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THE CONCISE GUIDE TO THE MODERN CALVINIST/ARMINIAN DEBATE

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

David J. Leonhardt

* * * * *

Western Kentucky University
2012

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2012

ABSTRACT

The Calvinist/Arminian debate is not a new issue to the Protestant Church; however, it is an issue that has resurged within contemporary Christianity. One major offense committed in this controversial debate occurs when a person or group uses a term from the opposite side in a way that is not the proponent's original intent or meaning. Furthermore, misconceptions concerning the actual doctrines maintained by either side have become commonplace in the debate. In order to correct this problem, this thesis will serve as a guide for understanding the Calvinist/Arminian debate. It will provide information on the founders of the two systems, the definitions of fundamental doctrines of each, the definitions of lesser-known terminology of the debate, the truth behind common misconceptions, and an analysis on the debate. This thesis will, in no way, attempt to determine a correct view. All the definitions, information concerning the founders, and information regarding misconceptions have been retrieved from the proponents of the respective theologies. Only Calvinists will define Calvinist terminology and only Arminians will define Arminian terminology. The goal of this work is to present an accurate depiction of both Calvinism and Arminianism.

Keywords: Calvinism, Arminianism, Free Will, Predestination, Election, Sovereignty

Dedicated to anyone who
has suffered because of this debate.

I pray it will be a help to you.

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Most importantly, thank you, Lord, for blessing me with all of these people.

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INTRODUCTION

Within Christianity, there is a debate between Calvinists and Arminians. This is not a new debate; rather, it has been developing for centuries. During this time, many theological doctrines and terms have been created and expanded upon in order to explain the theologies and ideas. Due to this constant creation and expansion of terms it is easy to become confused or to misunderstand what either side believes. Furthermore, because of the expansion of terms, definitions change. Thus, a word can have the same title but not the same definition for both sides. Another problem that causes confusion is a misunderstanding of what doctrines either side claims as its own. Although the two sides have remained relatively close to their founders, there have been authors or denominations that have proposed or claimed different doctrines while still retaining the name of their respective patriarch. Consequently, there is much confusion regarding what contemporary scholars of each party claim.

In response to these problems, this work will serve as a foundational guide to the Calvinist/Arminian debate. It will define terminology that is specific to this debate. Moreover, it will provide an answer to the problem concerning which doctrines each side claims and how each side defines each doctrine. These definitions have been obtained from contemporary, expert proponents of each party and will not reflect the opinion of the opposition. For the various doctrines that Calvinists claim, the definitions for these doctrines will be either quoted or summarized from Calvinist experts. Conversely,

doctrines that Arminians claim will be either quoted or summarized from Arminian experts. In addition, this work will serve as a reference for the various aspects of the debate as well as an analysis of how the debate should be handled within contemporary Protestant circles.

The scholars used in this work represent current experts in the debate. Because the aforementioned problems arise from what contemporary proponents imply by their use of terminology, all of the definitions of terminology in this work, as well as the analysis of the debate, stem from research of contemporary scholars. Each party is represented by five scholars who have been chosen because of their credentials, writings on the topic, and prominence within their party. Representing the contemporary Calvinist position:

- Wayne Grudem (Ph.D. University of Cambridge; Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, Arizona.)
- James I. Packer (Ph.D. Oxford University; Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College.)
- Edwin H. Palmer (Th. D. Free University of Amsterdam; former Executive Secretary of the NIV Committee on Bible Translation.)
- John Piper (D.theol. University of Munich; current Senior Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church.)
- Robert C. Sproul (Drs Free University of Amsterdam, Litt.D. Geneva College, LHD Grove City College, Ph.D. Whitefield Theological Seminary; Chairman of Ligonier Ministries.)

On behalf of the Arminian position:

- Jack Cottrell (Ph.D. Princeton Theological Seminary; Professor of Theology at Cincinnati Christian University.)
- F. Leroy Forlines (M.A. Winona Lake School of Theology, Th.M. Chicago Graduate School of Theology; Professor of Biblical Studies at Free Will Baptist Bible College.)
- Roger E. Olson (Ph.D. Rice University; Professor of Theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University.)
- Robert E. Picirilli (Ph.D. Free Will Baptist Bible College; Former Academic Dean of Free Will Baptist Bible College Graduate School.)
- J. Mathew Pinson (Ph.D. Florida State University; President of Free Will Baptist Bible College.)

With the exception of John Piper, each scholar's contributions were retrieved from the work that best explains his position on the debate as a whole. This will serve the main purpose of the work by informing the reader where to go for further research on the particular doctrine or side of the debate. For John Piper a different method was utilized. Piper has not produced a book targeted specifically for this debate, yet he is considered a respected expert on the field of Calvinism. Fortunately, Dr. Piper has made available sermons and other explanatory writings on his website, www.desiringgod.org, specifically to allow people to understand his position on the debate (the different articles and sermons have been footnoted accordingly). These articles serve as a great resource for further study, much like the works of his Calvinist contemporaries.

This work is broken down into several chapters, each concerning different aspects of the debate. The first chapter contains concise biographies of the founders of both systems of theology. The second chapter defines the fundamental doctrines of this debate. See the beginning of chapter two for more information on the format of this chapter. Chapter three will present miscellaneous terms. Unlike the fundamental doctrines in chapter two, the miscellaneous terms are not used in every work. The fourth chapter will contain a brief discussion about Greek translation problems, a section on other common misunderstandings about the debate (such as Pelagianism and Fatalism), and a portion discussing councils and documents pertaining to the debate. Finally, the fifth chapter will conclude the work by analyzing the debate and answering frequently asked questions pertaining to the debate.

Lastly, it is important to understand that this work does not seek to assert that one belief is superior to the other. The purpose of this work is to aid individuals in their understanding of the contemporary Calvinist/Arminian debate. It will present both sides of this debate from prominent experts of that system of theology in order for readers to understand the perspective of both parties. Furthermore, since this work is not attempting to defend but merely to state the opinions of both parties, it is important to consider this work as a foundation for further study about the debate.

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDERS

While academics already know about the founders of these two camps of theologies, many casual theologians or novices to the debate often overlook the founders. Although this work is examining modern theologians' terminology, there are instances within the definitions where scholars will quote their respective founders or refer to older documents. Furthermore, because this is a guide to the debate, it would be incomplete without a brief overview of the founders of these two theologies.

One of the most difficult aspects of biographies is determining which scholar to examine. No matter which scholar you read, depending upon his or her doctrinal position, he or she will tend to view Calvin or Arminius as either malevolent heretics or theological geniuses. In any case, the format of this work is to emphasize doctrines from the perspective of their proponents; thus, there is no reason not to extend this format to the discussion of the founders of these traditions. For this reason the discussion of both Calvin's and Arminius's lives will be presented from the perspective of proponents of their theologies.

John Calvin

John Calvin, whose actual name was Jean Cauvin, was born on July 10, 1509, in Noyon, France.¹ He was educated with French aristocracy and continued his education at the University of Paris. From there he went to College de Montaigu. His father, a Roman Catholic, desired that he be a priest; however, due to a falling out with the Church, Calvin's father decided that the law would be a better profession for his son. Calvin then left to study in Orleans under De l'Estoile and following that he went to the Academy of Bourges.² While studying law, Calvin had a conversion experience causing him to leave Catholicism and become a Protestant. After his conversion experience, Calvin wrote his Commentary on Seneca's treatise *On Clemency*. Calvin left France shortly after his commentary was published due to rising tension between the Catholic Church and Protestantism. So, in 1535, he went to Basel, Switzerland.³ Here Calvin finished the first edition of his highly influential *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536.

From there Calvin would travel to Italy, France, and Germany before ending in Geneva. While in Geneva, Calvin partnered with Guillaume Farel, a Protestant preacher. During the same year as his *Institutes* was published, Geneva adopted the Protestant Reformation. Both Farel and Calvin began building the church in Geneva. Calvin's job was to create a church order. However, his disagreements with Farel and others in Geneva led to Calvin leaving Geneva and heading to Strasbourg. In Strasbourg Calvin served as a pastor, teacher, and writer; he also married Idelette de Bure. He then returned

¹ Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 1.

² Elwood, pp. 2-3.

³ Elwood, p. 13.

to Geneva in 1541 and wrote the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, a document that created the four offices of the church (Pastors, Doctors, Elders, and Deacons) and described their responsibilities.⁴ Additionally, he wrote the *Genevan Catechism* (1542), which aided in understanding the Reformed faith. Sadly, in 1549, Idelette passed away, suffering from poor health as a result of losing a child during pregnancy.⁵ Calvin's time in Geneva allowed him to develop materials for church order, pastor responsibilities, interpretation of Scripture, and guides to theological understanding.⁶

Though Calvin has contributed much to the Protestant movement, Calvin's temperament has been the source of criticism towards him. Calvin's successor Thomas Beza noted that many believed Calvin to be "Choleric" (hot-tempered).⁷ However, as Elwood observes, "Beza, in other words, found Calvin's temperament perfectly suited to the controversies of the time."⁸ Still, the major contentions against Calvin concern his involvement with the controversies surrounding Jerome Bolsec and Michael Servetus. Bolsec was exiled from Geneva for his views on *Predestination* and Servetus was burned for his views on *Infant Baptism* and the *Trinity*. Yet in neither instance was Calvin responsible for the outcome. While Calvin did openly disagree with the two and even was the main accuser against Servetus, in both cases, Geneva's magistrates resolved the matters.

In the later years in his life, Calvin was able to see some of his dreams become a reality. In 1558, Calvin was finally able to establish The Genevan Academy.⁹ This

⁴ Elwood, pp. 23-24.

⁵ Elwood, pp. 25-26.

⁶ Elwood, pp. 31-35.

⁷ Elwood, p. 128.

⁸ Elwood, p. 128.

⁹ Elwood, p. 140.

academy served to educate pastors and missionaries. In addition, through his aid, in 1559, “A Presbyterian Reformed Church in France was born.”¹⁰ Calvin eventually died of severe illnesses on May 27, 1564, and was buried in an unmarked tomb so as to prevent his burial site from becoming a sacred relic.¹¹

Jacobus Arminius

Jacobus Arminius was probably born either in 1559 or 1560 in Oudewater, Holland. His actual name was Jacob Harmenszoon.¹² Arminius education involved, tutelage under a Protestant priest named Theodore Aemilius, studies at the University of Marburg, and studies at the University in Leiden. During his time at Marburg, his family was murdered by Spanish troops. Upon completion of his studies at Leiden, Arminius attended the Genevan Academy run by Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor. Due to a controversy in Geneva, Arminius left to study at Basel. In Basel, Arminius examined the book of Romans under the guidance of J. J. Grynaeus. By 1586, Arminius had finished his education and returned to Holland to become a pastor.¹³

Arminius was ordained in 1588 and spoke often on the book of Romans. In 1590, he married Lijsbet Reael; together they had eleven children, two that died while infants. As a pastor, Arminius was asked to refute the Reformed minister Coornhert’s teachings. It is at this point traditionally that Arminius is believed to have converted away from total Calvinism. However, there is speculation that Arminius never fully accepted Beza’s Calvinism and that this was merely the catalyst that spurred his separation. As a pastor, Arminius did not engage in many controversial issues. Still, there were two instances

¹⁰ Elwood, p. 141.

¹¹ Elwood, p. 143.

¹² Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2002), p. 3.

¹³ Picirilli, p. 5.

where he sparked controversy, one when he taught Romans 7 and another when he examined Romans 9. After Arminius taught Romans 7, minister Petrus Plancius charged Arminius of proclaiming Pelagianism.¹⁴ Arminius insisted that his stance was not Pelagianism and that his position was not against the church creeds. It should also be noted that the city officials supported Arminius and decided that the matter would be decided at the next church council.¹⁵ The second accusation came after he taught Romans 9. Again Arminius refuted the claims and even reaffirmed his agreement to the church creeds. It would not be until 1603 that Arminius would be cleared of the charges of Pelagianism.¹⁶ Aside from these two instances, Arminius lived a peaceful life as a pastor. He even was able to aid families during the outbreak of the bubonic plague when it came to Amsterdam.

In 1603, Arminius was appointed as a professor of theology at the University at Leiden.¹⁷ While a professor, Arminius was involved in theological conflicts, mainly involving *Predestination*. He believed¹⁸ that *Unconditional Election* caused God to be the author of sin and insisted that Scripture taught *Conditional Election*. Arminius was not the only person to disagree with Calvinism. It was also around this time that Arminius developed tuberculosis.¹⁹ Despite his condition, Arminius persistently attempted to convene a synod in order to settle these matters. It was during this time that Arminius's opposition accused him on multiple accounts; no formal charge was ever brought against him. Finally, in 1608, a legal inquiry forced both Arminius and Gomarus

¹⁴ Arminianism's connection (or lack thereof) with Pelagianism will be discussed on p. 62.

¹⁵ Picirilli, p. 7.

¹⁶ E. A. Livingstone & F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 107.

¹⁷ Picirilli, p. 9.

¹⁸ Picirilli, p. 10.

¹⁹ Picirilli, p. 10.

(Arminius's chief opposition) to formalize their disagreement in writing.²⁰ Arminius wrote his *Declaration of Sentiments* stating his disagreements with Calvinism.²¹ After this, Gomarus accused Arminius of various heretical stances and began a campaign against Arminius. Finally, both Arminius and Gomarus were asked to attend a conference to settle matters. However, Arminius was not able to continue and on October 19, 1609, Arminius succumbed to his illness and passed away. He was buried in Leiden under Pieterskerk church.²²

²⁰ Picirilli, p. 11.

²¹ It should be noted that in this writing Arminius did not disagree with the Calvinist stance on *Perseverance of the Saints*. However, he did state that there are Scripture passages that seem to indicate the opposite.

²² Picirilli, p.12.

CHAPTER II

FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES

This chapter will develop the fundamental terminology that is utilized in the debate. It will also serve to show what the mainstream doctrinal positions are for both parties by quoting or summarizing their specific work on the topic. The terms are placed in alphabetical order. They are not in order of creation or importance. The definitions are divided into two sections: “Calvinism” and “Arminianism.” The scholars under each heading represent contemporary, expert theologians from each respective party. There are doctrines that are not held by a particular side. These doctrines will be noted by referring to the matching doctrine that the particular party affirms. The references to other doctrines do not imply that the scholars have not written on the doctrine in their work. The next subheading is the “Notes to the Reader” segment. This is to aid in better understanding what the authors are saying. Often this portion presents other names of the doctrine or other aspects of the doctrine that are important to understanding it. Finally there is the “For Further Reading on this Doctrine” section. This section is to show page numbers where the authors discussed the specific doctrine being defined for supplementary reading. The pages will be listed regardless of the author’s doctrinal position. This serves in aiding future research on the debate.

Conditional Election

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – See *Unconditional Election*.

J. I. Packer – See *Unconditional Election*.

Edwin Palmer – See *Unconditional Election*.

John Piper – See *Unconditional Election*.

R. C. Sproul – See *Unconditional Election*.

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “Predestination to eternal life is based on God’s foreknowledge of who would and who would not meet the conditions that constitute a proper response to his grace.”²³

F. Leroy Forlines – “Our gospel says that God has predestinated salvation for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and He has predestinated that all who do not believe in Jesus Christ will be condemned to eternal death.”²⁴ This choosing (predestinating) took place in eternity past, based on God’s foreknowledge of who “would meet the condition of faith in Christ.”²⁵

Roger Olson – “God foreknows every person’s ultimate and final decision regarding Jesus Christ, and on that basis God predestines people to salvation or damnation. But Arminians do not believe God predetermines or preselects people for either heaven or hell apart from their free acts of accepting or resisting the grace of God.”²⁶

Robert E. Picirilli – “The decree of God, by which, of Himself, from eternity, He decreed to justify in (or through) Christ, believers, and to accept them unto eternal life, to the praise of His glorious grace.”²⁷

J. Matthew Pinson – “God’s choice to save those whom He foreknew *in Christ Jesus*.”²⁸

²³ Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once For All* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 2002), p. 394.

²⁴ F. Leroy Forlines, *Classical Arminianism* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2011), p. 174.

²⁵ Forlines, p. 187.

²⁶ Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), p. 180.

²⁷ Picirilli, p. 48.

²⁸ J. Matthew Pinson, *A Free Will Baptist Handbook: Heritage, Beliefs, and Ministries* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1998), p. 48.

Notes to the Reader:

- Calvinists affirm the doctrine of *Divine Election*. Calvinists differ from Arminians in that they avow that Election is unconditional and is not based on anything humans do (see *Unconditional Election*, pp. 42-44).
- It is important to note *Divine Election* is not the same as *Predestination* in either Calvinism or Arminianism. *Election* is God's choice on who will be saved, while *Predestination* contains *Election* and *Reprobation* (according to some scholars, *Predestination* contains rather *Election* and "Double Predestination," see *Reprobation* pp. 36-38 for more information).
- When discussing this particular doctrine, it is essential to understand that this is Divine Conditional Election of individuals.
- Forlines's definition is very similar to his definition of *Predestination*. The reason is that Forlines maintains a form of "Double Predestination." Just as some were predestined by God foreseeing them meet the condition of faith, the others were predestined for not meeting this condition.
- Olson maintains that God allows humans to make their own choice regarding salvation. He also notes that this is not possible (due to humans' *Total Depravity*) without God first providing *Prevenient Grace* to allow them to either accept or reject His gift of salvation.
- Picirilli's definition is a direct quote from Arminius (I:565). It is unique in that it sounds as if it should belong to *Unconditional Election* (See *Unconditional Election* pp. 42-44) yet it is presented this way for a precise reason. God has unconditionally elected believers to salvation. This was His decision without any condition obliging Him to do it. However, Picirilli states, "For Arminius, if salvation is by faith, then election is by faith. If salvation is conditional, election is."²⁹
- It is important to note that Arminians do maintain that God did elect those who would be saved, before the foundation of the world (He simply did not determine the identity of those individuals ahead of time).

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 669-687.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 149-151.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 29-47.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 139-161.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 390-399.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 97-166.
- Roger Olson, pp. 19-20.

²⁹ Picirilli, p. 53.

- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 35-84.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 48-49.

Divine Sovereignty

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his proposes.”³⁰

J. I. Packer – “God’s dominion is total: he wills as he chooses and carries out all that he wills, and none can stay his hand or thwart his plans.”³¹

Edwin Palmer – “God’s sovereign plan, whereby he decides all that is to happen in the entire universe. Nothing in the world happens by chance. God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen.”³²

John Piper – “God is in ultimate control of the world from the largest international intrigue to the smallest bird-fall in the forest . . . God’s sovereignty means that this design for us cannot be frustrated.”³³

R. C. Sproul – God is in complete rule over creation. His rule is in no way limited by human freedom. “God is free and we are free. But God is more free than we are. When our freedom bumps up against God’s sovereignty, our freedom must yield.”³⁴ According to the good pleasure of this sovereignty, God has seen fit to show grace to the elect and regenerate them to salvation.³⁵

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “God is sovereign in the sense that he is *in control* of every event that takes place among creatures, whether he actually causes it (which is often the case), or simply permits it to happen (instead of preventing it, which he could do if he so chose). Either way God is ‘in charge’; he is in full control over his creation; he is sovereign.”³⁶

³⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 315.

³¹ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Incorporated, 1993), p. 33.

³² Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism: A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), p. 30.

³³ John Piper, *A Very Precious and Practical Doctrine*, (1981) by John Piper ©2012 Desiring God Foundation.

³⁴ R. C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology? Understanding the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), p. 27.

³⁵ Sproul, pp. 141-149.

³⁶ Cottrell, p. 81.

F. Leroy Forlines – God has sovereign control over creation to where His Efficacious Decrees will be fulfilled. Yet in His sovereignty God saw fitting to grant free will to humans.³⁷

Roger Olson – “God is in charge of and governs the entire creation, and will powerfully and perhaps unilaterally bring about the consummation of his plan.”³⁸ However, God constrains himself in order to allow His “free and rational creatures, created in his image,”³⁹ to maintain their liberty either to sin or to respond to his call of Prevenient Grace.⁴⁰

Robert E. Picirilli – “He [God] acts freely, under no conditions than that He be true to Himself.”⁴¹ In His Sovereignty, He has created man a free being, able to freely choose salvation or destruction, either choice leading to the fulfillment of His decrees.⁴²

J. Mathew Pinson – See Forlines’s definition.

Notes to the Reader:

- Typically this term is simply referred to as *Sovereignty*.
- This doctrine has also been referred to as “Providence.”
- Grudem’s definition of *Sovereignty* is under his section on “Providence.” He also defines Sovereignty simply as, “his [God’s] exercise of rule (as “sovereign” or “king”) over his creation.”⁴³
- Palmer’s definition of *Sovereignty* comes from his section on “Foreordination.”
- This doctrine is easy to confuse with God’s “Omnipotence” (the doctrine that maintains God is all-powerful). However, *Sovereignty* is what God controls, while “Omnipotence” refers to how He controls His power. Nevertheless, these two concepts are connected. God is all-powerful and thus He is able to control everything.
- In his book, Pinson does not address the issue of God’s *Sovereignty*. Likely, this is due to the fact that there is general agreement on *Sovereignty*. However, in the introduction to Forlines’s book, Pinson praises Forlines’s treatment of God’s *Sovereignty*.
- It is important to understand that both sides affirm the doctrine of God’s *Sovereignty* even though they differ on how God utilizes His sovereignty. There have, however, been objections regarding the Arminian view of *Sovereignty*⁴⁴.

³⁷ Forlines, pp. 87-90.

³⁸ Olson, p. 135.

³⁹ Olson, p. 132.

⁴⁰ See *Prevenient Grace*, pp. 33-35.

⁴¹ Picirilli, p. 57.

⁴² Picirilli, pp. 42-42.

⁴³ Grudem, p. 217.

⁴⁴ See Grudem, pp. 338-351, for more explanation on the Calvinist objections to the Arminian position.

The main concern is that by allowing human *Free Will*, God's sovereignty is not absolute. Conversely, there have been objections to the Calvinist position as well. The argument is that by maintaining God's absolute sovereignty over human *Free Will*, God is the author of sin (Chapter five deals with this more thoroughly).⁴⁵

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 315-351.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 33-34.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 30-46.
- John Piper, *A Very Precious and Practical Doctrine*, (1981) by John Piper ©2012 Desiring God Foundation.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 26-27, 141, and 146-47.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 80-81.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 37, 41, 45-47, 52, 71, 78-80, 87, 97, 169, 305, 337, and 339.
- Roger Olson, pp. 115-136.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 42-46, 57, 63, 68, and 71.

⁴⁵ Olson, pp. 115-119.

Free Will

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – *Free Will* has two aspects; there is the free will of God and the free will of humans. God’s free will is the ability to make choices that are not decided by his nature. Man also retains free will. However, man cannot do anything good apart from God. Therefore, man can make willing choices but only within his nature.⁴⁶

J. I. Packer – “The ability to choose all the moral options a situation offers.”⁴⁷ Sin has taken this ability away from humanity and only through God’s grace can our will be freed.⁴⁸

Edwin Palmer – “The Calvinist teaches that man is free – one hundred percent free – free to do exactly what he wants. God does not coerce a single one against his will.”⁴⁹ However, man is unable to choose between good and evil. Thus, since man is free to do what he wants, he is a slave to his desires.⁵⁰

John Piper – “It is not a saving power. In his *freedom to will*, fallen man cannot on his own do anything but sin. Such “free will” is a devastating reality. Without some power to overcome its bent, our free will only damns us.”⁵¹

R. C. Sproul – *Free Will* is the mind choosing according to the strongest inclination. Humans do not have free will to choose good and evil; rather their actions are free because they are voluntary. People choose based on their strongest inclination. Thus, due to their corrupt nature, humans can only choose to sin without Divine intervention.⁵²

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “He [God] has created free-will beings who have the ability to sin, even though it is not necessary for them to choose to sin. (Free will does not make sin a necessity, but simply a possibility.) Having thus endowed his creatures with free will, God permits them to exercise it even when they use it to rebel against him.”⁵³

⁴⁶ Grudem, pp. 212-213 and 330-331. See *Total Depravity*, pp. 39-41.

⁴⁷ Packer, p. 86.

⁴⁸ Packer, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁹ Palmer, p. 43.

⁵⁰ Palmer, pp. 43-44.

⁵¹ John Piper, *A Few Thoughts on Free Will*. (Desiring God blog, 2008). By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.

⁵² Sproul, pp. 130-134.

⁵³ Cottrell, p. 165.

F. Leroy Forlines – “The freedom of a human being is in the framework of the possibilities provided by human nature. Also, the influences brought to bear on the will have a bearing on the framework of possibilities.”⁵⁴ The unconverted human cannot practice righteousness (do good). However, once the Holy Spirit works in the heart of a person, He allows the person to respond in faith or not.⁵⁵

Roger Olson – Apart from God’s grace humans are bound by sins and have no ability to choose good, only sin.⁵⁶ “[P]revenient grace⁵⁷ restores free will so that humans, for the first time, have the ability to do otherwise—namely, respond in faith to the grace of God or resist it in unrepentance and disbelief.”⁵⁸

Robert E. Picirilli – “Man is free, as possessing a true will, to make real choices and decisions between two (or more) courses of action . . . a choice that actually can go but one way is not a choice, and with this ‘freedom’ there is not personality.”⁵⁹ However, this is not absolute freedom; the choices have been given by God and therefore cannot be independent from God. Furthermore, without grace it is impossible for an individual to choose not to sin.⁶⁰

J. Matthew Pinson – “Man is so totally depraved that he is unable to save himself-to get to God on his own. Yet God in His grace reaches out to man and draws him-convicts him, and ‘excites him by divine grace.’ However, man *has the free will to resist and reject this grace.*”⁶¹

Notes to the Reader:

- Grudem divides God’s will into two categories: *Necessary* and *Free*. God’s necessary will is the sum of the choices that God makes because of his nature.
- Grudem is careful to note that *Free Will* does not mean that humans can make choices that are outside God’s control. Thus, there is no absolutely free act (an act apart from God’s control).⁶²
- Packer’s view on *Free Will* is a little different than that of his contemporaries. The difference is not in theology but in terminology. What his contemporaries define as *Free Will*, Packer defines as “Free Agency.” He defines “Free Agency” as, “All humans are free agents in the sense that they make their own decisions as to what they will do, choosing as they please in the light of their sense of right and wrong and the inclinations they feel. Thus they are moral agents, answerable to God and each other for their voluntary choices.”⁶³ In this definition, humans are

⁵⁴ Forlines, p. 51.

⁵⁵ Forlines, pp. 51-52.

⁵⁶ Olson, p. 76.

⁵⁷ See *Prevenient Grace*, pp. 33-35.

⁵⁸ Olson, p. 76.

⁵⁹ Picirilli, p. 41.

⁶⁰ Picirilli, p. 41.

⁶¹ Pinson, p. 47.

⁶² See *Divine Sovereignty*, pp. 11-13.

⁶³ Packer, p. 85.

able to make their own choices but their nature is totally depraved and so incapable of making good choices. Therefore, Packer does not disagree with any of his colleagues in form of doctrine. There is simply a differentiation of terminology.

- It should be noted that Sproul is referring to Jonathan Edwards's thoughts on the subject of *Free Will*.
- Both Sproul and Grudem note Calvin's hesitance with using the word "Free." Although humans have the ability to do what they want; the title "Free" often is the cause of frustration and confusion. "Relative freedom within our spheres of activity in the universe he has created."⁶⁴
- Cottrell maintains that humans cannot be guilty of sin without the ability to chose to sin or not.
- It should be noted that Forlines believes that the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism should focus on this doctrine.⁶⁵
- Olson also refers to this as "Libertarian free will" or "Incompatibilist free will."
- Additionally, Olson refers to this as "Freed Will,"⁶⁶ noting that God's grace has allowed humans to cooperate or not.
- It is important to note that Picirilli does not view his process of salvation as *Synergism*.⁶⁷ He argues that salvation is entirely a gift of grace from God.
- Picirilli notes later in his book that, "In consequence of this condition, man's will is no longer naturally free to choose God apart from the supernatural work of the Spirit of God."⁶⁸ In this sense, as with *Total Depravity*, Picirilli actually agrees with the Calvinist doctrine. The only difference between Picirilli and Calvinism is in the extent of the offer of grace (see *Universal Atonement* pp. 45-46).
- In an article, Pinson notes that Arminius was not a Synergist.⁶⁹ He believed that salvation was through grace and faith alone, although, unlike his Calvinist contemporaries, he did believe that God's grace was resistible.⁷⁰
- It is important to understand that Arminians and Calvinists do not disagree on this doctrine completely. Both parties argue that humans only have the ability to freely choose to sin apart from grace. However, they differ on extent of grace and free will after grace is extended. Cottrell's stance also differs slightly from the other Arminians. His view maintains that humans are able to choose good or evil. Yet it is still similar to the other Arminians when it is realized that *Prevenient Grace* has already been extended to humans.
- Further reading on this subject is strongly encouraged. This doctrine has been the cause of many disagreements. These disagreements generally stem from misunderstandings of exactly what both parties mean when they state that humans have *Free Will*.

⁶⁴ Grudem, p. 217.

⁶⁵ Forlines, p. 21.

⁶⁶ Olson, p. 142.

⁶⁷ See footnote on *Evangelical Synergism*, p. 49.

⁶⁸ Picirilli, p. 149.

⁶⁹ See *Evangelical Synergism*, p. 49.

⁷⁰ J. Matthew Pinson, "Will the Real Arminius Please Stand Up? A Study of the Theology of Jacobus Arminius in Light of His Interpreters," *Integrity: A Journal of Christian Thought* (2003), p. 129.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 211-216 and 330-332.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 85-86.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 43-45.
- John Piper, *A Few Thoughts on Free Will*, (Desiring God blog, 2008). By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 130-134.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 86, 114, 121, 152, 157, 165, 168, 193, 220, 346, 348, 376, and 586.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 35-90.
- Roger Olson, pp. 75-76 and 97-114.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 21-64.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 46-48.

God's Knowledge (Omniscience)

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.”⁷¹

J. I. Packer – “He knows everything about everything and everybody all the time. Also, he knows the future no less than the past and the present, and possible events that never happen no less than the actual events that do. Nor does he have to ‘access’ information about things, as a computer might retrieve a file; all his knowledge is always immediately and directly before his mind.”⁷²

Edwin Palmer – “God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass on all supposed conditions, yet He has not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass on such conditions.”⁷³ Furthermore, because God has ordained whatever will come to pass, He therefore possesses perfect knowledge of everything.⁷⁴

John Piper – “He knows all things including all future events and He ‘accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will.’”⁷⁵

R. C. Sproul – “Omniscience refers to God’s total knowledge of all things actual and potential. God knows not only all that is but everything that possibly could be . . . He knows the end before the beginning. God’s omniscience excludes both ignorance and learning.”⁷⁶

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “He [God] is infinite in his knowledge”⁷⁷ In addition to having perfect knowledge of the past and the present, God has perfect “Foreknowledge,” “We can understand how God can foreknow those future events that he himself has determined to cause, but the biblical teaching about foreknowledge (including many predictive prophecies) includes God’s knowledge of future contingent choices of free-will beings.”⁷⁸

F. Leroy Forlines – “I am most fully persuaded that the knowledge of God is eternal, immutable and infinite, and that it extends to all things both necessary and

⁷¹ Grudem, p. 190.

⁷² Packer, p. 31.

⁷³ Palmer, p. 154.

⁷⁴ Palmer, p. 154.

⁷⁵ John Piper, *Is There Good Anxiety*, (1981) By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God Foundation.

⁷⁶ Sproul, p. 171.

⁷⁷ Cottrell, p. 85.

⁷⁸ Cottrell, p. 86.

contingent, to all things which He does of Himself, either mediately [sic] or immediately, and which He permits to be done by others.”⁷⁹

Roger Olson – God possesses an “exhaustive and infallible foreknowledge.”⁸⁰ This includes foreknowledge of individual choices regarding salvation.⁸¹

Robert E. Picirilli – “The future is perfectly foreknown by God and yet is, in principle and practice, ‘open’ and ‘undetermined.’ That is, future free decisions are certain but not necessary. In other words, the person who makes a moral choice is free either to make that choice or to make a different choice.”⁸²

J. Matthew Pinson – The traditional Arminian position is that God has an “exhaustive foreknowledge of all future events.”⁸³

Notes to the Reader:

- I did not include the doctrine of “Foreknowledge” in this work, because in actuality, “Foreknowledge” is a subset of *God’s Knowledge (Omniscience)*. Note in Packer’s definition of *Omniscience*, he says, “He knows the future no less than the past and the present.” Similarly Grudem notes that God knows “All things actual and possible.”
- Palmer utilizes the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter III: “Of God’s Eternal Decree” to explain God’s knowledge. Additionally, he uses Chapter V on God’s Providence in connection with God’s infallible foreknowledge.
- Sproul takes special care to note that God does not learn. Sproul specifies later in his book that God knows already everything that will happen and what could have happened.
- Sproul continues his discussion on “Foreknowledge” saying, “All whom God has foreknown, he has also predestined to be inwardly called, justified, and glorified.”⁸⁴ To Sproul foreknowledge is not simply knowledge of future events but the first link in “The Golden Chain of Salvation” discussed in his book, *What Is Reformed Theology? Understanding the Basics*.
- Cottrell notes two aspects of foreknowledge: God, in His Sovereignty, has caused events to take place and there are events that are human choices.
- Forlines’s definition is a direct quote from Arminius.⁸⁵
- Olson discusses the views of “Foreknowledge” only in relation to *Predestination*⁸⁶ and does not discuss *God’s Knowledge (Omniscience)* in this book. However, if God possesses a perfect knowledge of future events there is no

⁷⁹ Forlines, p. 63.

⁸⁰ Olson, p. 199.

⁸¹ Olson, pp. 194-199.

⁸² Picirilli, p. 60.

⁸³ Forlines, p. viii.

⁸⁴ Sproul, p. 145.

⁸⁵ James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), 3:66.

⁸⁶ See *Predestination*, pp. 30-32.

reason to infer that He does not also possess a perfect knowledge of what has and is happening.

- Although Forlines's definition comes from Arminius, he affirms the Arminian position of Picirilli and Cottrell.
- Like Olson, both Picirilli's and Pinson's definitions come from their definitions of "Foreknowledge." Even though neither discusses God's Omniscience, presumably, if they maintain God has perfect knowledge future events, then He must also have a perfect knowledge of present and past events.
- It is important to understand Picirilli's notes that God's certain knowledge of the future does not necessitate the free choices of humans. Rather, humans make the free choices that God certainly knows. Picirilli refers to this as "Self-Determinism" or "Indeterminism."
- The doctrine of "Foreknowledge" is a cause of disagreement among Arminians. Both Picirilli and Cottrell agree that God's perfect knowledge of future events does not cause the events to happen. However, Forlines finds it difficult to understand how God can have perfect knowledge of what will happen and humans still have free decisions. Olson refers to this problem as a paradox. Some Arminians (such as William Lane Craig) have followed the doctrine of *Middle Knowledge*⁸⁷. Finally, some Arminians (such as Clark Pinnock and Richard Rice) have claimed that God does not possess a perfect foreknowledge of future events. This position, known as "Open Theism" maintains that God has limited His foreknowledge in order to preserve human *Free Will*. However, the movement to Open Theism is not accepted by most Arminians. Even Piper notes that both Calvinists and Arminians affirm the "Foreknowledge" of God and that Pinnock's move toward "Open Theism" is not representative of traditional Arminianism.⁸⁸

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 190-193.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 31-32.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 154-157.
- John Piper, *Is There Good Anxiety*, (1981) By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God Foundation.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 171-175.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 85-87.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 63-78.
- Roger Olson, pp. 194-199.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 59-64.

⁸⁷ See *Middle Knowledge*, p. 51.

⁸⁸ John Piper, *Is the Glory of God at Stake in God's Foreknowledge of Human Choices?* (1998) by John Piper, ©2012 Desiring God.

Irresistible Grace

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “The fact that God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, and both actions guarantee that we will respond in saving faith.”⁸⁹

J. I. Packer – “God quickens the dead. As the outward call of God to faith in Christ is communicated through the reading, preaching, and explaining of the contents of the Bible, the Holy Spirit enlightens and renews the heart of elect sinners so that they understand the gospel and embrace it as truth from God.”⁹⁰

Edwin Palmer – “God sends his Holy Spirit to work in the lives of people so that they will definitely and certainly be changed from evil to good people.”⁹¹

John Piper – “Irresistible grace means that God is sovereign and can overcome all resistance when he wills.”⁹² Because of *Total Depravity*⁹³ humans are unable to come to God without God irresistibly drawing them to himself.⁹⁴

R. C. Sproul – “The sinner’s resistance to the grace of regeneration cannot thwart the Spirit’s purpose.”⁹⁵ Due to our nature, humans resist God. There is nothing humans can do to make this grace effective. Because of this the responsibility for the grace of regeneration must be from God alone.⁹⁶

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – See *Prevenient Grace*

F. Leroy Forlines – See *Prevenient Grace*

Roger Olson – See *Prevenient Grace*

Robert E. Picirilli – See *Prevenient Grace*

J. Matthew Pinson – See *Prevenient Grace*

⁸⁹ Grudem, p. 700.

⁹⁰ Packer, p. 153.

⁹¹ Palmer, p. 69.

⁹² John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.

⁹³ See *Total Depravity*, pp. 39-41.

⁹⁴ John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, ©2012 Desiring God.

⁹⁵ Sproul, p. 189.

⁹⁶ See *Monergism*, p. 51.

Notes to the Reader:

- One of the most common misunderstandings of this doctrine comes from the word “Irresistible.” Calvinists are not stating that God draws people against their will. Rather, when God calls people, he changes their nature from evil to good. Thus, they desire what is good and then find God’s call to be irresistible.
- This doctrine has also been referred to as “Effectual Calling.”
- Even though Arminians do hold to the idea that there is a need for supernatural grace in salvation, Arminians do not hold to the doctrine of *Irresistible Grace*. See *Prevenient Grace* pp. 33-35.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 699-706.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 152-153.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 67-79.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 179-196.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 179-190.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 47-50.
- Roger Olson, pp. 158-178.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 14, 33, 141, 144, and 188.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 39-41 and 48-50.

Limited Atonement

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “The atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation.”⁹⁷ The extent of this atonement is only for those who repent and believe. (Also referred to as “Particular Redemption.”)⁹⁸

J. I. Packer – “The death of Christ actually put away the sins of all God’s elect and ensured that they would be brought to faith through regeneration and kept in faith for glory, and that this is what it was intended to achieve.”⁹⁹

Edwin Palmer – “Christ died only for the believer, the elect, only for those who will actually be saved and go to heaven. According to the Calvinist, Christ intended or purposed that his atonement should pay for the sins of only those the Father had given him.”¹⁰⁰

John Piper – “The atonement is the work of God in Christ on the cross whereby he canceled the debt of our sin, appeased his holy wrath against us, and won for us all the benefits of salvation.”¹⁰¹ The limited aspect of atonement refers to whom Christ died for. Christ appeased the wrath of God for the unbelieving elect in order that God’s grace could draw them (the elect) to him.¹⁰²

R. C. Sproul – “The Father gave to Christ a *limited* number of people. They are the ones for whom Christ prays. They are also the ones for whom Christ died.”¹⁰³ In other words, “To be sure, Christ’s propitiation on the cross is unlimited in its sufficiency or value. In this sense Christ makes an atonement for the whole world. But the efficacy of this atonement does not apply to the whole world, nor does its ultimate design.”¹⁰⁴

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – See *Universal Atonement*

F. Leroy Forlines – See *Universal Atonement*

Roger Olson – See *Universal Atonement*

Robert E. Picirilli – See *Universal Atonement*

⁹⁷ Grudem, p. 568.

⁹⁸ Grudem, pp. 594-596.

⁹⁹ Packer, p. 137.

¹⁰⁰ Palmer, p. 50.

¹⁰¹ John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, ©2012 Desiring God.

¹⁰² John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, ©2012 Desiring God.

¹⁰³ Sproul, p. 176.

¹⁰⁴ Sproul, p. 177.

J. Matthew Pinson – See Universal Atonement

Notes to the Reader:

- In a sense, Arminians do believe in *Limited Atonement*. They do not hold to the idea that all men are saved, merely that all men have the ability to be saved through the death on the cross. By this Jesus' atoning death on the cross is limited only to those who believe (the elect); however, the opportunity to believe is unlimited; see *Universal Atonement* pp. 45-46.
- One of the most important aspects of this doctrine to note is what *Limited* means. It is not indicating that Jesus' death on the cross only atones for a limited number or type of sins. It is emphasizing that a limited number of people (the elect) receive this atonement. Some Calvinist scholars refer to this doctrine as "Particular Redemption," "Effective Atonement," or "Definite Redemption," rather than *Limited Atonement*, in order to avoid this confusion.
- Piper presents the best, simple phrase to understand this doctrine; which is, "Christ died for all the sins of some men."¹⁰⁵
- The "Elect" in these definitions refers to those whom God has chosen.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 568-603.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 137-139.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 49-65.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 163-177.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 265-272.
- F. L. Forlines, pp. 199-246.
- Roger Olson, pp. 62-67.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 87-138.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 40, 45, and 51-61.

¹⁰⁵ John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, ©2012 Desiring God.

Original Sin

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – *Original Sin* (“Inherited Sin”) refers to the guilt and corruption that all humans inherit from Adam’s sin. Adam was the human representative and his failure caused his guilt and corruption to be imputed on the rest of humanity.¹⁰⁶

J. I. Packer – “(a) Sinfulness marks everyone from birth, and is there in the form of a motivationally twisted heart, prior to any actual sins; (b) this inner sinfulness is the root and source of all actual sins; (c) it derives to us in a real though mysterious way from Adam, our first representative before God.”¹⁰⁷

Edwin Palmer – “We believe that through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature and a hereditary disease, wherewith even infants in their mother’s womb are infected, and which produces in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof, and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind.”¹⁰⁸

John Piper – “In Adam we all fell and sinned and became sinners.”¹⁰⁹

R. C. Sproul – “*Original Sin* is the corruption visited on the progeny of our first parents as punishment for the original transgression.”¹¹⁰ *Original Sin* is the state humans are in as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin; it is not the first sin that was committed by them.¹¹¹

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – See *Original Grace*

F. Leroy Forlines – “By *Original Sin*, we mean that since the fall of Adam and Eve human beings are born with an innately depraved nature. There is an innate proneness to sin.”¹¹²

Roger Olson – “Inherited corruption that affects every aspect of human nature and personality, and renders human persons incapable of anything good apart from supernatural grace.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Grudem, pp. 494-498.

¹⁰⁷ Packer, p. 83.

¹⁰⁸ Palmer, p. 152.

¹⁰⁹ John Piper, *Adam, Christ, and Justification, Part 4* (2000). By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.

¹¹⁰ Sproul, p. 121.

¹¹¹ Sproul, p. 121.

¹¹² Forlines, p. 8.

¹¹³ Olson, p. 142.

Robert E. Picirilli – “Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all human beings inherit from the original parents a corrupt nature, as inclined toward evil now as Adam and Eve were toward good before the fall.”¹¹⁴

J. Matthew Pinson – “The sin of Adam affected individual born into the human race. Adam’s sin was ‘imputed’ or ‘credited’ to everyone. The imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race entails that we are just as sinful and guilty as Adam himself. We all sinned in Adam.”¹¹⁵

Notes to the Reader:

- Grudem does not use the term *Original Sin* to define this doctrine; rather he utilizes “Inherited Sin.” He notes that traditionally this doctrine is referred to as *Original Sin*; however, this term can cause confusion. Some confuse the term to mean that *Original Sin* refers to the first sin ever committed. Clearly, this is not what either side is arguing.
- Grudem also uses several other terms in relation to this doctrine, such as: “Inherited Guilt,” “Inherited Corruption,” and “Original Pollution.”¹¹⁶
- In his book, Palmer does not specifically address the doctrine of *Original Sin*. Rather, he utilizes the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561), Article XV, for an explanation of this doctrine.
- Cottrell notes, “The corresponding concept is “personal sin,” or the sins actually committed by an individual, as distinct from the sinful state in which he was born.”¹¹⁷
- Although Cottrell defines this view, he does reject the doctrine of *Original Sin*. He writes that there are problems, he believes, with some of the proof texts. Furthermore, he maintains that *Prevenient Grace* (or *Original Grace*) nullifies the doctrine of *Original Sin*.
- Olson refers to Arminius’s views on the doctrine of *Original Sin* believing that this is the closest to the Classical Arminians’ position.
- Picirilli does not utilize the term *Original Sin* when he defines the term. It is logged under *Total Depravity* and the terms are used almost interchangeably.
- It is important to note that Calvinists and Arminians do not generally disagree on the doctrine of *Original Sin*. However, Cottrell does disagree on this doctrine.
- This doctrine is easy to confuse with the doctrine of *Total Depravity*. Remember that *Total Depravity* is describing to extent to which human nature is depraved, while *Original Sin* is describing the condition humans are in as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin.

¹¹⁴ Picirilli, p. 149.

¹¹⁵ Pinson, pp. 41-42.

¹¹⁶ Grudem, pp. 494-496.

¹¹⁷ Cottrell, p. 179.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 494-498.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 82-84.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 152-153 (Article XV of the Belgic Confession of Faith).
- John Piper, *Adam, Christ, and Justification, Part 4* (2000). By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 121-125.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 179-190.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 8, 33, and 240-244.
- Roger Olson, pp. 33-34, 43, 57-58, 75, 142-157, and 222.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 150-153.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 41-43.

Perseverance of the Saints

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.”¹¹⁸

J. I. Packer – “The doctrine declares that the regenerate are saved through persevering in faith and Christian living to the end (Heb. 3:6; 6:11; 10:35-29), and that it is God who keeps them preserving.”¹¹⁹

Edwin Palmer – “The term *perseverance of the saints* emphasizes that Christians . . . will persevere in trusting in Christ as their Savior . . . Thus they will always be saved.”¹²⁰ This eternal security is only capable because of the perseverance of God.¹²¹

John Piper – “God will so work that those whom he has chosen for eternal salvation will be enabled by him to persevere in faith of the end and fulfill, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the requirements for obedience.”¹²²

R. C. Sproul – Through the work of God, a believer can persevere in faith and obedience. This perseverance in faith and obedience leads to an assurance of salvation (even though the assurance is not necessary for salvation). Furthermore, the Elect can never fully fall from grace.¹²³

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – See *Apostasy*

F. Leroy Forlines – See *Apostasy*

Roger Olson – See *Apostasy*

Robert E. Picirilli – See *Apostasy*

J. Matthew Pinson – See *Apostasy*

¹¹⁸ Grudem, p. 788.

¹¹⁹ Packer, p. 242.

¹²⁰ Palmer, p. 81.

¹²¹ Palmer, pp. 82-83.

¹²² John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper.

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¹²³ Sproul, pp. 197-216.

Notes to the Reader:

- Palmer utilizes a short description to express this doctrine, “Once saved, always saved.”¹²⁴
- This doctrine has commonly been referred to as “Eternal Security” or “Preservation of the Saints.”
- Most Arminians do not hold to the doctrine *Perseverance of the Saints*; however, there are some who do believe in this doctrine (such as Henry Thiessen).¹²⁵ Thiessen was a Theologian who taught at Wheaton College. He produced a textbook that agreed with Arminian theology on many aspects; however, he contradicted the theology on certain points—*Perseverance of the Saints* being one of them.¹²⁶
- The question of the fallen away Christian is typically brought up with this doctrine. It is important to note that in these definitions the word “truly” is utilized as well as “obedience. The idea is that if a person claims to be a Christian yet lives a life of sin then that person is probably not a Christian—“probably,” because no Calvinist would claim to know what a person believes. However, if this person does not desire to live a Christian life, then this would be evidence that the person does not have a genuine faith.¹²⁷
- It should also be noted that Calvinists do not believe that Christians will never fall away for a time. A Christian can fall into sin, but if he is truly one of the elect he will repent.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 788-807.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 241-243.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 81-95.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 197-216.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 375-387.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 303-333.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 185-233.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 61-69.

¹²⁴ Palmer, p. 81.

¹²⁵ Henry Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2006), p. 294.

¹²⁶ Olson, pp. 42-43.

¹²⁷ For further information on the discussion concerning perseverance versus falling from grace see chapter V under the heading, “Are they really that different?”

Predestination

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “A broader term and includes the two aspects of election (for believers) and reprobation (for unbelievers).”¹²⁸

J. I. Packer – “God’s decision, made in eternity before the world and its inhabitants existed, regarding the final destiny of individual sinners.”¹²⁹ In this decision God chose some for salvation (the elect) and some for condemnation (the reprobate).¹³⁰

Edwin Palmer – “Predestination is that part of foreordination that refers to man’s eternal destiny: heaven or hell. Predestination is composed of two parts: election¹³¹ and reprobation.”¹³²

John Piper – “It refers to the destiny appointed for those who are chosen. First, God chooses, that is, he unconditionally sets his favor on whom he will, THEN, he destines them for their glorious role in eternity.”¹³³

R. C. Sproul – “From all eternity God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish. God made a choice—he chose some individuals to be saved unto everlasting blessedness in heaven, and he chose others to pass over, allowing them to suffer the consequences of their sins, eternal punishment in hell.”¹³⁴

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “God predestines believers to go to heaven, just as he predestines unbelievers to go to hell. But he does not predestine anyone to become and remain a believer, or to remain an unbeliever. This is a choice made by each individual, a choice that is foreknown by God.”¹³⁵

F. Leroy Forlines – God has predetermined that salvation will take place in those who believe in Jesus. Furthermore, He has predestined those who do not believe in Jesus for eternal punishment.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ Grudem, p. 670.

¹²⁹ Packer, p. 38.

¹³⁰ Packer, pp. 37-39.

¹³¹ See *Unconditional Election*, pp. 42-44 and *Reprobation*, pp. 36-38.

¹³² Palmer, p. 30.

¹³³ John Piper, *Those Whom He Foreknew He Predestined*, (Desiring God Sermon, 1985). By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.

¹³⁴ Sproul, p. 141.

¹³⁵ Cottrell, p. 392.

¹³⁶ Forlines, pp. 36, 90, and 138.

Roger Olson – “God’s determination (decree) to save through Christ all who freely respond to God’s offer of free grace by repenting of sin and believing (trusting) in Christ. It includes God’s foreknowledge of who will so respond.”¹³⁷

Robert E. Picirilli – “The Election of men to salvation, and the Reprobation of them to destruction.”¹³⁸

J. Matthew Pinson – “GOD before the foundation of the world hath predestinated that all that believe in Him shall be saved (Ephesians 1:4, 12; Mark 16:16), and all that believe not shall be damned . . . [a]nd this is the election and reprobation spoken of in the Scriptures.”¹³⁹

Notes to the Reader:

- This doctrine is often confused with *Election*. However, *Election* refers to God choosing people to save, while *Predestination* is larger in that it is God choosing before time the elect and the reprobate.
- It is important to note that both sides hold to the doctrine of *Predestination*, though there are differences between them. Calvinists attempt to protect salvation as being solely a gift of grace by maintaining that only God knows the purpose of predestination, while Arminians believe that God predestines based off of His foreknowledge of faith (or simply non-resistance to God’s grace). The Arminian answer can be misconstrued as a work-based salvation, yet Arminians maintain that the ability to accept or reject God’s gift of salvation is a gift in itself on account of *Prevenient Grace*; thus, there is no work (or merit) involved.
- Picirilli also notes that it is important to remember the *Predestination* implies both *Election* and *Reprobation*.
- Pinson’s definition comes from Thomas Helwys’s “A Declaration of Faith of English People” (1611).

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 669-696.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 37-39.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 29-42.
- John Piper, *Those Whom He Foreknew He Predestined*, (Desiring God Sermon, 1985) By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- Piper also continued in a two part sermon series entitled *Those Whom He Predestined He Also Called*.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 139-141.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 390-399.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 169-182.
- Roger Olson, pp. 179-199.

¹³⁷ Olson, p. 37.

¹³⁸ Picirilli, p. 48.

¹³⁹ Pinson, p. 125.

- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 21-84.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 48-49, and 125.

Prevenient Grace

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – See Irresistible Grace

J. I. Packer – See Irresistible Grace

Edwin Palmer – See Irresistible Grace

John Piper – See Irresistible Grace

R. C. Sproul – See Irresistible Grace

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – Because of the work of Christ, all people are born into a state of grace. This is a pre-regenerative grace that is universal in its extent. This grace lasts until the *Age of Accountability*¹⁴⁰ when the person commits “Personal Sin” and/or accepts “Personal Grace.”¹⁴¹

F. Leroy Forlines – Because humans are incapable of choosing God on their own, the Holy Spirit draws them to God, “enlightening the mind concerning sin, Jesus Christ, and salvation.”¹⁴² The Holy Spirit convicts and allows for a framework of possibilities in which a person is able to respond or reject God’s gift of faith.¹⁴³

Roger Olson – “The convicting, calling, enlightening and enabling grace of God that goes before conversion and makes repentance and faith possible.”¹⁴⁴

Robert E. Picirilli – “That work of the Holy Spirit that ‘opens the heart’ of the unregenerate (to use the words of Acts 16:14) to the truth of the gospel and enables them to respond positively in faith.”¹⁴⁵ God is the initiator in salvation and without this grace it is impossible to be saved.¹⁴⁶

J. Matthew Pinson – “God in His grace calls all men, universally, to be saved.”¹⁴⁷ This grace is unmerited and God gives individuals the choice to either receive or reject it.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ See *Age of Accountability*, p. 47.

¹⁴¹ Cottrell, pp. 184-190.

¹⁴² Forlines, p. 257.

¹⁴³ Forlines, p. 257.

¹⁴⁴ Olson, p. 35.

¹⁴⁵ Picirilli, p. 154.

¹⁴⁶ Picirilli, p. 154.

¹⁴⁷ Pinson, p. 50.

¹⁴⁸ Pinson, p. 50.

Notes to the Reader:

- Cottrell refers to his doctrine of Grace as *Original Grace*. His doctrine of Grace is similar to his contemporaries in that it is pre-regenerative in nature. However, Cottrell claims that *Original Grace* cancels out the effect of *Original Sin*. While this is not too dissimilar, since the other Arminian scholars hold that *Prevenient Grace* does allow a person being totally depraved to freely respond or reject God's gift of salvation, it does present a slight disagreement. Additionally, Cottrell believes that the state of *Original Grace* is available for a time. Once people reach the *Age of Accountability* they are no longer under *Original Grace* but under "Personal Sin." Classical Arminians maintain that *Prevenient Grace* is a constant and, as stated above, allow people *Free Will* despite being wholly depraved. Cottrell, however, holds to "Partial Depravity," thus, the person is always able to respond to God's call without the need for special grace.
- Cottrell utilizes two other terms when he discusses *Original Grace*: "Personal Sin" and "Personal Grace." According to Cottrell, "Personal Sin" means "the stage all enter when they reach the age of accountability and lose the original grace under which they were born. Those in this stage are the lost, the unsaved. If they die here they will be condemned forever to hell."¹⁴⁹ "Personal Grace" is "a term we might use for the position occupied by all believers, or those who have personally repented and believed God's gracious promises. This is a stage of salvation, but it is not universal. It is available to all but is entered only through personal choice."¹⁵⁰
- Forlines' does not utilize the term *Prevenient Grace* often in his book. Mostly, he refers to it as simply *Grace*. This particular definition of *Grace* is actually found in his presentation of Faith as a gift.
- Olson notes that this is very similar to the Calvinist doctrine of *Irresistible Grace*.¹⁵¹ The only difference is that Arminians believe that people are able to resist God's grace. Olson refers to H. Orton Wiley's book *Christian Theology*; specifically, where Wiley notes, "*Prevenient grace* does not interfere with the freedom of the will. It does not bend the will or render the will's response certain. It only enables the will to make the free choice to either cooperate with or resist grace."¹⁵² Olson explains though that cooperation is better explained as non-resistance to God's grace. They are similar in the fact that Olson believes that without God offering this grace people are slaves to sin. Because of this Arminians are like their Calvinist counterparts in that they believe that *Regeneration*¹⁵³ is a necessity before conversion.¹⁵⁴
- Like Olson, Picirilli agrees with the Calvinist understanding of grace except for the human's ability to respond in faith or to resist. He asserts further, "God performs this work of enabling grace for those who will respond in faith (the

¹⁴⁹ Cottrell, p. 189.

¹⁵⁰ Cottrell, p. 189-190.

¹⁵¹ See *Irresistible Grace*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵² Olson, p. 36.

¹⁵³ See *Regeneration*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁴ Olson, pp. 35-36.

elect) and for those who will not (the non-elect or reprobate).”¹⁵⁵ The effect of the grace and its pre-regenerative nature is that same as the Calvinist understanding; however, it is resistible and is offered to both the elect and reprobate.

- Picirilli expresses three elements of *Prevenient Grace*: Conviction, Persuasion, and Enabling.
- This doctrine is also known as “Pre-regenerating Grace” or “Preventing Grace.”
- Calvinists do affirm that Grace is pre-regenerative, however, they also believe that this grace is irresistible. In order to avoid confusion, I have placed these two in different doctrines.
- The preeminence of the doctrine of grace stands as a common ground between Calvinists and Arminians. Grace is necessary before salvation and Grace is entirely a gift of God. Where they differ is in whether or not God has chosen to allow His grace to be irresistible or not and to whom this grace is offered.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 699-706.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 152-153.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 67-79.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 179-196.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 179-190.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 253-271.
- Roger Olson, pp. 35-37, and 159-178.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 56-58, and 153-159.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 48-50.

¹⁵⁵ Picirilli, p. 58.

Reprobation

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “The sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins and thereby to manifest his justice.”¹⁵⁶

J. I. Packer – “God’s eternal decision regarding those sinners whom he has not chosen for life. His decision is in essence a decision not to change them, as the elect are destined to be changed, but to leave them to sin as in their hearts they already want to do.”¹⁵⁷

Edwin Palmer – “Reprobation is God’s eternal, sovereign, unconditional, immutable, wise, holy, and mysterious decree whereby, in electing some to eternal life, he passes others by, and then justly condemns them for their own sin—all to his own glory.”¹⁵⁸

John Piper – See footnote on *Double Predestination*.

R. C. Sproul – “God passes over the reprobate, leaving them to their own devices. He does not coerce them to sin or create fresh evil in their hearts. He leaves them to themselves, to their own choices and desires, and they always choose to reject the gospel.”¹⁵⁹

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “God predestines believers to go to heaven, just as he predestines unbelievers to go to hell. But he does not predestine anyone to become and remain a believer, or to remain an unbeliever. This is a choice made by each individual, a choice that is foreknown by God.”¹⁶⁰

F. Leroy Forlines – See footnote on *Double Predestination*.

Roger Olson – “God’s foreknowledge of persons who will resist prevenient grace to the bitter end.”¹⁶¹

Robert E. Picirilli – “The decree of wrath, or of the severe will of God; by which he resolved from all eternity to condemn to eternal death unbelievers, who by their

¹⁵⁶ Grudem, p. 684.

¹⁵⁷ Packer, p. 151.

¹⁵⁸ Palmer, p. 117.

¹⁵⁹ Sproul, p. 159.

¹⁶⁰ Cottrell, p. 392.

¹⁶¹ Olson, p. 180.

own fault and the just judgment of God, would not believe for the declaration of his wrath and power.”¹⁶²

J. Matthew Pinson – “[A]ll that believe not shall be damned . . . not that GOD hath predestinated men to be wicked and so to be damned, but that men, being wicked, shall be damned; for GOD would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.”¹⁶³

Notes to the Reader:

- Note that within most of the Calvinist definitions God does not choose to condemn people but merely to allow them to remain in sin. Packer remarks that by not choosing God is choosing to not change them.
- Piper unlike his associates does not use the term *Reprobation* but rather *Double Predestination*. The view is essentially the same as Packer’s in that Piper believes that God choosing some to be saved is a decision for some not to be saved. Like Packer’s definition, though, this does not indicate that some people want to be saved and cannot but rather that those who are not chosen by God continue sinning, which is what they desire to do.¹⁶⁴
- Cottrell’s definition is his definition for *Predestination*. As Olson points out, the term *Reprobation* is rarely found in Arminian theology. However, the *concept* is found in Arminian theology. Cottrell discusses how God does predestine people to damnation (*Reprobation*), but this is based on the person’s choice to reject God’s gift of salvation.
- Like Piper, Forlines uses the term *Double Predestination*. However, as with *Predestination* Forlines maintains “Conditional Double Predestination.” He defines it as “He has on the condition of foreknown sin and unbelief predestinated unbelievers to eternal damnation.”¹⁶⁵
- Olson makes a point to express that Arminians believe that people reprobate themselves by resisting. Additionally, Olson remarks that this term is rarely found within Arminian literature.
- Picirilli is utilizing Arminius’s definition for *Reprobation*. He further notes that within Arminianism there is no question but that *Election* and *Reprobation* are parallel in decree (although they are opposite outcomes), the only difference being “the foreordination of the administration of the means to faith: namely, the Word and the Spirit; reprobation requires nothing more.”¹⁶⁶
- Pinson’s definition of *Reprobation* comes from Thomas Helwys’s “A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining in Amsterdam” (1611).

¹⁶² Picirilli, p. 48.

¹⁶³ Pinson, p. 125.

¹⁶⁴ Matt Perman, *What does Piper mean when he says he’s a seven-point Calvinist?* (2006), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.

¹⁶⁵ Forlines, p. 138.

¹⁶⁶ Picirilli, p. 59.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 684-686.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 149-151.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 117-146.
- Matt Perman, *What does Piper mean when he says he's a seven-point Calvinist?* (2006), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 141, and 157-59.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 388-399.
- F. Leroy Forlines, p. 138.
- Roger Olson, pp. 179-199.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 48-84.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 48-49, and 125.

Total Depravity

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – Preceding birth, the whole person is completely affected by sin, and lacks any spiritual good in him. Additionally, apart from God’s intervention, humans are incapable of doing any action that would please God.¹⁶⁷

J. I. Packer – “It signifies a corruption of our moral and spiritual nature that is total not in degree (for no one is as bad as he or she might be) but in extent. It declares that no part of us is untouched by sin, and therefore no action of ours is as good as it should be, and consequently nothing in us or about us ever appears meritorious in God’s eyes.”¹⁶⁸

Edwin Palmer – There is no good in humans, therefore, humans are evil. It is not that humans cannot do good actions; however, they cannot do any action that can please God. Furthermore, humans cannot understand the good, nor can they desire the good (can also be referred to as “Total Inability”). (Note: it is not the same as “Absolute Depravity:” “Not only are all of his [man’s] thoughts, words, and deeds sinful, but they are as vicious as possible.”)¹⁶⁹

John Piper – This is “man’s natural condition apart from any grace exerted by God to restrain or transform man.” Human virtue is not only insufficient, but is considered evil to God. Humans are not only in total (complete) rebellion against God (and in this rebellion man can only sin), but also are totally (wholly) unable to submit to God.¹⁷⁰

R. C. Sproul – “To suffer from corruption that pervades the whole person.”¹⁷¹ Humans are born with a sin nature and are under sin’s control. In this state, man is incapable of doing any action that can please God. (Sproul also refers to this as “Radical Corruption.”)¹⁷²

Arminian:

Jack Cottrell – See *Original Grace*.

F. Leroy Forlines – “Corruption has extended to all aspects of man’s nature, to his entire being . . . because of that corruption, there is nothing man can do to merit saving favor with God.”¹⁷³ (Note: it is not the same as “Absolute Depravity.”)

¹⁶⁷ Grudem, pp. 496-498.

¹⁶⁸ Packer, p. 84.

¹⁶⁹ Palmer, p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper.

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¹⁷¹ Sproul, p. 118.

¹⁷² Sproul, pp. 118-120.

¹⁷³ Forlines, p. 17.

Roger Olson - “Humans are born morally and spiritual depraved, and helpless to do anything good or worthy in God’s sight without a special infusion of God’s grace to overcome the affects of original sin.”¹⁷⁴

Robert E. Picirilli – Humans are bound to a corrupt nature that pervades the entire person. However, this does not indicate “(a) that every person is as bad as he can be, or (b) that every person commits every sin.”¹⁷⁵ Humans are therefore incapable of genuinely desiring good and are not capable of choosing God without Divine grace.¹⁷⁶

J. Matthew Pinson – “[M]an’s utter sinfulness. We believe that everyone born into the human race is by nature, totally sinful and guilty before God.”¹⁷⁷

Notes to the Reader:

- It is important to understand that Calvinists and Arminians generally do not disagree on this particular doctrine. In fact, Picirilli refers his readers to the section defining the Calvinist position of *Total Depravity* in his book. The disagreement comes from the subtle presence of “grace” in the different sides. The two sides disagree on the doctrine of *Grace*; see *Irresistible Grace* pp. 21-22 and *Prevenient Grace* pp. 33-35.
- It is important not to confuse this term with *Original Sin*; see *Original Sin* 25-27.
- Within all definitions the word “good” is important to understand. Neither side argues that natural (non-believing) humans cannot do good actions (such as giving to the poor). A “good” action, in this sense, is an action that pleases God. Grudem’s definition adds clarity to this by using the word “spiritual” before good.
- Note that within Calvinism there are several terms that can all indicate *Total Depravity*. Palmer favors the term “Total Inability.” Sproul uses his own term of “Radical Corruption;” however, this term is utilized to help the reader understand the concept better, rather than to rename the doctrine.
- Note that Cottrell disagrees with the other scholars on the doctrine of *Total Depravity*. Instead, Cottrell avows a doctrine of “Partial Depravity” (this was not listed as a separate doctrine given that the Calvinist and other Arminian scholars affirm the doctrine of *Total Depravity*). Humans are corrupted by sin and are depraved, but this depravity does not change the fact that humans remain in the image of God (though a damaged image). Through this corruption, humans have lost their place as masters over creation and have become slaves to creation.
- Forlines uses a conversation with Stephen Ashby to specify that (1) humans can do good but with the wrong motives (and therefore cannot satisfy God), (2) humans have a conscience, though it is skewed, and (3) *Total Depravity* is not “Absolute Depravity.”

¹⁷⁴ Olson, p. 33.

¹⁷⁵ Picirilli, p. 142.

¹⁷⁶ Picirilli, p. 142.

¹⁷⁷ Pinson, p. 41.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 490-511.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 82-84.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 11-25.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 117-121.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 195-201.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 1-33.
- Roger Olson, pp. 30-39.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 141-142.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 39-43.

Unconditional Election

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – “Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.”¹⁷⁸

J. I. Packer – “Before Creation God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ . . . This divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional.”¹⁷⁹

Edwin Palmer – “To elect means to choose, to select, to opt. Divine election means that God chooses some to go to heaven.”¹⁸⁰ Unconditional election refers to God’s choice not being based on anything within man.¹⁸¹

John Piper – “Election refers to God’s choosing whom to save. It is unconditional in that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him.” It is not that the final part of salvation is unconditional; rather, that election is the basis for faith.¹⁸²

R. C. Sproul – “God’s choosing of certain individuals to be saved.”¹⁸³ This is accomplished without any conditions, “Foreseen or otherwise.”¹⁸⁴

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – See *Conditional Election*.

F. Leroy Forlines – See *Conditional Election*.

Roger Olson – See *Conditional Election*.

Robert E. Picirilli – See *Conditional Election*.

J. Matthew Pinson – See *Conditional Election*.

¹⁷⁸ Grudem, p. 670.

¹⁷⁹ Packer, p. 149.

¹⁸⁰ Palmer, pp. 30-31.

¹⁸¹ Palmer, pp. 30-32.

¹⁸² John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper.

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¹⁸³ Sproul, p. 141.

¹⁸⁴ Sproul, p. 142.

Notes to the Reader:

- Arminians do not reject the concept of *Divine Election* (even *Election* that takes place before birth); however, Arminians differ from Calvinists in that Arminians believe that *Election* is conditional; see *Conditional Election* pp. 8-10.
- Sproul differentiates between *Election* and *Predestination*. He states that *Election* is only one part of the *Predestination*. Additionally, he mentions that there are positive and negative ramifications of this doctrine. The positive is that the elect are saved without any merit on their part. The negative is *Reprobation*; see *Reprobation* pp. 36-38.
- Several of the Calvinist scholars do not refer to this doctrine as *Unconditional Election*, but simply, *Election*. However, their definitions do not make any claim that *Election* is conditional, and that is why they are put under *Unconditional Election*.
- Note that these definitions express clearly the idea that *Unconditional Election* specifically is not based on anything that is foreseen. This is directly arguing against those who base *Election* or *Predestination* on God's Foreknowledge. According to these scholars, their opponents attempt to use Romans 8:29 as a basis for their claim. These scholars then typically write as to why they believe this cannot be the case.
- Because of this doctrine, a question has been raised: if *Election* is not based on any act that humans can do, then what is election based on? When describing *Unconditional Election* Palmer writes, "God never bases His choice on what man thinks, says, does, or is. We do not know what God bases His choice on, but it is not on anything that is in man."¹⁸⁵ Grudem claims further that when Paul discusses *Election*, the only reason that he gives is, "In order that God's purpose of election might continue."¹⁸⁶ Similarly Sproul states that the reason for *Election* is, "Solely the good pleasure of his [God] will."¹⁸⁷ He argues that this does not indicate that God is arbitrary but that only He knows the reason for *Election*. Sproul notes that there have been objections raised concerning God's righteousness.¹⁸⁸ He believes that Paul knew that there would be objections to and writes, "Paul asks rhetorical questions: 'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with [in] God?'" Therefore, the Calvinist position on the reason is very clear: God is righteous, and humans do not know the why God chooses some for heaven because he has not given this knowledge to us.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- J. I. Packer, pp. 149-151.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 139-161.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.

¹⁸⁵ Palmer, p. 31.

¹⁸⁶ Grudem, p. 677.

¹⁸⁷ Sproul, p. 147.

¹⁸⁸ Sproul, pp. 149-150.

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 669-687.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 29-47.
- Roger Olson, pp. 19-20.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 97-166.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 35-84.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 390-399.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 48-49.

Universal Atonement

Calvinism:

Wayne Grudem – See *Limited Atonement*.

J. I. Packer – See *Limited Atonement*.

Edwin Palmer – See *Limited Atonement*.

John Piper – See *Limited Atonement*.

R. C. Sproul – See *Limited Atonement*.

Arminianism:

Jack Cottrell – “The pardon purchased by Christ on Calvary is offered to all, but is actually given only to those who accept it through a faith commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord. Some of those bought by his blood will be lost (2 Pet 2:1).”¹⁸⁹

F. Leroy Forlines – God has decreed that the opportunity for salvation should be provided to all but that salvation could only be applied to those who believe.¹⁹⁰

Roger Olson – “The atonement is universal. This does not mean that all mankind will be unconditionally saved, but that the sacrificial offering of Christ so far satisfied the claims of the divine law as to make salvation a possibility for all. Redemption is therefore universal or general in the provisional sense, but special or conditional in its application to the individual.”¹⁹¹

Robert E. Picirilli – “Christ died to provide equally for the elect and those who will certainly be eternally damned. That by His redemptive work salvation was made accessible to all. That ‘the the price of the death of Christ was given for all and for every man’.”¹⁹²

J. Matthew Pinson – “Christ died for all, for everyone born into the human race.”¹⁹³ Christ’s death was to atone for sin; however, this does not indicate that all humans will be saved. A person must respond to God’s call.¹⁹⁴ Thus, “[i]f we have faith and continue in faith in Him, we will not have to pay this penalty-the penalty of eternal death. He has paid it for us.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Cottrell, p. 268.

¹⁹⁰ Forlines, p. 189-190.

¹⁹¹ Olson, p. 64.

¹⁹² Picirilli, p. 104.

¹⁹³ Pinson, p. 51.

¹⁹⁴ Pinson, pp. 51-58.

¹⁹⁵ Pinson, p. 58.

Notes to the Reader:

- Calvinists do not hold to the doctrine of *Universal Atonement*, see *Limited Atonement* pp. 22-23.
- This doctrine is also referred to as “General Atonement” and “Unlimited Atonement.”
- It should be noted that Cottrell does not use the term *Universal Atonement* in his book. He merely addresses it as *Atonement*.
- Cottrell is very careful to state in his book that Christ’s atonement being offered to all does not lead to universal salvation.
- Cottrell also notes, in his definition, that it is possible for a Christian to lose his or her salvation, though, like most Arminians, he notes later in his book that a loss of salvation comes from a rejection of faith in Jesus’ death on the cross being sufficient for salvation.
- Forlines utilizes Henry C. Thiessen’s¹⁹⁶ view of Sublapsarian¹⁹⁷ order of God’s decrees to explain *Universal Atonement*.
- In his definition of *Universal Atonement*, Olson makes use of H. Orton Wiley’s definition of *Atonement*.
- Within Picirilli’s definition, he refers to Arminius’ stance on *Atonement* from *The Writings of James Arminius* (three vols.), tr. James Nichols and W.R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), I:316.

For Further Reading on this Doctrine:

- Wayne Grudem, pp. 568-603.
- J. I. Packer, pp. 137-139.
- Edwin Palmer, pp. 49-65.
- John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, (1998), By John Piper. ©2012 Desiring God.
- R. C. Sproul, pp. 163-177.
- Jack Cottrell, pp. 259-283.
- F. Leroy Forlines, pp. 37, 189-190, 192-193, and 233-234.
- Roger Olson, pp. 34-35, 63-70, and 221-241.
- Robert E. Picirilli, pp. 103-138.
- J. Matthew Pinson, pp. 51-58.

¹⁹⁶ From Thiessen’s book *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 344.

¹⁹⁷ See *Sublapsarianism*, p. 53.

CHAPTER III

MISCELLANEOUS TERMINOLOGY

Age of Accountability – The doctrine that young children, despite committing personal sins, are not held accountable before God until they reach a level of spiritual development where they understand God’s law and what it means to disobey it. This is not a measurable age; rather children reach this spiritual development at different times.

Alien Righteousness – This is the righteousness found in Jesus. It is not found within any human due to our totally depraved state.¹⁹⁸

Antinomianism – The doctrine that if Christ’s death has paid the penalty as the perfect substitute for human sins, then Christians are free to live apart from the Old Testament Law.¹⁹⁹

Apostasy – “Comes from the Greek word meaning ‘to desert a post’ and refers generally to the abandonment of Christianity.”²⁰⁰

Arminians of the Heart – This is the term to describe the Arminianism of Arminius. According to Olson, these are the true Arminians “because they are faithful to the basic impulses of Arminius and his first followers.”²⁰¹ Later Remonstrants moved away from Arminius’s teachings and into early liberal theology. Arminians of the Heart “emphatically do not deny total depravity (even if they prefer another term to denote human spiritual helplessness) or the absolute necessity of supernatural

¹⁹⁸ In this case both Classical Arminians and Calvinists hold to this doctrine.

¹⁹⁹ The term literally means “anti-law.” This doctrine is a response to the *Penal Substitution Theory of Atonement* and is not a doctrine that either party claims. It is a doctrine that some Arminians have accused Calvinist theology leads to. However, Sproul argues that Regeneration creates a change in a person’s nature. Being freed from *Original Sin*, the person will desire to be like God and not desire to sin. Likewise, Forlines argues that Justification is always accompanied by Sanctification and thus no Christian could live like an unregenerate person. Packer maintains that Scripture teaches that repentance and a desire to become righteous are necessary for salvation to have take place.

²⁰⁰ Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological terms* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1992), p. 26. Calvinists maintain that it is possible for a Christian to come into a state of *Apostasy*; however, due to their doctrine of *Perseverance of the Saints*, this state is not permanent and if the individual was truly a Christian, he will repent before death (Sproul, p. 209). Arminians, in contrast, maintain that the sin of *Apostasy* causes a Christian to lose his or her salvation. This is due to their belief that faith is the condition for salvation; if a Christian renounces his or her faith, then the condition is no longer met (Forlines, pp. 337-356). For more information on the argument regarding the loss of salvation, see Chapter V

²⁰¹ Olson, p. 17.

grace for even the first exercise of a good will toward God.”²⁰² They are commonly referred to as Classical Arminians or Reformed Arminianism; more importantly, these are the Arminians utilized in this work.²⁰³

Blasphemy – “Refers technically to any speech, act, or thought which dishonors or defames the nature or name of God.”²⁰⁴

Compatibilism – “Another term for the Reformed view of providence. The term indicates that absolute divine sovereignty is compatible with human significance and real human choices.”²⁰⁵ (Sometimes referred to as soft-determinism.)²⁰⁶

Covenant of Grace – “The legal agreement between God and man, established by God after the fall of Adam, whereby man could be saved. Although the specific provisions of this covenant varied at different times during redemptive history, the essential condition of requiring faith in Christ the redeemer remained the same.”²⁰⁷

Covenant of Works – “The legal agreement between God and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden whereby participation in the blessings of the covenant depended on the obedience, or ‘works,’ of Adam and Eve.”²⁰⁸

Determinism – An external force governs all human actions. The decisions are made prior to the action and thus destroy the ability to make a free decision.²⁰⁹

Ecclesiology – The doctrine of the Church. Like Soteriology, the origin of this word is from the Greek. It is derived from *ecclesia* and *logia*. *Ecclesia* is the term used in the New Testament to indicate the Church (or an assembly, congregation).

²⁰² Olson, p. 17.

²⁰³ Cottrell is a Church of Christ Theologian and claims the title of Arminian (Olson p.134) but he is not a Classical Arminian. Thus, his theology will differ slightly from his Arminian colleagues.

²⁰⁴ Harvey, p. 45. Whenever this term is presented in this debate it should be used with caution (see footnote on *Heresy* p. 50).

²⁰⁵ Grudem, p. 1238.

²⁰⁶ Essentially this term suggests that despite God causing all actions, humans never act in a way that is against what they desire to do. Generally, this is considered the Calvinist (Reformed) position; see *Free Will* pp. 14-17 for more on this position.

²⁰⁷ Grudem, p. 1239. Olson notes that Arminius (as well as other Arminians) affirmed the *Covenant of Grace* along with Calvinists. Olson maintains that the main theme of Arminius’s theology was God’s grace. Moreover, he asserts that Arminius stood against the *Monopluristic Covenant* (which stated that God created the covenant but needed a human response) and affirmed that grace was the sole reason for any redemptive work, and that humans were not able to do anything to cause grace. The only difference in Calvinistic views of the *Covenant of Grace* and the Arminian is that Calvinists believe that it is absolute while Arminians maintain it is conditional.

²⁰⁸ Grudem, p. 1239. This covenant precedes the *Covenant of Grace*.

²⁰⁹ Calvinists are often accused of avowing to *Determinism*; however, Calvinists affirm that they hold to *Self-Determinism*. See footnote on *Self-Determinism*, p. 52.

Evangelical Synergism – Simply referred to as synergism in most cases, this doctrine “affirms the prevenience of grace to every human exercise of a good will toward God, including simple nonresistance to the saving work of Christ.”²¹⁰

Exegesis – “The act of explaining a text, in theology usually a sacred text. The explanation may include translation, paraphrase, or commentary on the meaning. Its purpose may be either to describe the author’s meaning or to apply that meaning to a contemporary situation. Its rules are governed by the science of hermeneutics.”²¹¹

Fatalism – “A system in which human choices and human decisions really do not make any difference. In fatalism, no matter what we do, things are going to turn out as they have been previously ordained.”²¹²

Five-Point Calvinists – The traditional form of Calvinism. It ascribes to the five doctrines in the T.U.L.I.P. acronym: *Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.*²¹³

Four-Point Calvinists – A segment of Calvinism that rejects the doctrine of *Limited Atonement.*²¹⁴

God’s Salvific Decrees – God, from all eternity, in order to save sinners made decrees regarding creation, election, the fall to sin, providing salvation, and applying that salvation. While both parties affirm these decrees, they differ on the order in which these decrees were made. (Note: the order put in this definition is not in any particular order or meant to hold theological significance.)²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Olson, p. 18. *Synergism* is a difficult doctrine to define in this debate. Olson differentiates between *Evangelical Synergism* and *Humanist Synergism*. *Humanist Synergism* maintains that humans are able to reach out to God without God first allowing it. Generally, when discussing Synergism, Calvinist scholars mean *Humanist Synergism*, rather than *Evangelical Synergism*. *Evangelical Synergism* upholds that God’s grace precedes humans’ decisions and that without grace it is impossible for humans to seek God. Picirilli takes a different approach and completely denies *Synergism* (it should be noted that he denies what Olson calls *Humanist Synergism*) and refers to his explanation of the Calvinist doctrines of salvation. Forlines makes a third argument. He asserts that both Calvinists and Arminians uphold *Synergism*. He maintains that both systems believe that humans make a choice (even if the Calvinist grace is irresistible). However, justification and regeneration are completely an act of God and therefore are Monergistic. By these three arguments it would seem that Arminians both affirm and deny *Synergism*. Nevertheless, the truth is that Classical Arminians universally deny *Humanist Synergism* and maintain that salvation is entirely a gift of God and that humans are utterly incapable of turning to God without first God giving them the ability to do so.

²¹¹ Livingston and Cross, p. 585. This is different from Hermeneutics in that Exegesis is the process while Hermeneutics is the method for studying a text.

²¹² Grudem, p. 674. Often Calvinism is accused of being Fatalistic. See chapter four under the heading “Common Misnomers” for more information.

²¹³ Sproul, p. 28.

²¹⁴ See Limited Atonement pp. 23-24.

²¹⁵ Norman Geisler. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3: *Sin/Salvation* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2004), p. 184. This is also called The “Divine Decrees” or “God’s Decrees.”

Governmental Theory of Atonement – “God inflicted pain on Christ for the sins of the world in order to uphold his justice and holiness. Christ’s suffering was equivalent to any sinner’s deserved punishment so that God could forgive while at the same time being wholly just and holy. But Christ did not take the actual punishment deserved by every person.”²¹⁶

Heresy – A conscious or willful rejection of a Scriptural truth.²¹⁷

Hermeneutics – “[T]he science (or art) by which exegetical procedures are devised.”²¹⁸

Hyper-Calvinism – A form of Calvinism that maintains *Equal Ultimacy (Double Predestination)*.²¹⁹ According to *Equal Ultimacy*, God actively predestines those who will be saved as well as those who will not be saved.

Imputed Righteousness – The righteousness that is transferred from Christ to the believer through faith. This righteousness is foreign to the believer (See *Alien Righteousness*).

²¹⁶ Olson, p. 224. This theory of atonement is difficult to define, partially on account of determining who holds to it and determining what the theory actually means. Calvinists do not claim the *Governmental Theory of Atonement* and instead maintain the *Penal-Substitution Theory of Atonement*. Similarly, many Arminians claim the *Penal-Substitution Theory of Atonement*. The confusion stems from the creator of the theory, Hugo Grotius, who was a Remonstrant, and thus, an Arminian (Olson, p. 224). Moreover, this doctrine was taught by other Arminians such as Charles Finney, John Miley, and Orton Wiley (Forlines, p. iv.). The doctrine is then Arminian in origin, despite the fact that it is not the doctrine of Arminius or of many other modern Arminian scholars. Another difficulty with this doctrine is in understanding what the difference is between it and *Penal-Substitution Theory of Atonement*. According to Grudem, the main Calvinist argument against this doctrine is that, “It fails to account adequately for all the Scriptures that speak of Christ bearing our sins on the cross, of God laying on Christ the iniquity of us all, of Christ dying specifically for our sins, and of Christ being the propitiation for our sins . . . Moreover, it makes the actual earning of forgiveness for us something that happened in God’s own mind apart from the death of Christ on the cross – he had already decided to forgive us without requiring any penalty from us and then punished Christ only to demonstrate that he was still the moral governor of the universe. But this means that Christ (in this view) did not actually earn forgiveness or salvation for us, and thus the value of his redemptive work is greatly minimized” (582). Olson, who does not claim to affirm the *Governmental Theory of Atonement*, does not deny this argument (note: Olson’s definition was only utilized because he was explaining what Arminians who hold to the Governmental Theory understand it to mean). However, he does refute the Calvinist criticisms that the Governmental Theory does not include substitution, given that Christ’s death is still a substitute for our sins. Cottrell argues further that the Governmental Theory stresses that God can forgive, or not forgive, sins as He chooses and that this teaching is not consistent with Biblical teaching concerning God’s relationship with holiness and wrath. Forlines, while arguing that the governmentalists have been strong advocates of Scripture, states, “In my opinion, the governmental view is seriously inadequate (229).”

²¹⁷ This is an extremely difficult term to define. Other past definitions include rejection of accepted doctrines by specific church authorities. The problem is that Calvinist authorities hold to a certain set of doctrines and Arminian authorities hold to a different set. The questions then become whether or not either is heretical, and if so, which is correct? Given that both hold Scriptural evidence for their position it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine which is the heretical belief (if indeed one must be heretical). Thus, it is important to use this word with caution if it is used at all.

²¹⁸ Livingston and Cross, p. 760. The difference between *Exegesis* and *Hermeneutics* is that *Exegesis* is the act of explaining a text, while *Hermeneutics* creates the methods for *Exegesis*.

²¹⁹ Sproul prefers the titles “Sub-Calvinism” or “Anti-Calvinism.”

Infralapsarianism – This is related to God’s Salvific Decrees, the order being, “(1) Create all, (2) Permit the Fall, (3) Elect some and pass others by, (4) Provide salvation only for the elect, (5) Apply salvation only to the elect.”²²⁰

Middle Knowledge – “God’s knowledge of what free creatures would do freely in any given set of circumstances.”²²¹ (Also referred to as Molinism).²²²

Monergistic Regeneration (Monergism) – “An action by which God the Holy Spirit works on a human being without this person’s assistance or cooperation . . . Monergistic regeneration is exclusively a divine act. Man does not have the creative power God has. To quicken a person who spiritually dead is something only God can do.”²²³ (Also called “Operative Grace”).²²⁴

Non-Compatibilism – “The free agency that allows persons to do otherwise than they do.”²²⁵ (Also referred to as “Incompatibilist Free Will” or “Libertarian Free Will”).²²⁶

Original Grace – “The stage we enter when we first come into existence and under which we stay until we reach the *Age of Accountability*,²²⁷ thanks to the work of the Second Adam. All infants and young children are here, as are those whose mental abilities never develop beyond those of young children. This is a state of salvation and it is universal; thus the concept of ‘universal salvation’ applies here.”²²⁸

Penal-Substitution Theory of Atonement – God, in His justice, required that the penalty for sin be paid. For this reason, Christ acted as a perfect substitute and paid the exact penalty for human sins.²²⁹

²²⁰ Geisler, p. 184.

²²¹ Olson, p. 76.

²²² Calvinists do not hold to the doctrine of *Middle Knowledge*; see rather *Omniscience*, pp. 17-19. This doctrine is generally considered an Arminian doctrine given that there are Arminian advocates for it. However, Classical Arminians, as Roger Olson notes, are cautious about this approach to God’s knowledge. Olson cites several other scholars claiming that Arminius also moved away from such a doctrine. J. Matthew Pinson argues against the doctrine of *Middle Knowledge*, calling it “idiosyncratic” (p. viii) in his introduction to Forlines’s book *Classical Arminianism*.

²²³ Sproul, p. 184.

²²⁴ The doctrine of *Monergism* is typically held by Calvinist scholars.

²²⁵ Olson, p. 20.

²²⁶ This is generally considered the Arminian position. Forlines refers and holds to the dictionary definition, “An advocate of the doctrine of free will.”

²²⁷ See *Age of Accountability*, p. 47.

²²⁸ Cottrell, p. 189. It should be noted about this doctrine that Cottrell holds it in place of *Original Sin*. According to his understanding, *Original Sin* is nullified since Christ’s death counteracted it.

²²⁹ This doctrine is accepted by Calvinists and many Arminians as well as Arminius. However, there is an argument raised against the Arminians’ doctrine of *Universal Atonement*. If Christ died for everyone (thus being the perfect substitute), then, if Arminians hold to the Penal view of Atonement, Arminians hold to a Universal Salvation (Sproul, p. 165). Moreover, if Christ is the perfect substitute and Arminians do not believe in Universal Salvation, then Christ suffering the penalty and the sinner suffering

Reformed – Often this term is used synonymously with Calvinism. Generally, this represents five-point Calvinists.

Regeneration – The beginning of Sanctification. It is the act by God when humans receive a new nature. This nature gives humans the desire to do the things of God.²³⁰

Remonstrants – Originally, this was a group of forty-five theologians who followed in the tradition of Arminius and retained their name from the document they composed, known as “The Remonstrance.” This document “Summarized in a few basic points what Arminius and they believed about salvation, including election and predestination.”²³¹

Self-Determinism – All human actions are governed by the decisions that each person makes.²³²

Soteriology – The doctrine of Salvation. It answers the question, “How is a person saved?” It is derived from the Greek words *sōtēria*, which literally means

the penalty leads to a double payment of sin (Grudem, p. 594). Since Calvinists maintain *Limited Atonement*, Christ’s death is only a perfect substitute for the elect and does not lead to this problem. In reply, Forlines asserts that the atonement of Christ is provisionary. He writes, “He [Jesus] suffered the penal wrath of God for sin, but that fact alone does not place His death on everybody’s account. It can be efficacious only as it is placed on a person’s account. It can be placed on a person’s account only as a result of a union with Christ. Union with Christ is conditioned on faith (233).” It should also be noted that some Arminians (objecting to the Penal view) believe that the Penal view leads to *Antinomianism* (see *Antinomianism* p. 47, for explanation).

²³⁰ Forlines, pp. 293-295. Grudem defines Regeneration as, “a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us” (p. 699). It can also be referred to as being “born again” (Grudem, p. 699; Forlines, p. 295). The act of *Regeneration* is a singular event, it does not happen multiple times. There is a dispute between Calvinists and Arminians concerning whether *Regeneration* takes place before or after faith. Grudem states, “On this definition, it is natural to understand that regeneration comes before saving faith. It is in fact this work of God that gives us the spiritual *ability* to respond to God in faith” (p. 700). Conversely, Forlines says, “Arminians believe that it is absolutely necessary for the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of the person who hears the gospel in order for faith to be possible (Jn. 6:44).” But to Arminians this work of the Holy Spirit is not regeneration. In Arminianism, faith precedes regeneration” (p. 293). However, both sides agree that the actual act of *Regeneration* is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit (Grudem, p. 700; Forlines, p. 293).

²³¹ Olson, p. 23.

²³² This definition appear relatively simple in its understanding, yet it is difficult because both parties claim they are Self-Determinists. Because of their stance on *Free Will* (see *Free Will* pp. 14-17), Arminians have never, nor will ever, be called Determinists. Arminians maintain that God’s grace allows people to choose equally between accepting or rejecting His gift. Therefore, God has allowed the individuals to choose their ultimate fate. Calvinists, on the other hand, have been thought of as Determinists. The problem is that Calvinists maintain that their definition of *Free Will* (see *Free Will* pp. 14-17) follows a Self-Determinist perspective. According to Calvinists, humans make a choice based on their strongest inclination. Thus, since humans are totally depraved (see *Total Depravity* pp. 39-41), their strongest inclination is to sin. In this sense, they decide their own fate based on their desire to remain in sin. Even when God’s grace (see *Irresistible Grace* pp. 21-22) is offered, the human’s strongest desire is God and, again, he decides his fate by accepting the call of God. In this way, no human performs any action that is not what he desires; hence, humans ultimately determine their fate.

“salvation” or “deliverance,” and *logia* meaning “the study of.” In the case of the Calvinist/Arminian debate, both hold to the phrase “Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.” Both assert that man is completely unable to reach God without first God’s gift of grace. Additionally, faith in Christ is essential for salvation. This will be discussed further in the Analysis of the Debate.

Sublapsarianism – This is related to God’s Salvific Decrees, the order being, “(1) Create all, (2) Permit the Fall, (3) Provide salvation for all, (4) Elect those who believe and pass by those who do not, (5) Apply salvation only to believers (who cannot lose it).”²³³

Supralapsarianism – This is related to God’s Salvific Decrees, the order being, “(1) Elect some and reprobate others, (2) Create both the elect and the non-elect, (3) permit the Fall, (4) Provide salvation only for the elect, (5) Apply salvation only to the elect.”²³⁴

Synthetic Justification – “We are justified by faith in the works performed in our behalf by Christ.”²³⁵

T.U.L.I.P. – T.U.L.I.P. is an acrostic for the five points of Calvinism: **T** (Total Depravity) **U** (Unconditional Election) **L** (Limited Atonement) **I** (Irresistible Grace) and **P** (Perseverance of the Saints). Although these are the names that are commonly used, several Calvinist scholars prefer other terms that they believe are more accurate (replacement words are noted in the definitions).

Universalism – This is the belief that all people will ultimately be saved. Hell in this system of beliefs is purgative and is not meant to be an eternal punishment.²³⁶ This doctrine originates from Apocatastasis, which is found in “Clement of Alexandria, in Origen and St Gregory of Nyssa.”²³⁷ The doctrine was condemned at the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 543).²³⁸

²³³ Geisler, p. 184. Forlines holds to a form of Sublapsarianism: he, along with many other Arminians, hold to the first four points of Sublapsarianism. The problem is that Geisler adds the fifth element to his definition regarding eternal security. Geisler also adds *Wesleyanism* to his list of *Salvific Decrees*. This can cause some confusion since it is not typically used in the debate. It has been added, however, in order to differentiate more accurately between Arminians who hold to *Perseverance of the Saints* (such as Henry Thiessen) and Arminians who do not hold to *Perseverance of the Saints*. According to Geisler’s order, Forlines would probably be closer to *Wesleyanism*. However, according to Forlines’s order (Sublapsarianism without the fifth decree), Forlines and most Arminians are Sublapsarians.

²³⁴ Geisler, p. 184.

²³⁵ Sproul, p. 74.

²³⁶ Occasionally, people confuse Universalism with Classical Arminianism. The difference is that Classical Arminianism maintains that God’s offer of salvation has been given to all people, but the effect of salvation only applies to those who believe in Jesus. Universalism asserts that both the offer and the effect of salvation have been given to all people.

²³⁷ Livingstone and Cross, p. 83.

²³⁸ Livingstone and Cross, p. 83.

Unregenerate – Like its name would suggest, this term indicates a person who is still in his sinful state and has not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It does not indicate that the person will not ever be regenerated.²³⁹

Wesleyanism – This is related to God’s Salvific Decrees, the order being, “(1) Create all, (2) Permit the Fall, (3) Provide salvation for all, (4) Elect based on the foreseen faith of believers, (5) Apply salvation only to believers (who can lose it).”²⁴⁰

Will of God – The *Will of God* is often divided into three categories: Decretive, Preceptive, and Will of Disposition.²⁴¹ The Decretive will (also referred to as Efficacious Will, Purposive Will, or Absolute Will) indicates “what he [God] decrees must necessarily come to pass. If God decrees sovereignly that something will happen, it will certainly take place.”²⁴² This expression refers to events that God causes: “It was his [God’s] purposive will to create (Rev 4:11); it is his purposive will to accomplish redemption through Jesus Christ.”²⁴³ The Preceptive Will (also referred to as the Permissive Will, Legislative Will, or Conditional Will) deals with “the precepts or commands”²⁴⁴ of God. Humans can resist the Preceptive Will. Cottrell adds, “This includes most things that take place via the relative independence of natural law and free will. All such things, even sins, are the will of God in the sense that he allows them to happen.”²⁴⁵ Finally, The Will of Disposition refers to what pleases God.²⁴⁶

²³⁹ Both Calvinists and Arminians use this term to describe an unsaved person.

²⁴⁰ Geisler, p. 184

²⁴¹ Sproul, 169

²⁴² Sproul, 168

²⁴³ Cottrell, p. 117.

²⁴⁴ Sproul, p. 168.

²⁴⁵ Cottrell, p. 117.

²⁴⁶ Sproul, p. 168. The different subsets of God’s Will have many different names and may vary slightly depending on who is utilizing them. However, as is apparent above, both Calvinists and Arminians agree that there are different aspects of God’s Will. The differences come in deciding which form of God’s Will is being used in a specific verse. Additionally, it should be noted that the Decretive and Permissive Wills are discussed more frequently than the Will of Disposition.

CHAPTER IV

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Knowledge of Koine Greek is a necessary tool in accurately understanding the New Testament. Scholars on both sides have written a wide range of works detailing various reasons as to why certain Greek words and phrases should be translated to fit their doctrines. To detail each, or even most, of these arguments would extend beyond the goal of this work. For this reason, the portion discussing interpretations based on Greek texts will be confined to explaining how scholars have interpreted texts differently despite similarities in the Greek. Additionally, this chapter will assist in expelling common misnomers in the debate. At times, both parties will be accused of being similar to, or directly following, a philosophical or theological thought that has been deemed heinous by orthodox Christianity. Examples of this include the ideas that Calvinism is a form of Fatalism or that Arminianism is Pelagianism (or Semi-Pelagianism). The following will present the arguments (again from proponents of the parties) against these claims. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a concise introduction of important documents and councils that are often discussed in the debate.

Greek Translations

Finding an English parallel word is not one of the major problems with Greek translations; one of the major problems is actually determining what is meant by the use of the word being translated. Context often plays a major role in determining what is

meant by each word. However, scholars often argue about the context. There are a variety of factors that often determine the context, such as the audience (is it Jewish or Gentile?), the use of the word in previous chapters or other books, and the literary style being used (e.g., metaphors, similes). The subsequent paragraphs will present arguments from each party that illustrate these points. The arguments will be centered on two passages: Romans 9:6-13 and 1 John 2:2. The reason for these two specifically is due to the fact that both of these passages have been used as proof texts for the debate (Romans 9:6-13 for Calvinism and 1 John 2:2 for Arminianism). These are not necessarily the strongest and certainly not the only arguments regarding these passages; however, they represent apt examples of how context is argued in this debate in order to determine meaning.

The first passage to examine is Romans 9:6-13:

But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. For not all those from Israel belong to Israel; (7) nor because they are all children of Abraham are they descendants [of Abraham], but, “by Isaac, your descendants will be called.” (8) That is, not the children of the flesh who are the children of God but the children of promise will be counted as descendants. (9) For this is the word of promise, “According to this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son. (10) And not only this, but also Rebekah had [children, twins] from intercourse [by one man], our father Isaac. (11) For [the children, twins] not yet being born and not having done what is good or evil, but in order that God’s purpose according to election might stand, (12) not from works but from the One who calls, it was said to her that, “the older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved but Esau I hated. (translated by the author)

Although this passage is traditionally utilized as a Calvinist proof text for *Unconditional Election*, Forlines believes that the text does not lead to *Unconditional Election* of individuals. Furthermore, he does not agree that the text refutes the Arminian position of *Conditional Election*. Forlines does agree with the conventional understanding of verses

six through nine—that is, he maintains that Paul was teaching that not all Jews (or descendants of Abraham through Jacob) are going to be saved. However, Forlines maintains that verses ten through thirteen should be interpreted to refute the first-century Jewish understanding of the corporate election of Jews and that Paul is advocating an individual election. Additionally, Forlines maintains that this individual election is not *Unconditional* but *Conditional*. He posits three reasons to support his second claim. First, Arminians maintain that election occurs before birth. Thus, there is no contention with verse eleven’s call before birth. Second, he asserts, “Paul specifically contrasts faith with works in Romans 4:1-8.”²⁴⁷ Therefore, Arminians do not contend with verse eleven, stating that God does not base election on works because works (or merit) are different from faith. Third, he asserts that both Calvinists and Arminians maintain that faith is a human act. He states, “In both cases [Calvinism and Arminianism], the human personality exercises faith by divine aid.”²⁴⁸ Calvinists believe that the Holy Spirit aids through regeneration, and Arminians believe that the Holy Spirit aids by drawing the person to God. In this sense, Forlines maintains that both groups believe the act of faith originates in humans, but it must follow the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁹

In his argument, Forlines focuses on the audience that Paul is addressing. Because the audience is Jewish, their theology would be different from a Gentile audience. Forlines also believes that faith must be separated from works, due to how faith is used earlier in Romans.

²⁴⁷ Forlines, p. 121.

²⁴⁸ Forlines, p. 121.

²⁴⁹ Forlines, pp. 115-123.

Thomas Schreiner provides a thorough account of the Romans passage from a Calvinist position.²⁵⁰ In verses six through eight, Schreiner maintains, Paul is teaching that the “seed of Abraham are not the physical children of Abraham or the children of the flesh, but they are the children of Isaac and the children of promise.”²⁵¹ Furthermore, he posits that Paul is claiming that “God never promised that all ethnic Israelites would belong to the true people of God.” Schreiner believes that Paul uses verse nine as scriptural evidence that not all children of God are biological descendants of Abraham. He notes that the word “called” in verse seven indicates what he identifies as the “usual Pauline meaning.”²⁵² In this context, he argues, “called” is effective and, thus, will certainly occur. In support of this interpretation of “called,” he refers to Romans 4, where Paul discusses God’s calling that results in the creation of things. Schreiner continues his discussion on the passage by examining the controversy over whether the text is discussing corporate or individual election. He maintains that the passage is discussing both corporate and individual election. The Jews were elected as a group; however, Paul clarifies in chapter ten that the individual must decide to believe in Jesus.

In chapter nine, verses eleven through thirteen, a promise is made to Rebekah that changes the recipient of God’s blessing from Esau to Jacob. Schreiner explains that this shows a “winnowing process”²⁵³ involved with the promise from God. This process allows for the exclusion of Jews without the possibility that God’s promise has failed. Schreiner asserts that Paul explains the conditions of the promise in verses eleven through twelve. Specifically, Paul clarifies that the decision for individual election is

²⁵⁰ Dr. Schreiner is the professor for New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has written a commentary on Romans for Baker Books.

²⁵¹ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), p. 494.

²⁵² Schreiner, p. 495.

²⁵³ Schreiner, p. 498.

God's. Moreover, this decision precedes birth and is not based on works. Schreiner argues that the inclusion of the idea that this decision was not based on Jacob or Esau doing anything good or evil refutes a Jewish concept that Esau was nefarious before birth. Since election is not based on works, Schreiner maintains that the only reason for election is God's call. Schreiner notes that the word translated "purpose" is from the Greek word *prothesis* and often indicates, "God's saving and electing purpose (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9)."²⁵⁴ He also asserts that faith cannot be the reason for election. Although Schreiner does not claim that faith is a work (he believes the text does not make that argument), he explains that Paul does not discuss faith in this passage. Thus, the only reason for election is God's call.

Another example of an argument concerning the context of a passage of Scripture is Sproul's interpretation of 1 John 2:1-2:

My children, I write these to you in order that you do not sin. And if someone might sin, we have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; (2) and He is the propitiation for our sins, but not concerning our sins only but also concerning the sins of the whole world.
(translated by the author)

The two words that Sproul analyzes are "our" and "world." In the Greek, the word for "our" in this passage is *hēmeterōn*. Sproul does not argue that the word should be translated any differently; however, he attempts to determine the correct antecedent. He maintains that if "our" refers to Christians and non-Christians, then the verse leads to universal salvation. Rather, he asserts that "our" is referring to Jewish Christians. In this sense, Sproul is arguing that who the audience is determines the meaning. He also notes the early Church's problem with determining who was included in the New Covenant as further proof. Additionally, Sproul notes that the word used here for "world," *kosmou*

²⁵⁴ Schreiner, p. 500.

(from the word *kosmos*), is literally translated “world.” Sproul argues that there is enough evidence to support his conclusion that “world” in this passage is referring to Gentile believers. He alludes to Luke 2:1, where “world” referred to the Roman Empire. In this case, Sproul is showing how another book uses the same word differently. Therefore, Sproul argues that since “world” does not always mean the whole of mankind, it probably does not mean the whole of mankind here.

In reference to the same passage (1 John 2:1-2), Picirilli maintains a contrary position that the meaning of the words “our” and “world” can be determined by examining the meanings of those same words throughout the letter. Picirilli notes “*kosmos* occurs 23 times in 1 John, thus frequently enough to give us confidence that we can discern how he uses it.”²⁵⁵ In these instances, only four times is the word “world” not utilized to illustrate opposition to the church (Christians). Picirilli notes, “The only four instances where this negative sense is not necessary are 3:17 and 4:17 (where “the world” is neutral as the context in which we live and have our livelihood); 4:9 (which may be viewed either as local-neutral or in the same sense as in 4:14); and 4:14 (where it has whatever meaning it has in 2:2).”²⁵⁶ Besides these four instances, Christians and “the world” are in conflict with each other. He further notes that 1 John 5:19 utilizes the phrase “whole world” (much like 2:2) and in this context, “whole world” clearly indicates the unsaved (non-elect). In regard to the use of the first person plural “our,” Picirilli maintains that the use in 1 John refers to Christians as a whole, rather than a subgroup of Christians. Moreover, 1 John 3:1, 4:5-6, 5:4-5, and 5:19 argue for a direct contrast between the first person plural (referring to the elect, or Christians) and “the world.”

²⁵⁵ Picirilli, p. 125.

²⁵⁶ Picirilli, p. 125.

In his closing arguments concerning 1 John 2:2, Picirilli focuses on the extent and application of *Atonement*. As noted above, Sproul makes the argument that the alternate interpretation of 1 John 2:2 leads to universal salvation. Picirilli maintains that his interpretation does not necessarily lead to universal salvation. In short, 1 John 1:7 states that Christ's blood cleanses all sins. 1 John 4:14 explains that God sent Jesus as the savior of the world. However, 1 John 1:9 indicates that forgiveness is contingent upon confession. Furthermore, 1 John 1:6-7 indicates that Christians walking in the light and fellowshiping with other Christians is linked to being cleansed by Jesus' blood. Therefore, Picirilli asserts, the text argues against universal salvation by illustrating that the effect of Jesus' *Atonement* is contingent upon confessing. Thus, Picirilli maintains, the text should be interpreted to mean the whole world and not the only the elect.

Common Misnomers

Calvinism is another form of Fatalism

Because of its doctrine of *Election*,²⁵⁷ Calvinism is often compared to the philosophy of *Fatalism*. As Grudem explains, *Fatalism* is "a system in which human choices and human decisions really do not make any difference."²⁵⁸ In reply to this charge, Calvinist scholars point to the New Testament. Grudem clarifies, "Not only do we make willing choices as real persons, but these choices are also real choices because they do affect the course of events in the world." John 3:18 illustrates that a person's decision to believe or not determines the eternal destiny of that person. Thus, the New Testament explains that humans do make choices that make a difference, unlike the

²⁵⁷ See *Unconditional Election*, pp. 42-44.

²⁵⁸ Grudem, p. 674.

philosophy of Fatalism.²⁵⁹ Grudem finishes his discussion about Fatalism by reminding Christians that only God knows who the elect are and therefore it is vital to continue to preach the gospel. He quotes 2 Timothy 2:10, “Therefore *I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation* in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory.”²⁶⁰

Arminianism is the heresy of Pelagianism

At the heart of Pelagianism is the idea that humans have the ability “to do God’s will apart from the special operation of divine grace.”²⁶¹ This view completely disregards *Total Depravity*. However, this position is vastly different from the teachings of Classical Arminians. Classical Arminians do, in fact, hold to a doctrine of *Total Depravity*²⁶² and *Original Sin*.²⁶³ Cottrell, being the exception, maintains a doctrine of *Original Grace*.²⁶⁴ Consequently, this (Original Grace) is still not naturally found in man but is a gift from God through Christ’s death. Furthermore, Picirilli notes that neither Arminius nor the first Remonstrants refuted *Total Depravity*. He quotes Arminius:

In his *lapsed and sinful state*, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, conceive, will, and perform whatever is truly good.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ See, *Free Will* under the “Calvinism” heading, p. 13.

²⁶⁰ Grudem, p. 676.

²⁶¹ Olson, p. 81.

²⁶² See *Total Depravity*, pp. 39-41

²⁶³ See *Original Sin*, pp. 25-27.

²⁶⁴ See *Original Grace*, p. 51.

²⁶⁵ James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius* (three vols.), tr. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), I:252 (as cited in Picirilli, p. 151.)

Arminianism is the heresy of Semi-Pelagianism

This is the most common accusation found against Arminianism. R. C. Sproul argues, “Though Arminianism is more properly speaking a variety of semi-Pelagianism, the ‘semi’ is a thin patina. The essence of Pelagianism is retained in semi-Pelagianism, and it is carried through into Arminianism.”²⁶⁶ The Second Council of Orange deemed semi-Pelagianism heretical in A.D. 529. According to Olson, semi-Pelagianism “affirmed human ability to exercise a good will toward God apart from special assistance of divine grace; it places the initiative in salvation on the human side.”²⁶⁷ Like Pelagianism, this denies the accepted, Classical Arminian doctrines of *Total Depravity*, *Original Sin*, and *Prevenient Grace*.²⁶⁸ According to these doctrines, humans are completely incapable of even initiating salvation without God’s gift of *Prevenient Grace*. Moreover, the above quotation from Arminius again refutes that semi-Pelagian stance. However, this form of partial depravity seems strikingly similar to Cottrell’s Arminianism, the main difference being that Cottrell understands that humans are incapable apart from God’s gift of *Original Grace*. In conclusion, Forlines utilizes Pinson’s refutation of semi-Pelagianism: “Thus, as Pinson explains, ‘Fallen humanity has no ability or power to reach out to the grace of God on its own.’”²⁶⁹

Although Sproul’s account of Classical Arminianism’s connection with semi-Pelagianism may not be accurate, there is a reason for his claim. Arminian scholar William Burton Pope, who wrote one of the standard textbooks for Arminian theology, noted a connection between the two theologies. Pope acknowledged “the departures of

²⁶⁶ Sproul, p. 180.

²⁶⁷ Olson, p. 81.

²⁶⁸ See *Prevenient Grace*, pp. 33-35.

²⁶⁹ Forlines, p. 23.

Limborch and other late Remonstrants from Arminius (and the early Remonstrants) into semi-Pelagianism and liberal theology.”²⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the doctrines of Arminius, the early Remonstrants, and Classical Arminians do not maintain a connection with semi-Pelagianism.

Documents and Councils

“Confessio Belgica” Belgic Confession of Faith (1566)

The Confessio Belgica is a Protestant document of beliefs adopted in 1566 by a synod in Antwerp, Belgium. Guido de Bray, a man educated in Geneva, wrote the confession in 1561.²⁷¹

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563, was the orthodox catechism for Reformed Protestant churches in Germany and Netherlands as well as in a few Bohemian and Hungarian Churches.²⁷² Schaff notes that the Heidelberg Catechism is like other catechisms in that it teaches “the articles of the Apostles’ Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer; that is, all that is necessary for a man to believe and to do in order to be saved.”²⁷³ Although it does differ slightly from other catechisms on issues of the sacraments and baptism, it maintains a strict adherence to Protestant orthodoxy. Moreover, Schaff asserts that the Heidelberg Catechism is the “fullest and richest” of all other catechisms.

²⁷⁰ Olson, p. 25.

²⁷¹ Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity* (Vol 2.) (U.S.: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 21.

²⁷² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Vol. 7: Modern Christianity, the German Reformation) (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910), p. 555.

²⁷³ Schaff, p. 555.

A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam (1611)

This document is a confession of faith written mostly by Thomas Helwys. According to Pinson, “this is the first systematic summary of Arminian, Free Will Baptist beliefs.”²⁷⁴

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-46)

Due to political and ecclesial tension the British Parliament assembled various theologians, laymen, and Scottish representatives to determine church order and doctrine. The document created is the Westminster Confession of Faith. González notes that the Westminster Confession “became one of the fundamental documents of Calvinist orthodoxy.”²⁷⁵ The Westminster Assembly endorsed the Confession to become the standard for the Church of England. In 1644, Parliament instituted it.²⁷⁶ The Westminster Confession of Faith contains discussions on *God’s Eternal Decree*,²⁷⁷ *Original Sin (and Total Depravity)*, *Limited Atonement*, *Free Will*, *Irresistible Grace*, and *Perseverance of the Saints*.²⁷⁸ This document bears a similarity to the findings of the Synod of Dort.

Synod of Dort (1618-1619)

From November of 1618 through May 1619 the Synod of Dort (or Dordrecht) assembled in order to settle the dispute between the Gomarists²⁷⁹ and the Remonstrants²⁸⁰ as well as other matters. The Synod found against Arminianism: “Thus, although the

²⁷⁴ Pinson, p. 123.

²⁷⁵ Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity* (Vol. 2: The Reformation to the Present Day) (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984), p. 159.

²⁷⁶ González, pp. 158-159.

²⁷⁷ See *God’s Salvific Decrees*, p. 50.

²⁷⁸ This is, by no means, all the doctrines the Westminster Confession of Faith contains; however, these are pertinent to the debate.

²⁷⁹ Followers of Gomar, see Chapter I, the section on Arminius.

²⁸⁰ See *Remonstrants*, p. 52.

synod did not approve the most extreme theses of Gomarus – who was one of its members – it did agree on the need to condemn Arminianism.”²⁸¹ It was at the Synod of Dort where the five points of Calvinism²⁸² were affirmed. Upon deliberating, the Arminians were punished. One of the Arminian leaders, Van Oldenbarnevelt, was sentenced to death. Hugo Grotius,²⁸³ like many other Arminians who continued to preach, was sentenced to life imprisonment. Grotius’s wife, however, was able to smuggle him out of jail. Other Arminians were exiled or taken from their pastoral positions. Church members were ordered to pay fines. The Synod of Dort effectively unified the Calvinist movement and required the various positions in church to follow the Synod’s decisions. Arminianism, however, would not be tolerated until 1630, when “a less rigid policy had been adopted, but it was not until 1795 that the Remonstrants were admitted to full toleration.”²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ González, p. 182.

²⁸² See T.U.L.I.P., p. 53.

²⁸³ See footnote on *Governmental Theory of Atonement*, p. 49.

²⁸⁴ Livingstone & Cross, p. 107.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DEBATE

Now that the terminology employed in the Calvinist/Arminian debate has been properly defined, it is important to analyze how, or if, the debate should continue within the Protestant Church. The first issue that needs to be addressed is whether or not both sides can be considered saved despite maintaining different doctrines. Examining the doctrine of Soteriology²⁸⁵ of both parties will provide the resolution of this issue. The next issue is determining if either side can be viewed as having a correct understanding of Scripture. The third point to discuss is whether the different systems are vastly dissimilar. The final issue is whether or not these systems can coexist without causing divisions within the church.

The Soteriology of Calvinism

The first step in the Calvinist system of Soteriology is the understanding of *Total Depravity* and *Original Sin*. Humans are born in sin and are completely unable to do any righteous or good act before God.²⁸⁶ Humanity's sin and sinful state demands the punishment of death. Christ, being fully human and fully God, became the perfect substitute for the elect (those whom God chose to be saved before the foundation of the

²⁸⁵ See *Soteriology*, p. 52.

²⁸⁶ See "Notes to the Reader" section of *Total Depravity* pp. 39-41 for the explanation of what constitutes a good deed.

world), taking on the punishment for all of their sins.²⁸⁷ In this way, Christ paid the penalty for the elect.²⁸⁸ God irresistibly²⁸⁹ draws the elect toward salvation through pre-regenerative grace. Because of God's grace, the elect are able to repent of their sin and respond in faith by believing in Christ's atoning death as the perfect payment for sin. Salvation is by God's grace, through faith; in this sense, both faith and grace are gifts from God.

The Soteriology of Arminianism

The first step in the Arminian system of Soteriology is the understanding of *Total Depravity* and *Original Sin*. Humans are born in sin and are completely unable to do any righteous or good act before God.²⁹⁰ Humanity's sin and sinful state demands the punishment of death. Christ, being fully human and fully God, became the perfect provisional substitute for all taking on the punishment for all sin.²⁹¹ Christ's death is for all who believe; however, while in a totally depraved state, humans are incapable of believing in Christ. To enable humans to be saved, God uses pre-regenerative grace to draw all toward salvation. This grace allows people, even while being totally depraved, to repent of their sins and respond in faith by believing in Christ's atoning death as the perfect payment for sin, or it allows them to reject His gift of salvation. Salvation is by God's grace, through faith; in this sense, both faith and grace are gifts from God.²⁹²

²⁸⁷ See *Penal-Substitution Theory of Atonement*, p. 51.

²⁸⁸ See *Limited Atonement*, pp. 23-24.

²⁸⁹ See "Notes to the Reader" section of *Irresistible Grace* p. 22 to understand what Calvinists mean by "Irresistible."

²⁹⁰ All of the Arminian scholars used in this work agree on this concept with the exception of Cottrell. He maintains a partial depravity, however, he maintains that without the existence of pre-regenerative grace in the form of *Original Grace*, man would be left in total depravity.

²⁹¹ See the *Penal-Substitution Theory of Atonement*, p 51.

²⁹² Understand that faith would not be possible without God's gift of pre-regenerative grace; therefore faith is a gift.

Are both sides saved despite having different doctrines?

The answer is, irrefutably, yes. In the core of both Soteriologies is the same understanding of who Christ is and what His death on the cross accomplished. Furthermore, both systems maintain that humans are unable to do anything to merit salvation. Salvation is only possible because of the grace of God which must precede regeneration. Moreover, since the ability to respond in faith and repentance is only possible because of this grace, both maintain that faith is a gift of God. By this reasoning, it is clear, both Calvinists and Arminians avow that Salvation is by grace through faith.

While this reasoning may seem overly simplistic, the more convincing evidence is that scholars from both sides affirm the salvation of the opposing theology. Palmer writes, “Arminians are sincere Christians.”²⁹³ In his work, Forlines states, “I recognize that there are many Calvinists who are very strongly committed to evangelism and worldwide missions. I respect them for this, and I appreciate it.”²⁹⁴ Sproul, in a separate book from the one used for this work, articulates,

My struggle has taught me a few things along the way. I have learned, for example, that not all Christians are as zealous about predestination as I am. There are better men than I who do not share my conclusions. I have learned that many misunderstand predestination. I have also learned the pain of being wrong.²⁹⁵

He goes on to record that two notable oppositions to the Reformed view are C. S. Lewis and Billy Graham.²⁹⁶ Moreover, the scholars used in this work treated the views as opposing Christian views, at times even thanking their Calvinist or Arminian friends for

²⁹³ Palmer, p. 32.

²⁹⁴ Forlines, p. 195.

²⁹⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, (Carol Stream, IL, Tyndale House Publishers, 1985), p. 13.

²⁹⁶ Sproul, p. 16.

their help. The fact that none of the authors assert an opinion that the opposition is not Christian is evidence enough to believe that both parties affirm the salvation of the other. Therefore, to claim that either side is not saved would be to go against the foremost experts of both sides.

Is there a superior view?

Both sides will, of course, claim that their view is the “Scriptural” or “superior” view. However, the truth is that neither side can make this claim fully. While this statement may seem blasphemous to readers, not understanding this fact is detrimental to the debate. That neither side can claim superiority is due to the contradictions found in both arguments. Each side maintains that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired word of God. Additionally, both sides agree that God cannot contradict Himself. Building on these two assumptions, it is impossible for Scripture (or for this matter, a doctrine of God) to have any contradiction, no matter how seemingly insignificant the contradiction may be. Thus, if a contradiction were found, the contradiction would not be in Scripture but in the human understanding of Scripture. Furthermore, since both arguments’ doctrines are interconnected and contingent upon each other, one doctrine holding a flaw or contradiction destroys the entire system.

The contradictions referred to in this section are the Calvinist contradiction of the origin of sin and *God’s Sovereignty*²⁹⁷ and the Arminian contradiction of “Foreknowledge”²⁹⁸ and “Foreordination.”²⁹⁹ Calvinists maintain that God is absolutely sovereign and has foreordained every event. In addition, Calvinists maintain that God is holy and without sin. The contradiction, then, is the question of how could sin enter the

²⁹⁷ See *Divine Sovereignty*, pp. 11-13.

²⁹⁸ See *God’s Knowledge (Omniscience)*, pp. 18-20.

²⁹⁹ See *Divine Sovereignty*, pp. 11-13.

world if God, foreordaining every event, did not foreordain it. Would this not make God the author of sin? In reply, Calvinists do admit that God ordains sin but did not cause it.

Grudem writes,

God himself never sins but always brings about his will *through secondary causes*; that is through personal moral agents who voluntarily, willingly do what God has ordained. These personal moral agents (both human beings and evil angels) are to blame for the evil they do.³⁰⁰

Palmer states, “He [God] has foreordained everything, ‘after the counsel of his will’ (Eph. 1:11): the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist—even sin.”³⁰¹ Even Sproul agrees, “We know that God is sovereign because we know that God is God. Therefore we must conclude that God foreordained sin. What else can we conclude?”³⁰² The answer is irrefutable according to Calvinism — God did ordain sin. However, there is another problem with this: where did the desire to sin stem from? Unlike the rest of humanity, Adam and Eve were not born with a sin nature. Therefore, according to the Calvinist understanding of *Free Will*,³⁰³ Adam and Eve would not desire to sin. Thus, it was Satan, in the form of a serpent, who gave Adam and Eve the desire to sin. The problem here, again, is why did Satan have a desire to sin?³⁰⁴ Since Satan is a creation of God, God gave Satan his nature. If God gave Satan a good, or even neutral nature, Satan would not have rebelled. Consequently, if God gave Satan an evil nature, then God would be the author of sin. In response to this problem Sproul says,

I don’t know. Nor have I found anyone yet who does know. In spite of this excruciating problem we still must affirm that God is not the author of

³⁰⁰ Grudem, p. 343.

³⁰¹ Palmer, p. 30.

³⁰² Sproul, *Chosen by God*, p. 31.

³⁰³ See *Free Will*, pp. 14-17.

³⁰⁴ Remember in Grudem’s quote above that even evil angels are mentioned as free moral agents.

sin . . . One thing is absolutely unthinkable, that God could be the author or doer of sin.³⁰⁵

It is clear that the Calvinist understanding of God's Sovereignty creates a tension with the origin of sin and God's holiness.

The Arminians are also not exempt from holding to a contradiction. As stated previously, their contradiction deals with how God can have perfect foreknowledge of future events without the events being foreordained. Arminians maintain that humans, through grace, have the ability to chose or reject God. Additionally, Arminians, as seen in the definitions of *God's Knowledge (Omniscience)*, affirm God's perfect foreknowledge of events. The contradiction stems from the fact that if God perfectly knows what will happen, it then must happen and, thus, the decision for salvation was predestined.

In regard to contradictions, scholars have adhered to this line of reasoning. Sproul writes, "Contradictions can never coexist, not even in the mind of God."³⁰⁶ In agreement, Grudem asserts, "Our supposedly logical deductions may be erroneous, but Scripture itself cannot be erroneous . . . Ultimately, there is no internal contradiction either in Scripture or in God's own thoughts."³⁰⁷ It is irrefutable — a contradiction cannot exist if these are Scriptural views. Furthermore, no view can be considered superior to another if it creates a contradiction.

However, despite the validity of the above argument, it differs from the conclusions drawn in other scholarly work in the way it views the contradictions. Scholars reason that these are not, in fact, contradictions, but paradoxes. Even though, to

³⁰⁵ Sproul, p. 31.

³⁰⁶ Sproul, p. 44.

³⁰⁷ Grudem, p. 34-35.

some, these words appear to be synonymous, there is a slight difference in the meaning that is being used in this debate. In this sense, a contradiction is “a set of two statements, one of which denies the other,”³⁰⁸ while a paradox is “a seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true.”³⁰⁹ While the scholars accept that their doctrines lead to seemingly contradictory ideas, they maintain that Scripture affirms their position, making it a paradox rather than a contradiction. This concept of paradoxes is definitely not a new idea in Christianity. A good example of an accepted paradox is the dual nature of Christ. Both sides affirm that Jesus was both fully God and fully human. Such a claim seems contradictory, since it is impossible to be completely one thing and also completely another; however, both sides agree that Scripture affirms such a belief. Thus, the dual nature of Christ is accepted as a paradox, rather than rejected as a contradiction.

In the same way, scholars argue that their position contains a paradox rather than a contradiction. However, the problem with maintaining such a claim is that it is impossible to distinguish a contradiction from a paradox. Both a contradiction and a paradox seem identical; the only difference is that a paradox is true. The only method used in the past to determine the difference between the two was to examine Scripture. As stated above, both sides affirm that Scripture is inerrant, so if there are seemingly contradictory ideas in Scripture, these ideas must be paradoxes. This is assuming, of course, that there is not a misunderstanding with the contradictory ideas, and that all relevant information regarding the context of the contradictory ideas is understood. As shown in chapter four, both sides posit arguments regarding different texts and have strong arguments for their positions. Since there are strong scriptural arguments for both

³⁰⁸ Grudem, p. 1239.

³⁰⁹ Grudem, p. 34.

sides, it is impossible to determine whether one side is either a paradox or a contradiction. Thus, while it is probable that one side is correct, neither side can make this claim.

At this point, it would be beneficial to clarify what has been stated above so as to ensure that there is no misunderstanding. Both sides admit that there are paradoxes within their system of beliefs. The presence of a paradox in no way invalidates either side; paradoxes occur within Scripture (such as the dual nature of Christ discussed above). However, it is possible that either, or both, of these paradoxes are contradictions. The only method used to determine whether one is a contradiction or paradox is to examine what Scripture says. Since there are numerous commentaries interpreting texts for either side, this method does not allow for certain proof. Thus, both sides must make the argument that Scripture validates their paradoxes. However, because this proof is based upon an assumption, neither side can argue beyond reasonable doubt that their side is the ultimate understanding of Scripture. In conclusion to this point, while one side may in fact be right, the claim that one is the Scriptural or superior belief cannot be substantiated.

Are they really that different?

In actuality there are not many differences between these two groups. This guide analyzes the terminology that is often used in the debate between these two; however, it does not highlight the beliefs that they share. The difficulty with highlighting their similarities is that the similarities are too numerous. Both Calvinism and Arminianism stem from the Reformed Protestant movement. They maintain the essential doctrines needed for salvation required by the Protestant Church. They agree on other important

doctrines of the church, such as the Trinity, the Eternality of God, and the dual nature of Christ. The list of agreed doctrines goes on. In truth, even with the doctrines they disagree on, there are points of similarity. On the question of the *Sovereignty* of God³¹⁰ the debate is not that one side affirms and the other disavows it. The difference is how God utilizes His Sovereignty. The argument diverges at a different understanding of the nature of God. On the argument concerning *Free Will*³¹¹ it, again, stems not from the affirmation and denial of the belief, but from how God allows people to choose. Similarly, neither side denies *Predestination*, the difference being that God either predestines according to His purpose³¹² or predestines according to the choice He allowed humans to have. The main difference is not in a plethora of affirmed or denied doctrines but rather in an understanding of how God uses His “Omnipotence.”

Probably the single greatest difference between the two sides is the doctrine of *Perseverance of the Saints*,³¹³ and even this difference is not as substantial as is commonly believed. As noted earlier, Calvinists maintain the belief that a Christian, being elected by God cannot lose his salvation because God preserves Christians. Conversely, many Arminians (though not all) maintain that a Christian can lose his salvation.³¹⁴ This has led to accusations that Arminian theology lacks security. Palmer states, “Arminianism believes: in again, out again; now saved, now lost; first a child of God then a child of the devil; now spiritually alive, now dead. Who can tell what his final state will be?”³¹⁵ Later, in the same chapter, Palmer says, “Now this is contrary to

³¹⁰ See *(Divine) Sovereignty*, pp. 11-13.

³¹¹ See *Free Will*, pp. 14-17.

³¹² His purpose has not been revealed to humanity.

³¹³ See *Perseverance of the Saints*, pp. 28-29.

³¹⁴ In this section, we will devote more space to the Arminian position since the Calvinist position has already been examined. See *Perseverance of the Saints*, pp. 28-29.

³¹⁵ Palmer, p. 83.

the Word of God. Jesus says that ‘whosoever believes on the Son shall never perish.’ But the Arminian says, ‘Wait and see. Maybe he will go to hell.’”³¹⁶ This kind of rhetoric is not only causing unnecessary tension but is also inaccurate. Forlines notes that the loss of salvation is a result of *Apostasy*.³¹⁷ In describing *Apostasy*, Forlines quotes Howard Marshall, saying,

Such a sin is an act of total rejection of God. The sinner has become an adversary of God (Heb.10:27), and he has rejected the very things which were the means of his salvation, the atoning blood of Christ and the Spirit of grace.³¹⁸

This is the only way in which Christians can lose their salvation. It is important to stress that the loss of salvation is not the result of a minor sin or even a time of continuous sin, but only through a Christian completely denouncing God, Jesus, and the atoning work of Christ can Christians ever lose their salvation. Forlines uses several Scriptural references to support his position. He further explains that Arminians do not need to live in bondage to fear³¹⁹ and that Christians do have assurance. Forlines argues, “We are saved by faith and kept by faith. We are lost after we are once saved, only by turning from faith in Christ to unbelief.”³²⁰ This understanding of how Christians lose their salvation is vastly different than the statements made by Palmer. Instead of the “in again, out again”³²¹ salvation that Palmer is insisting upon the Arminian position does offer security. The only instance where a Christian could lose his or her salvation is in the extreme case when he is willfully renouncing God and salvation or in the extreme case when he is unrepentant and unashamed concerning a continual life of sin.

³¹⁶ Palmer, p. 87.

³¹⁷ Forlines, pp. 320-321.

³¹⁸ Forlines, p. 320.

³¹⁹ Forlines, pp. 349-350.

³²⁰ Forlines, p. 351.

³²¹ Palmer, p. 83.

When describing the Reformed Calvinist position on *Perseverance of the Saints*, Sproul states, “it is impossible for the elect to fully or finally fall from grace.”³²² This does not negate the possibility that a Christian could become temporarily entangled in sin; however, this time of entanglement will not be permanent. The question then remains concerning the person who, by all human understanding is a Christian, renounces faith in God and Christ. Sproul gives two possible answers for this situation. First, it is possible “that their profession was not genuine in the first place. They confessed Christ with their mouths and then later committed a real apostasy from that confession.”³²³ The other option is that this person will reject faith in God and Christ and then repent before death. However, if there is no repentance before death, Sproul maintains, “then theirs is a full and final fall from grace, which is evidence that they were not genuine believers in the first place.”³²⁴ In the extreme case that a supposed Christian dies in a state of rejection of his or her faith in God and Christ, the person never had genuine faith, despite appearances to the contrary.

It is through these extreme cases that the similarity concerning the *Perseverance of the Saints* exists between Calvinism and Arminianism. Hypothetically, if a man, who by all appearances is a Christian, renounces his faith in God and Christ until death, what then is his position regarding salvation? The Calvinist, as shown by Sproul, would state that the man never was a Christian. The Arminian, as shown by Forlines, would state that the man lost his faith—the result is the same. In the end, neither side believes that the man died a Christian. Moreover, both sides agree on the Christian who falls into sin

³²² Sproul, p. 208.

³²³ Sproul, p. 208.

³²⁴ Sproul, p. 209.

for a time and then repents.³²⁵ Sproul discusses this in the second option quoted above. Forlines also makes it clear in his book that the Holy Spirit works to convict Christians of their sin. He states, “He [the Holy Spirit] chastises the believer (Heb. 12:7-8, 11), making it so that he cannot enjoy life except when living in harmony with God.”³²⁶ For a Christian to fall into sin for a time and then repent indicates that the Holy Spirit was still working in this person in order to restore a correct relationship with God. Thus, both sides affirm the Christianity of the person who falls into sin and then repents.

It is clear that through closer examination, the differences concerning *Perseverance of the Saints* are not that substantial. Forlines even agrees with Sproul that a Christian who is living in sin could not have had a genuine confession of faith.³²⁷ The fundamental problem with both sides is that no one can determine what an individual actually believes. Forlines says, “I believe a person is either saved or unsaved, but I cannot pass judgment on all cases.”³²⁸ The only method that either Calvinists or Arminians can use in order to attempt to determine the salvation of an individual is through outward appearances. Because of this both Calvinist and Arminian arguments concerning the salvation of another person have inevitably the same results. Furthermore, since the situation required for an Arminian to speculate the loss of salvation in a person is the same as the situation required for a Calvinist to speculate the lack of a genuine confession of faith, both systems offer the same assurance of salvation. Therefore, one of the greatest differences between Calvinists and Arminians is hardly more than a game of rhetoric.

³²⁵ Sometimes this type of person is referred to as a “Backslider,” however, Forlines notes that the definition of such a term varies from person to person (pp. 355-356) and, thus, too vague to use.

³²⁶ Forlines, p. 350.

³²⁷ Forlines, p. 355.

³²⁸ Forlines, p. 355.

Should the debate continue?

Regardless of my answer to this question, the Calvinist/Arminian debate, in one form or another, will always continue. The debate between these specific groups has been around for centuries and there is no reason to believe that it will be resolved by the latest theologian's thoughts. Furthermore, this debate did not originate with Calvin and Arminius; it did not even originate in Christianity. Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, records that the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes all had differing views on whether God predestines or allows free will.³²⁹ Regardless of attempts to solve it, this debate seems to have been predestined to continue.

However, to answer the question on whether or not the debate *should* continue, the answer is absolutely. As stated previously, this debate, at its core, is about understanding how God uses His omnipotence. Hence, studying the differing sides of the debate causes the reader to have a deeper understanding of God. Furthermore, both sides affirm that God is omnipotent. Therefore, neither side is maintaining a heresy that God is not omnipotent. Additionally, neither side argues that God could not act in accordance with the other system's beliefs, merely that, based on thorough Scriptural analysis, they believe He chooses not to act according to the other system's beliefs. This causes each side to reflect upon its analysis in order to enhance and refine its position. Thus, Christians can obtain a deeper understanding of God's power and characteristics through intense study in the debate, even if the question may never be answered.

Unfortunately, while this debate can be used as an excellent theological examination into the power and characteristics of God, what has happened recently and in

³²⁹ Josephus. *The Antiquities of the Jews in Josephus the Complete Works* (translated by William Whiston) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 572 (sections 13.5.9).

church history is that this debate has been used to divide Christianity. In an interview in 2011, Dr. Frank Page³³⁰ stated,

I think one of the issues which is a tremendous challenge for us is the theological divide of Calvinism and non-Calvinism. Everyone is aware of this, but few want to talk about this in public. The reason is obvious. It is deeply divisive in many situations and is disconcerting in others. At some point we are going to see the challenges which are ensuing from this divide become even more problematic for us. I regularly receive communication from churches who are struggling over this issue.³³¹

As Page notes, the problems from this debate are becoming more severe. However, these problems are not necessary. It has already been shown that the two sides affirm the other's salvation. Since salvation can be obtained regardless of affiliation to either system, any point of disagreement is superfluous to Protestant Christianity. While the points of disagreement are excellent for theological exercises, they should not be allowed to cause problems within the church.

This being said, it may not be beneficial for differing sides to attend the same congregation. Although these disagreements can be useful, centuries have shown that the differing sides within the church have a tendency to cause these disagreements to become problems. A good illustration of conflict and co-existence is the disagreements between George Whitefield and John Wesley. In 1735, George Whitefield joined "the Methodists," an Oxford club started by Charles Wesley and led by John Wesley.³³² According to Whitefield's journals, both Charles and John counseled him during times of

³³⁰ Dr. Frank Page is the President and CEO of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

³³¹ SBC Today, An Interview with Dr. Frank S. Page, 2011. <http://sbctoday.com/2011/10/18/an-interview-with-dr-frank-s-page-president-and-ceo-of-the-executive-committee-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/> (accessed October 6, 2012).

³³² Williston Walker, *History of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), p. 510.

trouble.³³³ Whitefield referred to both as “dear friends and fellow-labourers.”³³⁴

Unfortunately, in 1740, their relationship divided over a debate concerning the Calvinist/Arminian debate. They would never agree with one another concerning the doctrines. However, despite their vehement disagreements, they were still able to maintain a friendship, though they agreed not to preach in areas where the other was ministering. After his illness inhibited him from preaching, Whitefield stated to John Wesley, “May you, my Dear Friend, never be stopped till you breathe your last.”³³⁵

Despite differing on the doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism, both men maintained the knowledge of the other’s salvation and especially an understanding that both men were serving God. If this was not enough, the man who preached the sermon at George Whitefield’s funeral was none other than John Wesley.

In summation, it is important to examine a Scriptural example of church division. The Corinthian church in the New Testament was known for having many problems. The apostle Paul dealt with many of these problems in the letter that has come to be known as 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes that he has discovered from the messengers sent by Chloe that there are quarrels and division concerning people claiming “indeed I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas, and I am of Christ.”³³⁶ Paul makes his statement clear in verse twelve that there should be no division caused on account of following any of these men. In chapter three of 1 Corinthians, Paul clarifies further. He states, “For when someone says, ‘I am of Paul,’ on the other hand another

³³³ George Whitefield, *George Whitefield’s Journals* (Edited by Harry R. Warfel) (Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969), pp. 40-47.

³³⁴ Whitefield, p. 186.

³³⁵ Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 249.

³³⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:13 (translated by the author).

says, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not being [merely] human? Who then is Apollos? And who is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, and as the Lord entrusted to each."³³⁷

The words of Paul so aptly reflect this debate. These verses could also be read, "For when someone says, 'I am of Calvin,' on the other hand another says, 'I am of Arminius,' are you being [merely] human? Who then is Arminius? And who is Calvin? Servants through whom you believed."³³⁸ Both of these men have contributed much to the Protestant Church. For centuries, many have heard the Gospel due to the strenuous work of people like Calvin and Arminius. This debate has caused many to gain a deeper knowledge of God. Yet, the division caused by the debate has penetrated too long. As Paul wrote, if the focus can stop being on wording disputes over whom follows which church leader, but rather on following Christ, the division caused by this debate would be just another footnote in the history of Christianity.

³³⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:4-5 (translated by the author).

³³⁸ To clarify, this is not an attempt to change or to add to the New Testament, this is merely using the verse for practical application.

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