

The Fight for the Reformed Faith

Editor.

“War”, said that famous Prussian military genius, Karl Von Clausewitz, “is nothing but the continuation of politics by other means”. The chronicles of human history bear salient testimony to his sagacity. Ever and anon the military machine and the diplomat have been utilised, sometimes in unison, sometimes in alternation, and sometimes in juxtaposition. Sword and diplomat. Stick and Carrot. Or, as one might also put it, Sword and pen. For by the single flourish of a politician’s pen legions of men have oft been dispatched to the wars, and consigned to early deaths. By but the flourish of a pen, wars have been ended, or perhaps averted, or perhaps all the bloodstained vantage gained by thousands of battlefield heroes has been signed away in a moment.

Sword and pen. And strange though it may seem, it is the humble pen that time and time again, carries the day, over and above the mighty military machines of human invention. Yea, indeed, “God hath chosenthe weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty”. (1 Cor.1: 27).

And so it is too, in the Spiritual realm. St. Paul writes of how “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”, and how “...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor.1: 18 and 21). By the word of the apostles, by the written scriptures, the early foundation of Christianity was made, without legions of troops to enforce it, for “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds)...” (2 Cor. 10 : 3 and 4). By these spiritual means, the world had to confess of the early Christians that “These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also...” (Acts 17 : 6).

One finds the same thing at the time of the Reformation. After the long centuries of spiritual night that had stifled the church, at last the dawn broke, with the work of a pen, not of a sword. Indeed the sword was deployed intensely by those who opposed the pen, but yet, the pen, with the blessing of the Most High, prevailed, so that yet again, the world was turned “upside down”. In his monumental three volume work on the history of Protestantism, J.A.Wylie relates how, over the night of the 30th to the 31st October in the year 1517, the

The Fight for the Reformed Faith

3

Elector Prince Frederick was disturbed by his dreams while asleep in his palace at Schweinitz. The following morning he was to relate the events of his disturbed slumbers to his compatriot, Duke John :

".....I again fell asleep, and then dreamed that Almighty God sent me a monk, who was a true son of the Apostle Paul. All the Saints accompanied him by order of God, in order to bear testimony before me, and to declare that he did not come to contrive any plot, but that all that he did was according to the will of God. They asked me to have the goodness graciously to permit him to write something on the door of the church of the Castle at Wittenberg. This I granted.....thereupon the monk went to the church and began to write in such large characters that I could read the writing at Schweinitz. The pen which he used was so large that its end reached as far as Rome, where it pierced the ears of a lion that was crouching there, and caused the triple crown that was on the head of the pope to shake. All the cardinals and princes, running hastily up, tried to prevent it from falling.....at that moment I awoke.....enraged at the monk for not managing his pen better. I recollected myself a little; it was only a dream."

But once more asleep, and.....

".....the dream returned . The lion, still annoyed by the pen, began to roar with all his might, so that the whole city of Rome, and all the States of the Holy Empire ran to see what the matter was. The Pope requested them to oppose the monk, and applied particularly to me, on account of (it) being in my country. I again awoke, repeated the Lord's prayer,.....and once more fell asleep.

Then I dreamed that all the Princes of the Empire, and we among them , hastened to Rome, and strove one after another, to break the pen; but the more we tried the stiffer it became, sounding as if it had been made of iron. We at length desisted, and I asked the monk.....where he got the pen, and why it was so strong. 'The pen', replied he, 'belonged to an old goose of Bohemia, a hundred years ago. I got it from one of my old schoolmasters. As to its strength, it is owing to the impossibility of depriving it of its pith and marrow, and I am quite astonished at it myself.' Suddenly I heard a loud noise, a large number of other pens' had sprung out of the long pen of the monk. I woke a third time.....it was daylight."

On that blessed morning of October 31st 1517, hardly had the Elector Prince finished relating his dream, when, not 18 miles away, " the monk comes with his hammer to interpret it".¹

How Luther's pen, and eventually the pens of others shook the papacy is a well documented fact of history. With the amazing propulsive power of the printing press

¹ J. A. Wylie: History of Protestantism Vol. 1 pages 263-266. The dream is evidently something amazing, the monk is of course Luther, and the reference to the 'old goose of Bohemia is evidently John Huss the Bohemian Proto-Reformer and martyr of a hundred years previous.

soon all Europe was fanned to a zealous blaze for the glory of God and the gospel of grace in Christ. The tracts, the treatises, the printed sermons, the compendiums of Christian doctrine, and the Word preached, and the Reformers were turning the world upside down like the apostles. But of all this theological output, by far the most sublime, and true to scripture, was the output from that great citadel of the faith at Calvin's Geneva :

The zeal of those whose cause I undertook,
Has swelled a short defence into a book.

And thus the immortal "Institutes" came forth from the pen of John Calvin, to become one of the foremost compendiums of Theology world wide for nigh 450 years.

Rome reacted. With the sword she smote at the Reformers, and her special malice was reserved for those who followed the Genevan reformation - good reason for why - in that pure stream the white hot light of God's Word was most brilliantly set forth, thorough-going in its fidelity to scripture, and stripped of all the accretions of man, stripped of formalistic rituals, stripped of Romish traditions, stripped of human hymnody and raising its voice in song to God using only the pure praises of Biblical Psalmody. The Inquisition saw the giant spiritual stamina that the Genevan faith propagated, and targeted the Reformed Churches with special attention, upon them all the engines of hell were unleashed in an unmitigated, and un pitying stream of violence. Men and women, old and young, slow-burned over fires, godly pastors racked, whipped, and broken on the wheel, covenant children wrenched from their parents to be dispatched into the Romish labyrinth of convents and monasteries, to disappear into an oblivion of Romish anonymity. In their tens, nay, hundreds of thousands, they sealed their godly testimonies with their own life's blood.....we can read today of statistics like :

"....from the church at Caen, above 15,000 martyrs,.....from the church at Alencon 5,000 martyrs.....from the church at Paris 13,000 martyrs.....Orleans 8,000.....Poitiers 12,000.".....and so on and onthe figures take one's breath away across the spread of France's 2,000 plus Reformed Churches. "Allow", says the author of the book '*Le Cabinet du Roy de France*' which was published in 1581, "allow but a hundred martyrs to every church, and you have the sum of 200,000; and yet it is as clear as the sun at noonday that the sum is vastly more."² All this, before 1581, and in the Reformed Churches of France alone !

All over Europe the fires of persecution raged, in Holland, Poland , the British Isles, Spain, and Portugal, and in Italy. In Spain and Portugal the Reform was stifled completely, and in Italy it did not fare much better, except in the sub-Alpine regions of the Waldensian valleys. How all those faithful saints met and coped with

² Cited in : Instrumental Music in Public Worship, by John L.Girardeau, pages 168 to 169. Publ. 1983 reprint by New Covenant Publication Society, Pennsylvania.

The Fight for the Reformed Faith

5

the multiple horrors that bore down upon them can only be ascribed to supernatural grace. In his scholarly work "History of the Inquisition", Limborch gives us close focus insights into the sufferings, some of his details read like nightmares straight out of hell :

".....then mine eyes did begin to startle, and my mouth to foam and froth, and my teeth to chatter like the dobbling of drumsticks.....and notwithstanding my shivering lips....my vehement groaning, and blood springing from my arms, my broken sinews, yea, and my depending weight on flesh-cutting cords, yet they struck me in the face with cudgels to abate and cease the thundering noise of my voice.....O Jesus, the Lamb of God, have mercy on me , and strengthen me with patience to undergo this barbarous murder....."³

Thus the testimony of one William Lithgow, a Scotsman, who in the early 17th Century miraculously survived, at least for long enough to recount something of his sufferings for the Lord Jesus Christ.

So it was then, that the scarlet whore of Babylon became "drunken with the blood of the saints.." (Rev. 17:6). Amazingly, she failed. She had deployed the sword against the pen, and yet it was the pen that had prevailed, even as the Elector Prince Frederick had seen in his apocalyptic dream ! From the blood of Europe's martyrs sprung forth thousands upon thousands more to take their places, and to uphold the Glory and Honour of Christ our Eternal Redeemer. By the first quarter of the 17th Century, a giant phalanx of Reformed Churches had blossomed, stretching in a great swathe from the Highlands of Scotland in the north, down through the southern British Isles, eastwards through Holland, Belgium, France, the Rhineland, the Palatinate, Prussia, Switzerland, Hungary, Transylvania, Moldavia, Poland, and even stretching north eastwards up the east coast of the Baltic into Lithuania⁴ . And as early as 1563, the vast terrain of Russia was in their sights, at Cracow, Szymon Budny had printed a catechism in the Belo-Russian tongue.⁵

³ Cited in H.Grattan Guinness: **Romanism and the Reformation** (Lewes, Sussex, Focus Christian Ministries Trust 1987 reprint) pages 160 to 169, where several other incidents are also recorded. One could compile huge catalogues of martyrdoms and sufferings that spanned the period 1517 onwards for at least two centuries. The total number of martyrs would probably extend into the millions. As late as 1679, for instance, as the last remnants of the Reform were still suffering in Spain, the young Charles II of Spain, celebrating his marriage to Louise of Orleans, had an auto da Fe interwoven with the wedding solemnities, and the young royals sat for FOURTEEN HOURS watching the horrific spectacle of 23 so-called "heretics" being slow-burned over the fires. (See New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religion, 1891 edition, vol.4., Article "Spain").

⁴ See R.J.W. Evans , CALVINISM IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE, in INTERNATIONAL CALVINISM, ed. M.Prestwitch, (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1985) page 170..

⁵ Evans : Op. Cit. p. 170.

Who said Calvinists did not preach the Gospel ? Who claims that the Reformed were backward in the establishment of missions ? In these modern days too many have fallen foul of a distorting historical mythology which would hiss such doubts in the ears of those who would follow in the paths of the Reformers. We get told that the missionary movement originated with the Arminian-Pietistic Moravians in about the 1730's. The truth however, is different, and has been obfuscated by the modern propaganda. The facts of history show how the Reformed not only swept the whole of Europe with the Gospel, they were reaching out to the totally unevangelized heathen world, and very early on. It was not only in Europe that the Vatican was tottering in the face of the Reformation, the effects were global. In the year 1556 some fourteen men left Geneva, backed by Calvin and Admiral Coligny, to establish the Reformed Faith in the French colonies in Brazil. But after a mere 10 months of labours amongst colonists and native Brazilians, after making an initial impression on some, the whole mission was exterminated by orders of the Governor of the colony, Villegagnon, who had been won back to the Roman faith, the original Protector and advocate of the mission therefore became its persecutor and accuser.⁶ Some six years later the colony itself was destroyed by the Portuguese. The undaunted Coligny tried again, this time in Florida and in Carolina, but again and again the missions met "equally disastrous results"⁷

By 1587, however, the tide was turning. In that year one Thomas Heriot, an eminent English scientist and philosopher was the first English missionary to the native North American Indians, and the first convert of a native North American to Christianity was registered at Roanoke, in Virginia, on the 13th August, 1587.

In Holland, by 1612, Antonius Wallaeus had established a seminary for the training of missionaries, and from there the Reformed emissaries went out worldwide, following the trails of such as Magellan and Vasco da Gama. By 1630 they had established a mission near Madras in Southern India, and a congregation of native Indian Christians was growing there. And by the late 1640's, in their colony in Ceylon, the Dutch had a state church up and running. Its nature may have been marred by its Erastian philosophy, but nevertheless, its adherents numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and the small core of communicants appear to have been thoroughly sincerely converted people.⁸ Who knows how many thousands were brought into God's Kingdom by these tremendous efforts by the Dutch ? Their early missionary efforts have been veiled by the passage of centuries of forgetfulness, and it seems too as if some of the forgetfulness has been deliberate. Some 100 years before William Carey, they had the New Testament translated into both

⁶ Cf. J.A.Graham : THE MISSIONARY EXPANSION OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES, publ. Edinburgh: R.and R. Clark Ltd. 1898. p.34.

⁷ Graham: Op cit. p.34.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 35-36.

Tamil and Singhalese.

On, further to the east, the Dutch efforts continued, establishing Reformed Churches throughout many areas of the giant archipelago of islands that makes up the East Indies, and veering northwards, they reached Formosa (Taiwan), establishing a mission there by 1627. In 1629 a certain Robert Junius, born of Scots parents in Rotterdam, "a man of superior gifts and devotion"⁹ arrived to assist at this mission. An account of his work was later published in 1650 under the title "*Of the Conversion of 5900 East Indians in the Isle of Formosa, near China, to the Profession of the True God in Jesus Christ*". Evidently, a record of sterling work successful in the extension of God's Kingdom. Sadly, in later years, when the Ming Dynasty of China was supplanted by the Manchus, the powerful Tartar pirate Koxinga refused allegiance to the new regime and attacked Formosa in 1661. "He persecuted the native Christians who remained firm, cruelly massacred the Dutch who fell into his hands, and forced them to withdraw in 1662, thus putting an end to what was perhaps the most satisfactory of the early Dutch missions."¹⁰ Of it, nothing was left, except a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew in Formosan.

One wonders what tremendous testimonies could be recounted, what amazing accounts of God's grace working in that far-off isle in the Eastern waters, all which seem to have been lost to our Reformed heritage now. One wonders why such intrepid missionary faithfulness has been allowed to lapse into the netherworld of limbo-land. One asks similar questions about the Reformed churches that were planted in Lithuania so early on. By the late 16th Century these numbered some 200 congregations¹¹. In the early years of the 20th Century a remnant of these remained. Writing in 1913, the Scots Presbyterian Dr. J.R.Fleming speaks of them as being "as old as the Swiss, having old connections with Scotland," and sadly that also they had "through persecution and poverty sunk to a remnant of 11 congregations with 13,000 adherents." He goes on to say that "they are a small island in a great Roman Catholic sea, but survive strongly because founded upon a rock of faithful testimony".¹² Two world wars further on, interspersed with Russia's revolution, waves of Stalinism, then Nazi-ism, then Stalinism again, and one wonders what has become of them?

Of a truth,, however, surely it is right to say of the Reformed, that they received that power from on high, that made them witnesses unto the Lord Christ, "unto the

⁹ Ibid. p.37

¹⁰ Ibid pp. 37-38

¹¹ Evans: Op. Cit. p.174.

¹² J.R.Fleming: THE BURNING BUSH, (Edinburgh T. and T. Clark 1925) p.56.

uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8), ".....their sound went out into all the ends of the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world"...(Romans 10:18).

Rome was tottering, sure enough. But by now she had learned a few things, and began a new course of attack. She began to use the pen alongside the sword as a means of assault on the Reformed. Certainly, this was not entirely a new move in itself, perhaps it is truer to say that Rome began to give the pen more priority in those areas where the Inquisition was failing. Undoubtedly she had from an early date endeavoured to infiltrate the Reformed camp, and had tried to work sabotage from within. One thinks of the intrigues of the Libertines at Geneva as they opposed Calvin, and the work of Bolsec, all of which tended towards destabilizing the Genevan reform or hindering it in some way. No doubt the secret agents were abroad, latching on to any possibilities that presented themselves from within the Reformed citadels. Men such as Bolsec, apparently converted from Catholicism, were to wreak havoc in local areas, and later return to the Roman fold. But Rome went on to the attack now with the pen in a big way. Besides the various libelous attacks on the Reformers, there was a concerted effort to refute Reformed doctrines. With the rise of the Jesuit order, Rome organised the most dedicated and scholarly, and indeed courageous "shock troops", and we see a most significant attempt by them to negate the Reformed doctrines when Ribera and Alcazar devised new means of interpreting the apocalyptic scriptures, whereby the Reformed (and the Lutherans) had denominated the Pope as the Antichrist. Ingeniously, Ribera hatched what was essentially "Dispensational Premillennialism" with the Antichrist projected indefinitely forward into the future, thus getting any present pope out from under the odium cast on them by the Reformed interpretation. In parallel with this, Alcazar proposed a "preterist" scheme, whereby the scriptural antichrist was interpreted as being Emperor Nero, and all the apocalyptic events of the New Testament as being in the distant past, thus again allowing the pope to be seen as an apparently innocent and wrongly maligned figure. Cleverly worked out these hermeneutical schemes hovered around in the post reformation period, but had little effect until the 19th Century, when Protestantism, weakened by the debilitating effects of the so-called "enlightenment", finally succumbed to such ideas, but of this, more anon.

More importantly, however, we must focus attention on two men, just two men, who more than any others, were the primary triggers that set off the slow destruction of the Reformed Churches. Jacobus Arminius, and Moise Amyraut. These two men went into the Reformed Churches like a pair of logic viruses being up-loaded into a modern computer's memory systems. Like such "viruses", they had all the appearances of being native to their environment, but as time went on, their insidious effects began to unravel Reformed Theology, just like a computer virus will unravel the host computer's logic, and finally render the computer completely useless. Look at the state of the Reformed Churches today. and you can see

how much they resemble a disabled computer ! Stacked with the most amazing power and potential, they are effectively disabled, and disabled from within ! For the first 200 years after the Reformation, these churches had fought the good fight for the Reformed Faith, but then, in the early years of the Eighteenth Century in Europe they seemed to lose their inner Spiritual strength, and from thereon they became more and more disabled by the false theology working within them. The very logic of their Biblically true Theology was gradually unravelled, until today, in most quarters, they even espouse a "theology" that is essentially illogical - the dialectic system of Karl Barth, the system that speaking in Calvinistic language, asserts that two things that are mutually and simultaneously contradictory are nevertheless simultaneously true ! All scripture, then becomes simultaneously the Word of God and the erring, fallible word of man ! All men are simultaneously elect and reprobate !

What chaos ! And those who follow the old paths of the Reformers are excoriated as being "logical", or "scholastic", or "dead orthodox" ! Trace out the history of the Reformed over the last 200 years, and you will see how all this goes back to the work of just those two men, Arminius and Amyraut !

It is generally pooh-poohed today, even in Reformed circles, that Arminius had anything to do with Rome. After all, we get told, he studied under Beza at Geneva. He held, right to the end, that Calvin's commentaries on Scripture were unsurpassed. He was a Dutch Reformed minister. He was appointed Professor at the Reformed Theological Academy at Leiden. His credentials were impeccable, were they not ? His visit to Italy, where he spent some time, seems to be shrouded in what was for him, a convenient mist. But ugly rumours flew around - and whatever their truth or falsity, it was not for nothing that Arminius spent time down there. "If anything" says Homer Hoeksema, "(his) inclination to a very broad concept of Christianity was strengthened"¹³ The fact is, that "Arminianism" is essentially Roman Catholic in its soteriology. One could go on to say that even if Arminius was no Jesuit recruit, then who needs enemies like the Jesuits when you can have a friend, indeed a brother Reformed minister, like Arminius ?

Thank God for Gomarus, who saw the error in the Arminian doctrine. And thank God for that great Synod of Dordt, that met the Arminian challenge head on, and brought it to an abrupt stop !¹⁴

But Arminianism, checked for the moment, was to go into limbo for only a while. In the meantime it awaited the onset of something more subtle, and more of

¹³ Cf. Homer Hoeksema : THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS (Grand Rapids, Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980) p.7. Also, Augustus Toplady has some interesting observations to make concerning these matters, they can be perused in his pamphlet : ARMINIANISM; THE ROAD TO ROME publ. in British Reformed Journal Issue No.7 pp.32-36.

¹⁴ Cf. Hoeksema Op. Cit. This book is a MUST for every concerned Christian's reading !

a nature to be *prima facie* acceptable to the Reformed. Scarce had the dust died down after the Synod of Dordt, when the new enemy arose from within the precincts of a most prestigious French Reformed Seminary, the Academy at Saumur.

Error had been gestating at Saumur for some time, since the time when a doctrinally deviant instructor had been appointed there in the academy's early days, one John Cameron. He taught there from 1618 to 1620, and evidently made a big impression on the students, for from their ranks arose a new generation of theologians steeped in his principles. Foremost among them was Moise Amyraut, who turned out to be the most plausible arch-heretic of all time. He preached, and talked, and wrote like an orthodox Calvinist. He even openly espoused the deliberations of the Synod of Dordt which the French Reformed Churches adopted in 1620. But wrapped up in all these apparently impeccable credentials lurked an exquisitely-honed heresy that was to break out and ruin France's Reformed Churches! Thousands upon thousands were duped by his doctrinal innovations, believing innocently that they were following Calvin more faithfully than they would have done otherwise!

Some of his students, and the famous Rivet brothers, spotted the danger, and raised the alarm. The aging Pierre Du Moulin, perspicacious as ever, saw that in Amyraut you had Arminianism cleverly disguised to look like Calvinism, replete with multiple quotations from Calvin's writings purportedly proving that Amyraut was only advancing orthodoxy. Not all shared Du Moulin's analysis however, and Amyraut effectively up-staged him by publishing a carefully reasoned treatise refuting Arminianism! But really! Amyraut disassociating himself from Arminius! This is like a doberman barking its dissent against the presence of a rottweiler! Or, as one might say, two different breeds, maybe, but the same genus.

But the whole situation boiled up, and the matter was taken to the National Synod. Clearly, the orthodox wanted Amyraut either to repent, or that he, and his by now considerable following, should be excommunicated. However, the Romanists were ever alive to this situation. Under the Edict of Nantes, only two religions were permissible in France, the Catholic and the Reformed. If anyone should be separated from either group, they would become subject to all the horrors of the Inquisition! This lurking threat evidently bothered the Reformed, so that at National Synod level there was an understandable reluctance to condemn Amyraut and thereby, his supporters as well. Accordingly, the Synod tended to sound its trumpet with an uncertain sound, with the result that Amyraut was able to carry on as before. The Reformed Churches became permeated with his doctrines, so much so, that Professor Pierre Courthial, looking back at those times from his vantage point in this century, felt compelled to conclude that by the end of the 17th Century, "people of the Reformed Faith became a rarity" in France. Indeed Courthial insists that the rise of Amyraut to prominence in about 1633 marks the end of what he calls "the Golden Age of Calvinism" in France, from that point on came

a general apostasy, which he describes in the terms of the old Provencal proverb: "*The rotting of a fish begins with the head*". The head, of course, he likens to the leading theologians in this downgrade, i.e., those of Saumur.¹⁵

Was Amyraut a Romish infiltrate ? There appears to be no direct evidence. But there is evidence that he was inclining strongly in a Roman direction. To begin with, he claimed that the galvanizing *raison d'être* behind his theology was the need to so present Reformed doctrine as to make it easy for a Roman Catholic to become a Protestant. Specifically, it appears that he had a certain Roman Catholic nobleman in mind, but just who it was he never let drop. It was this ostensibly pastoral motive which led him to publish his "*Brief Traite de la Predestination*" in about the year 1634. In it he explicitly points out that his concern was for those who found difficulties with the Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, and on account of this were in danger of slipping back into Catholicism. It has of course, been questioned as to whether the nobleman in question was real, or was just a fictitious convenience to provide Amyraut with an excuse to write his book. But the Amyrauldian party in the French Reformed churches insisted that the story was genuine. ¹⁶ It has been noted, however, that in 1634 arose what has been called a "sensational case" of the duke de Bouillon, a Protestant nobleman who actually converted to Catholicism. ¹⁷

Evidence enough abounds to the effect that Amyraut was in fact constructing a theological bridge that would make it easy for Romanists to cross over into the Reformed camp. But by the same premises, this bridge would likewise make it easy for Protestants to cross over to the Roman camp. Noteworthy too, is the fact that Amyraut, by virtue of being employed by the Reformed Synod in diplomatic negotiations with the government was frequently in contact with Romanist bishops, and was held in high regard among them. No less than Cardinal Richelieu himself esteemed Amyraut highly. This is somewhat in contrast to how Romanist dignitaries usually viewed the Reformed, and went to great lengths to denigrate them.. One wonders what attributes Amyraut had which so enchanted them ! ¹⁸

¹⁵ Cf. Pierre Courthial: THE GOLDEN AGE OF CALVINISM IN FRANCE 1533-1633 in JOHN CALVIN, HIS INFLUENCE IN THE WESTERN WORLD (Publ. Zondervan Grand Rapids 1982.)pages 75 and 76. Prof. Courthial takes 1533-1633 as being the "Golden Age" of French Calvinism because these dates mark the period between Calvin's conversion (1533), and the rise of Amyraut (1633), at which latter point the Golden Age ended.

¹⁶ Cf. F.P. Van Stam: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE THEOLOGY OF SAUMUR, 1635-1650, (Amsterdam: Holland University Press 1988) pp. 39-41.

¹⁷ Van Stam: Op Cit. p. 41 , footnote 46.

¹⁸ Cf. Schaff: THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM (Grand Rapids 1990 reprint BAKER) Vol 1 pages 480 to 481 for interesting details re. Amyraut's actual doctrine.

Inside his doctrinal portfolio, Amyraut had given the atonement a double reference. He insisted that Christ had died to save all men if only they willed, and that God, foreseeing that none would will, deployed a second decree whereby some, the elect, would be effectively made to believe. Hence the direct connection between the Lord's death and the outworking of this in the heart of an elect person was broken. A person was saved by virtue of being objectified in that secondary decree, not by the blood of Christ, because if the blood of Christ had been shed for everyone, therefore in and of itself it could not be the distinguishing factor between elect and non elect. This was of course, effectively Arminian-Roman soteriology wrapped up in the words of orthodoxy. And it had a hideous knock-on effect on the doctrine of justification. From the Amyrauldian standpoint one could no longer see Christ as having "paid the debt" for the sins of the elect, thereby releasing them from the burden of paying the debt of sin themselves, for if Christ had died for all, then ipso facto, the debt of all would be manifestly cleared, and all men would be saved. To avoid this logical terminus, the Amyrauldian system posits that Christ *did not pay the debt of anyone's sins, but only a TOKEN*". Now this is effectively a **denial of the Christian Biblical Gospel** ! On this particular point Baxter argued with John Owen, and it is to be feared that a large phalanx of England's Presbyterians of the 17th century were under Baxter's influence, and therefore to be categorized as Amyrauldian. Certainly there were a few of them at the Westminster Assembly trying to steer the deliberations of that august body into Amyraut's direction, notably among them, Calumy, Arrowsmith, Vines, Seaman and others. No wonder English Presbyterianism crashed in the later Puritan period, after the glorious revolution of 1688, when, though unhindered by the state, the later Puritans floundered into chaos!

In France, the Romanists must have discerned how the Reformed doctrines had now essentially taken a new line that would ultimately be favourable to them. It remained only for a judicious usage of the sword now to supplement the work the pen had been doing for half a century, and when, in 1685, the Jesuits persuaded the King of France to revoke the Edict of Nantes, doubtless they anticipated that in order to stay alive, the vast bulk of Protestants would cross Amyraut's theological bridge back to "mother" Rome. They were right. Under the threat of the Inquisition the Protestants abjured their Protestant faith in the hundreds of thousands. After all, they might have thought, except for certain outward trappings Romanism is essentially the same theologically as Amyrauldianism ! The thinking ones must have seen that Amyrauldian soteriological teaching with its ramifications on the doctrine of justification was similar to that of the medieval Catholic scholastics such as found in Occam's Nominalist school, or like that of Gabriel Biel and the Via Moderna, (which latter system Luther had rejoiced to be liberated from.) .

According to some scholarly estimates, up to 30% of the Reformed Pastors abjured their faith and crossed over to the Roman church, though more recent esti-

mates would lower this figure to about 16%.¹⁹ The fact is that the pastors alone among the people were given the option of going into exile instead of abjuring. And if they abjured they would receive a pension ! By far the majority chose exile and left their flocks without shepherds. In consequence the success of the Romanist conversion drive was "spectacular"²⁰ and except for the "diehards" in the mountainous reaches of the Cevennes in the South, there was little resistance, even if large numbers of the Protestants obeyed the priests somewhat sullenly. The backbone had gone from French Protestantism now, few stood ready to die for their convictions. Many availed themselves of opportunities to escape France, and found a welcome in Britain, South Africa, the emergent American colonies, where they were to become stalwarts in the Reformed Churches of those countries. But many brought with them the Amyrauldian virus. Particularly is this probably so in respect of most, if not all, the pastors who fled, seeing that they were the ones who had the education and the articulation to be able to put forward and argue their doctrines. A large number of this type turned up in Geneva in the closing decades of the 17th Century, and gradually their poison began to spread in Calvin's old citadel. Francis Turretin and others fought valiantly against it at first, but after Turretin's death in 1687 the Amyrauldian cartel captured control of the Theological Academy, and this old bastion of the Reformed Faith found its doctrines unravelled from within. By 1724 with the death of the last faithful occupier of Calvin's professorial chair, Benedict Pictet, Geneva was apostate, its Amyrauldianism having unravelled into the underlying Arminianism, and this unravelling into "enlightenment rationalism". It was the end of Reformed Theology in that city.

Overseas, the Amyrauldian virus laid low, only to surface in a new form in the British Isles. An obscure book published amongst the English Puritans in 1645 was to become the incubus in which Amyrauldianism entered Scots Presbyterianism in the early years of the 18th Century. It was of course, the "*Marrow of Modern Divinity*" by one Edward Fisher. Due to a doctrinal dispute with various ministers, the book came to the notice of the General Assembly, and was officially condemned by them on the grounds that it taught :

- 1) Assurance was of the nature of faith.
- 2) a strong implication that the atonement was universal.
- 3) holiness was not necessary to salvation
- 4) the fear of punishment and the hope of reward were not legitimate motives for obedience.
- 5) the believer is not under the law as a rule of life.

19. Cf. Philippe Joutard : The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: End or Renewal of French Protestantism ? in INTERNATIONAL CALVINISM ed. M. Prestwitch., pages 342 onwards.

20 Joutard Op.cit. p.342.

Many in the Church of Scotland were dissatisfied over this ruling, and a group of twelve such men protested vehemently. This group consisted of Thomas Boston, James Hog, Traill, the Erskines, and others. Especially were they concerned that in this condemnation the Assembly had condemned the universal offer of salvation. Yet, these original "marrowmen" and their followers insisted on teaching a limited atonement, a feature which one can see readily in Boston's works. Nevertheless, in holding to the belief that the Gospel was the preaching of a universal offer of grace to all without exception, they taught that the atoning work of Christ did have a universal aspect. They put it something like this :

It is heretical to believe that Christ died for all,BUT :

It is orthodox to teach that Christ is dead for all.

Now the fact is, that the English language will not bear the weight that is being put on those words, and something somewhere has to crack. Without doubt Boston and his colleagues were devout men, the contradiction in their soteriology did not poison their own Christianity....but in the generations that were to follow them, it was seen that their doctrine led on naturally to Amyrauldianism. Dr. John McLeod, in his eminently useful tome, "*Scottish Theology*", notes that Boston is popularly regarded as the "high-water mark of Scottish orthodoxy," and evidently appears to agree with this evaluation, but paradoxically has to go on in his book to outline the incursion of Amyrauldianism amongst the followers of the Marrowmen, which effectively tore at the foundations of the Scottish churches in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is during this period that we find Scots Presbyterianism splitting into a multitude of warring factions, with the New Light Burghers, and the New Light Anti-Burghers, the Old Light Burghers, and the Old Light Anti-Burghers, the Original Protesters, and so on. Embroiled in all this was "New Light", which acted as a welcoming host for Amyrauldianism.²¹

In mid 19th Century Scotland, Free Kirk divines earnestly contested against Amyrauldianism. No less than Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall opposed the proposed merger of the Free Kirk with the United Presbyterians on the grounds that Marrowism in that denomination was breaking out into outright Amyrauldianism, and that effectively " IN THE MARROW DEFINITION OF FAITH , THERE WAS THAT GERM OF ALL ERRORS WHICH HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED INTO AMYRAULDIANISM".²²

²¹ Cf. John McLeod : SCOTTISH THEOLOGY (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth 1974) particularly chapter 5 : The Neonomians and the Marrow Controversy, and chapter 8: New Light, and what it has done. While Dr. McLeod gives an excellent overview of how Amyrauldianism captured the Succession Church, he does not seem to give sufficient attention to the fact that the Marrow acted as a comfortable repository for gestating that kind of doctrine. Others, notably Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall DID see this, and warned about it in no uncertain terms.

²² Cited in H. Hanko: HISTORY OF THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL (Publ. Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Grandville, Michigan USA 1989) page 124.

Despite the the powerful polemics of such eminent Scots theologians as Dr. John Kennedy, Candlish, Buchanan, and Cunningham, the next generation of the Free Kirk went down the very road which they had so vociferously warned against. The subsequent history of the Free Kirk is one of dissension and division, an unravelling of their Reformed Theology and ultimately the hosting of modernism. The faithful remnant were isolated, and it is their subsequent generations that form the Free Kirk of the present day, and also the Free Presbyterian Church.

But still, in these two remnant bodies, the "Marrow" was maintained in many quarters. Today among the Free Presbyterians one senses that it may in fact be the *de facto* orthodoxy of that denomination, which raises the question as to how far its emphasis on a Universal gospel offer might not have been a root cause in the development of an avant garde wing amongst them, who came to the point of succession in 1989. Certainly the emergent Associate Presbyterians seem happy to link up with the Arminian style evangelism of the Billy Graham campaigns.

But amongst modern Evangelicals nation wide, the Marrow holds a prominent status. The Banner of Truth has put the works of Marrowmen on its publishing list with a high profile. And as if in unwitting demonstration of the "unravelling" effect of the Marrow acting as an incubus for Amyrauldianism, the Banner have even published works by such Amyrauldians as Richard Baxter, and John Brown (Tertius), whose commentary on Hebrews was an early Banner publication. In recent issues of their magazine they have included several dubious pieces of work. In the July issue of 1994 there appeared an article giving a positively up-beat evaluation of the French Huguenot Amyrauldian Jean Daille, who from his vantage point as a pastor at France's premier Reformed congregation at Charenton in the mid 17th Century gave Moise Amyraut great support and encouragement.²³

Generally, people are stumbling from the Marrow into Amyrauldianism, because the latter fits so comfortably inside the Marrow, indeed modern Amyrauldians will cite the Marrowmen as being essentially on their side ! That the downhill slide is well under way can be seen from a further article in the Banner of Truth magazine, in the Aug/Sept. issue of 1994, by David Gay. If someone had prophesied to me 30 years ago that this kind of stuff would be appearing in the Banner in the 1990's I would have told them them not to be daft! But there it was, as large as life, and

²³ Cf. van Stam: Op Cit. p.37, where he points out that Amyraut and Daille were fellow students at Saumur, "where they had fallen under the spell of John Cameron", and that Daille "took up the cudgels for Amyraut" to defend him, and this as early as 1635. Notable too is Van Stam's observation that after the Synod of Dordt some 200 Arminian pastors from the Netherlands were welcomed into the French Reformed Churches, and their advocate within was none other than Daille, who insisted that they be accepted without requiring doctrinal discipline Ibid pp. 19-20. Even the Arch-Arminian Grotius was welcomed at Daille's church, and could say later how in that church " the Synod of Dordt has been forgotten here; it was a matter of passions." Ibid. p.21..It is of concern that NO DETAILS of this other side of Daille's activities were presented for the Banner's readers, and in effect, the article gave the false impression that Daille was orthodox! Sadly, the same article (or similar) was repeated last year in the Protestant Alliance's REFORMER.

herewith some pertinent extracts:

"Does God *desire* the salvation of the reprobate?"

"*Does God desire the salvation of all men?* The answer is, Yes!"

"Therefore we must, in our preaching, declare indiscriminately to all our hearers that God desires to see them saved. Further, we are preaching the gospel to sinners properly, ONLY (emph. mine Ed.) when we are convinced of the truth of such a desire in God and say so very clearly."²⁴

The author then goes on to justify his statements on the basis of "paradox" theology, that we should accept that "we must not, we dare not, try to force scripture into the mould of human reason and logic" ! That is , that we are to accept it when two contradictory doctrines emerge out of our exegesis of God's Word, and not in any way try to reconcile the differences, or even, it seems, to question the exegesis, but to accept that the truth is represented by both sides of the dialectic tension. Shades of Karl Barth ! So Mr. Gay's gospel would look like this :

God loves all men without exception to the point of desiring the salvation of all men without exception.

Subject to the following unspoken but non-negotiable provisions:

1. That God has ordained only the Elect actually to be saved notwithstanding any elements in the propositional clause printed in bold type above (hereinafter denominated the "referent" proposition) which might be deemed to stand in contradiction to this and the following provisions

2. That God, though capable of granting the gifts of repentance and saving faith to ALL, will only grant such to the Elect as declared in provision 1 above, notwithstanding any incoherence of logic which may be deemed to arise out of this in juxtaposition with the referent proposition.

3. That the tension of mutual simultaneous contradiction inherent between these provisions and their referent proposition herewith should not be allowed in any way to vitiate any of the sentiments contained in the referent proposition and these provisions.

4. That these provisions 1-4 herewith be carefully obfuscated from the cognition of any putative auditors under evangelization.

5. That all liabilities obligations responsibilities and their subsequent/consequent ramifications implications inferences that may or may not irrevocably arise out of the foregoing referent proposition and these attendant provisions herewith be deemed to devolve and remain solely and entirely upon the author of scripture and in no way upon the exegete preacher spokesman representative of the same.

Notice the small print! This does not get preached with the "referent proposition", and no wonder, those being evangelized would soon spot the contradiction and reject the whole package ! But is it honest preaching, to veil these contradictions from those you exhort unto conversion ? With this kind of drift going on in British and world-wide Calvinism today it is critical that we should stand up and Fight for the Reformed Faith, to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints" (Jude v.3), and to "preach the word.....instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.." (2 Timothy 4:2), for God's Glory and His Great Name's sake.

To be continued(DV).

²⁴ David Gay : Article: PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO SINNERS Part 2 Banner of Truth Aug-Sept issue 1994.