

# The Comparison of Calvinism and Wesleyan Arminianism

by

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When we start to investigate the difference between Calvinism and Wesleyan Arminianism, the question must be asked: "For Whom Did Christ Die?" Many Christians answer the question with these Scriptures: (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3)

*JOH 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)*

We believe that "whoever" means "any person, and ...that any person can believe, by the assisting Spirit of God." (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3)

*1Timothy 2:3-4 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, (4) who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)*

*2PE 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)*

*REV 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (NIV)*

*(Matthew 28:19-20 NIV) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

We understand that in the great commission is implied that all men everywhere should hear the gospel and that all men may believe and be saved.

This is further evidenced by:

*ACT 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (NIV)*

# Arminius Was A Calvinist

## *What is an Arminian?*

People who believe in the teachings of the Bible from the historic Methodist perspective is an Arminian. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

To further answer this question we must start with the doctrine of John Calvin since Arminianism is first of all, a reaction to Calvinism. Calvin's Systematic Theological Teachings are summarized in the "Five Points Of Calvinism". (Marston, n.d., n.p.) They can be formed into an acrostic called TULIP.

## Calvinism's Five Points: TULIP

(Lockman, 1968, n.p.)

**T TOTAL DEPRAVITY.** The corruption of man by sin was so complete that it left him without the ability even to call on God for mercy. This is termed "Total Depravity". (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Total Depravity means that the Fall (which Adam could not prevent) cast man into a state of corruption and helplessness so complete that man is wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. Neither God's revelation in His world, in His Word, or in His Son can so enlighten and assist one to receive forgiveness unless the individual is effectually called and converted by sovereign grace." (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3)

**U UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION.** Even before creation, God foreordained the fall of the human race in order that He might show forth His mercy by saving a select number of individuals there from. Obviously, those not included in this selection were thereby predestined to be lost even before they existed. This is "Predestination" or, more accurately "Double Predestination". Calvinists call this "Unconditional Election. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Unconditional Election emphasizes that by the decree of God from all eternity certain men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, apart from any foreknowledge of God of their faith, good works, or perseverance. The rest of mankind God is pleased to ordain to dishonor and wrath for their sin." (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3)

**L LIMITED ATONEMENT.** The atonement of Christ, which was to be the basis for salvation, needed only to include those whom God had already chosen to save. All others, therefore, would be excluded. This is aptly titled a "Limited Atonement." (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Limited Atonement signifies that Christ's sacrifice is available to and meritorious only for the elect. (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3) "Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners as to whether or not Christ's work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed himself will be saved infallibly." (Steele & Thomas, 1963, pp.24) Through the redemption Christ wrought on the cross was of such infinite value that the whole race might have been saved, (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3) "Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others." (Steele & Thomas, 1963, p.48)

**I IRRESISTIBLE GRACE.** But since God had already chosen to save certain ones, he would call them to salvation in such a way that they would be unable to resist His call. The name for this is "Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling." (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Simply stated, this doctrine asserts that the Holy Spirit never fails to bring to salvation those sinners whom He personally calls to Christ. He inevitably applies salvation to every sinner whom He intends to save, and it is His intention to save all the elect." (Steele & Thomas, 1963, p.48) "True, the gospel invitation is to be extended to all, and God promises salvation to all who repent and believe. Since the non elect will not respond to this outward general call, God's Holy Spirit gives a special inward call to the elect, which effectual and enabling call inevitably brings him to faith in Christ." (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3)

**P PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.** Those who were called and saved would be unable ever to fall away and be lost. This is called the "Perseverance of the Saints." (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Perseverance of the saints is also known as the eternal security of the believers. The Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that "they whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit,

can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." (Westminster Confes.XXIX sec.1) "Some professing Christians fall away but they do not fall from grace, for they were never in grace. Though true believers fall into temptations and commit grievous sins, these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ's love." (Failing,1978,pp.1-3)

## Calvinism's Logic System

These Five points can be seen to compose a "cast-iron" system of logic. But locked into them is a conception of God which is austere and forbidding. A person is saved or lost by God's eternal decree! "Consistent Calvinists believe that though these five points are not presented in the Bible as separate and independent units of truth, they affirm that the Bible is best understood as presenting" (Failing, 1978, pp.1-3) "one harmonious, interrelated system in which God's plan for recovering lost sinners is marvelously displayed. In fact, these doctrines are so inseparably connected that no one of them can be fully appreciated unless it is properly related to, and viewed in light of, the other four; for they mutually explain and support one another." (Steele & Thomas, 1963, p.24) "In the preface to the 1559 edition of the Institutes, Calvin says that the principles and methods outlined and applied in the book should become the principle of biblical interpretation." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.38) "In examining the Institutes it is obvious that the doctrines systematized in them are not exegetically determined." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.39) Calvin didn't "read out" from the Scripture to get his doctrine, rather he used Scripture to illuminate and give authority to his doctrines. "Calvin's grasp of the essential truths of the Bible is enormous and impressive but it is obvious that the philosophical system underlying theology has taken precedence over exegetical considerations. Calvin did not reject exegesis. Exegesis, as we now know it, had not been developed. Calvin's contribution is an appeal to Scripture as authority." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.39) "Calvin built on Augustine's philosophy. But Calvin's premise was Augustine's conclusion. Augustine's reasoning led him to the conclusion that God predestines some men to salvation" (Wynkoop, 1967, p.39) but he would carry his logic no further. The doctrine of predestination was to defend the absolute sovereignty of God over against the sovereignty of the Church over body, soul, mind and purse. Presuming that some were predestined to heaven and some to hell thus reinstated Gottschalk's "heresy" that was rejected years before as a monk. It was really meant in history to be a final repudiation of the Catholic doctrine of good works and merit. (Wynkoop, 1967, p.40) "This idea of "fixed-fate" "inspired a poet of another century to write:" (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

"God, ever merciful and just  
With new-born babes did Tophet [*hell*] fill;  
Down into endless torments thrust  
Merely to show His sovereign will.  
This is that Horrible Decree!  
This is that wisdom from beneath!  
God (O detest the blasphemy!)  
Hath pleasure in the sinner's death."  
(Marston, n.d., n.p.)

"In spite of its austerity, Calvinism spread rapidly." (Marston, n.d., n.p.) Calvin and Augustine were better Christians than they were theologians- neither would make God responsible for any evil. Calvin's follower named Beza didn't know God as well and so introduced the doctrine of "double predestination" whereby God is responsible for choosing some to go to heaven and some to go to hell (supralapsarianism). "By the end of the sixteenth century it had fanned out in all directions from Geneva Switzerland; but its strength had become particularly concentrated in the Netherlands. There, something startling happened. A Dutchman named Koornheerts infuriated the Dutch clergy by attacking Calvinism in his writings." (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

Such an attack was not allowed to go unchallenged. A brilliant and well trained young Calvinist, Jacobus Arminius, was asked to answer Koornheerts. This he set about to do, but his study of the subject only convinced him that Calvinism was indefensible. From his thorough search of the Scriptures was born a view out of harmony with austere Calvinism. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

## Arminianism's Five Points

A struggle followed but Arminius did not live to see it resolved. The "five points of Arminianism," however, are based on his writings. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "The Five Arminian Articles (Arminians were then called "Remonstrants" were framed in 1610 and first published in 1612. In abridged form they are: (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

### **1. Conditional Election.**

God wants to save all men. Those who respond to the call of His Spirit are the elect or the predestinated. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "God, by an eternal purpose, has determined to save in Christ, and for His sake, all who through the grace of the Holy Spirit believe on Jesus and persevere in faith and obedience to the end." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

### **2. Unlimited Atonement.**

Christ died for all men. The atonement is adequate for the whole race generally and every man individually. Therefore, the atonement is universal in its scope. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Jesus Christ died for all men and obtained for all men, by His redemption on the cross, forgiveness of sins, yet only those who believe are saved." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

### **3. Prevenient Grace.**

Mankind, it's true, is corrupted by sin or totally depraved, but God extends to every man a grace which enables him to turn to Christ for forgiveness. This is called Prevenient Grace -- the grace that goes before. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Since he (man) has no saving grace in himself nor even can will that which is good, man must be born again through the Holy Spirit so he can think, will, and do that which is good." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

### **4. Resistible Grace.**

Because man is truly a free moral agent, he may, if he chooses, resist the grace of God. This is termed Resistible Grace. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Only by the prevenient and assisting grace of God can man be awakened to righteousness, so that all good deeds must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. Yet this grace is not irresistible, for men can resist the Holy Spirit." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

### **5. It's Possible To Fall Away.**

*(Once saved not always saved)*

Because man does not surrender this freedom when he is saved, he is able (though less likely than many preachers imply) to renounce his faith and be lost. Arminius was of the firm conviction that all men are free moral agents both before and after they are converted. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) "Those who become partakers of Christ's life-giving Spirit have full power to strive against Satan, sin, and the world, and to win the victory. By the continued assistance of Christ, providing only they desire His help and are not inactive, believers are kept from falling, so that no power of Satan can pluck them out of Christ's hands. Whether they are capable of forsaking faith in Christ and becoming devoid of grace" (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3) "must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture." (McNeill, 1977, p.264)

"Arminius explicitly rejects the position that God decreed or foreordained Adam's sin and our fall. God foreknew man's disobedience and knowing that, God predestined Christ to be our Savior.

# Calvinism / Arminian Comparison Chart

John Calvin (1509-1564) Key Doctrine James Arminius (1560-1609)

<b>T</b>	<b>Total Depravity</b> Man's will had been so corrupted by the fall that salvation was entirely a matter of divine grace.	<b>Depravity</b>	<b>Depravity Cooperation</b> Man was able to initiate his salvation after God had granted the primary grace to enable his will to cooperate with God.	<b>D</b>
<b>U</b>	<b>Unconditional Election</b> by the Sovereign God to grace condemnation.	<b>Election</b>	<b>Conditional Election</b> Election is conditional since "decrees" to save and damn had roots in double predestination.	<b>C</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Limited Atonement</b> granted only to those elected to salvation.	<b>Atonement</b>	<b>Unlimited Atonement</b> Christ's death was sufficient for all but it was only efficient (efficacious) to those who believe by free will.	<b>U</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>Irresistible Grace</b> God's grace is irresistible to those elected to salvation.	<b>Grace</b>	<b>Resistible Grace</b> Men can resist the saving Grace of God.	<b>R</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>Perseverance of the Saints</b> Those elected are eternally secure - they would be ultimately saved no matter how sinful - they'll suffer for sin on earth - therefore "once saved always saved."	<b>Security</b>	<b>Falling Away Possible</b> God gives saints grace so they need not fall since the Scriptures indicate possibility of falling (backsliding) away from salvation.	<b>F</b>

*Wesleyan Arminianism "protects" God from being the author of sin; both taught inherited depravity.*

Furthermore, God decreed that only those who believe and persevere were elected to salvation. In fact, McNeill refers to this as 'the eternal decree of salvation.' Arminians expressly disavow the belief that God from all eternity elected a certain number of men to be reprobate, never to receive from God grace sufficient to repent and believe. Even Calvin calls the decree of reprobation (meaning that God elected some to be lost, displaying His justice in punishment upon their impenitence) 'a horrible decree.' Lutherans join with Arminians in rejecting the decree of reprobation." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

"Arminius quotes Prosper of Aquitain, a highly respect Latin theologian (c.390-463) as follows: (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3) "He who says that the Savior was not crucified for the redemption of the whole world, has regard, not to the virtue of the sacrament, but to the case of unbelievers, since the blood of Jesus Christ is the price paid for the whole world. To that precious ransom they are strangers, who, either being delighted with their captivity, have no wish to be redeemed, or, after they have been redeemed, returned to the same servitude." (Arminius, 1977, p.232)

## The Five Points of Arminianism (A-B-C-D-E)

The Five Points of Arminianism can be looked at in another way too. Dr. Failing used to be editor of the Wesleyan Advocate and printed a series of articles summarized or quoted below.

### **A Atonement For All.**

(See beginning of paper) Jn.3:16; 1Tim.2:3,4; 2Pet.3:9; Rev.22:17

1TI 4:10 (*and for this we labor and strive*), *that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.* (NIV)

JOH 4:42 They said to the woman, *We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.* (NIV)

Cf. 1JO 4:14 1JO 2:2 JOH 6:51 ROM 14:15 IIPet.2:1,3

"If the Calvinists' position on limited atonement is correct (that God decreed only the salvation of the elect, and for them only Christ died), then, as Arminius suggests, John 3:16 should read: "God so loved those whom he had absolutely elected to eternal life, as to give his Son for them alone, and by an irresistible force to produce within them faith on him." (Arminius, 1977, p.232)

### ***B Believers Alone Are Elected***

"Arminius taught a fourfold predestination or election.

1. God by decree appointed His Son to obtain and mediate to men salvation from sin.
2. God decreed to receive into favor those who repent and believe.
3. God decreed to provide the means necessary for repentance and faith, according to His justice and according to mercy, for God is love.
4. God decreed from all eternity to save those individuals whom, from the foundation of the world, He foreknew would by His grace believe and persevere, and to damn those whom He foreknew would not believe and persevere. (Arminius, 1977, p.247,248)

### ***C Convicting Grace***

"Calvinists speak of the 'common operations of the Spirit' which morally benefit men as they are moved by the ministry of the Word, but which nevertheless are insufficient to bring them savingly to Christ. They also speak of the 'effectual call' which God is pleased to give to the elect. Though this call comes to men who are 'altogether passive' in sin's bondage, by God's work these elect persons are enlightened, renewed, and drawn to Jesus Christ, 'of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man'." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

"Arminius taught that grace is the 'gratuitous affection' of God toward miserable sinners, a grace that first of all provides that assistance which enables sinners to repent and trust in Christ, often called preventing grace." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

"In his sermon on 'Working Out Our Own Salvation,' Wesley states that 'no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, is devoid of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural. It is more properly termed preventing grace. Every man has a greater or a less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man.... Every man has some measure of that light ... which lightens every man that cometh into the world. ... So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.'" (Wesley, 1872, p.512)

A few pages before that Wesley states: "Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace, including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and first transient conviction of having sinned against him. ... Salvation is carried on by convincing grace, usually in Scripture termed repentance, which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation whereby, 'through grace' we 'are saved by faith,' consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God; by

sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, show this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual." (Wesley, 1872, p.509)

"In other words, Arminians believe that God's saving grace reaches out to every man, that each person has such an 'effectual calling' as to respond to the divine initiative. If a man, according to the knowledge he has, will respond to that initiating grace, God will give him assisting grace and, as man accepts that gift, God will give him enabling grace. Man can only respond to God's loving initiative; he can never originate one desire or by his unassisted will yield to the Savior. Grace come unsolicited from God; man must then receive or resist it. So all grace is from God and all condemnation and ruin is charged to those who resist it." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3)

### ***D Deliverance From Sin***

"Those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory .. ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3) -- Creeds of Christendom (Schaff p.548)

"One strong emphasis of Arminianism is that forgiven sinners may win the victory over sin." (Failing, 1978, p.3)

To the question - Is it possible for a man in this life to exist without sin?

Arminius said, "While I never asserted that a believer could perfectly keep the precepts of Christ in this life, I never denied it." (Arminius, 1977, p.256)

Augustine said, "It is possible for a man in this life to exist without sin, by means of the grace of Christ and free-will," (Arminius, 1977, p.256) but he admitted that he never met one.

"Arminius raises the question, 'Can believers under the grace of the New Testament perfectly observe the law of God in this life?' He answers: 'The performance of the law is to be estimated according to the mind of Him who requires it to be observed. (1) Man cannot perfectly perform such a law of God if it be ... performed according to rigor. (2) But if he require it according to mercy, and if the powers conferred be proportionate (which must be acknowledged, since He requires it according to the evangelical covenant), the answer is it can be perfectly observed ... provided a man confesses it is possible to be done by the grace of Christ, as St. Augustine justly observes.'" (Failing, 1978, p.3)

"When Arminius modestly claims that, according to God's strengthening grace and within the limits of the ability God gives us, Christians may win the victory over Satan, sin, and the world, it appears that Zachariah's prophecy was not overstated: God will 'grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life' (Lk.1:74-75)." (Failing, 1978, p.3)

"Calvinists teach that sanctification, 'the continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened, progressively subdues the tendencies to evil remaining in our nature and strengthens us to obey Christ more perfectly. The conflict of the two natures (Gal.5:16) in the Christian persists throughout life, Calvinists maintain. The struggle depicted in Rom.7:14-24 is true only of the earnest believer, not of the sinner. Sanctification is never completed in this life, the sanctification of the soul being completed at death and that of the body at the resurrection.'" (Strong, 1906,n.p.)

"Some Calvinists such as A.J. Gordon, S.D. Gordon, A.T. Peirson, F.B. Meyer, and Andrew Murray have written extensively on the victorious life. For example, F.B. Meyer writes, "The teaching of Romans 6 is, not that self is dead, but that the renewed will is dead to self, the man's will saying Yes to Christ and No to self; through the Spirit's grace it constantly repudiates and mortifies the power of the flesh." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3) "Yet the Calvinists continue to warn against sinless perfection, and most Calvinist theologians

disagree with the victorious life emphasis of the Keswick Movement. The Arminians (in the Methodist branch) dislike, even disavow, the term sinless perfection. Yet they believe that the believer may, in a deeper surrender to God, claim a practical victory over the power and practice of sin which many who are justified do not experience. So the 'power not to sin,' as John Wesley puts it, is more compatible with Arminian than with Calvinist theology." (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3,14)

### ***E Endurance of Believers***

"Arminians do not believe simply that sinners may resist the Holy Spirit or that believers may fall from grace. Their strong emphasis in the Fifth Article of their creed (1610) was on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to preserve believers from falling or perishing. They were not convinced that this grace of perseverance was guaranteed to believers from election, into glory, so that they could 'neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace' (Westminster Confession). They found it difficult to believe that the grievous sins into which believers may fall following justification 'do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ.'" (Steele & Thomas, 1963, p.56) And they believe that A.H. Strong overstates it when he writes as follows:" (Failing, 1978, pp.2) "'Adam's holiness was mutable; God did not determine to keep him. It is otherwise with believers in Christ; God has determined to give them the kingdom (Lk.12:32)." (Strong, 1906, p.881)

"Arminians believe that the doctrine of perseverance of the saints, commonly called eternal security, is inconsistent with human freedom. Even though God calls the sinner to repentance, the sinner may resist divine entreaty and be lost. Even though God gives every promise and provides every incentive of perseverance in faith, the Word nowhere expressly pledges that the believer loses the power to so disobey Christ as to lose salvation. Thus, according to the Calvinists, Judas was never saved, or he could never have betrayed the Lord." (Failing, 1978, p.2)

"Arminians believe that those scriptures that warn against apostasy are not written to those 'apparently regenerate' (*Strong*). Why would they need such warnings, if in any case they are not among the elect, or if indeed they should and could heed those warnings, it would make no difference to them! They are nonelect anyway. I refer to the scripture they cite (Matt.18:7; 1Cor.11:19; Rom.9:6-7; Rev.3:1, et al.)." (Failing, 1978, p.2)

"Arminians think that for believers to long remain 'at ease in Zion' or to 'leave their first love' is to imperil their relationship with Christ. Granted that God never easily or quickly abandons to self and sin the soul once indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we believe that Israel's history is a warning to present believers: 'They kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of God rose against his people, till there was no remedy' (2 Chr 36:16, RSV). But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit: therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them (Isa.63:10, RSV). Paul writes to the backslidden Galatians: "Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?... You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal.3:3; 5:4, RSV). (Failing, 1978, p.3)

"Arminians do not hold as a cherished doctrine the real possibility of falling from grace. It is rather a necessary truth. It is also a challenging one." (Failing, 1978, p.3)

Matt.24:13 *He who endures to the end will be saved.*

2 Pet 1:10-11 *Brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 Pet 3:17,18 *Knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (RSV)*



## What Is An Arminian?

It's more than the above five points. They are a positive affirmation that God loves all men, that Christ died for all men, and that no man is excluded from salvation unless he excludes himself by willful unbelief. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

That was the truth that gripped the hearts of the Wesleys over a century after the death of Jacobus Arminius. The fire in the soul of early Methodism was the conviction that, God "is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9b). And this is still the abiding mood of a true "Wesleyan- Arminian." (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

An Arminian then is one who believes that God, in Christ, extends His love to all men and that each one must accept personal responsibility for his attitude toward that love. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

## Centuries After Calvin and Arminius

The Calvinism commonly encountered today is something less than the "high" Calvinism of John Calvin, even as the Arminianism of the Wesleyan movement is something more than the Arminianism developed by followers of Arminius after his death. Harsh doctrine has been bled from the former, and warmth of spirit has been infused into the later. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

Arminius revolted from the rigid predestinarianism of Calvinism which held that man is saved or lost by God's arbitrary election from all eternity, without regard to man's faith and obedience. This doctrine Arminius opposed on grounds of Scripture. He was one of the most scholarly men of his or any age, and his Biblical insight and keen logic disturbed the scholastic reasoning of Calvinists who falsely charged him with being heretical. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

"After the great leader's death, some who called themselves his followers did wander into Pelagian rationalism, arguing that man never fell and therefore is born free from original sin. Thus they corrupted the teachings of Arminius and anticipated aspects of the liberal theology of today which exalts man and denies his need of salvation through the death of Christ on Calvary. Calvinists to this day sometimes identify Arminianism with liberalism, as did one who expressed to me his surprise that I could be Arminian and at the same time be evangelical." (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

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### ***Wesleyan Arminianism***

A century after Arminius came the Wesleys who met the distortions of liberal Arminianism with two teachings, (1) the necessity of a transforming experience of pardoning grace for sins committed, and (2) the operation of cleansing grace to remove the stain of "inbred sin." We may say that Wesleyanism is original Arminianism baptized with the Holy Spirit! Thus the Methodist movement restored and vivified Arminianism. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

Not only did the Wesleyan movement restore Arminian orthodoxy and infuse it with the power of the Spirit, but its impact upon glacial Calvinism was so effective, both by its spiritual warmth and its theological and Biblical arguments, that by the close of the nineteenth and opening of the twentieth century leading Calvinistic bodies had been forced to revise some of their creeds in line with the "whosoever" of John 3:16. Early Methodists declared salvation for all with such radiant fervor and convincing logic that rigid Calvinism began to yield and its basic doctrine of "predestination" or deterministic "election" was rather generally abandoned. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

### ***Today's Neo-Calvinism (New Calvinism)***

From "high" Calvinism's primary doctrine of "predestination" had flowed a secondary doctrine of "the final perseverance of the saints." Obviously, once grant the premise that God chooses from all eternity those who will be saved, then nothing can prevent the final salvation of these "elect." But when the basic doctrine of "election" was abandoned, logically the secondary doctrine of "perseverance" likewise fell. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

But strangely enough, some in the Calvinistic tradition retained the dependent doctrine of "perseverance" after its foundation doctrine of "election" had collapsed. That old doctrine of "perseverance" now survives as "eternal security," a doctrine with varying interpretation according to its different advocates, but all interpretations agreeing that once a person becomes a Christian he can never be lost. Strange logic! According to this position not God but man decrees in effect by one act of choice his own eternal "election" to salvation. As a rebel against God he was once free to choose or reject salvation, but now as a Christian he is not free to choose another eternal destiny! (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

The old foundation of "perseverance" having given way, these Neo-Calvinists sought a new basis for "eternal security" in isolated passages of Scripture to which they gave strained interpretations. Claiming to accept the Scriptures literally, they nevertheless resorted to fantastic figurative devices to bolster their positions, and too often seem to have taken the uninspired footnotes of some authoritarian editor of the Bible in the place of the plain teaching of the Bible text (Marston, n.d., n.p.) (Scofield).

### ***Summary of Combination Doctrines***

Without claiming completeness and only in general terms, let us note the three channels of doctrine in this day that as intelligent and sincere Christians we should carefully distinguish. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

#### **Liberal Arminianism**

Liberal Arminianism is the essential position of liberal theology which minimizes or denies the basic fact of man's fall and his inbred sin and therefore exalts Jesus as an example more than Christ as a Redeemer. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) This must never be the Wesleyan position.

#### **Neo-Calvinism**

Neo-Calvinism (Mild, or Low Calvinism) , which has surrendered "high" Calvinism's basic doctrine of "predestination" but retains its secondary doctrine of "election" under the name "eternal security", or "once- saved- always-saved", resting the same on the insecure basis or isolated "proof-texts." These "proof-texts," taken out of their context, sometimes distort the clear teaching of the Bible as a whole and open the way for Antinomianism, or security in sin after salvation. (Marston, n.d., n.p.) This is the position of Billy Graham.

H.H. Hodge, a staunch Calvinist believes that Calvinism and Arminianism together utter the perfect truth. (Hodge, 1887, pp.160-161) Though he may not understand it in the way stated in this paper, Hodge is a noted Calvinistic scholar and so lends force to what I am saying about Neo-Calvinism.

"Fearing to claim a right to salvation, Calvinists maintain that election is free, sovereign, and gracious. They warn us against" (Failing, 1978, pp.2-3) "the Arminian concept of 'offer' whereby God gives in Christ the possibility of salvation and then offers that salvation and leaves the decision with man." (Berkouwer, 1960, p.227)

"In the mild Calvinist's view, it is not God's eternal decree which limits and assures salvation but man's own one momentary act of faith which becomes the basis of assurance and security. As a sinner he is free to choose or reject Christ, but as a Christian he loses the power of contrary choice. As a sinner, he is morally responsible to obey; but when he become a Christian, God no longer condemns his sin but condones it, closes His eyes to it. Donald Barnhouse declares that not even faithfulness is required after

that one moment of faith which eternally changes our relationship to God. Obedience is classed as works and as such is 'filthy rags.' (Wynkoop, 1967, pp.72-73) "When once you have entered into the great truth that God cannot deny himself, that you are saved and safe in Christ, and that God himself cannot remove us from Christ, at that moment true holiness begins. Wesley was particularly concerned about any religious philosophy which stepped from sin to heaven 'without any holiness coming in between.' And yet some mild Calvinism is rooted in a philosophy which makes this leap from conversion to heaven not only possible but inevitable." (Wynkoop, 1967,p.72) (Taken from Donald Gray Barnhouse, "Eight Things God Cannot Do," *Eternity*, Jan., 1958, Vol.9, No.1,p.27.)

#### Wesleyan Calvinism.

Wesleyan Calvinism is "Calvinism with a Wesleyan emphasis is the result of uniting Calvinism's doctrine of human depravity and unconditional eternal security to Wesley's doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit. Wesley's teaching relative to victory over sin and dynamic power for service is fused to Calvin's concept of human nature which says that it is antagonistic to grace and cannot be reformed in this life." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.73) "This theology teaches that human nature cannot be changed in this life, but it can be controlled - not by man himself, but by the Holy Spirit. The believer has the choice of yielding himself (1) to his own base nature or (2) to the Holy Spirit." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.73-74) They build a bridge between the sinful human nature and victory in Christ that is neither Wesleyan or Calvinistic. The source of this "heresy" is Gnosticism - a mixture of ideologies and Greek Platonic philosophy. In this view the body is considered evil and the spirit pure. The body is the enemy of the spiritual nature. So long as they are together the spirit will be hindered - and only death can deliver it from its sinful prison. This "dualism" is what Paul dealt with in the ethical problems of the Corinthians and the Thessalonians. They thought their spirits were saved but that their bodies couldn't be delivered from sin. "Therefore physical sins were allowed in their lives and among Christians without any conviction for sin. Fornication ... crept into the Christian community because of the philosophy which said that the actions of the body had no relation to the spiritual life. The body could not 'infect' the purity of the spirit, and the spirit could not reform the body." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.76) In 1 Thes 5:23 Paul wasn't teaching that man is composed of three unrelated elements of their personality but that God's grace brings purity to the entire human personality. This is the basic belief system held to by Campus Crusade.

#### Calvinistic Wesleyanism.

In Calvinistic Wesleyanism there is an overemphasis on special "experience." If there has been a failure in Christian victory, the tendency is to seek another "experience" which will make temptation impossible. Congregations believing this way are usually small, isolated from the spiritual needs of their communities, overly critical of external forms of "worldliness" in dress and recreation. They too easily forget that love of neighbor is as essential as total love for God. (Wynkoop, 1967, p.80-81) This is the TRUE Wesleyan position, though certainly there are pastors, churches and or congregations that do not hold to it.

#### Wesleyan Arminianism.

Wesleyan Arminianism is the original Arminian doctrine infused with the warmth of the Holy Spirit. It opposes the Pelagianism of liberalism by its insistence upon the necessity of a Redeemer because of man's historic fall and his present sins, and opposes the Antinomianism of Calvinism by maintaining the doctrine of deliverance from the taint of inbred depravity and grace to enable man to live without willful sinning. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

#### ***In Any Case -- Christian Courtesy***

What should be the attitude and relationship of Wesleyan Arminians to those in the other two groups? (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

1. Let's remember that in both groups may be found some who are better than their doctrine require and who may indeed be Christian in life. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

2. While graciously tolerant of those who believe another doctrine, let's remember that in the long run what we believe will powerfully influence our lives; and to guard against the errors of others let's seek to understand clearly our own doctrines and their grounding in Scripture. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

3. Let's live up to our doctrines so that our lives and our radiant Christian experience will carry conviction to our friends that a pure heart and life are indeed provided by God's abundant grace and can be maintained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (Marston, n.d., n.p.)

"No one ever charged Arminius with mishandling Scripture, but only with failing to use Scripture to defend a predetermined position. Arminius insisted that authority rested in the Word of God, not in the opinions of men. It behooves men, then, to find out what the Word of God says." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.50) And so now I accept with ease the Wesleyan-Arminian theological system, as best interpreting the Scriptures and salvation. "Salvation itself is wholly the gift of God, unmerited by me, procured by the vicarious death of Christ and effected in me by the Holy Spirit." (Failing, 1978, p.14) "...Calvinists make much of God's ability to 'harden' hearts (Rom.9:18; 11:7; Ex.4:21), while Arminians stress the fact that Christ died for 'all' (Rom.5:18). (Noll, 1980, p.17) "Arminius rejected the supralapsarian concept of God's decrees because:

1. It was not supported by Scripture.

2. It had not been held by responsible Christian scholars in fifteen hundred years and had never been accepted by the whole Church.

3. It made God the author of sin.

4. It made the decree of election refer to uncreated man." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.51)

***"Arminius' principles regarding predestination:***

1. The doctrine of predestination must be biblical and not primarily logical or philosophical. (This point of view would become Wesley's principle later in history.)

2. Predestination must be understood Christologically. Christ, not the decrees, is the Source and Cause of salvation.

3. Salvation must be evangelical, that is, by personal faith in Christ.

4. On the one hand, no theory of predestination is biblical which makes it logically necessary to say that God is the author of sin; yet, on the other hand, it must not be logically possible to say that man can be the author of his own salvation." (Wynkoop, 1967, pp.52-53)

"Arminius' predestination theory in terms of four decrees: God decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ ... who might destroy sin by His own death.' Christ is the Elect Man. Individual persons are not chosen to salvation, but it is Christ who has been appointed as the only Savior of men. The way of salvation is predestined. In this way, the whole concept of predestination is changed, (1) from an emphasis on the specific human individual to Christ, and (2) from divine decrees to the conditions of salvation, namely, that Christ is the Savior and the Door rather than election or divine decrees being the Savior and Door. 'It was [Arminius'] well-grounded fear that Beza and Gomarus, the supralapsarian interpreters of Calvin, were in danger of divorcing the doctrine from Christology and making Christ the mere instrument or means of carrying out a prior, abstract decree. Arminius sought to state the doctrine in the light of Scripture and in integral relation to Christology." (Wynkoop, 1967, p.53)

"As I read the Bible and pray, remain in fellowship with Christians, resist the devil and flee from evil, cultivate a life of praise and simple trust in God, I shall be preserved from all evil, kept by the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In the meantime, I await the return of my Lord with joy, and take seriously my duty to witness the good news of salvation to all I can reach." (Failing, 1978, p.14)

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