

AMYRAUT AFFIRMED



Alan C. Clifford

Amyraut Affirmed

or

'Owenism, a caricature of Calvinism'

A reply to Ian Hamilton's

Amyraldianism -
is it modified Calvinism?

Alan C. Clifford

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An influential theologian of the French Reformed Church, Moïse Amyraut (1596-1664), was Professor of Theology at the Reformed Academy of Saumur. His claim to fame (or infamy, depending on one's point of view) arises from his distinctive theological stance. Convinced that orthodox Calvinism had distorted the original Bible-based teaching of John Calvin, Amyraut's criticisms aroused intense hostility. Tried for heresy and acquitted, opposition continued throughout France and elsewhere. Within Reformed

and Presbyterian circles, the theology known as 'Amyraldianism' has aroused strong dissent ever since. This booklet is a reply to a recent critique of Amyraut's controversial views. The author demonstrates that far from being alien to Calvinism, Amyraldianism may be seen as an authentic expression of John Calvin's misunderstood teaching. The author thus maintains that the ultra-orthodox theology of John Owen and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* demands a radical reassessment and revision.

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INTRODUCTION

On receiving the *Newsletter* of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (Summer 2003), I was interested to see the Revd Ian Hamilton's lecture on 'Amyraldianism' advertised. Soon after ordering a copy from the Clerk of Presbytery, Mr Hamilton kindly offered me an e-version which I received and read with much interest. Impressed both by his scholarly presentation and the tone of his argument, I am honoured that Mr Hamilton has engaged with my various publications on the subject so extensively. That said, I regret that a less than satisfactory picture of the Amyraldian position has emerged. Much of his material consists of a recycling of traditional and ill-informed anti-Amyraldian polemic. For instance, citing Dr Jonathan Moore's thesis, he attempts to distance English hypothetical universalists from Amyraut (at p. 2, n. 1). In the process, he ignores the fact that Amyraut emphatically denies a sequential view of the divine decrees (see my *Calvinus*, pp. 15, 29). As R. L. Dabney pointed out, this is an utterly futile dispute (see *Systematic Theology*, p. 233). Thus a reply to Mr Hamilton's incomplete analysis of my case is called for.

While my writings already contain most of what needs simply to be restated in reply to Mr Hamilton, suffice to say that his refusal to evaluate Amyraut's appeal to Calvin's exposition of the two-fold will of God prevents the reader from attaining a true understanding of Amyraut's 'authentic Calvinist' theology. I will therefore, when appropriate, re-quote material from my books for the benefit of those who have been either unable or unwilling to consult them. In view of his citations of both Dr Richard Muller's view of Calvin and Dr Carl Trueman's criticisms of me, readers may consult my response to these scholars in the Appendix of my recent biography of Philip Doddridge, *The Good Doctor* (2002). As will be demonstrated, the impressive scholarship of Dr Richard Muller is not as conclusive as Mr Hamilton and others might hope. Apart from failing accurately to evaluate Calvin's teaching on the atonement, the author even admits that Calvin's successors were 'more rationalistic' than the reformer (*Christ and the Decree*, 1988, p. 12). Elsewhere, he concedes that 'Calvin's teaching was ... capable of being cited with significant effect by Moyse Amyraut against his Reformed opponents' (*The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 2000, p. 62). In view of Mr Hamilton's claim that Dr Trueman 'exposes' my *Atonement and Justification* to 'trenchant criticisms', it might interest him to know that, in an e-mail to a friend of mine, Dr Muller did *not* consider that Dr Trueman had disproved my thesis.

NOTE TO THE READER

Every attempt has been made to convey the sense of Mr Hamilton's criticisms without quoting all of them verbatim. Those who wish to consult his work can obtain copies from The Clerk of Presbytery, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, 15 Key Avenue, Worcester WR4 0LT, UK. Regarding my style of presentation, footnotes and endnotes have been dispensed with. Thus all information, including basic book data, appears in the text. Page numbers alone relate to Mr Hamilton's text. While numerous extracts from Calvin's writings feature here, those used in my *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism, A Clarification* (Charenton, 1996) are indicated, e.g. #58. For fuller details of other cited works, see my *Atonement and Justification* (Clarendon, OUP, 1990, rep. 2002).

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DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA

The very title of Mr Hamilton’s paper demands immediate clarification. ‘Calvinism’ itself requires careful definition before the title’s question can be answered. If by ‘Calvinism’, we are to understand the orthodoxy of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ‘Amyraldianism’ is at best a modification and at worst a corruption of it. From an historical point of view, even this is a fallacious anachronism. Amyraut’s *Brief Traitté de la Predestination* was published in 1634, nearly a decade before the Westminster Assembly convened (1643-9). More to the point, if we define ‘Calvinism’ in terms of the soteriology of Calvin and his fellow sixteenth-century reformers, ‘Amyraldianism’ - as Amyraut repeatedly argued - may be regarded as ‘authentic Calvinism’. That being so, what may be described as the ‘Owenism’ of the WCF is at best a ‘modification’ if not a ‘caricature’ of ‘Calvinism’. Therefore, careful definition is required. (Although he was not a member of the Westminster Assembly, John Owen’s relevant writings were published at the same time. *A Display of Arminianism* (1643) and *The Death of Death* (1647) closely reflect the theology of the WCF.) Consequently, with only a single passing reference to Calvin in his *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy* (1990), Mr Hamilton should have entitled his study *The Erosion of Owenite Orthodoxy*. Indeed, it is high time to identify Owen’s ultra-orthodox excesses by their proper name. While we are used to Arminianism, Calvinism and Wesleyanism, not to forget the English equivalent of French Amyraldianism known as Baxterianism, Owenism properly refers to distinctives which are decidedly different from Calvin’s.

Before proceeding, I would argue that since the WCF is only a ‘subordinate standard’, the entire discussion should be measured by the Word of God. However, Mr Hamilton seems to give greater priority to the former. Indeed, his paper commences not with scriptural statements about the divine purpose but with quotations from the Westminster standards. After surveying my case for Amyraldianism, Mr Hamilton then states the specific objective of his paper:

It is not my primary intention to argue that Amyraut, and subsequent Amyraldians, have misunderstood Calvin. My main concerns are: First, to explain what the essential features of Amyraldianism are; and, Secondly, to show that the Amyraldian scheme is inconsistent with the theological profession of churches committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith as their Subordinate Standard of Faith (p. 7).

In short, whether or not Amyraldianism has a biblical basis, Mr Hamilton is concerned to demonstrate that it has no support from the WCF. Hence, Presbyterians cannot be allowed to hold Amyraldian convictions. While he engages with Scripture to some degree, the authority of the WCF is clearly his main concern. Such an issue is, of course, of no concern to subscribers to the Reformed ‘Three Forms of Unity’ (*Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort*).

Consistent with this confessional stance, my concern is to demonstrate - with significant help from Calvin - that John Owen's soteriology and, for all its excellencies, the Presbyterian 'subordinate standard' are in conflict with the Bible on key dogmatic points.

In effect, Owen and his disciples are guilty of rationalism. The portrayal of this rationalist reductionism given in my *Calvinus* (p. 11) is applicable to their theology of the atonement:

As his writings make abundantly clear, the great reformer John Calvin taught a doctrine of the atonement significantly different from that of later Calvinists. Indeed, he would hardly recognise the theory of limited atonement as his offspring. The key to understanding Calvin's very different view of the extent and efficacy of Christ's death is his view of the divine will. While Calvin believed God's will to be one, he insists that it is set before us in Scripture as double - secret and revealed (see quotations #21, 27, 73, 83). Conscious of its rational incomprehensibility (yet no more problematic than the doctrine of the Trinity), Calvin argued for this divine dichotomy from Deut. 29: 29 and elsewhere. As it relates to redemption, God's revealed will is universal and conditional but the secret will or counsel is restricted and absolute (#22, 74). While predestination and election relate to the latter, Calvin usually relates the Gospel to the former (#49, 81). Hence the death of Christ is presented by Calvin as universal according to God's revealed intention or decree, but limited in efficacy according to God's secret decree (#31, 42, 58, 63, 80). In his biblical comments, without speculating on any temporal or logical priority in the decrees, Calvin seems to stress one or the other according to strictly contextual considerations.

Accepting the delicate balance of this acute antinomy, it is truly remarkable that one who has been condemned for severe logicality should embrace a concept branded by its detractors as illogical. Yet Calvin insisted that humility of mind is demanded in the face of transcendent truth. After his death, his finely tuned biblical balance was effectively destroyed by the ultra-orthodoxy of Theodore Beza (1519-1605) and the reactionary sub-orthodoxy of Jakob Arminius (1560-1609). Their theological antagonism notwithstanding, they agreed on the priority of strict rational consistency. Thus the two strands in Calvin's composite thought were separated with unhappy soteriological results. While Beza insisted on an atonement limited by decree, design and efficacy, Arminius - denying divine foreordination - taught an unlimited, hypothetical atonement. Thus the two sides of a supra-logical, paradoxical coin were rent asunder. The opposing positions were alike rationalistic; theologians adjusted and modified textual evidence which conflicted with their particular perspective. Whereas the Arminians made election conditional and God's redemptive purpose contingent, the high Calvinists squeezed the universal language of Scripture into a rigidly particularist mould. Calvin would have rejected this double-distortion of his theology.

CALVIN AND AMYRAUT

It is undeniable, that Amyraut was Calvin's true disciple and that Owen adopted Beza's approach. Inspired by what we may call an 'Owenite fixation', Mr Hamilton's agenda is governed by the scholastic reductionism typical of most critics of the Amyraldian view. Their inability to grasp the significance of the two-fold will of God contributes to an unbalanced and thus distorted grasp of the Bible, Calvin and Amyraut. Betraying his rationalism, Mr Hamilton complains that 'at its heart, the Amyraldian scheme is ... irrational, imputing what appears to be a decretal confusion within the Godhead' (p. 22). Appealing to Calvin (and using a quotation Amyraut actually used to justify his own two-fold will of God doctrine), Mr Hamilton proceeds to contradict himself:

This highlights the traditional Reformed understanding of relating God's revealed will to his decretive will in the free offer of the gospel. Commenting on 2 Peter 3: 9, Calvin writes, "This is His wondrous love towards the human race, that He desires all men to be saved...It could be asked here, if God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God, by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of his loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps those...whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world." "This means", says John Murray, "that there is a will to the realisation of what he has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which he has not been pleased to decree. This is indeed mysterious..." This ties in with Ezekiel 33: 11. Clearly the will or desire that is revealed is not of the same "kind" as the will or desire that eternally decrees. Truly, we see through a glass darkly, but what are perplexities to us are resolved in God. It is a wonderful testimony to the truth of God's revealed word that it leaves us out of our depth. There are, of necessity, insoluble mysteries, because we are dealing with divine revelation (p. 23)!

If Mr Hamilton is happy to allow the 'perplexities' endorsed by Professor Murray, why is he so critical of Amyraut's position? May not the 'mysteries' acknowledged by Mr Hamilton also be dismissed by other rationalists as 'decretal confusion'? His attempt to distance Professor Murray's version of the 'revealed/decretive will' distinction from Amyraut's version is invalid. Indeed, no significant difference exists between them. Amyraut too holds - in Mr Hamilton's own words - that 'the will or desire that is revealed is not of the same 'kind' as the will or desire that eternally decrees' (p. 23). Consistent with Dort's teaching on election and predestination, Amyraut declared:

That there is none other decree of predestination of men unto eternal life and salvation, than the unchangeable purpose of God, by which according to the most free and good pleasure of his will, he hath out of mere grace chosen in Jesus Christ unto salvation before the foundation of the world, a certain number of men in themselves neither better nor more worthy than others, and that he hath decreed to give them unto Jesus Christ to be saved...' (John Quick, *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*, 1692, ii. 354).

Agreeing with Calvin, the double-aspect divine will is the very scheme underlying Amyraut's doctrine of the atonement. How then can Mr Hamilton criticise Amyraut without implicating Calvin? Indeed, the Genevan reformer appears every bit as 'irrational' as the Saumur professor;

Seeing that in His Word He calls all alike to salvation, and this is the object of preaching, that all should take refuge in His faith and protection, it is right to say that He wishes all to gather to Him. Now the nature of the Word shows us that here there is no description of the secret counsel of God - just His wishes. Certainly those whom He wishes effectually to gather, He draws inwardly by His Spirit, and calls them not merely by man's outward voice. If anyone objects that it is absurd to split God's will, I answer that this is exactly our belief, that His will is one and undivided: but because our minds cannot plumb the profound depths of His secret election to suit our infirmity, the will of God is set before us as double (*Comment on Matthew 23: 37; Calvinus, #27*).

Citing Roger Nicole's questionable criticism of Amyraut (at p. 5), Mr Hamilton denies his readers a sight of Amyraut's key testimony during his 'heresy trial' at the National Synod of Alençon (1637). Consistent with the second Canon of Dort (its

very terminology being woven into their statement), Amyraut (with Paul Testard) declared:

That Jesus Christ died for all men sufficiently, but for the elect only effectually: and that consequentially his intention was to die for all men in respect of the sufficiency of his satisfaction, but for the elect only in respect of its quickening and saving virtue and efficacy; which is to say, that Christ's will was that the sacrifice of his cross should be of an infinite price and value, and most abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world; yet nevertheless the efficacy of his death appertains only unto the elect;...for this was the most free counsel and gracious purpose both of God the Father, in giving his Son for the salvation of mankind, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, in suffering the pains of death, that the efficacy thereof should particularly belong unto all the elect, and to them only...' (Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 355)..

UNDERSTANDING CALVIN

So, to re-quote myself, I emphatically do believe 'that a man cannot be a true Calvinist if he fails to believe with Amyraut in a redemption which is both universal and particular'. At this point, Mr Hamilton proceeds to say, 'It is difficult, however, to see how Dr Clifford can be so emphatic in the light of Calvin's response to Heshusius, a Lutheran divine, regarding the Lutheran dogma of consubstantiation...' (pp. 3-4). But I *am* able to be 'emphatic' because Calvin's language clearly has more to do with consubstantiation than the extent of the atonement (as I argue in my *Atonement and Justification*, p. 87). However, Mr Hamilton accuses me of attempting to explain this seemingly particularist statement to 'square' with my view that Calvin taught universal atonement. I am surprised, in view of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that Mr Hamilton can build so much on so little. After all, even anti-Amyraldian William Cunningham says of this single isolated denial of universal atonement: 'But it stands alone, - so far as we know, - in Calvin's writings, and for this reason we do not found much upon it' (*The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, 1967 rep, p. 396).

To adopt a more 'scientific' method, Mr Hamilton's difficulty is how to handle Calvin's numerous universal atonement statements scattered throughout his works (see the ninety examples I give in my *Calvinus*). At least he *partly* cites (at p. 3, n. 6) the selection of Calvin quotations I provide in my reply to Iain H. Murray's review of my *Calvinus*. In fact, Mr Hamilton omits three. Was this only for reasons of space or did he think they might challenge his unquestioning use of the Heshusius passage? The first of the omitted quotations is the highly significant comment on Romans 5: 18:

Paul makes grace common to all, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive him (*Calvinus*, #58).

Even John Owen (Thrussington) concludes from 'this sentence that Calvin held general redemption' (see the Calvin Translation Society edition of Calvin's *Commentary on Romans*, p. 212). Roger Nicole admits that 'the passage ... comes perhaps closest to providing support for Amyraut's thesis'. Without actually quoting the passage at this point, Dr Nicole flies in the face of the obvious when he adds: 'it may well refer simply to the relevance of the sacrifice of Christ to a universal offer, without actually asserting a substitutionary suffering for all mankind' (*Moyses*

Amyraut (1596-1664) and the Controversy on Universal Grace, Harvard University thesis, 1966, p. 83, n. 38).

This is not to say that Dr Nicole never quotes the passage. However, the English reader is prevented from detecting the inaccuracy of his highly doubtful gloss by some questionable presentation (*Ibid.* p. 17). After giving an extract from Calvin's typically-universalist sermon on Isaiah 53 in *English* (see also *Calvinus*, #18), the quoted comment on Romans 5: 18 is given in *Latin*! It seems that Roger Nicole is not the only scholar to 'suppress' this significant information. Jonathan Rainbow - another anti-Amyraldian - nowhere engages with this key piece of evidence (see *The Will of God and the Cross*, 1990). Indeed, all in all, it is difficult to question Dr Richard Muller's concession that 'Calvin's teaching was ... capable of being cited with significant effect by Moyses Amyraut against his Reformed opponents' (*The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 2000, p. 62).

Attempting to harmonize Calvin's exegesis with Owen's, Mr Hamilton resists my 'Amyraldian' interpretation of Calvin when he pleads that 'Calvin's language is nuanced and needs to be carefully and contextually exegeted' (p. 4, n. 6). While this observation is valid, it does nothing to aid an Owenite view of Calvin as my *Calvinus* (p. 12) discussion makes clear:

High Calvinists have claimed that their restrictive exegesis of terms like 'world' and 'all' has a precedent in Calvin, especially in his exposition of 1 Timothy 2: 4-6 (see #71). However, the case is unfounded, despite some similarity of language. Whereas the English high Calvinist John Owen (1616-83) treats the will of God in 1 Timothy 2 as the 'efficacious' or absolute will, Calvin expounds it as the revealed, conditional will. *Failure to detect this has led high Calvinist expositors to misinterpret Calvin's thought.* True, Calvin and Owen agree that Paul is discussing racial and social groups rather than individuals, yet this means something totally different according to the underlying conception of the divine will assumed by each expositor. Indeed, their respective uses of this observation are diametrically opposed.

While Owen expounds Paul's 'all' as 'elect individuals of all sorts', Calvin denies that the apostle has the elective, secret counsel of God in mind. In short, Calvin asserts that Paul is not speaking of elect 'individuals of nations' according to God's secret will but 'nations of individuals' (#72) invited to the Gospel according to God's revealed will. Thus when Calvin speaks of racial or social classes, he is not denying that the Gospel makes redemptive provision for individual members of each group: the 'each' in his comment on John 1: 29 (#44) is clearly 'each individual', not 'each nation'. Thus Calvin does not use classification as a limiting factor as Owen does; on the contrary the atonement is unlimited since no class or 'nation of individuals' is excluded from 'the hope of salvation' according to the revealed preaching of the Gospel. On the other hand, Owen's exegesis would be valid if Paul had God's 'secret counsel' in view, but Calvin denies that this is the case. A careful reading of the evidence now presented will demonstrate the fundamental error of citing Calvin's exegesis as a precedent for the high orthodox view.

While several unrestricted atonement statements show no trace of any ambiguity (see especially #12, 54, 55, 68, 69, 79, 87), it is admitted that one or two of Calvin's textual and theological observations do not readily conform to his general view. Yet what seem like deviations from the rule are, on closer examination, more consistent with 'authentic' rather than high Calvinism. A case in point is Calvin's comment on 1 John 2: 2 (#84). The seeming agreement in exegesis here between Calvin and Owen - that John writes of 'actual' as opposed to 'offered' salvation confined to the church throughout the whole world - is more than counterbalanced by the wider differences. Since Calvin was opposing the theory of an absolute universalism advanced by certain 'fanatics', even embracing the possible salvation of Satan as well as the reprobate, he did not resort to his usual exegetical formula. Calvin also admits here the truth of the

sufficiency-efficiency distinction, only denying - surely unnecessarily, except where Satan is concerned - that it fits the passage. In Calvin's mind, the only issue here was the effectuality of the atonement, not its wider sufficiency. But his view of a universal propitiation (#20, 77) obviously distances him from Owen's basic approach to 1 John 2: 2.

Faced with textual abuse, Calvin's comments clearly reflect concern with the application of the atonement rather than its universal provision for sinful humanity. What he certainly does not say is that 'whole world' means the 'elect world'. Combining #84 with the thrust of #85, by definition no salvation is applied to the reprobate, *qua* reprobate, i.e. viewing such individuals from the standpoint of the secret decree. Calvin's note here on John 11: 52 assumes that perspective: Christ's office is only to gather (or grasp (#83) or effectually redeem) the elect. What is remarkable is that he still maintains in #85 a universal expiation of sin and the consequent offer of reconciliation to all, including the reprobate *qua* 'poor sinners' - as he describes 'all' elsewhere (#42, 43, 90). In short, notwithstanding the secret will's guarantee of the salvation of the elect, the revealed will makes salvation available to all.

UNDERSTANDING AMYRAUT

Owen and Calvin aside, Mr Hamilton also takes exception (at p. 4, n. 8) to my remarks on the views of Charles Hodge and R. L. Dabney, *as if I had ignored their formal criticism of Amyraldianism*. My point is that their views on the extent of the atonement are closer to Amyraut's than to Owen's, and certainly wider than the WCF allows. They both grant a universal dimension to the atonement, a point confirmed by Mr Hamilton's own citation of Dabney's views (see pp. 10-11, n. 23). Readers will find the following notes in my *Atonement and Justification* (p. 90):

62. See *D[ictionary of] A[merican] B[iography]*. Hodge was the leading representative of 'Old School' Presbyterian Calvinism. He rejected the commercial view of the atonement as well as certain speculative features of Amyraldianism, but his view of the extent of the atonement is virtually Amyraldian. Reflecting Baxter's statement 'Christ therefore died for all, but not for all equally...', *C[atholick] T[hologie]*, I. ii. 53, Hodge writes that 'Augustinians do not deny that Christ died for all men. What they deny is that He died equally, and with the same design, for all men'. *Systematic Theology* (1960 rep), ii. 558.

63. See *DAB*. The Southern Presbyterian Dabney is very similar to Hodge. He even criticises William Cunningham for taking a narrow view of the atonement's design, see *Systematic Theology* (1985 rep), 529. Dabney distances himself from John Owen's particularism: 'I have already stated one ground for rejecting that interpretation of John 3: 16, which makes 'the world' which God so loved, the elect world....Christ's mission to make expiation for sin is a manifestation of unspeakable benevolence to the whole world'. *Ibid.*, 535. See also 'God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy', *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (1967 rep), i. 282 ff.

Of course, while Mr Hamilton cannot deny the degree of concurrence I claim, he will point out that Hodge (like Baxter) denies the very *equality* of universal intent in the atonement maintained by Amyraut (see p. 8). In this respect, Hodge (and Baxter) cannot be classed with Amyraut. Before I comment on Amyraut's view, it is only fair to point out that while the National Synod of Alençon was 'well satisfied' regarding Amyraut's professed orthodoxy, he thereafter observed the assembly's order to avoid 'the phrase of Jesus Christ dying *equally* for all' (Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 354). Professor Brian Armstrong points out that the 1658 edition of the *Brief Traitté* 'does,

in fact, drop most of such terminology' (*Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 1969, p. 93). Therefore, it is only just to assess Amyraut's theology in its mature form, including his comprehensive work *Defense de la doctrine de Calvin* (1644). While even this would not exonerate him in the eyes of Mr Hamilton and his friends, something may be said in defense of his original notion of 'equality'. By itself, the idea is ambiguous. A universally-sufficient atonement may indicate an equality of *provision* where a *sameness* of intent is denied (hence Hodge's qualified words above). Regarding the atonement's offered *provision*, even Calvin held that the 'benefits' or 'fruits' of Christ's death are provided for all. Whether one adds 'equally' or not makes not the slightest bit of difference:

To bear the sins means to free those who have sinned from their guilt by his satisfaction. He says many meaning all, as in Rom. 5: 15. It is of course certain that not all enjoy the fruits of Christ's death, but this happens because their unbelief hinders them (*Comment on Hebrews 9: 27; Calvinus, #77*).

God was in Christ and then that by this intervention He was reconciling the world to Himself...Although Christ's coming had its source in the overflowing love of God for us, yet, until men know that God has been propitiated by a mediator, there cannot but be on their side a separation which prevents them from having access to God...[Paul] says again that a commission to offer this reconciliation to us has been given to ministers of the Gospel...He says that as He once suffered, so now every day He offers the fruit of His sufferings to us through the Gospel which He has given to the world as a sure and certain record of His completed work of reconciliation. Thus the duty of ministers is to apply to us the fruit of Christ's death (*Comment on 2 Corinthians 5: 19; Calvinus, #61*).

Christ is in a general view the Redeemer of the world, yet his death and passion are of no advantage to any but such as receive that which St Paul shows here. And so we see that when we once know the benefits brought to us by Christ, and which he daily offers us by his gospel, we must also be joined to him by faith (*Sermons on Ephesians, p. 55; Calvinus, #67*).

Regarding sameness of design or intent in the atonement, Mr Hamilton is incorrect to imply that no discrimination was involved in Amyraut's scheme, as if the restricted application did not reflect a feature of divine intent in the atonement. Robert Reymond's view (see p. 6) that Amyraut only introduces discrimination at the point of the Holy Spirit's application is wrong. Indeed, correlating with the two-fold will of God, Amyraut's view of the atonement's design involved a two-fold intention. The truth he affirmed at the National Synod of Alençon (*see above*) simply clarified what he wrote in the *Brief Traitté* three years before. While he quotes Smeaton's extract from Chapter VII of Amyraut's treatise, Mr Hamilton and Smeaton ignore Chapter IX (*italics mine*):

The nature of men being such, *if God had had no other intention in ordaining to send his Son to the world than to present him as Redeemer equally and universally to all*, as great as the love is from which this council proceeded, it would have been useless to the human race and the sending and the sufferings of his Son entirely frustrated (*tr. R. Lum, 1985*).

French: Telle est la nature de l'homme, si Dieu n'avait d'autres conseils en ordonnant d'envoyer son Fils au monde que lui présenter comme Rédempteur également et universellement à tous, pour grande soit son charité de laquelle ce conseil procède, il aurait été inutile aux êtres humaines et les souffrances de son Fils n'auraient servi à rien (pp. 102-3; *updated text, J. Talbot, 2004*).

It is interesting to note how closely Amyraut follows Calvin's similar statement:

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us (*Institutes*, III. i. 1; *Calvinus*, #7).

It cannot be denied that Amyraut's idea of the atonement as a potential universal provision reflects Calvin's equally clear teaching. Even before the preceding quotation commences Book III of the *Institutes*, Calvin always presents the work of Christ in general 'Amyraldian' terms. He writes of 'the divine decree on which the salvation of man depended'; 'Christ' came 'to redeem the human race'; 'We know well why Christ was at first promised - viz. that he might renew a fallen world, and succour lost man'. After quoting John 3: 16 without any 'Owenite' qualifications, Calvin states that God 'was pleased to provide a cure for the misery of the human race' (*Institutes*, II. xii. 1, 4, 5).

Amyraut's universalism must not be confused with Arminianism. His distinction between natural and moral ability is too easily misunderstood. Amyraut's English biographer John Quick was careful to rescue Amyraut from the charge of crypto-Arminianism:

The orthodox do judge...that the efficacy of Christ's death which consisteth in the communication of the Spirit of grace doth exert itself in none other persons but in the elect only. But as for others, although they may be called with an outward calling, yet because they be not inwardly enlightened, they must of necessity abide in their impenitency. Amyrald (sic) did always believe this doctrine of the orthodox to be true and hath demonstrated the truth of it by invincible arguments in the 14th chapter of his *Defense of Mr Calvin' (Icones Sacrae Gallicanae [1700], Dr Williams's Library Quick MSS (transcript) 6. 38-39 (35), 1024.*

Like Calvin, Amyraut attributes all ability for good in man to the grace and providence of God (*ibid*, 1019). Distinguishing between natural and moral ability, the Amyraldians affirmed that human impotency arises from 'malice of heart' rather than physical or mental incapacity (see Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 356f). Calvin clearly assumed this (see *Inst.* II. ii. 12f). In short, sinners are 'unwilling' rather than 'unable' to turn to Christ.

SUFFICIENCY AND EFFICIENCY

This brings us to the issue of the 'sufficient for all/efficient for the elect' distinction (a formula affirmed by Calvin although rarely used by him, see my *Atonement and Justification*, p. 74; *Calvinus*, #19, 42, 84). As already indicated above, Amyraut affirmed the distinction in his heresy trial by weaving its use in the Canons of Dort into his defence. It should also be remembered that he and his colleague Paul Testard also affirmed the Canons, 'all which they were ready to sign with their best blood' (Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 354). Mr Hamilton takes exception to the Amyraldian use of the formula and their understanding of the Canons of Dort as follows:

Amyraldians make much, therefore, of Peter Lombard's formula, "Christ died sufficiently for all, but only efficaciously for the elect" (*Sufficienter pro omnibus, efficaciter pro electis*). It should not be thought, however, that this phrase necessarily teaches what Amyraut and subsequent Amyraldians say it does. It has a perfectly proper Reformed

lineage. The infinite “sufficiency” of Christ’s death to cover the sins of the world is rooted in the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ.

Mr Hamilton takes issue with my interpretation as follows:

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

Mr Hamilton rejects my interpretation of the Canons because ‘it becomes absolutely clear that the infinite value of Christ’s death is solely related to Christ’s Person, not to any universal intention’. While I agree that the infinite value of Christ’s death is rooted in His person, to deny there is any universally sufficient provision intended in the sacrifice itself ignores the point of my earlier comment about the ‘ambiguity’ of the language of the Canons. It is a fact that the Canons were a compromise statement reflecting ‘broader’ and ‘narrower’ views of the Lombardian formula (see Armstrong, pp. 59-60). The likes of Bishop Davenant and the other English delegates at Dort, together with the divines from Bremen and Hesse, represented this ‘broader view’. For them, notwithstanding the atonement’s application to the elect, the following articles relate to an *intended provision* (‘for the sins of the whole world’) in Christ’s sacrifice and not merely to its intrinsically infinite value derived from His person:

That, however, many who have been called by the gospel neither repent nor believe in Christ but perish in unbelief does not happen because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but through their own fault....For this was the most free counsel of God the father, that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect (Arts. 3, 6, 7).

Mr Hamilton is plainly unaware that this ‘broader view’ predates both Dort and Davenant. For instance, it was held by the Heidelberg divines of the late sixteenth century, Dr Zacharias Ursinus (1534-83) and Caspar Olevianus (1536-87), authors of the famous *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563). These men - contemporaries of Theodore Beza (an early exponent of the ‘narrow view’) - provide precedents for Amyraut. Reflecting the *Heidelberg Catechism’s* answer to Q. 37 (which states that ‘Christ bore in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race’), Ursinus’ successor David Pareus (1548-1622) expressed the ‘Heidelberg’ position at Dort. Too old to attend the Synod personally, his views on the atonement were heard *in absentia*. Significantly, the words of the *Heidelberg Catechism* are woven into his

statement:

The cause and matter of the passion of Christ was the sense and sustaining of the anger of God excited against the sin, not of some men, but of the whole human race; whence it arises, that the whole of sin and of the wrath of God against it was endured by Christ, but the whole of reconciliation was not obtained or restored to all (see J. Davenant, *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ*, tr. J. Allport in *An Exposition of ... Colossians*, 1832, ii. 356).

Not surprisingly, many catechism commentators have been quick to distance the *Heidelberg Catechism* from a 'broader' understanding. However, in so doing, they have reflected not the views of the catechism's authors, Ursinus and Olevianus (surely the best guides as to its meaning) but a later and 'higher' orthodoxy of the Westminster type. Notwithstanding the Heidelberg divines' commitment to election and predestination, they nonetheless - like Calvin, Amyraut and Baxter - maintained a universal dimension to the atonement. Ursinus affirmed that as Christ 'died for all, in respect to the sufficiency of his ransom; and for the faithful alone in respect of the efficacy of the same, so also he willed to die for all in general, as touching the sufficiency of his merit ... But he willed to die for the elect alone as touching the efficacy of his death' (*The Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, ed. G. W. Williard, 1985, p. 223). Consistent with his colleague, Olevianus declared that Christ 'was being tried before God, laden with your sin and my sin and that of the whole world' (*A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism* (tr. & ed. L. D. Bierma, 1995, p. 65). What are these statements but Amyraldianism before Amyraut? Significantly, they employ the language of intention and not mere sufficiency. To be very precise, it is the language of *two-fold intention*, of the kind Amyraut was to become infamous for advocating.

Claiming that the Lombardian formula 'has a perfectly proper Reformed lineage', Mr Hamilton cites John Owen as a representative of this 'line'. However, according to the quotation given (see p. 10), Owen subscribes to the 'narrow' view only. He adopts the idea of a merely hypothetical sufficiency. Aided by his commercial view of the atonement (it is only sufficient for whom it is efficient) and agreeing with Beza and Perkins, Owen eliminates from his concept of sufficiency the notion of actual redemptive provision. In this respect, he rejects the 'Reformed lineage' of Calvin and the Heidelberg divines. In other words, he abolishes the Reformation concept of universal sufficiency altogether:

Its being a price for all or some doth not arise from its own sufficiency, worth, or dignity, but from the intention of God and Christ using it to that purpose, as was declared; and, therefore, *it is denied that the blood of Christ was a sufficient price and ransom for all and every one*, not because it was not sufficient, but because it was not a ransom (*Death of Death*, 1959 rep, p. 184).

Representing the 'authentic Reformed line', Richard Baxter lucidly demolishes Owen's impoverished thinking:

When the schoolmen and our own divines say, that Christ died for all *quoad sufficientiam pretii*, but not *quoad efficientiam*; they cannot without absurdity be interpreted to mean, that his death is sufficient for all if it had been a price for them; and not a sufficient price for them; for that were to contradict themselves. ... Christ's death is a sufficient price and satisfaction to God for the sins of all mankind. ... but it effecteth actual remission, justification, adoption, salvation, only for believers. This is the plain truth, and the sense of divines in saying, that Christ died for all *quoad*

sufficientiam, non quoad efficientiam (*Universal Redemption of Mankind*, 1694, p. 59).

DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

Before stating a series of objections to Amyraldianism, Mr Hamilton attempts to deny that any 'significant' differences exist between Calvin's 'theological legacy' and the developments evident in later Reformed theology. Yet he pleads that 'the developing Reformed Churches could not be expected to mirror exactly Calvin's expressions or formulations' (p. 11). Appealing to scholars such as Douglas Kelly, Richard Muller and Carl Trueman, Mr Hamilton defends this 'necessary development' as follows:

Theology is not an ossified science; by its very nature it encourages reflection and development. A failure to understand the historical contextualization of theological enquiry and exposition, often leads to an atomising of theological enquiry, where isolated texts are culled to buttress a particular theological position. Simply to contrast theological statements from different eras, without first seeking to understand the respective theological and sociological contexts, produces superficial contrasts.

Untruths coexist with truths in this interesting statement. *First*, while theology has often developed in helpful and scriptural ways, not all development is biblical. The long process of development in medieval theology produced the unbiblical dogmas of Roman Catholicism. In short, timeless truths have been altered. Thus for 'development' read 'change'.

Second, if Bible truth is not timeless truth, how may we test the validity of developments? And why does Mr Hamilton imagine that Amyraldianism is less faithful to the deposit of truth than Owenism? When Amyraut and his friends were charged with introducing 'novelties', they reversed the charge. Reformed orthodoxy had 'developed' soteriology into something significantly different from that of Calvin. For all their claims for 'continuity', neither Dr Muller nor Dr Trueman can deny this.

Third, 'historical contextualization' can become an excuse to impose an invalid subjective agenda on our evaluations of intellectual change. As a theologian, Owen imposed his philosophical and dogmatic agenda on the scriptural data to arrive at the reductionist conclusions of the *Death of Death*. Yes, there is a great danger in 'culling isolated texts to buttress a particular theological position'. This is precisely the charge Amyraldians press against both Arminians and Owenites!

Fourth, in the cause of timeless truth, Amyraut refused to allow the embattled Huguenot sociological context to distort Calvin's theology in the way ultra-orthodox theology had done. And there was nothing 'superficial' about the theological grasp of this Calvin scholar!

Fifth, Mr Hamilton probably agrees with Professor Murray's argument that in view of controversies subsequent to Calvin's death, theologians were compelled to 'to give Reformed doctrine fuller and more precise definition' (*Collected Writings*, 1976, i. 317). However, are the developed definitions of the WCF the last infallible word? Not according to Professor Murray (*Ibid*, pp. 314, 317). One must add that errors easily result from 'over-refinement' as well as from ambiguous 'generalities'. Employing more vivid rhetoric, Richard Baxter warned of the dangers of 'over-doing' as well as 'under-doing'. He linked Owen with Francis Cheynell when he described them as 'the over-Orthodox Doctors' (*Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 1696, ii. 199).

OBJECTIONS TO AMYRALDIANISM

I

Mr Hamilton's first objection to Amyraldianism expresses the usual dogmatic reductionism of ultra-orthodoxy. This involves an inability to grasp the nature of the two-fold will of God. Amyraut specifically denies that the secret, efficacious will of God can ever be thwarted. However, he also insists that God's revealed hypothetical will, being conditional, is unfulfilled if the condition is not fulfilled. Does not God will or command or intend that people should not sin against Him? Do we therefore dethrone God when we disobey Him? Of course not. Neither does Amyraut 'un-God God' when he declares concerning His revealed will that 'this does not suppose in God an ignorance of the event, nor an impotency as to the execution, nor any inconstancy as to His will, which is always firmly accomplished, and ever unchangeable in itself, according to the nature of God, in which there is no variableness nor shadow of turning' (Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 355). As in the case of sinful rebellion against God, so in an unbelieving rejection of the gospel offer, Amyraut would agree with Professor Murray 'that there is a will to the realisation of what he has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which he has not been pleased to decree'. However, where God's absolute and unconditional purpose is concerned, Amyraut could not be clearer:

That there is none other decree of predestination of men unto eternal life and salvation, than the unchangeable purpose of God, by which according to the most free and good pleasure of his will, he hath out of mere grace chosen in Jesus Christ unto salvation before the foundation of the world, a certain number of men in themselves neither better nor more worthy than others, and that he hath decreed to give them unto Jesus Christ to be saved... (Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 354).

As Brian Armstrong points out, it is highly significant that Amyraut appeals to Calvin in his distinction between the *foedus absolutum* and the *foedus hypotheticum*. In order to show that Mr Hamilton cannot 'argue that Amyraut, and subsequent Amyraldians, have misunderstood Calvin', let Calvin 'speak' for Amyraut:

Now we must see how God wishes all to be converted...But we must remark that God puts on a twofold character: for he here wishes to be taken at his word. As I have already said, the Prophet does not here dispute with subtlety about his incomprehensible plans, but wishes to keep our attention close to God's word. Now what are the contents of this word? The law, the prophets, and the gospel. Now all are called to repentance, and the hope of salvation is promised them when they repent: this is true, since God rejects no returning sinner: he pardons all without exception; meanwhile, this will of God which he sets forth in his word does not prevent him from decreeing before the world was created what he would do with every individual... (*Comment on Ezekiel 18: 23; Calvinus*, #21).

I contend that, as the prophet [Ezekiel] is exhorting to penitence, it is no wonder that he pronounces God willing that all be saved. But the mutual relation between threats and promises shows such forms of speech to be conditional...So again...the promises which invite all men to salvation...do not simply and positively declare what God has decreed in His secret counsel but what he is prepared to do for all who are brought to faith and repentance...Now this is not contradictory of His secret counsel, by which he determined to convert none but His elect. He cannot rightly on this account be thought

variable, because as lawgiver He illuminates all with the external doctrine of life. But in the other sense, he brings to life whom He will, as Father regenerating by the Spirit only His sons (*Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, pp. 105-6; *Calvinus*, #22).

Seeing that in His Word He calls all alike to salvation, and this is the object of preaching, that all should take refuge in His faith and protection, it is right to say that He wishes all to gather to Him. Now the nature of the Word shows us that here there is no description of the secret counsel of God - just His wishes. Certainly those whom He wishes effectively to gather, He draws inwardly by His Spirit, and calls them not merely by man's outward voice. If anyone objects that it is absurd to split God's will, I answer that this is exactly our belief, that His will is one and undivided: but because our minds cannot plumb the profound depths of His secret election to suit our infirmity, the will of God is set before us as double (*Comment on Matthew 23: 37; Calvinus*, #27)

Typical of his reductionist exegesis, Mr Hamilton's citation of John 6: 38-40 presents only half the picture of our Lord's discourse. Notwithstanding the efficacy of God's elective purpose (see *John 6: 37*), Jesus also said (*even to those who later rejected Him*):

... my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world (*John 6: 32-3; 51*).

Consistent with these utterances, Christ stressed the universal gospel offer:

... I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world (*John 12: 47*).

Calvin's uninhibited comment on this invitation is refreshingly direct:

Christ...offers salvation to all indiscriminately and stretches out His arms to embrace all, that all may be the more encouraged to repent. And yet He heightens by an important detail the crime of rejecting an invitation so kind and gracious; for it is as if He had said: 'See, I have come to call all; and forgetting the role of judge, my one aim is to attract and rescue from destruction those who already seem doubly ruined.' Hence no man is condemned for despising the Gospel save he who spurns the lovely news of salvation and deliberately decides to bring destruction on himself (*Comment on John 12: 47; Calvinus*, #49).

II

In his second objection, Mr Hamilton reveals a 'tunnel vision' view of the atonement. He fails to recognise the dualistic soteriology of Amyraldianism, as if Amyraut denied the certain efficacy of Christ's death in the case of the elect. Let us hear him again at Alençon!

That Jesus Christ died for all men sufficiently, but for the elect only effectually: and that consequentially his intention was to die for all men in respect of the sufficiency of his satisfaction, but for the elect only in respect of its quickening and saving virtue and efficacy; which is to say, that Christ's will was that the sacrifice of his cross should be of an infinite price and value, and most abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world; yet nevertheless the efficacy of his death appertains only unto the elect;

... for this was the most free counsel and gracious purpose both of God the Father, in giving his Son for the salvation of mankind, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, in suffering the pains of death, that the efficacy thereof should particularly belong unto all the elect, and to them only... (Quick, *Synodicon*, ii. 355).

How then can Mr Hamilton assert that 'in the Amyraldian scheme, the Saviour's death achieved nothing (p. 13)? How can he further assert that 'Amyraut's teaching renders the glorious New Testament doctrine of union with Christ a charade' and that 'the Amyraldian scheme cuts at the heart of Christ's federal or representative headship'? Amyraut could not be more innocent of this ill-informed criticism. Commenting on our Lord's high-priestly prayer for his people (see John 17), he affirms in the final chapter of the *Brief Traitté* :

Now that we are no longer of the world and that we are in Christ, now that, as he had resolved in his eternal counsel, he has really and in fact given us to him and engrafted us into him by faith and be made one and the same plant, how could he not render indissoluble this holy communion and have regard for the prayers of his only Son (*tr.* R. Lum; D. Elcoat)?

French: Maintenant que nous ne sommes plus du monde et que nous sommes à Christ , et que comme il avait résolu en son conseil éternel, il nous a réellement et de fait donnez à lui et d'entrer en lui par la foi pour être un et partie de la même plante. Comment ne rendrait-t-il pas indissoluble cette sacré communion et n'aurait-il pas égard aux prières de son Fils unique (pp. 191-2; *updated text*, J. Talbot, 2004).

Mr Hamilton's repeated criticisms of Amyraut also implicate Calvin whose comments on the texts cited by Mr Hamilton do not fit his 'narrow' orthodoxy. For instance, 'his people' of Matthew 1: 21 are equated with God's elect according to Mr Hamilton's tight exegesis. Calvin's comment is rather different:

He says, For ... he ... shall save his people from their sins ... We must determine that the whole human race was appointed to destruction, since its salvation depends on Christ ... Doubtless, by Christ's people the angel intends the Jews, over whom He was set as Head and King, but as soon after the nations were to be ingrafted into the race of Abraham, this promise of salvation is extended openly to all who gather by faith into the one body of the Church (*Comment on Matthew 1: 21; Calvinus*, #24).

While Calvin obviously believed in the certain salvation of God's elect sheep, his remarks on John 10 still find room for the kind of universalism Amyraut is accused of asserting:

It is no small consolation to godly teachers that, although the larger part of the world does not listen to Christ, He has His sheep whom He knows and by whom He is also known. They must do their utmost to bring the whole world into Christ's fold, but when they do not succeed as they would wish, they must be satisfied with the single thought that those who are sheep will be collected together by their work (*Comment on John 10: 27; Calvinus*, #48).

Of course, Calvin never questions the union between Christ and His people. However, even in Isaiah 53, the reformer still anticipates Amyraut's evangelistic universalism:

Yet I approve of the ordinary reading, that he alone bore the punishment of many, because on him was laid the guilt of the whole world. It is evident from other passages,

and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that 'many' sometimes denotes 'all' (*Comment on Isaiah 53: 12; Calvinus, #17*).

Yet I approve of the common reading, that He alone bore the punishment of many, because the guilt of the whole world was laid upon Him. It is evident from other passages ... that 'many' sometimes denotes 'all'... That, then, is how our Lord Jesus bore the sins and iniquities of many. But in fact, this word 'many' is often as good as equivalent to 'all'. And indeed, our Lord Jesus was offered to all the world. For it is not speaking of three or four when it says: 'God so loved the world, that He spared not His only Son.' But yet we must notice what the Evangelist adds in this passage: 'That whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but obtain eternal life.' Our Lord Jesus suffered for all and there is neither great nor small who is not inexcusable today, for we can obtain salvation in Him. Unbelievers who turn away from Him and who deprive themselves of Him by their malice are today doubly culpable. For how will they excuse their ingratitude in not receiving the blessing in which they could share by faith? And let us realize that if we come flocking to our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall not hinder one another and prevent Him being sufficient for each of us ... Let us not fear to come to Him in great numbers, and each one of us bring his neighbours, seeing that He is sufficient to save us all (*Sermons on Isaiah 53*, ed. T. H. L. Parker, 1956, pp. 136, 141-4; *Calvinus, #18*).

... Not only were the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ sufficient for the salvation of the world, but that God will make them efficacious and that we shall see the fruit of them and even feel and experience it (*Sermons on Isaiah 53*, p. 116; *Calvinus, #19*).

Mr Hamilton's appeal to Romans 5 does not help him where Calvin is concerned. Remembering Roger Nicole's concession that the reformer's comment on Romans 5: 18 'comes perhaps closest to providing support for Amyraut's thesis', another look at Calvin's proto-Amyraldianism is useful at this point:

Faith is the beginning of godliness, from which all those for whom Christ died were estranged. ... [God] loved us of His own good pleasure, as John tells us (John 3: 16) ... We have been reconciled to God by the death of Christ, Paul holds, because His was an expiatory sacrifice by which the world was reconciled to God... (*Comment on Romans 5: 6-10; Calvinus, #57*).

Paul makes grace common to all men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive him (*Comment on Romans 5: 18; Calvinus, #58*).

Mr Hamilton is anxious to deliver 2 Corinthians 5: 14-15 from the clutches of the Amyraldians. He insists that Paul's 'all' are those for whom Christ died (in an exclusively 'Owenite' sense, of course). 'To argue any other way is to make a mockery of the doctrine of union with Christ' (p. 14). Despite his critical stance *vis-à-vis* Amyraldianism, R. L. Dabney is not persuaded by a 'narrow' exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5: 15 and other related verses:

In John iii. 16, make 'the world' which Christ loved, to mean 'the elect world'; and we reach the absurdity, that some of the elect may not believe, and perish. In 2 Cor. v. 15, if we make the all for whom Christ died, mean only the all who live unto Him - i. e., the elect - it would seem to be implied that of those elect for whom Christ died, only a part will live to Christ. In 1 John ii. 2, it is at least doubtful whether the express phrase, 'the whole world', can be restrained to the world of elect as including other than Jews'

(*Systematic Theology*, p. 525).

It clearly never occurred to Calvin to resort to a 'narrow' exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5: 14-15. He endorses Paul's obvious universalism when he says:

... God was in Christ and then that by this intervention He was reconciling the world to Himself. ... Although Christ's coming had its source in the overflowing love of God for us, yet, until men know that God has been propitiated by a mediator, there cannot but be on their side a separation which prevents them from having access to God. ... [Paul] says again that a commission to offer this reconciliation to us has been given to ministers of the Gospel. ... He says that as He once suffered, so now every day He offers the fruit of His sufferings to us through the Gospel which He has given to the world as a sure and certain record of His completed work of reconciliation. Thus the duty of ministers is to apply to us the fruit of Christ's death (*Comment on 2 Corinthians 5: 19; Calvinus, #61*).

... when Christ appeared, salvation was sent to the whole world. ... (*Comment on 2 Corinthians 6: 2; Calvinus, #62*).

Appealing for support to Robert Reymond and J. I. Packer, Mr Hamilton cannot abide the notion of a 'potential substitution' as opposed to a 'real substitution' (p. 14). His concern is largely driven by the related notion that the atonement includes the specific purchase of faith. Therefore, if Christ died for all, then all must be saved, since all would believe. Regarding the first of these two crucial issues, where in the Bible does Mr Hamilton find support for his *exclusive* doctrine of 'real substitution'? No texts can be found in support of the idea. As we have already seen, Calvin plainly detected no such view in the Scriptures. His comment on Romans 8: 32 is not remotely in favour of limited atonement! Even this seemingly 'Owenite text' is frequently coupled by him with John 3: 16 and given a *universal* sense. His language is always inclusive and universal. Here is another specimen:

For God, who is perfect righteousness, cannot love the iniquity which he sees in all. All of us, therefore, have that within which deserves the hatred of God...Our acquittal is in this - that the guilt which made us liable to punishment was transferred to the head of the Son of God [Isa. 53:12]...For, were not Christ a victim, we could have no sure conviction of his being *apolutrosis, antilutron, kai hilasterion, our substitute-ransom and propitiation* (*Institutes II. xvi. 3, 5, 6; Calvinus, #20*).

Calvin's discussion of substitution in his *Institutes* majors on Isaiah 53. As we have already seen, his comments on this highly significant chapter contain no suggestion of an exclusive emphasis where the atonement is concerned. On the contrary, Calvin goes out of his way to employ universal or general expressions:

Yet I approve of the ordinary reading, that he alone bore the punishment of many, because on him was laid the guilt of the whole world. It is evident from other passages, and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that 'many' sometimes denotes 'all' (*Comment on Isaiah 53: 12; Calvinus, #17*).

Yet I approve of the common reading, that He alone bore the punishment of many, because the guilt of the whole world was laid upon Him. It is evident from other passages...that 'many' sometimes denotes 'all'. ... That, then, is how our Lord Jesus bore the sins and iniquities of many. But in fact, this word 'many' is often as good as equivalent to 'all' (*Sermons on Isaiah 53, pp. 136, Calvinus, #18*).

Calvin's reference to Romans elsewhere leaves us in no doubt that Amyraut's appeal to the reformer's teaching is entirely justified:

From this it follows that our reconciliation with God is free, for the only price paid for it is Christ's death. ... 'Many' is used, not for a definite number, but for a large number, in that He sets Himself over against all others. And this is the meaning also in Rom. 5: 15, where Paul is not talking of a part of mankind but of the whole human race (*Comment on Matthew 20: 28; Calvinus, #26*).

Of course, Mr Hamilton assumes that a 'potential substitution' cannot be a 'real' one. Why not? For Calvin and Amyraut, we may say that the 'reality' is dual. *First* in the provision made and then offered to all, and *second* in its application to the elect when they believe. Two more quotations confirm this:

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us (*Institutes, III. i. 1; Calvinus, #7*).

Christ is in a general view the Redeemer of the world, yet his death and passion are of no advantage to any but such as receive that which St Paul shows here. And so we see that when we once know the benefits brought to us by Christ, and which he daily offers us by his gospel, we must also be joined to him by faith (*Sermons on Ephesians, p. 55; Calvinus, #67*).

Referring to these and similar statements in Calvin, Paul van Buren makes this astute observation: 'Christ is the reality of our salvation ... only as we are related to Him by faith. That is to say, the tension arising from the fact that Christ died for all men and the fact that not all believe is left by Calvin as a tension, resolved neither in favour of [*an absolute*] universalism nor in favour of a limited atonement' (*Christ in Our Place, 1957, p. 50; italicised addition mine*).

Whether or not Mr Hamilton and his friends can accept this teaching as a legitimate exposition of Scripture, it should be crystal clear by now, apropos Roger Nicole's concession, that Calvin's comment on Romans 5: 18 is not the only evidence for his position which Amyraut could appeal to.

III

Mr Hamilton's third objection brings us to the second crucial issue. This concerns the notion that the atonement includes the specific purchase of faith. Appealing to R. L. Dabney, Mr Hamilton insists that this is taught in Ephesians 1: 3, Philippians 1: 29 and Hebrews 12: 2. However, these texts support the notion *at best* only inferentially. Paul is simply not that specific. Neither in fact is the *Westminster Confession*! Mr Hamilton's further appeal to John Owen regarding a connection between the atonement and the procurement of faith does not justify the necessity of such a link. Indeed, such an argument merely confirms my earlier observation about the dangers of 'over-refinement' in Owen's type of scholastic soteriology. There are no more Bible texts to support this thesis than there are in favour of an atoning substitution exclusive to the elect. To quote from my *Atonement and Justification*, p. 115, it was Richard Baxter who gave a considered reply to Owen's view. After noting that the statement 'Christ died to purchase the act of faith for us' is 'no scripture-phrase so far as I know', Baxter puts the issue in a more satisfactory light:

It must be considered that Christ did not die to purchase faith as immediately, and on the same account, as to satisfy for sin, and purchase us impugny or redemption. The proper direct reason of his sufferings, was to demonstrate the justice of God against sin....and thereby to procure pardon. We may well conceive Christ promising to the Father, as it were, (I will suffer for sinners, that they may not suffer). But you will hardly describe his undertaking thus, (I will die, if thou wilt give men faith) or (I will give thee so much of my blood for so much faith (*Catholick Theologie*, 1675, II. 69).

However, Baxter does not deny that the gift of faith is related to the atonement; it is so indirectly and through the instrumentality of the means of grace. In other words, it is through preaching and the blessing of the Holy Spirit that 'Christ causeth sinners to believe: so that faith is a fruit of the death of Christ in a remoter secondary sense' (*Ibid*). In which case, Mr Hamilton misrepresents Amyraut. Denying the existence of a necessary cause-and-effect relationship between the atonement and the bestowal of faith on the elect is not the same as saying that 'the sinner's salvation rests ultimately, therefore, on the sinner's faith, not on the Saviour's satisfaction for sin' (p. 15). Is Mr Hamilton trying to suggest that Amyraut denies the sovereign purpose of the triune God in efficaciously applying the atonement? He does so no more than Calvin who links the giving of faith to the influence of the Word and Spirit of God in relation to election (see *Institutes* III. i. 4; ii. 6-7; xxiv. 3). In Chapter VIII of the *Brief Traitté* (pp. 95-6), Amyraut could not be clearer:

Scripture invariably attributes the faith by which we embrace Christ to the operation of God in us, indeed in terms which fully disclose the impotence which is our part in this affair. For it says that 'it is he who removes from us the heart of stone, in order to give us a heart of flesh', that it is he who 'transports us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light', that 'he works in us to will and to do his good pleasure,' (*Col 1: 13; Phil 2: 13*) that it is he who illumines us, who renews us, who regenerates us (*John 3: 5*), who vivifies us (*Eph 2: 5*), who makes us new creatures and creates us anew (*Eph 2: 10*), who grafts us into the body of his Son (*Rom 11: 23*), who calls us (*Rom 8: 28*), who draws us, who grants to us to believe in Christ, and similar things. These expressions sufficiently demonstrate that we contribute nothing to the efficacy by which our understandings are induced to receive the doctrine of salvation and our wills to follow it (*tr. R. Lum*).

Attributing the bestowal of faith to divine election and predestination, Amyraut has this to say in Chapter IX of the *Brief Traitté* (pp. 113-14):

Since faith does not come from us but is a gift of God, before foreseeing any faith in us it was necessary that God had ordained to put it there. And we seek the reason why he has so ordained. It appears to be enough that God has not ordained to give it to all the world, as St. Paul the Apostle says, 'faith does not belong to all' (*II Thess 3: 2*). Otherwise all the world would believe, which is more than refuted by experience. For this reason in another place he calls faith 'the faith of the elect of God' (*Tit 1: 1*) to show that God has in particular chosen some to give them this grace to believe (*tr. R. Lum; D. Elcoat*).

IV

Mr Hamilton's categorical assertion that 'Christ came to redeem his people, and only his people' (p. 15) owes more to the *WCF* than it does to the Bible. The same may be said about his understanding of Romans 8: 29-30 (p. 17-18). His reductionism

eliminates the universal conditional aspect of the dualistic presentation of the gospel evident in the Scriptures and in the writings of Calvin and Amyraut. However, neither men denied the absolute nature of God's elective purpose. Thus Romans 8: 29 posed no problems for either Calvin or Amyraut. The alleged 'fatal error of the Amyraldian scheme' (p. 18) simply doesn't apply. Enough has been said to demonstrate this already.

Looking at detailed textual evidence, Mr Hamilton states that 'Amyraut argued strongly ... that certain Scriptures showed that the saving work of Christ was intended to save all and that some for whom Christ died may ultimately perish (e. g. Isaiah 53: 6, John 3: 16, Romans 5: 18, 2 Corinthians 5: 14, 1 Timothy 2: 6, Romans 14: 15, Hebrews 10: 29 and 2 Peter 2: 1)' (p. 16). Again, solidarity exists between Amyraut and Calvin on this issue. From evidence already cited, Mr Hamilton is simply wide of the mark in arguing that 'Calvin did not interpret 'all' and 'world' univocally' (p. 17). Neither - as Richard Baxter would be quick to point out - does Calvin support Mr Hamilton and his cited authorities in their interpretation of Romans 14: 15 (see also 1 Corinthians 8: 11) and 2 Peter 2: 1 (see also Jude 4):

... the price of the blood of Christ is wasted when a weak conscience is wounded, for the most contemptible brother has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is intolerable, therefore, that he should be destroyed for the gratification of the belly (*Comment on Romans 14: 15, Calvinus, #59*).

For one can imagine nothing more despicable than this, that while Christ did not hesitate to die so that the weak might not perish, we, on the other hand, do not care a straw for the salvation of the men and women who have been redeemed at such a price. This is a memorable saying, from which we learn how precious the salvation of our brothers ought to be to us, and not only that of all, but of each individual, in view of the fact that the blood of Christ was poured out for each one...If the soul of every weak person costs the price of the blood of Christ, anyone, who, for the sake of a little bit of meat, is responsible for the rapid return to death of a brother redeemed by Christ, shows just how little the blood of Christ means to him. Contempt like that is therefore an open insult to Christ (*Comment on 1 Corinthians 8: 11; Calvinus, #60*).

Christ redeemed us to have us as a people separated from all the iniquities of the world, devoted to holiness and purity. Those who throw over the traces and plunge themselves into every kind of licence are not unjustly said to deny Christ, by whom they were redeemed (*Comment on 2 Peter 2: 1; Calvinus, #82*).

Certainly, in 2 Pet. 2: 1, there is reference only to Christ, and He is called Master there. Denying...Christ, he says, of those who have been redeemed by His blood, and now enslave themselves again to the devil, frustrating (as best they may) that incomparable boon (*Comment on Jude 4; Calvinus, #87*).

Calvin's exegesis is also a challenge to Mr Hamilton on pastoral grounds. In the reformer's view, universal atonement has enormous implications for pastoral and evangelistic motivation:

And surely there is nothing that ought to be more effective in spurring on pastors to devote themselves more eagerly to their duty than if they reflect that it is to themselves that the price of the blood of Christ has been entrusted. For it follows from this, that unless they are faithful in putting out their labour on the Church, not only are they made accountable for lost souls, but they are guilty of sacrilege, because they have profaned the sacred blood of the Son of God, and have made useless the redemption acquired by Him, as far as they are concerned. But it is a hideous and monstrous crime

if, by our idleness, not only the death of Christ becomes worthless, but also the fruit of it is destroyed and perishes (*Comment on Acts 20: 28; Calvinus, #54*).

For we ought to have a zeal to have the Church of God enlarged, and increase rather than diminish. We ought to have a care also of our brethren, and to be sorry to see them perish: for it is no small matter to have the souls perish which were bought by the blood of Christ (*Sermons on Timothy & Titus, p. 817; Calvinus, #55*).

With regard to this aspect of the discussion, my reply to Jonathan H. Rainbow's *The Will of God and the Cross* (1990) is applicable to Mr Hamilton:

This brings us to Rainbow's discussion of the final group of Calvin statements, those implying that souls perish for whom Christ died (pp. 159ff). We are told that this, the 'best evidence on the side of the Amyraut thesis' was 'hardly tapped by Amyraut or his recent sympathizers' (p. 159). ... [The] author maintains that Calvin's teaching relates not to soteriology but to pastoral care. The various gyrations made by the author to establish his case are not impressive. We are asked to believe, assuming Calvin was a limited redemptionist, that he never saw the relevant NT texts as threats to his soteriology. One question immediately exposes the fatal flaw in Rainbow's thesis: why in all these statements on pastoral care does Calvin speak soteriologically? Indeed, in every one of them, redemption is the key thought and primary motivation. Is it remotely possible to imagine that Calvin, who became a theologian in order to be a pastor, could ever employ a practical, working assumption without a dogmatic basis? To say Calvin's statements have absolutely nothing to do with the extent of the atonement is really to read them blindfolded. Rainbow's further concession that Calvin did teach a 'universal saving will of God' as well as the 'elective decree of God' (p. 171) surely points to the true reason why Calvin was not troubled theologically by the issues involved. The death of Christ can be, and often is, negated, ruined and wasted by man with respect to its 'potential' redemptive provision but not according to its 'kinetic', efficacious impact on the elect. In pastoral and evangelistic activity, Calvin obviously taught that God's gracious revealed will is frustrated time and time again but that the elective will ensured the infallible redemption of the true church (see #48, 51, 52, 83). In other words, the relevant NT texts involved no denial of the doctrine of limited *efficacious* redemption. Such was the authentic doctrine of Calvin. It was also the doctrine of Amyraut (*Calvinus, pp. 80-1*).

V

Mr Hamilton's final objection to Amyraldianism sounds more like a critique of Arminius than Amyraut. Sufficient evidence has already been adduced to show that the latter's dualism affirms God's special or 'particularistic love' for the elect. This is not a matter of dispute. The question is, does God love *only* the elect? Indeed, is propitiation provided *only* for them? Mr Hamilton's citation of B. B. Warfield's and John Murray's comments on the 'world' of John 3: 16 and 1 John 2: 2 are intriguing (pp. 19-20). Being so different from John Owen's strictly exclusive emasculation of the text, one might have expected Mr Hamilton to criticise his exegesis. Significantly, Warfield and Murray do not endorse either Owen or the *WCF*. They lean more in the direction of Calvin whose teaching Amyraut endorsed. Having discussed the reformer's view of 1 John 2: 2 earlier, his 'general/special love' understanding of John 3: 16 is as follows:

Christ...was offered as our Saviour...Christ brought life because the heavenly Father does not wish the human race that He loves to perish...But we should remember...that

the secret love in which our heavenly Father embraced us to Himself is, since it flows from His eternal good pleasure, precedent to all other causes; but the grace which He wants to be testified to us and by which we are stirred to the hope of salvation, begins with the reconciliation provided through Christ...Thus before we can have any feeling of His Fatherly kindness, the blood of Christ must intercede to reconcile God to us...And He has used a general term [whosoever], both to invite indiscriminately all to share in life and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the significance of the term 'world' which He had used before. For although there is nothing in the world deserving of God's favour, He nevertheless shows He is favourable to the whole world when He calls all without exception to the faith of Christ, which is indeed an entry into life. Moreover, let us remember that although life is promised generally to all who believe in Christ, faith is not common to all. Christ is open to all and displayed to all, but God opens the eyes only of the elect that they may seek Him by faith...And whenever our sins press hard on us, whenever Satan would drive us to despair, we must hold up this shield, that God does not want us to be overwhelmed in everlasting destruction, for He has ordained His Son to be the Saviour of the world (*Comment on John 3: 16; Calvinus, #45*).

Another quotation should leave Mr Hamilton and his friends in no doubt that Calvin would reject the exclusive reductionism of John Owen and the Westminster divines:

It is true that Saint John saith generally, that [God] loved the world. And why? For Jesus Christ offereth himself generally to all men without exception to be their redeemer. ... Thus we see three degrees of the love that God hath shewed us in our Lord Jesus Christ. The first is in respect of the redemption that was purchased in the person of him that gave himself to death for us, and became accursed to reconcile us to God his Father. That is the first degree of love, which extendeth to all men, inasmuch as Jesus Christ reacheth out his arms to call and allure all men both great and small, and to win them to him. But there is a special love for those to whom the gospel is preached: which is that God testifieth unto them that he will make them partakers of the benefit that was purchased for them by the death and passion of his Son. And forasmuch as we be of that number, therefore we are double bound already to our God: here are two bonds which hold us as it were strait tied unto him. Now let us come to the third bond, which dependeth upon the third love that God sheweth us: which is that he not only causeth the gospel to be preached unto us, but also maketh us to feel the power thereof, so as we know him to be our Father and Saviour, not doubting but that our sins are forgiven us for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, who bringeth us the gift of the Holy Ghost, to reform us after his own image (*Sermons on Deuteronomy, p. 167; Calvinus, #8*).

Mr Hamilton's appeal to Hugh Martin's comparison between the priesthoods of Levi and Christ (p. 20) does not invalidate the Calvin-Amyraut thesis. Once one asks if every member of ancient Israel benefited *efficaciously* from the *nationally sufficient* priestly provision, it becomes clear that Mr Hamilton's case is based on a fallacy. John Owen's position is flawed for the same reason. I re-quote my reply (with a small addition) as follows:

Appealing to the parallel between Old Testament theocratic Israel and the New Testament church, Owen insists that 'universal redemption' is self-contradictory if any 'die in captivity'. The redeemed nation, 'delivered from bondage, preserved, taken nigh unto God, brought unto Canaan, was typical of God's spiritual church, of elect believers. ...(*Death of Death, p. 146*) Israel was therefore a microcosm of the elect. However, the simple fact that not all those who were liberated actually reached the promised land demands a dualistic view of the nation's temporal deliverance, if

deliverance from Egypt and settlement in Canaan were all of a piece. As a result of unbelief and disobedience, a significant proportion of the nation perished in the wilderness. On Owen's model, this would imply that some of the elect might perish. But since throughout Israel's long history, great stress is placed on the 'remnant' (*Isaiah 10: 20f; Romans 9: 27*), the most that Owen can argue is that the nation was a type of the visible church, the latter consisting of 'nominal professors' and 'true believers'. Contrary to Owen's view, one may argue that in certain respects, theocratic Israel was a typical microcosm of the post-theocratic visible church *and* the world. In other words, as there was a spiritual elect remnant within the church-state of Israel (*Romans 9: 6; 11: 5*), so the elect are now to be found in visible churches gathered from all nations. On this model, the [priestly provision and] spiritual privileges promised to national Israel became the privileges of 'all nations', (*John 1: 29; Matthew 28: 19*). Thus the 'sufficient for all/efficient for some' dualism once applying to Israel is now internationalised according to the New Testament (*Atonement and Justification*, pp. 125-6).

Again, Calvin clarifies this for us in his usual manner:

And when he says the sin of the world he extends this kindness indiscriminately to the whole human race, that the Jews might not think the Redeemer has been sent to them alone. ... John, therefore, by speaking of the sin of the world in general, wanted to make us feel our own misery and exhort us to seek the remedy. Now it is for us to embrace the blessing offered to all, that each may make up his mind that there is nothing to hinder him from finding reconciliation in Christ if only, led by faith, he comes to Him (*Comment on John 1: 29; Calvinus, #44*).

VI

Correlating with the proper Amyraldian understanding of the 'sufficiency/efficiency' distinction, it should now be clear that the 'impetration/application' distinction (p. 21) has a vital and valid biblical basis. Notwithstanding the limited efficacy of the atonement, the divinely-intended provision is universal according to both Amyraut and Calvin. Sufficient has been said to demonstrate this. Owen and the Westminster divines were thus guilty of undermining the biblical basis for the free offer of the gospel. If no universal provision exists, no universal offer may be made. Their position led inexorably to the hypercalvinism which grew logically out of their reductionist soteriology. For this reason, Warfield's and Murray's endorsement of the WCF is not impressive. It is to be regretted that the 'Amyraldian' orthodoxy of Edmund Calamy and his friends did not prevail over the 'Owenite' hyperodoxy of George Gillespie and others in the Westminster Assembly. Calamy's position remains impressive and impeccable:

I am far from universal redemption in the Arminian sense; but that that I hold is in the sense of our divines (e.g. Bishop Davenant) in the Synod of Dort, that Christ did pay a price for all. ... that Jesus Christ did not only die sufficiently for all, but God did intend, in giving Christ, and Christ in giving himself, did intend to put all men in a state of salvation in case they do believe. ... (*Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, eds. Mitchell and Struthers, 1874, p. 152).

As for Mr Hamilton's methodology, undermining the perspicuity of 1 John 2: 2 by ambiguously mixing up the parable of the sheep and goats with John 10: 11, 15 is not impressive. As for the 'good shepherd' texts, these are generally misread. The Lord Jesus is not saying that the provision of His death is only available to 'the sheep' but that His care for them is superior to the cowardly hireling's. The latter flees from the

wolf but the good Shepherd yields His life for them. In short, Christ is stressing the *quality* rather than the *objects* of His care, i.e. He will give HIS LIFE for the sheep. It is undeniable that the atonement makes a *universal* provision for *universal* gospel preaching (*Mk. 16: 15*). In this respect, our Redeemer is equally clear: 'For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and gives life to the world. ... the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world' (*Jn. 6: 33, 51*). Clearly, the provision is universal notwithstanding its application to the elect (unless one adopts the exegetical fallacy of equating 'the world' with 'the elect'). With regard to Calvin's view of 1 John 2: 2 (discussed earlier), his uncritical response to the articles of the Council of Trent - where the text is incorporated - is thoroughly 'Amyraldian':

[Him God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world...But though he died for all, all do not receive the benefit of his death, but those only to whom the merit of his passion is communicated... (Articles III, IV of the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent)].
(The third and fourth heads I do not touch... (*Antidote to the Council of Trent, Tracts, Vol. 3, pp. 93, 109; Calvinus, #88*).

From all that has been said, Mr Hamilton's assertion that 'Amyraut ... radically diminishes God's love, power, effectiveness and unity' (pp. 24-5) is simply absurd. Mr Hamilton's reference to the finished work of Christ in Hebrews 1: 3 does not 'clarify' the issue in favour of his narrow reductionism either. Or did Calvin miss something? Certainly his commentary on Hebrews is full of proto-Amyraldian universalism:

Indeed the death of Christ was life for the whole world... (*Comment on Hebrews 8: 2, Calvinus, #75*).

He suffered death in the common way of men, but He made divine atonement for the sins of the world as a Priest (*Comment on Hebrews 8: 4; Calvinus, #76*).

To bear the sins means to free those who have sinned from their guilt by his satisfaction. He says many meaning all, as in Rom. 5: 15. It is of course certain that not all enjoy the fruits of Christ's death, but this happens because their unbelief hinders them (*Comment on Hebrews 9: 27; Calvinus, #77*).

He brought His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary in order to atone for the sins of the world (*Comment on Hebrews 13: 12; Calvinus, #78*).

Such statements as these completely vindicate Amyraut's claim to be an authentic Calvinist. That said, it is totally false to cite Roger Nicole's simplistic anti-Amyraldianism as if Amyraut - with Calvin - never maintained the *efficacy* of the atonement for the elect.

Mr Hamilton is relentless in his pursuit of Amyraut. Appealing again to Roger Nicole, he declares:

The focus of this study has concentrated on the Amyraldian errors in relation to God's decrees and the work of Christ. There is, however, perhaps an even more serious and fundamental error at the heart of Amyraldianism. The Amyraldian scheme appears to introduce a disjunction within the intentions and operations of the Trinity. In the Amyraldian scheme, what the Father intends and purposes, the Son and Spirit fail to

accomplish! God the Father's intention (universal redemption), is not effectively realised in the work of the Son and the Spirit (p. 25).

This charge is simply wrong. And what is more, Calvin virtually supplied a pre-vindication of Amyraut's doctrine of Trinitarian grace. The latter's mentor taught that all three persons concur in redeeming activity, *each in a dualistic way*. Thus no disharmony exists at all. The following quotations - including the reformer's comment on 2 Peter 3: 9 (often appealed to by Amyraut but misappropriated by Mr Hamilton) make Trinitarian harmony very clear:

GOD THE FATHER

This is His wondrous love towards the human race, that He desires all men to be saved, and is prepared to bring even the perishing to safety... It could be asked here, if God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to Himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world (*Comment on 2 Peter 3: 9; Calvinus, #83*)

GOD THE SON

Our Lord made effective for [the pardoned thief on the cross] His death and passion which He suffered and endured for all mankind... (*Sermons on Christ's Passion, pp. 151; Calvinus, #42*)

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit bestows 'regeneration only on the elect' while still 'touching the reprobate with a taste of his grace' (*Comment on Hebrews 6: 4-5*).

For biblical validation, one must note the 'general/universal' dualism in the following passages:

God the Father - John 3: 16; Matthew 22: 14; 1 Timothy 4: 10.

God the Son - John 6: 32-3, 37, 44, 51.

God the Holy Spirit - Acts 3: 26; 7: 51; 13: 48.

VII

Turning from theological to historical issues, Mr Hamilton's citation of Roger Nicole's critique of Amyraut borders on the outrageous:

Roger Nicole has argued that "Amyraut thought he could establish a bridge that would make it easier for Roman Catholic people to embrace the Reformed faith. He seemed to remain oblivious to the fact that most bridges carry two-way traffic: he unwittingly made it easier for Reformed people to turn to Romanism. He may deserve to be called, as Professor Georges Serr expressed it, 'the gravedigger of the French Reformed Church'." (p. 26).

Roger Nicole's albeit tentative thesis conclusion is no less regrettable:

Amyraut's influence ... may also be viewed as the weakening of a type of faith which the Huguenots desperately needed, if they were to stand up in the presence of the coming onslaught of persecution. Unwittingly, and much against his own desire,

Amyraut may have helped to dilute the faith and reduce the stamina of the Reformed churches of France. This may have been his contribution toward the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) (*Moyse Amyraut*, p. 132).

I only need to re-quote my *Calvinus* (pp. 16-17) in response to these highly-questionable verdicts:

[Professor F. P.] Van Stam's [*The Controversy over the Theology of Saumur, 1635-1650: Disrupting debates among the Huguenots in complicated circumstances*, 1988], disproves beyond all doubt the propriety of that subtle suggestion that the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) was a divine judgement on the French Protestants for tolerating Amyraut's teaching, and the less than subtle description of Amyraut as 'the grave digger' of the French Reformed Church. To say in effect that a return to authentic Calvinism destroyed the Reformed churches of France is an opinion hardly worth mentioning, far less refuting.

That said, recent research confirms the absurdity of linking the supposed debilitation of French Calvinism to Amyraldianism. Abjuration statistics give an entirely contrary picture, especially where the pastors were concerned. Since Amyraut's influence was greatest north of the Loire, it is a striking fact that pastors were generally more faithful in the northern provinces where 8 per cent abjured compared with 18 per cent in the 'high orthodox' southern provinces. In particular, the province of the Ile-de-France lost 4 per cent compared with 27 per cent in the Cévennes and 41 per cent in Béarn. It is significant that in the north, unlike the south, the smaller protestant population owed its strength more to personal conviction than to nominal adherence (See P. Joutard, 'The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: End or Renewal of French Protestantism?' in *International Calvinism 1541-1715*, ed. M. Prestwich, 1985, p. 343).

Contrary to the fears of their high orthodox critics, the Amyraldian pastors still combined an irenic spirit with a decided aversion to Roman Catholic dogma. If their Calvinism was kinder and less socially aggressive, their theological commitment was unquestioned, even if, for various 'worldly-wise' reasons, apostasies were not uncommon among their adherents. To blame Amyraut for facilitating easy defections to Rome among the Reformed is a travesty of truth. As famous as he was for a philanthropy without religious discrimination, his fidelity to the Reformed Faith was evident to the last. Indeed, John Quick's account of Amyraut's death-bed utterances put the matter beyond all doubt:

[He proved] the truth of the Christian religion, and of our Holy Reformed religion, by many unanswerable arguments. "This I have professed," said he; "I have preached this Holy Reformed religion well nigh forty years." And turning himself unto the Papists (for there were many then present in his chamber, spectators and witnesses of his last end) "Gentlemen," said he, "This is the only true religion, and out of it there is no salvation. That God to whom I am going knows that I do speak the very truth." This, and much more he uttered with a clear and audible voice; yea, and those very Papists heard him with much reverence and attention (*The Triumph of Faith*, 1698, p. 24).

Regarding the cause of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, it had more to do with Louis XIV's aversion for Protestantism than with the finer points of doctrinal debate among the Huguenots. In the run up to the Revocation, the faithful and godly labours of Jean Daillé (1594-1670), Jean Claude (1619-87) and Pierre du Bosc (1623-92) - all Amyraldians - helped maintain a doctrinally-sound and vitally-effective piety among the Reformed churches. Regarding Dr Nicole's 'bridge builder' criticism of Amyraut, the latter's teaching rightly rendered the Reformed Faith less objectionable to Lutherans and Roman Catholics. After all, Reformed

ultra-orthodoxy is no valid answer to Roman heterodoxy. However, no concessions were made in other controverted areas to encourage Reformed people to desert their own convictions. Returning to the other side of the Channel, may one not adopt a similarly-fallacious interpretation of the Puritan calamity of 1662 as that used by Dr Nicole and others to explain the Huguenot holocaust of 1685? The 'strength' of Westminster Calvinism did not preserve the Puritans from the cruelties of Charles II. It could be suggested – tentatively, of course – that the highly-exclusive mind-set of ultra-Calvinism contributed to division within puritan ranks. It possibly contributed more to the overthrow of Puritanism than did Amyraut's moderation to the demise of the Huguenots.

Drawing to a conclusion, Mr Hamilton states that 'Amyraldianism is not confessional Calvinism, even in a so-called 'modified' state' (p. 26). Of course, this verdict reflects Mr Hamilton's preoccupation with the WCF. However, he needs to remember that there are other confessions which permit a different verdict from his. After all, during his 'heresy trial' at the National Synod of Alençon in 1637 - where he was acquitted incidentally - Amyraut affirmed his commitment to the *French Reformed Confession of Faith* (1559) and the *Canons of Dort* as incorporated into the confessional basis of the French Reformed Church in 1623. Reference has also been made earlier to the *Heidelberg Catechism*. I have demonstrated that the catechism's authors expounded the answer to Question 37 in a distinctly proto-Amyraldian manner. One may also refer to the universalist phraseology contained in the *Second Helvetic Confession*, not to mention arguably similar features in the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England.

In short, one may certainly argue that 'Amyraldianism is confessional Calvinism' - or at least it is consistent with those cited. It all depends which doctrinal standards are invoked. It must also be said that significant relevant differences exist between the various Continental confessions and the Westminster standards. Regrettably, these differences are smothered by the dubious and misleading matchings of the various confessions in *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* (1999) by Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson (eds).

Not content with distancing Amyraut from Westminster Confession Calvinists, Mr Hamilton cites (p. 27) the damning verdict of Pierre du Moulin - the 'French John Owen' one may say! This statement is a grotesque *reductio ad absurdum* of Amyraut's Bible-based case. The situation is little helped by Mr Hamilton's concession that Du Moulin's assessment is thought to be 'exaggerated'. This paints this 'grand old man of French Protestantism' in pastel shades! Roger Nicole further calls him a 'demolition expert', almost 'obsessed by the spectre of Arminianism'. His 'handling of biblical texts commonly advanced in support of a universal intent of the work of Christ is so short as to be cavalier' (*Moyse Amyraut*, p. 94). Dr Nicole also says that Du Moulin 'did not hesitate to draw logical implications from' the statements of Amyraut and his companion Paul Testard 'far beyond anything that they had ever said' (*Ibid* p. 116). More may be said about this gentleman but I forbear. While I am thankful for Mr Hamilton's generally irenic tone, I regret to say that many of his remarks reflect too much of the substance if not the style of Pierre du Moulin's criticisms. Mr Hamilton's lament over the 'enormous differences' that 'divide Calvinism from Amyraldianism' (p. 27) is predictable. An equal lament may be expressed from the opposing perspective. In short, Westminster Calvinism or Owenism - to call it by its proper name - is a caricature of the authentic biblical Calvinism of Calvin and Amyraut. I would therefore plead that adherents of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* might consider amending the confession in the light of the more moderate orthodoxy reflected in Calvin and the Continental confessions.

Mr Hamilton concludes with a quote (p. 28) from the final paragraph of Owen's *Death of Death*. I do not share his enthusiasm for this treatise. Notwithstanding the value and usefulness of many of Owen's practical and devotional works, I regret that the *Death of Death* was ever written. Its ultra-orthodox polemic distorts to a serious degree the beauty and balance of the Bible's presentation of our Saviour's sacrifice. It helped fuel both the later development of hypercalvinism and the consequent over-reaction of Wesleyan Arminianism. Whatever suspicions continue to be entertained about Amyraldianism, Amyraut believed he was rescuing the gospel from scholastic distortion. Aided by the writings of Calvin, he restored a message which encouraged evangelistic preaching.

CONCLUSION

In view of Mr Hamilton's questionable assertions, the Owenite position faces awkward questions. *First*, if a universal gospel offer is to be made, what precisely is on offer if not a universally-available redemption? *Second*, if Christ died only for the elect, does it not become necessary for enquirers to discover their election *before* they come to Christ? *Third*, what are the non-elect guilty of rejecting if nothing was ever offered to them?

The Amyraldian position possesses five advantages. *First*, it provides an object lesson on how to avoid extreme reductionist hermeneutics. Theory is ever to be the servant not the master of the textual data. *Second*, it enables us to accept plain statements of Scripture *as they are* without forcing them into a theological mould, e. g. 'world' = 'the world of the elect' (as Owen maintains). How can Owenites criticise Roman Catholics and the cults for tampering with the text when they do likewise? *Third*, in keeping with God's plain declarations, it proclaims a universal compassion for the world without unwarranted restrictions. Thus the Owenite tendency to produce clinically-clear heads and callously-cramped hearts is reduced. Sadly, not all Owenites are like Whitefield and Spurgeon whose compassion exceeded their creed. *Fourth*, it is, in the best biblical sense, conciliatory. Ralph Wardlaw considered that High Calvinism provided too easy an excuse for the Arminians to reject true Calvinism. *Fifth*, without prying into the profundities and complexities of God's inscrutable sovereign purposes, it enables us to pursue an uninhibited mission of mercy to a lost world. We leave the results to God. While faith is evidence of election, present unbelief is not necessarily proof of non-election. There is always hope for everyone we proclaim Christ to.

I therefore rephrase Mr Hamilton's final verdict (p. 27). In view of the 'enormous differences' that divide Calvinism from Owenism, it is right that Owenism has its own name. It will continue to lay claim to the mantle of Calvinistic orthodoxy, but its claim will always exceed its grasp. Indeed, despite Mr Hamilton's critique, Amyraldianism may continue justly to be regarded as 'authentic Calvinism'. Should attempts to discredit Amyraut continue, rather than drive a wedge between him and Calvin, his critics must consider the reformer to be Amyraut's ally and thus the WCF's adversary.

APPENDIX

Amyraut's 'friends'

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

'For it is good for all men to hear [Christ's] voice and live, by passing to the life of godliness from the death of ungodliness. Of this death the Apostle Paul says, "Therefore all are dead, and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. 5: 14-15). Thus all, without one exception, were dead in sins, whether original or voluntary sins, sins of ignorance, or sins committed against knowledge; and for all the dead there died the only one person who lived, that is, who had no sin whatever, in order that they who live by the remission of their sins should live, not to themselves, but to Him who died for all, for our sins, and rose again for our justification...'. (The City of God).

JOHN WYCLIFFE

'Christ ... suffered bitter death upon a tree, and bought man again with his precious blood, and after that returned again to his Father, for the salvation of mankind. ... And thus Christ was without blemish, and was offered on the cross for the sin of all this world. ... Other lambs in a manner put away the sin of one country; but this Lamb properly put away the sin of all this world' (On the Lord's Prayer and Sermons).

MARTIN LUTHER

'It is certain that you are a part of the world. Do not let your heart deceive you by saying: "The Lord died for Peter and Paul; He rendered satisfaction for them, not for me." Therefore let every one who has sin be summoned here, for He has made the expiation for the sins of the whole world and bore the sins of the whole world' (Comment on 1 John 2: 2).

JOHN CALVIN

'True it is that the effect of [Christ's] death comes not to the whole world. Nevertheless, forasmuch as it is not in us to discern between the righteous and the sinners that go to destruction, but that Jesus Christ has suffered his death and passion as well for them as for us, therefore it behoves us to labour to bring every man to salvation, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be available to them' (Sermons on Job).

'Paul makes grace common to all men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive him' (Comment on Romans 5: 18).

'God commends to us the salvation of all men without exception, even as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world' (Comment on Galatians 5: 12).

'This is His wondrous love towards the human race, that He desires all men to be saved, and is prepared to bring even the perishing to safety...It could be asked here, if God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to Himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world' (Comment on 2 Peter 3: 9).

THE ANGLICAN REFORMERS

Archbishop **Thomas Cranmer** stated that Christ 'by His own oblation ... satisfied His Father for all men's sins and reconciled mankind unto His grace and favour'. Bishop **John Hooper** affirmed that Christ died 'for the love of us poor and miserable sinners, whose place he occupied upon the cross, as a pledge, or one that represented the person of all the sinners that ever were, be now, or shall be unto the world's end'. Bishop **Nicholas Ridley** declared that the sacrifice of Christ 'was, is, and shall be forever the propitiation for the sins of the whole

world'. Bishop **Hugh Latimer** preached that 'Christ shed as much blood for Judas, as he did for Peter: Peter believed it, and therefore he was saved; Judas would not believe, and therefore he was condemned'. Even particularist **John Bradford** admitted that 'Christ's death is sufficient for all, but effectual for the elect only'. The Elizabethan Anglicans were no different in their understanding. Bishop **John Jewel** wrote that, on the cross, Christ declared "It is finished" to signify 'that the price and ransom was now full paid for the sin of all mankind'. Elsewhere, he made clear that 'The death of Christ is available for the redemption of all the world'. **Richard Hooker** stated an identical view when he said that Christ's 'precious and propitiatory sacrifice' was 'offered for the sins of all the world' (*All extracts from the Parker Society Volumes*).

THE CANONS OF DORDRECHT

'The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin; and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. ... That, however, many who have been called by the gospel neither repent nor believe in Christ but perish in unbelief does not happen because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but through their own fault. ... [This] was the most free counsel of God the Father, that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect' (*The Second Canon*).

WILLIAM TWISSE

'I am ready to profess ... that every one who hears the gospel, (without distinction between elect or reprobate) is bound to believe that Christ died for him, so far as to procure both the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul, in case he believes and repent' (*Works*).

EDMUND CALAMY

'I am far from universal redemption in the Arminian sense; but that that I hold is in the sense of our divines (e.g. Bishop Davenant) in the Synod of Dordt, that Christ did pay a price for all ... that Jesus Christ did not only die sufficiently for all, but God did intend, in giving Christ, and Christ in giving himself, did intend to put all men in a state of salvation in case they do believe' (*Minutes of the Westminster Assembly*).

RICHARD BAXTER

'When God saith so expressly that Christ died for all [2 Cor. 5: 14-15], and tasted death for every man [Heb. 2: 9], and is the ransom for all [1 Tim. 2: 6], and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world [1 Jn. 2: 2], it beseems every Christian rather to explain in what sense Christ died for all, than flatly to deny it' (*Universal Redemption*).

PHILIP DODDRIDGE

'It is plain ... that there is a sense, in which Christ may be said to have died for all, i.e. as he has procured an offer of pardon to all, provided they sincerely embrace the Gospel. Cf. John 3: 16, 6: 50, 51, Romans 5: 18, 8: 32, 1 Corinthians 8: 11, 2 Corinthians 5: 14, 15, 19, 1 Timothy 2: 4, 6, Hebrews 2: 9, 1 John 2: 2' (*Lectures on Divinity*).

JONATHAN EDWARDS

When asserting the 'particular' efficacious redemption of the elect, Edwards still grants that 'Christ in some sense may be said to die for all, and to redeem all visible Christians, yea, the whole world, by his death; ...' (*Freedom of the Will*).

JOSEPH BELLAMY

'Because the door of mercy is thus opened to the whole world by the blood of Christ, therefore, in scripture, he is called, the Saviour of the WORLD (*1 John 4: 14*); the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the WORLD (*John 1: 29*); a propitiation for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD (*1 John 2: 2*); that gave himself a ransom for ALL (*1 Timothy 2: 6*); and tasted death for EVERYMAN (*Hebrews 2: 9*)' (*True Religion Delineated*, Preface by Jonathan Edwards).

THOMAS BOSTON

When he published *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1726), he was clearly happy to endorse the words (of John Preston): 'Go and tell everyman without exception that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him'. In his own book *A View of the Covenant of Grace* (1734), Boston himself stated, '... the extent of the administration [of the covenant] is not founded on election, but on the sufficiency of Christ's obedience and death for the salvation of all'.

THOMAS CHALMERS

'If Christ died only for the elect, and not for all', then ministers 'are puzzled to understand how they should proceed with the calls and invitations of the gospel. ... Now for the specific end of conversion, the available scripture is not that Christ laid down His life for the sheep, but that Christ is set forth a propitiation for the sins of the world. It is not because I know myself to be one of the sheep, or one of the elect, but because I know myself to be one of the world, that I take to myself the calls and promises of the New Testament' (*Institutes of Theology*).

J. C. RYLE

Commenting on John 1: 29, he wrote that 'Christ's death is profitable to none but to the elect who believe on His name. ... But ... I dare not say that no atonement has been made, in any sense, except for the elect. ... When I read that the wicked who are lost, "deny the Lord that bought them," (2 Pet. 2: 1) and that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," (2 Cor. 5: 19), I dare not confine the intention of redemption to the saints alone. Christ is for every man'. Commenting on John 3: 16 and appealing to Bishop John Davenant, Calvin and others, he concludes: 'Those who confine God's love exclusively to the elect appear to me to take a narrow and contracted view of God's character and attributes. ... I have long come to the conclusion that men may be more systematic in their statements than the Bible, and may be led into grave error by idolatrous veneration of a system' (*Expository Thoughts on John's Gospel*, Vol. 1).

CHARLES HODGE

'There is a sense ... in which Christ did die for all men. His death had the effect of justifying the offer of salvation to everyman; and of course was designed to have that effect. He therefore died sufficiently for all' (*Systematic Theology*)

ROBERT L. DABNEY

He criticised Scottish theologian William Cunningham for taking a narrow view of the atonement's design. Dabney also distanced himself from John Owen's particularism: 'I have already stated one ground for rejecting that interpretation of John 3: 16, which makes 'the world' which God so loved, the elect world. ... Christ's mission to make expiation for sin is a manifestation of unspeakable benevolence to the whole world' (*Systematic Theology*).

JOHN MURRAY

For all his particularism, he still concedes that the 'Non-elect are said to have been sanctified in the blood of Christ, to have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, to have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, and to have known the way of righteousness (cf. *Heb. 6: 3, 5; 10: 29; 2 Pet. 2: 20, 21*). In this sense, therefore, we may say that Christ died for non-elect persons' (*The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel*).

D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

'But look at [Christ's] death for a moment and consider it as an expiation for the sin of the whole world. What are we told about it? Well, those sufferings were enough, according to John, for all. Listen! 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 Jn. 2: 2). The whole world! ... The sins of the whole world he had borne upon Himself'.

'[If] ever you feel utterly helpless and hopeless, then turn back to Him, the Christ of the cross, with His arms outstretched, who still says: 'Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth'. It is there that the whole of humanity is focused. He is the representative of the whole of mankind. He died for all' (*Aberavon Sermons*).