

# WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

## The Arminian and Calvinist Controversy

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## I. INTRODUCTION: WHY?

One young theological student made the following awkward entry into his journal:

I am becoming increasingly reticent of (sic) employing the terms 'Calvinism' and/or 'Calvinist'. They are unbecoming both historically and spiritually. Were we to consistently use these terms and pin them to those holding to the theology they represent we would have to call St. Augustine a 'Calvinist' which would be historically awkward. We would have to call St. Paul a 'Calvinist' and that would be spiritually uncomfortable. But we would also have to call our Lord a 'Calvinist' and that thought is morally repulsive.

In I Corinthians 1. 11- 17 Paul writes:

*For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.*

By reviewing this historical controversy between those called Arminians and those called Calvinists are we guilty of disobeying the admonition found in Paul's text? Without a doubt many throughout the history of the Church, as well as the history of this particular controversy, have violated this Scriptural exhortation. There have been men and groups who have aligned themselves behind human teachers and personalities, thus dividing Christ. But is there any substance to this issue? It is unfortunate that two men's names have become the labels for these two distinctly different ways of viewing God's Word. Though attention will not be given to this, it is historically accurate to state that both of these systems of theology pre-existed their own namesakes. This being the case, this controversy ought not to be viewed as a siding or identifying with one man over and against another man. These two systems of theology represent two contrasting views of God and His revealed Word. There are irreconcilable differences between these two systems. There are results and effects that do follow out from these two positions. It is important to determine what the Scriptures teach, for what we believe truly does affect how we walk and worship (Proverbs 23:7). In the final analysis it must never be which man or which theology most appeals to us personally that decides the case. As with every issue of truth the only important question and purpose of resolve is

What Do the Scriptures Say?

This pamphlet seeks to be only a very brief outline with a view to constructing an historical and theological definition of these two contradicting theologies. Hopefully, further study on the part of the reader will be it's fruit. It is important that we understand what the Bible teaches and that we comply with it fully. For Paul has said:

*Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless, and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.*

2 Timothy 2:14 -15 (emphasis is mine)

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The setting for this controversy is the early 1600s at the conclusion of the German Reformation.<sup>1</sup> A Dutchman named Jacob Hermann had studied under Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor in Geneva.<sup>2</sup> He returned to his native

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther is commonly considered to be the father of the German Reformation. Born in 1483, Dr. Luther died in 1546 at the age of 63.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann's actual name was Jakob Hermandszoon (1560-1609). John Calvin's dates are 1509 to 1564.

Holland to teach. Hermann Latinized his last name and became Jacob Arminius. It was in Holland that he began to question the doctrines of election, man's will, as well as the nature and the extent of Christ's atoning work. His followers came to be known as *Remonstrants* and later, after Hermann's death, *Arminians*. The Arminians systematized their theological views into five points of doctrine and issued a document known as the "*Remonstrance of 1610*." As the result of this publication, the theology of the Arminians spread throughout Holland. Ultimately, the Dutch Church summoned a conference to review and decide the conflicting issues. This conference was called the *Synod of Dort* which convened from November of 1618 until May of 1619.<sup>3</sup> After seven months and 154 sessions of review, the "*Five Points of Arminian Theology*" were declared to be at variance with the Scriptures. They were labeled *heretical* and their proponents *heretics*. The findings of this Synod were published in a document entitled the "*Canons of Dort*." This document critiques each of the five points of Arminian theology from the biblical perspective. It is somewhat regrettable that these five responses have come to be called the "*Five Points of Calvinism*." Though these responses accurately reflect the teaching of John Calvin, they did not originate with the Swiss Reformer. These same doctrinal tenets are found to varying degrees in the writings of Martin Luther (1500s), John Hus (1400s), Anselm of Canterbury (1100s), Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine of the 400s) and ultimately they find their source in the Scriptures, especially apparent in Paul's epistles.<sup>4</sup>

Although condemned as heretical and persecuted by the Dutch Church and government of the day, Arminianism continued to flourish as a heretical defection from orthodox Christianity. Ironically, within twenty years of the controversy a seminary devoted to the teaching of Arminianism was founded in Amsterdam by Simon Episcopius. And of course, Arminianism prospers in our own day throughout the Church.

### III. THE FIVE POINTS OF ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

#### Point 1

**FREE WILL** - This debate has continued throughout the history of the Church. In the 1500s two learned men published their views in treatise form: Erasmus of Rotterdam, On the Freedom of the Will, and Martin Luther, On the Bondage of the Will.<sup>5</sup> The Arminians adopted views that paralleled the work of Erasmus, believing that man possesses a free and independent will. By this it is meant that in Eden, man's fall only partially affected his ability to choose. The will of man is neutral and not determined by his nature, therefore it is autonomous and free of any binding persuasion towards unrighteousness and sin.

John 3:16, Acts 2:38, & 16:31, Romans 10:9, 1 John 3:23.

#### Point 2

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this conference took place well after the death of both John Calvin and Jacob Arminius. Though their names have become attached to this controversy, neither of these men can be charged with promoting this historical development.

<sup>4</sup> The characteristic doctrines of "Five Point Calvinism" are also to be found in the writings of the early Church Fathers; e.g. Clement of Rome (A.D. 69 - a contemporary of the apostles - Philippians 4:3), Barnabus (A.D. 70 - Paul's companion), Ignatious (A.D. 110), Justin Martyr (A.D. 150), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 190), Irenaeus (A.D. 198), Tertullian (A.D. 200), Cyprian (A.D. 250), Arnobius (A.D. 303), Lactantius (A.D. 320), Eusebius (A.D. 330), Julius & Athanasius (A.D. 350), Hilarius (A.D. 363), Gregory of Nazianzum (A.D. 370), Ambrose of Milan & Pacianus (A.D. 380), Epiphanius & Hieronymus (A.D. 390), and Remigius (A.D. 850). See Michael Horton's appendix to Putting Amazing Back Into Grace (pages 219-242) for quotations from each of these Church Fathers. These doctrines are truly the faith of God's elect through the ages.

<sup>5</sup> Both of these treatises are currently in print and available separately or bound in one volume. They are not difficult to read. Every Christian would benefit from reading these two treatises.

**CONDITIONAL ELECTION** - The Arminian believes that God's election unto salvation is based upon His fore-knowing<sup>6</sup> the free will choices of men with regard to their own salvation. In other words, in eternity-past God observed certain men freely choosing Christ. In response to that pre-observed choice, God, in turn, chose those men and called them the elect. Election, therefore, is conditioned by and based upon the free will choices made by men and observed in advance by God.

Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 8:2, Mark 1:15 & 11:22, John 5:24, Romans 11:2, 1 Peter 1:1-2.

### Point 3

**UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT** - The Arminian believes that in order to accommodate man's free will, Christ took to the Cross the sins of every human being without exception. The death of Christ does not save any individual, rather it makes salvation *possible* for every individual.<sup>7</sup> The cross is thereby *limited* as to its *nature*, becoming an incomplete work, ineffectual until completed by the free will work of man.<sup>8</sup> It is the free will choice of man to accept Christ's work that completes salvation (e.g. man's decision to receive Christ accomplishes, secures, and completes an atonement which Christ did not "finish" at Calvary Himself).

John 1:12 & 29, 3:16, & 6:37; 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2<sup>9</sup>.

### Point 4

**OBSTRUCTABLE GRACE** - The Arminian believes that the Holy Spirit merely woos the man, but salvation rests ultimately upon that man's free will response to the Holy Spirit's persuasion. The free will of man can and does thwart and refuse the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. It is man's volition, or willingness to cooperate with God that can either support or frustrate God's desire to save. With this concept of salvation great importance and weight is laid upon the work of man. The Arminian believes that the logical order of salvation is: first, man chooses Christ and exercises faith in Him, then, as the result of that activity the Holy Spirit regenerates him. First man believes, then, man is born again. The Arminian believes that faith precedes regeneration, and is the cause of that regeneration, giving, as it were, the go-ahead to the Holy Spirit to do His assigned work.

John 1:12, 3:18-21 & 36, John 5:40, & 8:45, John 5:24 (often taught as two conditions with three results although the final verb tense precludes this interpretation - perfect tense, also with I John 5:1).

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<sup>6</sup> Foreknowledge in the mind of the Arminian is equated with a seeing-in-advance, a pre-observation on the part of God. In His foresight, God, observing the activities of men notes which men will choose Christ. This impugns the omniscience of God for we must assume that prior to this pre-observation He did not know the choices they would make. This portrays God as One who learns, but if God shall have to learn anything He must be unknowing of the thing before He learns it and therefore, not omniscient - not God. A word study of this term *foreknowledge* will reveal that it is a creative term. God's foreknowledge creates, dictates, and determines. When He foreknew, He established the event as a certain reality (pre-destined).

<sup>7</sup> A leading proponent of this position, Dr. Lewis S. Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote, "Christ's death does not save either actually or potentially; rather it makes all men savable." From an article entitled "For Whom Did Christ Die?" reprinted in Biblioteca Sacra (Oct-Dec 1980), p. 325.

<sup>8</sup> This position, though called "unlimited" atonement actually does limit the *nature* and *effectiveness* of the atonement. The Calvinist's position limits the *scope* or *extent* of the atonement while maintaining that Christ's work was absolutely effectual and successful. Both positions limit the atonement: the Arminians – it's nature (and this without Scriptural warrant), the Calvinists – it's scope. What do the Scriptures say?

<sup>9</sup> For a helpful review of the use of "universal" terms, such as *all* and *world*, see Tom Wells' book A Price for a People.

### Point 5

**FALLING FROM GRACE** - The Arminian believes that since man chooses for himself salvation, he can likewise choose to fall away from it. By man's choice salvation is acquired, sustained, or rejected at any given time. This is the necessary conclusion if one is to maintain the free will of man. A man must be as free to get out of salvation as he was to get in to salvation, lest God become guilty of violating that man's free will.

Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 6:4-6.

**SUMMARY** - The Arminian believes that at every point, to varying degrees, a man cooperates and assists God in acquiring and securing his own salvation. Man has a positive, meritorious part in the saving of his own soul. In theology this has come to be known as synergism.<sup>10</sup> Synergism views salvation as being the product of a partnership between God and man, who, working together, secure a similar and common goal. Varying degrees of effort may be paraded (50/50,60/40,99/1), but man has a part in his own salvation. In the Arminian system the role of grace is reduced and that of human works is enlarged.

<sup>10</sup> Literally from its Greek roots a compound of *syn* – together and *ergo* – to work, therefore, *working together*.

#### IV. THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISTIC THEOLOGY

##### Point 1

**TOTAL DEPRAVITY** - The Calvinist believes, as did Luther, that man has a will and his will is in bondage to his nature. The will of man is free to choose according to the dictates of his nature, but it is not free to contradict his nature. From Adam's fall the nature of every man has been sinful. Therefore, every action of the unsaved man is sinful and rebellious; it is stained through and through by his sin nature. The unregenerate man can NOT perform even one single righteous or pleasing work with respect to a holy God.<sup>11</sup>

Genesis 6:5 & 8:21, Isaiah 64:6-7, Jeremiah 17:9, John 3:19, Romans 3:10-18 & 8:8, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:26.

##### Point 2

**UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION** - The Calvinist believes that God's election is truly unconditional. The foreknowledge of God is based upon His decree, plan, and purpose; it is the expression of His will and good pleasure,<sup>12</sup> not a response to man's free-will choices. Election is the sovereign act of God the Father choosing specific individuals out from the entire body of condemned and fallen humanity. These individuals<sup>13</sup> were chosen before the foundations of the universe and not as a result of any foreseen merit or activity or decision on their part.<sup>14</sup> These chosen or elect individuals are purposed to become monuments to the Father's love for all of eternity.<sup>15</sup> In this regard the Calvinist understands election as an example of God's "love before time."<sup>16</sup>

John 15:16, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:28-30, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, Ephesians 1:3-5 & 2:4-7, 2 Timothy 1:9.

##### Point 3

**LIMITED ATONEMENT** - The Calvinist believes that in order to accomplish the specific will of the Father, Christ took to the Cross the sins of the elect. Christ died for the sins of men without distinction as to race or nationality (that is, Jew or Gentile). He provided a complete and effectual atonement for their sins. Those whom Christ redeemed, Christ really and truly redeemed (actual not potential). Though infinite in value, Christ's atoning work was specific in its design. Some Calvinists prefer to call this "definite atonement" or "particular redemption". The death of Christ at Calvary does not make men savable, but rather it saves men completely.<sup>17</sup> The Cross is a completed, successful work that requires no assistance from man. The Calvinist believes that Christ died for all of the sins of the elect. The Arminian must avoid the idea of all the sins lest he proclaim a universal salvation. For, if Christ died for all of the sins of all men without exception, upon what basis would any man be denied heaven? Remember, unbelief is a sin and therefore a sin for which Christ died if He has truly died for all the sins of all men without exception.

Psalm 34:22, Isaiah 53:8, Matthew 1:21 & 20:28, Luke 1:68, John 3:16 (the Father gave His Son for whom? - according to this verse the Son was given for *whoever believes in Him (the believing ones)* not for the ones not believing in Him), John 10:14 -15 & 17:2,6,9; Acts 20:28, Galatians 3:13, Eph 5:25b, Hebrews 10:14, Revelation 5:9.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:8 – *and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 46:10 – *Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’.*

<sup>13</sup> Romans 8:29 – *for whom (persons) He foreknew – not for what (actions) He foreknew.*

<sup>14</sup> Romans 9:11 – *not yet born...not because of works.*

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 2:7 – *in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

<sup>16</sup> Love Before Time is the title of a book by Kenneth D. John – well recommended on this topic.

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 3.13 – *Christ redeemed us* – He did not simply make us redeemable.

#### Point 4

**IRRESISTIBLE GRACE** - The Calvinist believes that the Holy Spirit, in agreement with the electing will of the Father and the atoning work of the Son, does *in the fullness of time* quicken the dead spirit of a man and give to him the gift of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Calvinist, the logical order of salvation is regeneration first, followed by faith/believing. Since dead men do not respond, God must make them alive first (Eph 2:4-5); regeneration, of necessity, precedes any action or activity on the part of man, including faith and repentance. Hence, every single individual upon whom the Spirit of God moves savingly is regenerated, born again, adopted, grafted in, and saved eternally.

John 5:24 - the perfect tense verb should read *has already passed from death unto life*; John 6:37-39,44, Ephesians 2:1-10, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 John 5:1 - another perfect tense verb is used here and should be translated *has already been born of God*, I John 3:7, John 1: 12-13 but of God, and Romans 8:8.

#### Point 5

**PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS** - The Calvinist believes that since God is *the Author and Finisher of our faith* man cannot fall away from eternal salvation. Once a man has been born-again he cannot be unborn-again. Furthermore, the elect of God will definitely manifest evidences of their salvation by means of *good works*. The elect shall, by the grace of God and without exception, ultimately persevere in righteousness.<sup>18</sup> The eternal security of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is demonstrated by the persevering faith and righteousness wrought by the grace of God in His *little begotten ones*.

John 3:36, John 10:28, Romans 8:28ff, Ephesians 2:10 *God’s workmanship*, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 2 Timothy 1:12b & 4:18, 1 Peter 1:4-5, & I John 2:19.

**SUMMARY** - The Calvinist believes that salvation is the product of the complimentary, cooperative work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father elects specific individuals out from a race of entirely undeserving (hell-deserving) sinners, the Son redeems those same specific individuals by taking their sins to the cross<sup>19</sup>, and the Spirit regenerates and quickens those exact same specific individuals. Man, throughout, is the recipient of grace, serving as the object of God’s sovereign and saving love. It is a monergistic<sup>20</sup> salvation that proclaims along with the apostles. In the theology of the Calvinist, with regard to salvation, grace is enlarged and works of meritorious human origin are eliminated as initiating necessities or realities.

Ephesians 2:10 & I John 2:19.

## **V. WHO WAS WHO?**

In history it is interesting to note which men took which positions. Remember, these two theologies pre-dated the men whose names have become associated with them (Calvin & Arminius).

The Arminian: The Pelagians of the 400s, the Semi-pelagians of the 500s, Roman Catholicism (past and present), the Remonstrants of the 1600s, John & Charles Wesley of the 1700s, and Liberal theology of the 1800s to the present have and do hold to a theology that fits the description and definition of Arminianism. Arminianism has spawned the popular evangelistic methods characterized under the heading "decisional regeneration." This method has become popular through the ministries of Charles Finney, Dwight L Moody, Billy Graham and the Campus Crusade movement. The majority of conservative Christians in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean heavily upon the Arminian views. Arminianism, today, is the all pervading and prevailing theology of the conservative Evangelical church, even though most Christians are completely unaware of this theology, it's tenets, and it's conflict with the Scriptures. There are

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<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 2:10 & 1 John 2:19

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>20</sup> *mono* – one only, *ergo* – working; hence the working of only one.

numerous varieties and versions of Arminianism, but all of the basic tenets (five points) can usually be discovered within the various systems (e.g. the popular "Four Point Calvinistic" theology is demonstrably compatible and agreeable to the Arminian system in all it's points excepting "falling from grace").

The Calvinists: The list contains such notable men of faith as Augustine of the 400s<sup>21</sup>, all of the Reformers of the 1500s, the Puritans of the 1600s, George Whitefield (one of the greatest evangelists in Church History), Jonathan Edwards of the 1700s, and Spurgeon of the 1800s. At the turn of this century there were numerous theologians of a high caliber faithfully proclaiming the Calvinistic doctrines. These were men such as Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, R. L. Dabney, A.A. Hodge, etc. In our own century there have been outstanding men of the Calvinistic persuasion: J. Gresham Machen, A.W. Pink, R. B. Kuiper, David Martin Lloyd-Jones, and J.I. Packer. Calvinistic theology has been at the root of the greatest examples of evangelistic outreach the world has witnessed, the Reformation, the Puritan revivals, the great Awakening, and the ministry of the Gospel emanating from Charles H. Spurgeon's pulpit.<sup>22</sup>

All of this is of passing interest in deciding these issues. For once again the issue of great import to us is

What Do the Scriptures Say?

In his autobiographical work, The Force of Truth, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) describes his ministry as an Anglican minister who steadfastly opposed the Calvinistic doctrines that we have reviewed. His small book is a testimony to his *conversion* to these truths. Mr. Scott long ridiculed the doctrines of grace and pursued the arguments opposing them. At last he was overwhelmingly brought into a faithful obedience to these once despised truths. His journey from opposition to compliance included the study of men and creeds. Mr. Scott writes:

The great question therefore was, Are these doctrines in the Bible, or not? Hitherto I had willfully passed over or neglected, or endeavored to put some other construction upon all those parts of Scripture which directly speak of them; but now I began to consider, meditate, and pray over them; and I soon found that I could not support my former interpretations. They (the Scriptures) would teach predestination, election, and final perseverance, in spite of all my twisting and expounding. It also occurred to me, that these doctrines, though now in disgrace, were universally believed and maintained by our venerable reformers; that they were admitted, at the beginning of the Reformation, into the Creeds, Catechisms, and Articles, of every one of the Protestant churches; that our Articles and Homilies expressly maintained them; and consequently, that a vast number of wise and sober-minded men, who in their days were burning and shining lights, had upon mature deliberation agreed, not only that they were true, but that they ought to be admitted as useful, or even necessary Articles of Faith, by every one who deemed himself called to take upon him the office of a Christian minister.... In short, though my objections were many, my anxiety great, and my

resistance long, yet by the evidence which, both from the Word of God and from my own meditation, crowded upon my mind, I was at length constrained to submit; and, God knoweth, with fear and trembling, to allow these formerly despised doctrines a place in my creed."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Again, attention would be directed to the appendix of Michael Horton's work entitled Putting Amazing Back Into Grace.

<sup>22</sup> "The greatest evangelists the world has ever known have been men who held the doctrines of grace...Did you know that this was a fact, that every single person who was involved in the beginning of the great missionary enterprise in the 1790s was what is called a Calvinist? ...And as we know, there was no man in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who was so active, none who labored so indefatigably as that great George Whitefield." David Martin Lloyd-Jones, The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), pp. 42-43.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Scott, The Force of Truth, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), p. 81 & 83. This work was published in 1779.

## VI. A WORD ABOUT SCHISM

Though historically this controversy has produced a number of schisms,<sup>24</sup> persecutions, and, in one case, capital punishment, I believe that it should be treated, for the most part, as an "in family" controversy. The doctrinal issues that divide these two theologies are in bold contradiction to each other, and therefore, they cannot both be true. One theology is true and the other is false. Contrary to much popular rhetoric, these two theologies can NOT be blended, mixed, or compromised. The issues at stake relate to the Bible's declaration of Who God is, what He has done, who man is, and what he is able to do. To mix these two distinct systems of doctrine and proclaim a compromise will, in the end, portray a deity who is duplicitous and self-contradicting. This study is important. We do well to heed our Lord's words concerning the Pharisees; *but in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men* (Matthew 15:9). One of these two systems does certainly fit the charge of *teaching as doctrine the precepts of men*. So again, it is important to ask in prayerful earnest -

What Do the Scriptures Say?

These theological tenets ought not to be used as tools for dividing fellowships as long as all parties involved continue to *search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be true* (Acts 17:11). The Calvinist and the Arminian, when they truly and actively (not by lip alone) revere the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, should be able to fulfill the command to love one another. Both parties, if they are saved, have been saved, not by their intellectual grasp of doctrine, but rather *by grace through faith*. Neither party should have difficulty reading Acts 4:12 and bowing in humble awe that,

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

This is a discussion primarily among brethren, and it ought to be conducted as such. These doctrines must define our faith and practice, but not the boundaries of our fellowship. We must keep our doors open for those who are not yet convinced, but teachable (for all Bereans). We must practice the exhortation of God's Word to *speak the truth in love* (Ephesians 4:15). There is a legitimate and important place for separation and division regarding those areas where there is a final refusal to submit to the authority and accuracy of the Scriptures. The denial of such Biblical

truths as the Virgin Birth, the deity of Christ and the literal resurrection of our Lord must require separation and division for the sake of the flock. When men prefer the dictates of other men and schools, refusing to pursue God's Word as the only authority (*sola scriptura*) in all areas of doctrine and truth, separation may very well be necessary. Born-again men committed to

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<sup>24</sup> I make a distinction between schism and separation in the following manner. Schisms are sinful. They are “‘causeless divisions’ within the body of a particular church” (D.M. Lloyd-Jones citing John Owen, The Puritans, pp. 73ff). Our best New Testament example of schism would be the church at Corinth which was at times riddled by internal divisions and strife (1 Corinthians 1:11 *among us*). Separation, on the other hand, can be viewed from two perspectives. First, separation is a form of church discipline (Matthew 18, Titus 1, etc.) exercised normally by the elders after repeated attempts at correction fail to restore an erring member who persists in ungodliness or doctrinal non-compliance according to the Scriptures. From a second perspective, a member may, of necessity, separate without sin, when he is at doctrinal odds with the elders and for reasons of conscience cannot submit to the doctrinal error embraced by them. For that individual to stay in that church and, against the directions of the elders, continue to seek to put forth his case from the Scriptures would endanger him of committing the sin of schism and rebellion. Schism is always unhealthy and sinful. Separation may be and has often been necessary for the very health and spiritual purity of the *faith of God's elect*.

the prayerful study of the Word of God will, led by the Spirit, come to a *knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness* (Titus 1:1). Ultimately, in all things God will be glorified (Revelation 4:11). These issues, along with all others, will be resolved only when men prayerfully understand the necessity of asking

What Do the Scriptures Say?

Is it important for us as believers *to* study the issues that are involved in this controversy? The answer *to* that question must be a resounding YES! There are to be no Scriptures or portions *of* the Scriptures reserved and intended for an elite group *of* saints (e.g. theologians and seminarians only).

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

II Timothy 3:16-17

## VII. CONCLUSION

I have admittedly written this review from the point of view of a committed Calvinist, but as a Calvinist who formerly and initially held to the Arminian position. No apology is offered here, but a warning may be in order. Unless you are convinced by the Scriptures you will do well to continue your investigation (do not put it off) of the *oracles of God* (do not set them aside) until clarity of conscience manifests itself. Prayerfully call upon the Spirit of God for illumination and instruction. This is a spiritual study not to be reduced to the low level of a merely academic curiosity. It must have an important effect upon your walk and worship. My favorite definition of a Calvinist comes from Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield and is found in his book Calvin and Augustine.<sup>25</sup>

It is the vision of God and His Majesty, in a word, which lies at the foundation of the entirety of Calvinistic thinking .... The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled on the one hand, with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and on the other hand, with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God who receives sinners.

## VIII. A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is not meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive. I have included only books that I have read and from which I have benefited. These are books that are readable by any interested believer. I have not found any thorough works dedicated to the support of the Arminian position. However, the vast and overwhelming majority of contemporary Christian literature today is written from an Arminian presupposition, but without any acknowledgment of that fact. It is likely that many of the contemporary Christian authors are completely unaware of their own divergence from historic biblical Christianity in the areas we have reviewed. Many will even proudly call themselves Calvinists though their personal theological convictions parallel point for point the historic Arminian position.<sup>26</sup> Arminianism is so widespread in our day that most Christians today are unaware of their own theological history and subsequent *drifting away* from sound healthy doctrine (Hebrews 2.1). An aversion to the study of the history of the church and the Lord's work these past two millennia has left us wide open to deception and imbalance. There is such a disregard for Church history in our day that some seminaries are even beginning to phase out their departments of history. We fail to obey the Lord's command to love the brethren when we exclude the vast majority of our brethren from our fellowship and affection simply because they are presently *at home* with the Lord. Though they have fought the good fight and persevered unto the end, the Lord does continue their work and ministry through their preserved writings and we ought to avail ourselves of those tools. It will be to our great spiritual profit to do so. There is a marvelous fellowship to be enjoyed in the company of our dear brethren who have gone before us. Through their writings and their biographies we can be much instructed of the Lord, as we see His hand in their lives and ministries. The ministries of these departed saints can still be used of the Lord to *encourage* us and to *stimulate us to love and good deeds* (Hebrews 10:24-25). We have cut the rope to our anchor when we refuse to pursue and enjoy the study of church history.

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<sup>23</sup> B. B. Warfield, Calvin and Augustine, (Philadelphia, The Presbyterian and Ref Publishing Co., 1974), p. 491.

<sup>26</sup> The best example of this is the self-named Four Point Calvinist.

The books listed are primarily available through the ministry of the Trinity Book Service of Montville, New Jersey (1 800 722-3584).

Boettner, Loraine. The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976. A classic that covers the whole subject and is quite readable. Everyone should at least have this one in their library. If you do not read it perhaps one of your grandchildren will one day and go on to become another Luther or Spurgeon.

Chantry, Walter. Man's Will: Free Yet Bound. Canton, Georgia: Word of Truth Publications, 1975. An excellent pamphlet, but hard to locate. Check with Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service 1 800 656-0231.

Chantry, Walter. Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic? Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970. This one is quite an eye opener and thought-provoking.

Horton, Michael Scott. Putting Amazing Back Into Grace: An Introduction to Reformed Theology. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991. A relatively new work that is thorough and well written. The appendices are worth the cost of the whole book. 263 pp.

John, Kenneth D. Election: Love Before Time. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976.

I recommend it highly.

Kuiper, R. B. The Bible Tells Us So. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968. This is a good place to begin. Dr. Kuiper was president of Westminster Theological Seminary in the 1960s.

Palmer, Edwin H. The Five Points of Calvinism. Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1972. One of the best though currently out of print.

Pink, Arthur W. The Sovereignty of God. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1928. This really ought to be required reading for all believers. Two versions are available; the Banner of Truth is my preference.

Seaton, W. J. The Five Points of Calvinism. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970. This small tract is the work of Jack Seaton, pastor of the Inverness Reformed Baptist Church in Scotland. It is excellent and kind.

Spencer, Duane Edward. TULIP: The Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979. One of the very best basic works. Available through Cumberland (1 800 656-0231).

Steele, D. N. & Thomas, C. C. The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1975. This is as close to a textbook presentation as I have found.

Wells, Tom. A Price for a People: The Meaning of Christ's Death. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992. This is the best contemporary treatment of the question for *whom did Christ die?* Mr. Wells is very thorough with the Scriptures and it is highly recommended.

From C. H. Spurgeon

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic, of no honorable character, might rise up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of faith, I see the land of ancients peopled with my brethren; I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.

from a sermon delivered by  
Mr. Spurgeon, September 2, 1855

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