

Point and Counter-point

Five Points of Arminianism

(1) Free Will or Human Ability -

Although human nature was seriously affected by the Fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so in such a manner as not to interfere with man's freedom. *Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it.* Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe. *Faith is the sinner's gift to God;* it is man's contribution to salvation.

(2) Conditional Election -

God's choice of certain individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world was based on His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned on what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected to salvation. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

(3) Universal Redemption or General Atonement -

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe in Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it. *He only made man potentially salvable, not finally saved;*

(4) The Holy Spirit can be effectually resisted -

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation. He does all He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But because man's will is free, he can resist the call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes. Thus man's free will limits the Spirit's application of Christ's saving work. The Spirit only draws those to Christ who let him. God's grace therefore can be resisted and thwarted by man.

(5) Falling from Grace -

Because man's will is free to accept salvation, it is equally free to reject it and therefore man may lose his salvation through sin, loss of faith, etc. *Not all Arminians are agreed on this point and many accept that once regenerated, a sinner is eternally secure in Christ.*

The Five Points of Calvinism

(1) Total Inability or Total Depravity -

Because of the Fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. *The sinner is dead, blind and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt.* His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore he will not -- indeed he cannot --- choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ --- it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation --- *it is God's gift to the sinner,* not the sinner's gift to God.

(2) Unconditional Election -

God's choice of certain individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

(3) Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement -

Christ' redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation. *4-point Calvinists usually reject this point.*

(4) The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace -

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation. The external call can be resisted but the inward call is irresistible and inevitable. The internal call is made only to the elect. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace is therefore invincible; it never fails to save those to whom it is extended.

(5) Perseverance of the Saints -

All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God. Because the Spirit comforts and guides them, intercedes for them in prayer, He is the seal and guarantor of their inheritance: they will persevere.