church in which it has officially received and declared a doctrine which is not laid down in the *Westminster Confession* or the *Shorter* and *Larger* Catechisms. This is a fact, which, despite all their attempts at denial, is irrefutable.

(13)

The Condemnation of Modern Modified Calvinism in the Law of the Church

The *Vindication* published by the Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia under the date of 12/2/1965, gave a full account of the matter under this heading. This is now repeated together with other relevant factors brought forward in this essay.

1. We have seen how the *Westminster Confession* is a positive statement of doctrine which teaches that only the elect are effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but does not, in any of its statements, specifically exclude a conditional intention in the atonement for the reprobate. We have also seen that the Church of Scotland in taking an absolute position in respect to the atonement, in the Acts of its General Assembly of 1720 and 1722, in which it condemned the book of *The Marrow*, declared the doctrine of universal redemption as to purchase to be contrary to Scripture, the *Westminster Confession* and the *Larger Catechism*.

2. Since the constitution of our Church embraces the Church of Scotland Acts of 1720 and 1722, the book of *The Marrow* and its terms are condemned in our Church.

3. The Marrowmen of Scotland reinterpreted the terms of the book of *The Marrow* in an attempt to bring the theology of that book and its terms within the Church of Scotland, but in so doing subjected their theology to ambiguity and contradiction.

4. Modern modified Calvinists who have embraced the doctrine of the Marrowmen, have extended the ambiguities and contradictions of that system, in their proclamation of a universal loving-kindness in God, and the notion that God, in the free offer of the Gospel, desires the salvation of all men. This has been systematised in their doctrine of the complexity of God's will in which one department of the Divine mind is said to respect His preceptive will, but at the same time is contrary to its other department, which respects His decretive will.

5. In the pamphlet issued by the Literature Committee of our Presbytery, it was shown that the *Westminster Confession* positively teaches that the disposition of God toward the reprobate is one of everlasting hatred and wrath, and does not at any point teach that God desires the salvation of all men.

6. In spite of the two facts, a) that the *Westminster Confession* teaches that the disposition of God toward the reprobate is one of hatred and wrath, and b) that there is no statement in the *Confession* which teaches that God loves the reprobate and desires their salvation; the Report of the 1971 Free Church Synod, pages 24 & 27, makes the incongruous statement that our Presbytery has engaged in "an attempt to impose a doctrinal position on the Church which is not laid down in the Confessional Standards of the Church and does not take sufficient account of certain clear statements of Scripture and Reformed interpretation of them."

7. It is because the *Westminster Standards* make positive statements only on this matter and do not directly deny a universal benevolence in God, that our Presbytery has maintained from the outset, that the doctrines of *The Marrow* and of modern modified Calvinism cannot be condemned by simple or direct appeal to those *Standards*, but must be condemned by an Act of the highest court of the Church.

This was declared in the *Vindication* published by our Presbytery under the date of 13th February 1965, relative portions of which we now quote.

Page 10 of the *Vindication*:

Difference of opinion has arisen as to the procedure by which the controversy may be resolved. The supporters of the controverted propositions maintain that they are allowed by the scope of interpretation, which it is claimed, is inherent in the *Westminster Confession*. We, however, maintain that an interpretation of the *Confession* cannot be used to maintain the controverted doctrine, without allowing two diametrically opposed systems of theology to ever disturb the peace of the Church, and so we insist that the controversy cannot be resolved otherwise than by a declaratory act of the Church.

In other words, because the controverted doctrine is not declared or refuted in the *Westminster Standards*, being a gross error, it must first be shown to be contrary to Scripture and then condemned by a declaratory act of the Church, in this case by the principle of interpretation of Scripture.

Page 28 of the *Vindication*:

The following are the ambiguities contained in the doctrine of the Marrowmen and our present opponents.

1. Christ having taken upon Himself the sins of all men, and being a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, is not a universal benefit or purchase of the death of Christ, therefore,
2. the said deed of gift and grant to all mankind is effective only to the elect, i.e., an infallible redemption gifted to all secures only a portion of its objects.
3. A deed of gift and grant to all is only an offer.

These ambiguities are embraced by the proponents of the doctrine presently controverted, with the addition of several others, namely, that: The Omniscient and Omnipotent Being of God,

1. earnestly longs for, and desires the salvation of those whom He has for the praise of His glorious justice made reprobate, having made them the objects of his eternal displeasure and wrath,

2. does not inwardly call by His Spirit all those whom He earnestly longs and desires to save,
3. has a desire and longing which is at variance to His will as an efficient cause to the doing of all His good pleasure,
4. has a will to the realisation of that which He has not decretively willed, and a pleasure toward that which He has not been pleased to decree.

Pages 29, 30, and 31 of the *Vindication*:

“Chapter 5. Conclusion, The application of the Act of 1720, and the rule of interpretation of Scripture to the present controversy.”

As we have demonstrated, the resolving of the present controversy cannot rest on an interpretation of the *Confessional Standards*, but must first rest on the definition of the extent and intent of redemption as to purchase clearly given to those standards in the Act of 1720 ... The Act of 1720 condemns certain propositions of the book of *The Marrow* as advocating a universality of redemption as to purchase, which as we have demonstrated, the Assembly accurately condemned in the actual meaning of their terms ... These propositions belong to the same school of doctrine as that of Davenant and Amyraut, which asserted an absolute intention for the elect, and a conditional intention for the reprobate in case they do believe.

The Act did not condemn those propositions under meanings which were attached to them by the Marrowmen. So that we are now faced with propositions using terms and expressions which have a double meaning, i.e., one which is condemned under the Act of 1720, and the other which is seemingly orthodox, attached by the Marrowmen, on which they and our present opponent have rested their claims to orthodoxy within the Church.

The *Vindication* then stated the terms under which the doctrine of modern modified Calvinism is condemned in our Church. It reads as follows:

The position as it stands is this:

The terms which are used by our opponents from *The Marrow* are directly condemned by the Act of 1720, because in fact, they advocate a universality of redemption as to purchase.

The ambiguous use of those terms as listed, Nos. 1-3 (page 52 herein) are condemned by the principle of interpretation of Scripture as stated in the *Westminster Confession* chapter 1, para. 9. Nos. 4-7 (page 52 herein) are condemned for the same reason. Since the ambiguous use of terms is the vehicle upon which the notion that God longs for and desires the salvation of all men in

the free offer of the Gospel is entirely entered, such notion is also condemned.

It is clear from the foregoing that our Presbytery has not, as falsely alleged by the Free Church Synod Report, page 23, ever rested its condemnation of the doctrines of modern modified Calvinism, which includes the whole system of doctrine which derives from a notion of universal benevolence in God, directly on the 1720 Act of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, or by direct appeal to the *Confession*.

It is equally clear that our Presbytery has rested on the 1720 Act only for condemnation of the terms of the book of *The Marrow* and the doctrine of universality of redemption as to purchase. Quite apart from that Act, our Presbytery has declared the use of the ambiguities of the Marrowmen and modern modified Calvinists, which are the vehicle on which the notion that God desires the salvation of all men is entered, to be contrary to the principle of interpretation of Scripture as set out in the *Westminster Confession*.

(14)

The Relative Positions within the Free Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

By its adoption of the Report, the Free Church Synod of 1971, being the highest court of that Church, has in effect made a Declaratory statement binding that Church to the doctrine of universal benevolence in God, and to the position that the particularistic doctrines held by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church are invalid and to be rejected. Every Minister and Elder of the Free Church must, therefore, consider his position relative to his vows in respect to the government and doctrine of his Church. He is bound to oppose the position taken by Calvin's Calvinism. He must embrace and support the doctrine, that God loves that which He hates and desires the salvation of those whom He does not purpose to redeem, together with all the ambiguities and inconsistencies of that system. It is relevant to ask the question, how the Free Church Synod can affirm that "the point at issue is an open one on which individuals may have their own views," and at the same time outrightly reject and virtually outlaw the doctrine held by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church, conversely, has declared against the system which has been embraced by the Free Church. Every Minister and Elder of that Church is therefore bound to oppose the doctrines of universal benevolence in favour of the particularistic doctrines of Calvin's Calvinism, in the light of which the *Westminster Confession* must logically be held. Only then is the *Westminster Confession* properly subordinate to Scripture, because it represents an interpretation of Scripture according to its own internal principle, that Scripture must be interpreted with Scripture and not according to the philosophies and traditions of men. As long as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church remains true to Scripture, Calvin's Calvinism, and the Reformation, it must remain opposed to the position declared by the Free Church at its 1971 Synod.

Conclusion

The Free Church Synod in the conclusions of its 1971 Report, page 27, has attempted to relegate the doctrinal differences which are involved in the system which is identified as modern modified Calvinism, as being of minor importance. On the contrary, that system is perhaps the most deceptive of all the errors which have ever assailed the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, because it is a completely ambiguous system. On the one hand it has the appearance of accepting the formularies and standards of the Reformed Church, while on the other, it demolishes them. This it accomplishes through veiling or obscuring its ambiguities in a false mystery concerning Divine Sovereignty.

In conclusion let us now recapitulate the main points which have been brought forward in this essay.

(a) The Practical Issues of Modern Modified Calvinism

By its deceptions it creates the following problems in the defence, propagation, and application of the Reformed faith:

1. It represents itself as the true Reformed faith, whereas in fact, those who embrace it are in a state of error and decline.
2. It cannot uphold the principles of the Reformed faith because of its ambiguous contradictory system of theology.
3. Its effect on good men who unwittingly embrace its system as a code of life is that they are liable to become like the doctrine itself in their relationships before God and with their fellow men. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).
4. Its ambiguous and contradictory system robs the Reformed faith of its defenses against other doctrines of self-salvation because it has itself adopted the common principle of a universal benevolence in God.

(b) The Overthrow of Calvin's Calvinism as Set Forth in his *Institutes* and Commentaries

We have seen how modern modified Calvinism constitutes the overthrow of Calvin's Calvinism on the following points:

1. It rejects the central principle of Calvin's theology that the will of God is simple.
2. It proposes that the will of God is complex by placing within the divine mind a desire concerning His precepts, which is contrary to His purposes and decrees.

3. It proposes that its system does not imply a contradiction in God because His desire to save all respects only His preceptive will and not His decretive will. Such proposal fails to comprehend that a desire in God, whether it respects His preceptive will or His decretive will involves a state or act *of the divine mind*. The proposal is therefore a nonsense statement, unless it is acknowledged there are two minds or there is duplicity in God; which is contrary to Calvin's system.

4. It turns the mystery of divine sovereignty concerning the apparent contradiction between God's precepts and decrees, into an internal conflict between desires and purposes within the divine mind. Calvin, however, simply accepts the apparent contradiction between the precepts of God's Word and His decretive will, as being a mystery which cannot be understood or comprehended by the weak finite mind of man.

5. It gives a double meaning to certain texts, as listed on page 13 herein, one-of which says that God desires the salvation or repentance of all men; whereas Calvin clearly refers those texts only to the elect without giving them a universal reference. It also proposes a law of opposites in which God is said to love and hate the one object at the one time.

6. It intrudes into the secret counsels of God's will on two counts:

a) By false interpretation of Scripture it misinterprets the mind of God, so teaching that which Scripture does not teach.

b) It attempts to define the inner workings of the divine mind, when it says that there is an unfulfilled desire in God's mind for the salvation of all men which respects His preceptive or revealed will; but which is contrary to His decretive will.

7. It actually takes the position which Calvin's objectors raise against him, the substance of which is, on the one hand it is said, "Nothing happens without the will of God," on the other, "He must have two contrary wills, decreeing by a secret counsel what He has openly forbidden in His law." This is the same as saying, "there is a will to the realisation of what He has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which He has not been pleased to decree."

8. It implies that God desires that man shall obey Him without grace in spite of such Scriptures which teach, "Without me ye can do nothing," and "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6).

It is God's requirement that all men, regenerate and unregenerate, obey His moral law. God's command is man's rule of duty. If, however, the natural man is allowed to think that God desires that he obey His law without grace, he will either never consider himself bound by the moral law, or imagine that he can please God and merit His favour by his own efforts without grace. It is the function of the moral law and the gospel to show sinners their total inability in this respect, that they may cast themselves on the mercy of God.

Conclusion

Since the theology of the Westminster formularies and other standards of the Reformed Churches is founded on Calvin's system of theology, we may now draw the following two conclusions concerning modern modified Calvinism.

1. Because of the four practical issues in which it fails, and the eight points enumerated above at which it overthrows Calvin's Calvinism and therefore the *Confessional Standards* of the Reformed Churches, it must be considered to be destructive of the true preaching of the Word of God.

2. Where it has been made or allowed to be a received doctrine by the highest court of a Church, it is also destructive of the discipline of the Church, because the courts of such a Church cannot deal with it or other doctrines of like kind, as a heresy. The Church then becomes the medium for the propagation of error rather than truth. All that then remains is a fundamentalism which claims Scripture as the Word of God, but which is without the principles of Calvin's Calvinism and the doctrinal standards of the Reformation. It is only a matter of time, thereafter, when even the so called fundamentalism gives way to the theology of liberalism and unbelief.

Let us therefore learn the lesson of history, that modified Calvinism is the tool of the enemy, who from within, brings about the downfall of a Reformed Church. In its modern form it constitutes a great hindrance to the propagation of the truth. Nothing reacts to Calvin's Calvinism like modern modified Calvinism. Until those who would propagate the truth of God in our age, recognise it for what it is, all other heresies and the lawlessness of our time will go virtually unchallenged.

APPENDIX

The Five Points of Amyraldianism

1. The motive impelling God to redeem men was benevolence, or love to men in general.
2. From this motive He sent His Son to make the salvation of all men possible.
3. God in virtue of a universal hypothetical decree, offers salvation to all men if they believe in Christ.
4. All men have a natural ability to repent and believe the Gospel.
5. But as this natural ability was counteracted by a moral inability, God determined to give His efficacious grace to a certain number of the human race, and thus secure their salvation.