

# **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE <sup>1</sup>**

## **THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN PELAGIUS AND AUGUSTINE**

Neither John Calvin nor James Arminius originated the basic concepts which undergird the two systems that bear their names [Calvinism and Arminianism]. The fundamental principles of each system can be traced back many centuries prior to the time when these two men lived. For example, the basic doctrines of the Calvinistic position had been vigorously defended by Augustine against Pelagius during the fifth century. Cunningham writes, "As there was nothing new in substance in the Calvinism of Calvin, so there was nothing new in the Arminianism of Arminius; ...The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus, and seem to have been held by many of the fathers of the third and fourth centuries, having been diffused in the Church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. Pelagius and his followers, in the fifth century, were as decidedly opposed to Calvinism as Arminius was, though they deviated much further from sound doctrine than he did."

Pelagius denied that human nature had been corrupted by sin. He maintained that the only ill effects which the race had suffered as the result of Adam's transgression was the bad example which he had set for mankind. According to Pelagius, every infant comes into the world in the same condition as Adam was before the fall. His leading principle was that man's will is absolutely free. Hence every one has the power, within himself, to believe the gospel as well as to perfectly keep the law of God.

Augustine, on the other hand maintained that human nature had been so completely corrupted by Adam's fall that no one, in himself, has the ability to obey either the law or the gospel. Divine grace is essential if sinners are to believe and be saved, and this grace is extended only to those whom God predestined to eternal life before the foundation of the world. The act of faith, therefore, results, not from the sinner's free will (as Pelagius taught) but from God's free grace which is bestowed on the elect only.

## **THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN AUGUSTINIANISM AND SEMI-PELAGIANISM**

Smeaton, in showing how Semi-Pelagianism (the forerunner of Arminianism) originated, states that "Augustine's unanswerable polemic had so fully discredited Pelagianism in the field of argument, that it could no longer be made plausible to the Christian mind. It collapsed. But a new system soon presented itself, teaching that man with his own natural powers is able to take the first step toward his conversion, and that this obtains or merits the Spirit's assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> This material is a compilation of excerpts taken from several articles. These articles include "A Brief Survey of the Origin and Contents of the 'Five Points' of Calvinism" in The Five Points of Calvinism by David Steele and Curtis Thomas, "Calvinism in History" in The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination by Loraine Boettner, "Evangelical Arminians" in Modern Reformation Magazine (May/June 1992) by Michael Scott Horton, "Who Was Arminius?" in Modern Reformation Magazine (May/June 1992) by W. Robert Godfrey, "Thrust Into the Game" in Church History in Plain Language by Bruce Shelley, and "Calvinism" in Selected Shorter Writings of B.B. Warfield - II edited by John Meeter. Names of noted Reformed people in history were primarily supplied from Who's Who in Christian History edited by J.D. Douglas, et. al.

Cassian...was the founder of this middle way, which came to be call "semi-pelagianism," because it occupied intermediate ground between Pelagianism and Augustinianism, and took in elements from both. He acknowledged that Adam's sin extended to his posterity, and that human nature was corrupted by original sin. But, on the other hand, he held a system of universal grace for all men alike, making the final decision in the case of every individual dependent on the exercise of free-will." Speaking of those who followed Cassian, Smeaton continues, "They held that the first movement of the will in the assent of faith must be ascribed to the natural powers of the human mind. This was their primary error. Their maxim was: `It is mine to be willing to believe, and it is the part of God's grace to assist.' They asserted the sufficiency of Christ's grace for all, and that every one, according to his own will, obeyed or rejected the invitation, while God equally wished and equally aided all men to be saved.... The entire system thus formed is a half-way house containing elements of error and elements of truth, and not at all differing from the Arminianism which, after the resuscitation of the doctrines of grace by the Reformers, diffused itself in the very same way through the different Churches."

## **THE REFORMATION AND THE THEOLOGY OF GRACE**

The leaders of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century rejected Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism on the ground that both systems were unscriptural. Like Augustine, the Reformers held to the doctrines of the sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, and of unconditional election. As Boettner shows, they stood together in their view of predestination. "It was taught not only by Calvin, but by Luther, Zwingli, Melancthon (although Melancthon later retreated toward the Semi-Pelagian position), by Bullinger, Bucer, and all of the outstanding leaders in the Reformation. While differing on some other points they agreed on this doctrine of Predestination and taught it with emphasis. Luther's chief work, The Bondage of the Will, shows that he went into the doctrine as heartily as did Calvin himself." Packer states that "all the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation, stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points, they had their differences; but in asserting the helplessness of man in sin, and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were entirely at one. To all of them, these doctrines were the very life-blood of the Christian faith....To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort. In speaking of the English Reformation, [Harry] Buis shows that "The advocates of that Reformation were definitely Calvinistic." To substantiate this he says, "The Anglican Church agreed with the Protestant Churches on the [European] continent on the subject of predestination. On this subject, for a long period, the Protestants generally were united in opinion. The leaders of the English Reformation, from the time when the death of Henry VIII placed them firmly upon Protestant ground, profess the doctrine of absolute predestination as distinguished from conditional predestination." [Steele and Thomas, pp 19-21].

## WHO WAS CALVIN? WHAT DID HE BELIEVE?

In spite of the fact that the doctrines of sovereign grace were taught and defined as early as the fifth century A.D. by the great Augustine of Hippo, the name of John Calvin is often considered no more than a synonym for these doctrines -- particularly predestination (decretum-absolutum). Many think that Calvin so emphasized these things that little room could be left for human initiative and industry. Yet study of his work proves that he believed and stressed many other doctrines beside predestination and history demonstrates that his general influence affected true religious responsibility in a great number of people. Unfortunately, to most historians he remains a cold, calculating logician. For example, Will Durant writes:

*Calvin's genius lay not in conceiving new ideas, but in developing the thought of his predecessors to ruinously logical conclusions. Calvin's Institutes therefore are "the most eloquent, fervent, lucid, logical, influential, and terrible work in all the literature of religious revelation.*

This characterization of Calvin is continued by Aldous Huxley:

*There is a mediaeval proverb, the heart makes the theologian, when the heart doesn't function at the full you get monstrous heresies, like that of Calvin.*

Yet, to portray Calvin as a cold theologian is not accurate. For Calvin's theology was not a theology of independence, but one of humility. Because one finds Calvin a persistent battle for consistency, it is incorrect to maintain that his theology is based solely upon rational deduction apart from scripture. For Calvin believed that reason is blind. The foundation of Calvin's view of sovereign grace is not independent reason but the teaching of scripture. To quote Calvin:

*It is becoming to us, then, not to be too inquisitive; only let us not dare to deny the truth of what scripture plainly teaches and experience confirms, or even to suggest that it does not reach agreement with God.*

Thus when we view Calvin's understanding of grace we must reckon with the fact that we approach a theology which elicits faith and hope in an all wise God. No greater testimony to this can be given than to quote the reformer's own words upon the death of his son, Jacques:

*The Lord's Providence has certainly inflicted us with a heavy and bitter wound in the death of my little son, but He is Father. He knows what is expedient for his sons.*

John Calvin came from a small town sixty miles northeast of Paris. His father was anxious for his son to have the advantages of a good education. Calvin entered the university of Paris at fourteen and mastered not only a brilliant writing style but a skill in logical argument. In later years people might not like what Calvin said but they could not misunderstand what he meant. He left the university in 1528 with his Master of Arts degree. After Paris, at his father's insistence, John turned to the study of law in the universities of Orleans and Bourges, but his father's death in 1531 left Calvin free to pursue his own interests. Thus he returned to Paris as a student of the classics, intent upon a scholar's career.

His studies brought Calvin into touch with reforming ideas circulating in Paris and shortly thereafter Calvin's life turned him in a new direction. He called it an "unexpected conversion." We can't be certain about the date but it was clearly more than a kind of spiritual enlightenment or the recognition of the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Calvin surrendered his will to God. He gave up his career as a classical scholar and identified with the Protestant cause in France.

Because of anti-Protestant sentiment, Calvin was forced to flee from Paris. The young reformer found refuge in Basel, where in March 1536, he published the first edition of his highly influential Institutes of the Christian Religion. The work was the clearest, most logical, and most readable exposition of Protestant doctrine that the Reformation age produced, and it gave its youthful author European fame overnight. Calvin labored on its elaboration nearly all his active life. Twenty years later it remained essentially the same. He could no longer remain in France. This is why after some months of travel he was headed for Strassburg. An inflammatory reformer named William Farel had been preaching in Geneva for four years and Catholic masses had ceased. But Geneva's Protestantism rested chiefly on political hostility to the bishop, not doctrinal convictions. No one had stepped forward to shape the city's religious institutions along biblical lines. Farel knew the city needed a manager. So during the visit of John Calvin, Farel made a point to call upon the visitor. He urged the young scholar to go no farther but to stay in the city and help establish the work there. Calvin protested that he had some special studies he wanted to pursue. But Farel responded, "*You are only following your own wishes! If you do not help us in this work of the Lord, the Lord will punish you for seeking your own interest rather than His.*" Calvin was terror-stricken. The last thing he wanted was to offend Almighty God! So he consented to stay and immediately took up the reforming cause in Geneva.

Opposition arose especially over who had the power to excommunicate, the church or the magistrates. After a year of struggle Calvin and Farel were defeated on the issue and in April 1538, the city councils ordered the two reformers to leave Geneva. The next three years spent in Strassburg were probably the happiest in Calvin's life. As pastor of the church of French refugees he was a successful teacher of theology; he was honored by the city, and was made its representative to important religious conferences in Germany. He married a widow with two children.

Meanwhile Calvin's friends in Geneva regained power in the city government and urged him to return and resume his reform efforts. In September 1541, with great reluctance, he once again took up the Geneva burden. Opposition continued. Many times Calvin was on the brink of banishment. But he fought his way through courageously. By 1555, Calvin's position in Geneva was secure, and until his death he had no serious opposition in the city. For Calvin, however, Geneva was never an end in itself. He considered the city a refuge for persecuted Protestants, an example of a disciplined Christian community, and a center for ministerial training. Enthusiastic students from all over Europe came to Geneva to see what John Knox called "*the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles.*"

Just as Luther's central doctrine was justification by faith, so Calvin's was the sovereignty of God. Both reformers had an overwhelming sense of the majesty of God, but Luther's served to

point up the miracle of forgiveness, while Calvin's gave the assurance of the impregnability of God's purpose particularly in salvation.

The Calvinism the students imbibed flowed from Calvin's central belief in the absolute sovereignty of God. "*God asserts his possession of omnipotence,*" he wrote, "*and claims our acknowledgment of this attribute.*" God is the "*Governor of all things.*" In his wisdom, from the remotest eternity, he decreed what he would do, and by his own power, he executes what he has decreed.

From the very first edition of the Institutes, in 1536, Calvin espoused a belief in sovereign grace. By the 1539 edition the concept of sovereign grace could be found through out the work. One chapter entitled, "On the Predestination and Providence of God" suggests how Calvin approached Providence at the time. Calvin regarded the sovereign grace of God as a truth known only by the scripture through faith. He argued that the right understanding of the sovereignty of God must maintain two basic truths; God is all governing and human beings are responsible. He also declared that it is difficult for the fallen human mind to maintain both conceptually. Thus, for Calvin, it is a matter of faith. He wrote, "*Providence is a doctrine known only from the Word of God.*" This is more than a general guidance. The Bible teaches God's particular direction in individual lives. We read that not a sparrow falls to the ground unknown to the Father. We read too that he has given babies to some mothers and withheld them from others. Such events represent no relentless fatalism in nature, but the personal decrees of Almighty God, who moves people to walk in his ways. Calvin saw the old doctrine of sovereign grace -- taught by Paul, Augustine, and Luther -- as a source of religious devotion. More than a problem of the mind, Calvin considered divine election to eternal life the deepest source of confidence, humility and moral power. [Shelley, pp. 274-279]

## **WHO WAS ARMINIUS? WHAT DID HE BELIEVE?**

James Arminius (Jacob Harmenszoon) is undoubtedly the most famous theologian every produced by the Dutch Reformed Church. His fame is a great irony since the Dutch Reformed Church historically was a bastion of strict Calvinism, and Arminius has given his name to a movement very much in opposition to the historic doctrines of grace. Who was this Arminius? What did he teach?

Arminius was born in 1559 in Oudewater--a small city in the province of Holland. In October of 1575 Arminius entered the newly founded University of Leiden. From 1581 to 1586 he studied in Geneva and Basle. While in Geneva Arminius studied under Theodore Beza, Calvin's staunch successor. He returned to the Netherlands in 1586 to take up pastoral responsibilities in Amsterdam. Most of the years of Arminius's pastorate (1587-1603) in Amsterdam were peaceful. But there were some controversies. Arminius preached through the book of Romans, and some of his sermons did evoke opposition. In 1591 he preached on Romans 7:14 and following. The standard Reformed interpretation argued that Paul in these verses is speaking as a regenerate Christian. Romans 7 then presents the Christian's continuing struggle resisting sin in his life. By contrast, Arminius taught that Paul is remembering his previous, unregenerate state. For Arminius the struggle against sin in Romans 7 is a struggle before conversion. The Reformers objected sharply to this interpretation, asking how the unregenerate can delight in the law in the

inner man (Rom. 7:22). In 1593 Arminius preached on Romans 9 and his sermons on predestination seemed inadequate to many Dutch Calvinists.

Still these controversies passed. When two vacancies in the theological faculty at the University of Leiden had to be filled in 1603, people of influence in the government thought Arminius ought to be appointed, but strict Calvinists objected, unsettled by too many questions about Arminius's orthodoxy. The disagreement was resolved when both sides agreed to allow the one remaining member of the faculty, Francis Gomarus, to interview and evaluate Arminius for this position. Gomarus was a strict Calvinist of undoubted orthodoxy. After the interview Gomarus declared himself satisfied with Arminius and that latter was installed as a professor at Leiden.

The reason Gomarus was satisfied with Arminius is unclear. Perhaps Gomarus failed to ask the right questions, or Arminius was not candid with his answers. Another possibility is that Arminius's theology changed significantly after the interview, but it is difficult to speculate.

Within a few years, however, suspicions began to arise about Arminius. People criticized the books he assigned students. Others worried about his private sessions with students. Gomarus became convinced that Arminius was not orthodox on the doctrine of predestination. These suspicions led Arminius's classes to try to examine Arminius's doctrine, but the trustees of the university would not permit that. Some said the issues surrounding Arminius's teaching could only be resolved at a national synod. But the government was reluctant to allow a national synod to meet.

Tensions within the Church finally led to a government investigation in 1608. In the course of that investigation, Arminius wrote his "Declaration of Sentiments," probably the best summary of his beliefs. Arminius had been insisting that he was only trying to protect the Church from the extremes of Calvinism, especially supra-lapsarianism. Gomarus had replied that the issue was not peripheral matters such as supra-lapsarianism, but rather the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. With no satisfactory resolution to the matter, Arminius became ill and died in 1609, a minister in good standing in the Dutch Reformed Church.

Arminius is best known theologically for his rejection of the Reformed doctrine of predestination. In this definition Arminius states his belief that faith is the cause of election: "It is an eternal and gracious decree of God in Christ, by which He determines to justify and adopt believers, and to endow them with eternal life, but to condemn unbelievers, and impenitent persons." But such a position reverses the Biblical pattern (e.g., Romans 8:30 and Acts 13:48) where election is clearly the cause of belief. For orthodox Reformers faith is a gift of God. If election--God's purpose to give faith according to his sovereign will--does not precede faith, then faith is not truly a gift.

Arminius expanded his basic definition of predestination in four theses. First, God decreed absolutely that Christ is the Savior who will "destroy sin," "obtain salvation," and "communicate it by his own virtue." Second, God decreed absolutely to save "those who repent and believe in Christ, and for His sake and through him to effect salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end." Third, God decreed "to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the means which were necessary for repentance and faith" according to divine wisdom and

justice. Fourth, God decreed "to save and damn particular persons" based on the foreknowledge of God, by which He knew from all eternity those individuals who would, through his preventing [i.e., prevenient] grace, believe, and through his subsequent grace would persevere.

In his exposition of predestination Arminius sought to have a theology of grace and to avoid all Pelagianism. He stated, "That teacher obtains my highest approbation who ascribes as much as possible to divine grace, provided he so pleads the cause of grace, as not to inflict an injury on the justice of God, and not to take away the free will of that which is evil." Arminius wanted a theology of grace that made God seem fair in all his dealings with man, and also wanted to leave room for people to reject grace. Like many others Arminius thought this kind of theology would make it easier to preach the Gospel and emphasize human responsibility. But Arminius ultimately failed to have a true theology of grace. For Arminius, God's grace is essential and necessary, but is not absolutely efficacious. Man's response to grace remains the final, decisive factor in salvation. Jesus is no longer the actual Savior of His people. He becomes as the one who makes salvation possible. Man's contribution, however sincerely Arminius tried to limit it, became central for salvation.

Arminius also gave faith a different place in his system from the role that faith had occupied in earlier Reformed theology. Arminius taught that faith itself was imputed to the sinner for righteousness, whereas the earlier teaching had stressed that it was the object of faith, namely Christ and His righteousness, that was imputed to the sinner. This shift is important because again it shifts the primary focus of salvation from God's work in Christ to man's faith. Arminius can even speak of faith being the one work required of man in the New Covenant. This kind of teaching led to Gomarus' charge that Arminius was undermining the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. Arminius' teaching turns faith from an instrument that rests on the work of Christ to a work of man, and tends to change faith from that which receives the righteousness of Christ to that which is righteousness itself.

After the death of Arminius, controversy continued in the Netherlands about the teachings of Arminianism. Forty-two ministers in 1610 signed a petition, or Remonstrance, to the government asking for protection for their Arminian views. [W. Robert Godfrey, pp. 5-7.]

## **THE "FIVE POINTS" OF ARMINIANISM AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS**

Roger Nicole summarizes the five articles contained in the Remonstrance as follows:

Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed.

This grace may be resisted.

God elects or reproveth on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.

Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.

Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.

The last article was later altered so as to definitely teach the possibility of the truly regenerate believer's losing his faith and thus losing his salvation. Arminians however have not been in

agreement on this point--some have held that all who are regenerated by the Spirit of God are eternally secure and can never perish.

J.I. Packer, in analyzing the system of thought embodied in the Remonstrance, observes, "The theology which it [Arminianism] contained stemmed from two philosophical principles: first, that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility; second, that ability limits obligation. From these principles, the Arminians drew two deductions: first, that since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; second, that since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal. Hence, they maintained, Scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following positions:

- Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him.
- Nor is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it.
- God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe.
- Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift); what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe.
- It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost.

Thus, Arminianism made man's salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work and, because his own, not God's in him." [Steele and Thomas, pp 13-14.]

## **THE REFORMED RESPONSE TO THE ARMINIANS**

The Calvinists answered with a Contra-Remonstrance in 1611. It's surely ironic that through the centuries there has been so much talk of the "five points of Calvinism" when in fact Calvinists did not originate a discussion of five points. Indeed, the Reformed faith has never been summarized in five points. Calvinism has only offered five responses to the five errors of Arminianism.

Controversy raged in the Netherlands over Arminianism, even threatening civil war. Finally in 1618, after a change of leadership in the government, a national synod was held at Dordrecht--the Synod of Dort--to judge the Arminian theology. By the time the Synod of Dort met, the issues raised by the Arminians were being widely discussed in the Reformed community throughout Europe. Reformed Christians from Great Britain, France, Switzerland and Germany expressed great concern for the dangers posed by Arminian Theology.

William Ames, one of the great English Puritans, wrote that Arminianism "is not properly a heresy but a dangerous error in the faith tending to heresy...a Pelagian heresy, because it denies the effectual operation of internal grace to be necessary for the effecting of conversion and faith." In this evaluation Ames rightly saw the conflict between Calvinists and Arminians as



related to the conflict between Augustine, the champion of grace, and Pelagius, who insisted that man's will was so free that it was possible for him to be saved solely through his own natural abilities.

The Synod of Dort had delegates not only from the Netherlands but also from throughout Europe, the only truly international Reformed synod. The Synod rejected the teaching of the Arminians and in clear and helpful terms presented the orthodox Calvinist position in the Canons of Dort. Unanimously approved by the Synod, they were hailed throughout the Reformed Churches of Europe as an excellent defense of the faith. The Canons of Dort responded to the five errors of Arminianism and expressed the Calvinist alternative to those errors:

Man is so utterly lost in sin that without the regenerating grace of God, man cannot desire salvation, repent, believe or do anything truly pleasing to God.

God's grace saves the sinner irresistibly since only irresistible grace can overcome man's rebellion.

God freely and sovereignly determined to save some lost sinners through the righteousness of Christ and to give to His elect the gift of faith.

God sent His Son to die as the substitute for His elect and Christ's death will certainly result in the salvation of His own.

God in mercy preserves the gift of faith in His elect to ensure that the good work He began in them will certainly come to completion in their salvation. [W. Robert Godfrey, p 7.]

No doubt it will seem strange to many of our day that the Synod of Dort rejected the five doctrines advanced by the Arminians, for these doctrines have gained wide acceptance in the modern Church. In fact, they are seldom questioned in our generation. But the vast majority of the Protestant theologians of that day took a much different view of the matter. They maintained that the Bible set forth a system of doctrine quite different from that advocated by the Arminian party. Salvation was viewed by the members of the Synod as a work of grace from beginning to end; in no sense did they believe that the sinner saved himself or contributed to his salvation. Adam's fall had completely ruined the race. All men were by nature spiritually dead and their wills were in bondage to sin and Satan. The ability to believe the gospel was itself a gift from God, bestowed only upon those whom He had chosen to be the objects of His unmerited favor. It was not man, but God, who determined which sinners would be shown mercy and saved. This, in essence, is what the members of the Synod of Dort understood the Bible to teach. [Steele and Thomas, p 15.]

## **THE SPREAD OF THE CONTROVERSY TO THE WEST**

Arminianism came to the English-speaking world chiefly through the efforts of 17th century Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud; Bishop Jeremy Taylor; and the great preacher, Lancelot Andrewes. The leading Puritans such as John Owen, Richard Sibbes, and Thomas Goodwin opposed Arminianism as a Protestant form of "Romanism" in which the Christian faith degenerated into a moralism that confused the Law and the Gospel and with-held from God his rightful praise for the whole work of salvation. Eventually, the English "Arminian" element evolved into the High Church wing of the English Church, emphasizing the importance of ritual

and the Church hierarchy as well as the moralistic Deism which characterized the preaching of the eighteenth century.

Later, in the British revival of the 18th century, Whitefield (a Calvinist) and Wesley (an Arminian) were willing to work together as close friends and allies in the evangelistic effort. However, as Wesley began to teach that justification was not purely forensic (that is, a legal declaration), but that it depended on "moment by moment" obedience, the Calvinists who had enthusiastically supported the revival and led the evangelistic cause side by side grew increasingly worried. Late in life, Wesley recorded some very unfortunate statements in his Minutes of the Methodist Conference, including the conclusion that his own position was but "a hair's breadth" from "salvation by works." Wesley's favorite writer, William Law wrote, "We are to consider that God only knows what shortcomings in holiness He will accept; therefore we can have not security of our salvation but by doing our utmost to deserve it....We have," said he, "nothing to rely on but the sincerity of our endeavors and God's mercy." Was Law an evangelical? If so, someone owes Pope Leo an apology.

Wherever Arminianism was adopted, Unitarianism followed, leading on to the bland liberalism of present mainline denominations. This can be discerned in the Netherlands, in Eastern Europe, in England, and in New England. In fact, in a very short period of time, the General (Arminian) Baptists of New England had become amalgamated into the Unitarian Church in the 18th century.

History actually bears out the relationship between Arminianism and naturalism. One can readily see how a shift from a God-centered message of human sinfulness and divine grace to a human-centered message of human potential and relative divine impotence could create a more secularized outlook. If human beings are not so badly off, perhaps they do not need such a radical plan of salvation. Perhaps all they need is a pep talk, some inspiration at half-time, so they can get back into the game. Or perhaps they need an injection of grace, as a spiritual antibiotic, to counteract the sinful affections. But in Reformation theology human beings do not need help. They need redemption. They do not merely need someone to show them the way out; they need someone to be their way out of spiritual death and darkness. [Michael Scott Horton, pp 16-17.]

## **THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE AND ARMINIANISM**

The issues involved in this historic controversy are indeed grave, for they vitally affect the Christian's concept of God, of sin, and of salvation. Packer, in contrasting these two systems, is certainly correct in asserting that "The difference between them is not primarily one of emphasis, but of content. One proclaims a God Who saves; the other speaks of a God Who enables man to save himself. One view [Calvinism] presents the three great acts of the Holy Trinity for the recovering of lost mankind--election by the Father, redemption by the Son, calling by the Spirit--as directed towards the same persons, and as securing their salvation infallibly. The other view [Arminianism] gives each act a different reference (the objects of redemption being all mankind, of calling, those who hear the gospel, and of election, those hearers who will respond), and denies that any man's salvation is secured by any of them. The two theologies thus conceive the

plan of salvation in quite different terms. One makes salvation depend on the work of God, the other on a work of man; one regards faith as part of God's gift of salvation, the other as man's own contribution to salvation; one gives all the glory of saving believers to God, the other divides the praise between God, Who, so to speak, built the machinery of salvation, and man, who by believing operated it. Plainly, these differences are important, and the permanent value of the 'five points,' as a summary of the doctrines of grace, is that they make clear the points at which, and the extent to which, these two conceptions are at variance." [Steele and Thomas, p 22.]

## **DO THE DIFFERENCES MATTER TODAY?**

Many argue that the differences between the Reformed perspective and Arminianism no longer matter. After all, some argue, Arminius lived 400 years ago. Are his views still important and influential? The answer to that question must be a resounding yes. Arminianism is very influential in evangelical and Pentecostal circles today. Indeed Arminianism today usually goes much further in emphasizing free will that Arminius did or would ever have approved of doing.

Some downplay the differences between Arminianism and the Reformed faith out of an activism that is rather indifferent to theology. Such activists often argue that, with so much to do for Christ in the world and with so much opposition to Christianity in general, theological differences must be minimized. It is certainly true that the theological differences between the doctrines of grace and Arminianism should not be overemphasized. Most Arminians have been and are evangelical Christians. But the differences between Calvinists and Arminians are important precisely for the work that all want to do for Christ. What is the work that needs to be done and how will it be done? The answers to those questions depend very much on whether man has a free will or not. Does one seek to entertain and move the emotions and will of men whose salvation is ultimately in their own hands? Or does one present the claims of God as clearly as possible while recognizing that ultimately fruit comes only from the Holy Spirit? Those kinds of concerns will affect the ways in which Christians worship and witness and serve and live.

Some argue that the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism are unimportant because the theological terms of the controversy were wrong or are now outmoded. They argue that just as progress has been made in so many fields, so theological progress has transcended the old controversies. This claim may be an attractive one until it is examined closely. On close examination such a claim proves to be false. Either salvation is entirely the work of God or it is partially the work of man. There is no way to "transcend" this reality. On close examination those efforts to transcend the Biblical doctrines of grace are at best other forms of Arminianism.

Some try to split the difference between Arminianism and the Reformed faith. They say something like, "I want to be 75% Calvinist and 25% Arminian." If they mean that literally, then they are 100% Arminian since giving any determinative place to human will is Arminian. Usually they mean that they want to stress the grace of God and human responsibility. If that is what they mean, then they can be 100% Reformed for the Bible taught both that God's grace is entirely the cause of salvation and that man is responsible before God to hear and heed the call to repentance and faith.

Today some Reformed people are hesitant to stress their distinctives because they feel that they are such a small minority within Christendom. They must remember that in the providence of God, Calvinism has gone through varying periods. In some it has flourished and in some it has declined. God does not call His people to be successful; He calls them to be faithful.

Reformed people should still confidently teach the sovereign grace of God as it was summarized in the Canons of Dort. They should do so because, according to this author and the witness of Reformed Christians in Church history, the doctrines of grace are both Biblical and helpful. They are helpful because in a world that is often foolishly optimistic and man-centered, the doctrines teach the seriousness of sin and the glories of the redemptive work of Christ for sinners. In the face of so much religious shallowness, the profundity of the Reformed faith is needed. Shallow religion produces shallow Christian living. The depths of God's grace should lead Christians to live gratefully, humbly, joyfully and carefully before God. Today the Church of Jesus Christ does not need less of the Reformed faith. Rather it needs to recover a forceful and faithful commitment to the God-centered Biblical message. [W. Robert Godfrey, pp. 7,24.]

### **THE ONE POINT WHICH THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE ARE CONCERNED TO ESTABLISH**

While recognizing the permanent value of the five points as a summary of Calvinism, Packer warns against simply equating Calvinism with the five points. He gives several excellent reasons why such an equation is incorrect, one of which we quote:

*...the very act of setting out [the doctrines of grace] in the form of five distinct points (a number due, as we saw, merely to the fact that there were five Arminian points for the Synod of Dort to answer) tends to obscure the organic character of Reformed thought on this subject. For the five points, though separately stated, are really inseparable. They hang together; you cannot reject one without rejecting them all, at least in the sense in which the Synod meant them. For to Calvinism there is really only one point to be made in the field of soteriology: the point that God saves sinners. God--the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing. Saves-- everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. Sinners--men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot. God saves sinners--and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-pedaling the sinner's inability so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Saviour. This is the one point of Calvinistic soteriology which the `five points' are concerned to establish and Arminianism in all its forms to deny: namely, that sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; amen. [Steele and Thomas, pp 22-23.]*

## **SOME NOTED REFORMED PEOPLE IN HISTORY (AN ABBREVIATED LIST)**

### **I. THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS:**

[For the first four centuries after Christ, the intellectual energies of the Church were primarily focused upon the doctrines of God and of Christ. It was through controversies over the nature of salvation which occurred later that the doctrines of grace were clearly defined. Nevertheless, many of the early Church Father's bore witness that they held to the basic tenants of the doctrines of grace.]

Origen, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Eusebius, Cyprian, Tertullian, Hilary (of Poitiers), Ambrose (of Milan), Epiphanius.

### **II. AUGUSTINE TO THE REFORMATION.**

Augustine, Prosper, Hilarius, Avitus (Archbishop of Vienna), Caesarius (Archbishop of Arles), Fulgentius (of Ruspe), Gregory the Great, Charlemagne, Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Claudius (of Turin), Gottschalk, Anselm (Archbishop of Canterbury), Bernard (Bishop of Clairvaux), Peter Lombard, Hugo de St. Victor, Thomas Bradwardine (Archbishop of Canterbury), John Wycliffe, Jerome of Prague, John Huss, John of Goch, John of Wesalia, Jerome of Savonarola, John Wessel, John Reuchlin.

### **III. THE REFORMERS.**

Andreas Carlstadt, Martin Luther, George Spalatin, Huldrych Zwingli, Johann Bullinger, Martin Bucer, William Farel, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, John Knox, William Tyndale.

### **IV. POST-REFORMATION THROUGH THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.**

Thomas Cranmer, Frances Gomarus, Girolamo Zanchius, John Frith, Andrew Fuller, James Ussher, Robert Barnes, Richard Vines, David Brainerd, John Brown (of Haddington), Robert Browne, John Hooper, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, Toplady, George Buchanan, Francis Turretin, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, John Gill, John Bunyan, Andrew Melville, Gaspard Coligny, Johannes Cocceius, William Cowper, Oliver Cromwell, William Cunningham, Jean Henri Merle D'Aubigné, Samuel Davies, William of Orange, John Milton, Charles Bridges, Thomas Goodwin, Charles Hodge, Andrew Bonar, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Traill, Matthew & Philip Henry, Steven Charnock, Robert Dabney, Thomas Boston, Thomas Manton, John Newton, Abraham Kuyper, Archibald Alexander, A.A. Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, George Whitefield, Alexander Whyte, John Flavel, J.C. Ryle, Lord Shaftesbury, John Witherspoon, Robert McChyenne, Ridderbos, Vos, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Richard Cameron, Robert Candlish, William Carey, Thomas Cartwright, Thomas Chalmers, Richard Baxter, William Ames, John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, Thomas Jones, Cotton & Increase Mather, William Perkins, Matthew Poole, Richard Sibbes, John Winthrop, William Guthrie, William Jay, John Elias, Isaac Watts, William Wilberforce, David Livingstone, J.C. Philpot, William Tiptaft, Asahel Nettleton, James Henley Thornwell, William Grimshaw, William Romaine, James

Haldane, Robert Haldane, Daniel Rowlands, Patrick Fairbairn, Frances Havergal, George Gillespie, William Tennent, Gilbert Tennent.

## V. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Francis Schaeffer, Leon Morris, Jay Adams, J.I. Packer, John Murray, Andrew Murray, William Hendrickson, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, A.W. Pink, Geoffery Wilson, John & Earnest Reisinger, Loius Berkhof, D. James Kennedy, Edwin Palmer, Louis Sperry Chafer, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Loraine Boettner, Edmund Clowney, Robert Godfrey, Gary North, Robert Strimple, S. Lewis Johnson, Bruce Waltke, Alan Mawhinney, John R.W. Stott, Iain Murray, E.J. Young, Cornelius Van Til, George Machen, Dennis Johnson, B.B. Warfield, John Gerstner, R.J. Rushdoony, R.C. Sproul, James Montgomery Boice, O.T. Allis, George Smeaton, Gordon Clark, C. Samuel Storms, Michael Scott Horton, Chuck Colson, Joni Eareckson Tada, John MacArthur, George Grant, C. Everett Koop, Henry Krabbendam, Carl F. Henry, Art Lindsley, Joel Nederhood, Rod Rosenblatt, Alister McGrath, Donald Matzat, D.A. Carson, John Armstrong, Ken Myers, Os Guinness, Jerry Bridges, Sinclair Ferguson, John Blanchard, John Benton, Richard Pratt, Ronald Nash, Robert Morey, Richard Belcher, Philip Hughes, Roger Nicole, R.B. Kuiper, John Frame, Peter Jones.

### **THE REFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE IN HISTORY**

The sure test of the character of individuals or of systems is found in Christ's own words: "By their fruits ye shall know them." By that test Calvinists and Calvinism will gladly be judged. The lives and the influences of those who have held the Reformed Faith is one of the best and most conclusive arguments in its favor. Smith refers to "that divinely vital and exuberant Calvinism, the creator of the modern world, the mother of heroes, saints and martyrs in number without number, which history, judging the tree of its fruits, crowns the greatest creed of Christendom."

**THE FIRST GREAT CHRISTIAN REVIVAL:** Three thousand people were converted, occurred under the preaching of Peter in Jerusalem, who employed such language as this: "Him being delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye by hands of lawless men did crucify and slay," Acts 2:23. And the company of disciples, when in earnest prayer shortly afterward, spoke in these words: "For of a truth in this city against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass," Acts 4:27,28. That is Calvinism rigid enough.

**THE FOURTH CENTURY REVIVAL:** The next great revival in the Church, which occurred in the fourth century through the influence of Augustine, was based on these doctrines, as is readily seen by anyone who reads the literature on that period. [Between Augustine and the Reformation] From the time of Augustine until the time of the Reformation very little emphasis was placed on the doctrine of Predestination. We shall mention only two names from this period: Gottschalk, who was imprisoned and condemned for teaching Predestination; and Wycliffe, "The Morning Star of the Reformation," who lived in England. Wycliffe was a Reformer of the Calvinistic type, proclaiming the absolute sovereignty of God and the Foreordination of all things. His system of belief was very similar to that which was later taught by Luther and Calvin.

The Waldensians also might be mentioned for they were in a sense "Calvinists" before the Reformation.

**THE REFORMATION:** This period is admitted by all to have been incomparably the greatest revival of true religion since the New testament times, occurred under the soundly predestinarian preaching of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. The Reformation was essentially a revival of Augustinianism. The early Lutheran and Reformed Churches held the same views in regard to Original Sin, Election, Efficacious Grace, Perseverance, etc. This then, was the true Protestantism. "The principle of Absolute Predestination," says Hastie, "was the very Hercules-might of the young Reformation, by which no less in Germany than elsewhere, it strangled the serpents of superstition and idolatry; and it continued to be the very marrow and backbone of the faith in the Reformed Church, and the power that carried it victoriously through all its struggles and trials."

[*The Reformation in Germany & Switzerland*] In his work, The Bondage of the Will, Luther stated the doctrine as emphatically and in a form quite as extreme as can be found among any of the Reformed theologians. To a great extent Calvin built upon the foundation which Luther laid. His clearer insight into the basic principles of the Reformation enabled him to work them out more fully and to apply them more broadly.

[*The Reformation in England*] The doctrines of grace are in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Cunningham has shown that all of the great theologians of the Established Church were thorough-going predestinarians and that the Arminianism of Laud and his successors was a deviation from that original position. Also, the Puritans were the literal and lineal descendants of the Reformation; and they kept alive the precious spark of Biblical salvation.

[*The Reformation in Scotland*] McFetridge tells us, "When Calvinism reached the Scotch people, they were vassals of the Romish Church, priest-ridden, ignorant, wretched, degraded in body, mind, and morals. Marvelous was the transformation when the great doctrines of grace taught by Knox flashed upon their minds. It was like the sun rising at midnight. Knox made the Reformed Faith the religion of Scotland, and the Reformed Faith made Scotland the moral standard of the world. It is certainly a significant fact...that of all the people of the world today that nation which is confessedly the most moral is also the most thoroughly Calvinistic; that in that land where Calvinism has had supremest sway individual and national morality has reached its loftiest level.

[*The Reformation in France*] In France the Reformers were called the Huguenots. The character of the Huguenots the world knows. Their moral purity and heroism, whether persecuted at home or exiled abroad, has been the wonder of both friend and foe. "Their history," says the Encyclopedia Britannica, "is a standing marvel, illustrating the abiding power of strong religious conviction. The account of their endurance is amongst the most remarkable and heroic records of religious history." On St. Bartholomew's day, Sunday, August 24, 1572, and for days afterward the Huguenots in France were massacred. Various estimates run between 10,000 to 50,000 lost their lives. Schaff puts it at 30,000. These furious persecutions caused hundreds of thousands of the Huguenots to flee to Holland, Germany, England, and America. The loss to France was irreparable. The great historian Lecky, who himself was a cold-blooded rationalist, wrote: "The

destruction of the Huguenots by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was the destruction of the most solid, the most modest, the most virtuous, the most generally enlightened element in the French nation, and it prepared the way for the inevitable degradation of the national character, and the last serious bulwark was removed that might have broken the force of that torrent of skepticism and vice which a century later, laid prostrate, in ruin, both the altar and the throne." What the Puritan was in England, the Covenanter was in Scotland, and the Huguenot was in France.

[*The Reformation in Holland*] For nearly three generations Spain, the strongest nation in Europe at that time, labored to stamp out Protestantism and political liberty in the Reformed Netherlands, but failed. Because they sought to worship God according to their Biblically educated conscience and not under the galling chains of a corrupt priesthood their country was invaded and the people were subjected to the cruelest tortures the Spaniards could invent. And if it be asked who effected the deliverance, the answer is, it was the Calvinistic Prince of Orange, known in history as William the Silent, together with those who held the same creed. Says Dr. Abraham Kuyper, "If the power of Satan at that time had not been broken by the heroism of the Reformed spirit, the history of the Netherlands, of Europe and of the world would have been painfully sad and dark as now, thanks to Calvinism, it is bright and inspiring." If the spirit of the Calvinism had not arisen in Western Europe following the outbreak of the Reformation, the spirit of half-heartedness would have gained the day in England, Scotland, and Holland. Protestantism in these countries could not have maintained itself; and, through the compromising measures of a Romanized Protestantism, Germany would in all probability have been again brought under the sway of the Roman Catholic Church. Had Protestantism failed in any one of these countries it is probable that the result would have been fatal in the others also, so intimately were their fortunes bound together. In a very real sense the future destiny of nations was dependent on the outcome of that struggle in the Netherlands. Had Spain been victorious in the Netherlands, it is probable that the Catholic Church would have been so strengthened that it would have subdued Protestantism in England also... In that case the Protestant development of America would automatically have been prevented. We do but repeat the very clear testimony of history when we say that the Reformed Faith has been the creed of saints and heroes. "Whatever the cause," says Froude, "the Calvinists were the only fighting Protestants. It was they whose faith gave them courage to stand up for the Reformation, and but for them the Reformation would have been lost." The Reformed Faith proved itself to be the only system able to cope with and destroy the great powers of the Romish Church.

[*Puritan America*] The Reformed faith came to America in the Mayflower, and Bancroft, the greatest of American historians, pronounces the Pilgrim Fathers "Calvinists in their faith according to the straightest system." John Endicott, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; John Winthrop, the second governor of that Colony; Thomas Hooker, the founder of Connecticut; John Davenport, the founder of the New Haven Colony; and Roger Williams, the founder of the Rhode Island Colony, all were Calvinists. William Penn was a disciple of the Huguenots. It is estimated that of the 3,000,000 Americans at the time of the American Revolution, 900,000 were of Scotch or Scotch-Irish [Presbyterian] origin, 600,000 were Puritan English, and 400,000 were German or Dutch Reformed. In addition to this the Episcopalians had a Calvinistic confession in their Thirty-Nine Articles; and many French Huguenots also had



come to this western world. Thus about two-thirds of the colonial population were committed to the doctrines of grace.

**THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING:** The first and chief actor in the Great Awakening was George Whitefield (an uncompromising Calvinist). Whitefield began the great work at Bristol and Kingswood, and had found thousands flocking to his side, ready to be organized into Churches. So large was the Methodist movement owing to Whitefield that he was called 'the Calvinistic establisher of Methodism,' and to the end of his life he remained the representative of it in the eyes of the learned world. Walpole, in his Letters, speaks only once of John Wesley in connection with the rise of Methodism, while he frequently speaks of Whitefield in connection with it. Mant, in his course of lectures on Methodism, speaks of it as an entirely Calvinistic affair. It was Calvinism, and not Arminianism, which originated the great revival in which the Methodist Church was born.

**REVIVAL IN PERSONAL LIVES:** The Reformed people dwelt, as pious men are apt to dwell in suffering and sorrow, on the all-disposing power of Providence. Their burden grew lighter as they considered that God had so determined that they must bear it. But they attracted to their ranks almost every man in Western Europe who hated a lie. They abhorred as no body of men ever more abhorred all conscious mendacity, all impurity, all moral wrong of every kind so far as they could recognize it. Whatever exists at this moment in England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Wales, Holland, and America of conscious fear of doing evil is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinist in the people's hearts. If Calvinism is indeed the hard and unreasonable creed (as many of its critics suggest), why has it attracted the greatest men that ever lived? And how is it (being as we are told "fatal to morality") wherever it established itself, it made the moral law the rule of life for states as well as persons? And I shall ask you again, why, if it be a creed of intellectual servitude (as some critics suggest) why was it able to inspire and sustain the bravest efforts ever made by man to break the yoke of unjust authority? When all else has failed, when patriotism has covered its face and human courage has broken down, when intellect has yielded with a smile or a sigh (content to philosophize in the closet), when emotion, and sentiment, and tender imaginative piety have become the handmaids of superstition, and have dreamt themselves into forgetfulness that there is any difference between lies and truth, the belief called Calvinism has borne ever an inflexible front to illusion and mendacity, and has preferred rather to be ground to powder like flint than to bend before violence or melt under temptation. [Boettner, pp 365-426.]

### **THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE IN HISTORY**

It appears superfluous to prove the tendency of Calvinism to promote freedom and popular government, both in Church and state. Its principles strip the ministry of all sacerdotal powers; they make all men and all Christians equal before God; they make God absolute and supreme over all, and the immediate controller and disposer of human affairs. Hence all Churches accepting Calvinism (unless prevented by external conditions) have immediately adopted popular constitutions, either Presbyterian or Independent. This is true of all the Churches of Switzerland, France, Holland, the Palatinate, Scotland, America, and the free Churches of England and Ireland.

The political influence of Calvinism was at an early period discerned by kings as well as by the people. The Waldenses were the freemen of the pre-Reformation period. A republic was established at the same time as the Presbytery in Geneva. The Hollanders, grouped around the sublime figure of William the Silent, performed deeds of heroism against odds of tyranny unparalleled in all foregoing and subsequent history. This battle was fought by Calvinistic Holland and they won their freedom in 1590. Add to these the French Huguenots, the Scottish Covenanters, the English Puritans in the Old and New World, and we make good our claim that Calvinists have successfully been the champions of political freedom among men.

Bancroft, the historian of the United States, traces the modern impulse for republican liberty back to Calvin's Geneva and to its Reformed theology. He credits the molding of the governments in North America chiefly to the New England Independents, and to Dutch, French, and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. "The Mecklenburg Declaration, signed on May 20, 1775, more than a year before the Declaration of Independence signed in Philadelphia, July 4, 1776, was the first voice raised for American Independence. And the convention by which Mecklenburg was adopted and signed consisted of twenty-seven delegates, nine of whom, including the president and secretary, were ruling elders, and one, the Rev. H. J. Balch, was a Presbyterian minister."

Tucker, in his Life of Jefferson, says: "Everyone [who has read the Mecklenburg Declaration and the Declaration of Independence] must be persuaded that one of these papers must have been borrowed from the other"; and it is certain that the Declaration of Independence written by Jefferson was written a year after that of Mecklenburg. The Correspondence between the representative system and the gradations of sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and national general assemblies, developed in the Presbyterian system, to the federal system of state and the national governments in the Constitution of the United States, seems too remarkable to have been accidental. Reformed theology shaped the American government! [B.B. Warfield, pp. 443-445.]

## **THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTS OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE IN HISTORY**

Wherever the Reformed faith has gone it has carried the school with it and has given a powerful impulse to education. It is a system that demands intellectual manhood. In fact, we may say that its very existence is tied up in the education of the people. Mental training is required to master the system and trace out all that it involves. It makes the strongest possible appeal to the human reason and insists that man must love God not only with his whole heart but also with his whole mind. Calvin held that "a true faith must be an intelligent faith"; and experience has shown that piety without learning is in the long run about as dangerous as learning without piety. This love for learning, putting mind above money, has inspired countless numbers of Reformed families in Scotland, in England, in Holland, and in America, to pinch themselves to the bone in order to educate their children. Wherever the Reformed faith has gone, there knowledge and learning have been encouraged and there a sturdy race of thinkers has been trained. The Reformers have not been the builders of great cathedrals, but they have been the builders of schools, colleges, and universities. [Boettner, pp 396-7.]

The little republic of Geneva became the sun of the European world. The Huguenots of France, immediately founded and sustained three illustrious schools at Montauban, Saumur, and Sedan.

The Huguenots so far surpassed their fellow countrymen in intelligence and skill that their banishment, on the occasion of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), quickened the manufactures and trades of Germany, England, and America, and for a time almost paralyzed the skilled industries of France.

The fragment of marshy seacoast constituting Holland became the commercial focus of the world, one of the most powerful communities in the society of nations, and the mother of flourishing colonies in both hemispheres. The peasantry of Scotland has been raised far above that of any other European nation by the universal education afforded by her parish schools [such as Aberdeen and Edinburgh]. When the Puritans from England, the Covenanters from Scotland, and the Reformers from Holland and Germany, came to America they brought with them not only the Bible...but also the school. Our three American universities of greatest historical importance: Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, were originally founded by these Calvinists. These were strong schools, designed to give students a sound basis in theology as well as in other branches of learning. In America, for the first two hundred years of its history, almost every college and seminary of learning, and almost every academy and common school which existed, had been built up and sustained by Calvinists. Wherever the Reformed faith gained dominion it invoked intelligence for the people and in every parish planted the common school. [Boettner, pp 396-7. Also see Warfield, pp 445-6.]

## CONCLUSION

As we survey this system we feel as one sitting at the manual of a great organ. Our fingers touch the keys, as stop after stop opens, until the full chorus responds, resulting in a grand harmony. These doctrines touch all the music of life because they seek the Creator first and above all and they find Him everywhere. Using another example it is like going out on a clear night and seeing the great heavenly dome overhead, and peering beyond that, through the river of time, into the wide expanse of eternity. And there the angels, and the saints who have gone on before us whisper back the words, "*O the depth of the riches!*" For the doctrines of grace show us GOD -- GOD in all His greatness, majesty, wisdom, holiness, justice, and love. They show us GOD high and lifted up; and our souls cry out in response, "*What is man that THOU... art mindful of him?*" [Boettner, p 430.]

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Source: <http://www.cov-pres.org/sermon/grace-history.html>