

## What **similarities** does Arminian Theology have with the Augustinian/Reformed Tradition?

The Similarities of Reformed Theology and Arminianism include: belief in the inspiration of Scripture; the two natures of Christ; the historical uniqueness of Christ's death on the cross; Christ's physical resurrection; our future hope of eternal life (general resurrection); original sin, inherited depravity, and that man, of himself is not capable by reason or strength alone to produce faith, apart from grace. Both hold to all the [early Christian creeds](#) except the [The Canons of the Council of Orange](#) (Which Arminians Reject). Both hold in common the view that the rejection of the Trinity constitutes heresy and that justification is through faith alone.

## **Differences with the Augustinian/Reformed Tradition?:**

While it is true that Arminians teach salvation is **by grace**, they do not hold that salvation is by [grace alone](#). Here's why >>> With the help of grace, they reason, man has the independent desire and ability to either **make use** of that grace (by believing the gospel) or to not make use of it by resisting it. The free choice emanating out of the desires of natural man is what determines man's eternal destiny. The human will is, therefore, to be viewed as one of the causes of regeneration (synergism) which itself is a teaching contrary to Scripture (John 1:13). Because man has this autonomous ability to cooperate or resist, it is thereby something innate within man's natural capacity/desires, and **not grace itself**, which is the sine qua non or determining factor in one's salvation. Man's self-determining role in salvation is, therefore, ultimate, while God's role is only penultimate. This means God's "election" of man is, in the Arminian scheme, **conditioned** on man's independent response to the gospel. William G.T. Shedd once commented, "The dependence upon grace in the Arminian system is partial; in the Calvinistic system it is total."

It should be noted that Arminian doctrine believes that man is never free to accept the gospel apart from a work of the Holy Spirit called "[prevenient grace](#)". This is the doctrine (deduced from logic) whereby God initiates with grace to place the sinner in a **neutral position**, above his inherited depravity. The unspiritual man is then given the autonomous choice to either resist Christ by rejecting the gospel or may receive the gospel by cooperating with that grace (synergism). Therefore, it is not grace which makes men to differ, but their innate capacity/desire to believe or not. Arminian regeneration is, therefore, not effectual. In other words, they are faced with the awkward belief that spiritual affections for God are somehow possible prior to being spiritual (1 Cor 2:14). For grace to be effectual in the Arminian scheme, the **humility, desire, and obedience** of the natural man is required. But, we ask, where did spiritual desires, humility or obedience (in those who believe) come from? Are they from self? Doesn't this show some merit, or capacity in some that others don't have? Arminians generally explain the reason why some persons believe the gospel and others do not is by liberty of indifference. Some people just happen to love and believe God, and others don't, they say. But this doesn't answer the question of **why** one believes and not another. So we must ask, if the choice is first, before the existence of a good disposition of heart, what signifies that choice?

Contrary to the Arminian system, the Scriptures teach that we make choices based our greatest desires and affections. Otherwise our motives for our choice is not morally driven and indifferent. Reformed Theology teaches that even the very moral ability & desire to cooperate with God itself comes by the power and work of the Holy Spirit (1 Thes 1:5), mercifully working

holy affections within us (monergism). Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature. It is by grace itself that we even have the faith, the will, or the strength to cooperate or do all these things as we ought. If the assistance of grace depended on the humility or obedience of man and it is not a gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble, such teaching contradicts the Scripture which says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). All our spiritual blessings and moral ability to believe can be traced back to the person and work of Christ. What we could not do or produce for ourselves, Christ graciously does for us.

Our human reasoning is never free from the effects of sin. People deny God not because they lack evidence, but because their hearts are rebellious. So the unbelievers problem is ethical first and then intellectual. Those who know facts, therefore, are not the same as those who forsake sin and come to love God. We must therefore appeal to the entire person and not merely his intellect. God is hidden from man because he loves sin and is in hostile rebellion against God. It is hostile affections that turn man from God, not because the natural man lacks data or is not smart enough. So we appeal to the heart of the sinner because God is not an axiom in mathematics. To come to faith in Christ one must desire Christ, have affections for Him more than he does sin. These holy affections are not produced by our unregenerate human nature (1 Cor 2:14) and faith is not indifferent or neutral. So a full orbed gospel is not just and indifferent ticking off a list of impersonal propositions for our assent, it is putting forth Christ in His love shown in the cross and resurrection. We are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit through faith, which God has granted us in Him. The desire to come to faith in Christ then, is itself, a spiritual blessing which flows from the person and work of Christ (Eph 1:3, Eph 2:8, 2 Tim 2:28, 1 Pet 1:3).

For those who don't believe desires play a role in our faith, let me ask -- could someone actually believe that we could come to Christ in faith without desiring Him? Is such an act possible?

### **Arminian Five Points of the Remonstrance of 1610 with contrasting Five Points of Calvinism**

- 1) **Election is conditioned upon man's response or [foreseen faith](#) (conditional "election")**  
The Reformed Tradition, by contrast, teaches that election is unconditional.
- 2) **Universal Atonement** (According to Arminians Christ has already atoned and propitiated for the sins of all humanity. Christ purchased redemption not only for those who would believe but for all men, yet only those who believe go to heaven). [The Reformed Tradition asks, if this is the case, why aren't all men saved if all their sins are atoned for? Unbelief is also a sin. By contrast, we believe the Bible teaches that the redemptive blessings of the atonement were intended only for those who would believe, the elect \(particular redemption\). Christ died in a way for the elect that He did not for the non-elect.](#)
- 3) **"Unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God's will"** (thus eliminating the categorization of either "[Pelagian](#)" or "Semi-Pelagian." The latter holds that the first steps are originated by the human will rather than by the Holy Spirit) [This doctrine is similar to the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity, with some important differences.](#)

**4) Grace is not irresistible**

(Thus faith is itself a principle or capacity in autonomous natural man standing ultimately independent of God's action of grace) **The Reformed Tradition**, by contrast, teaches that God can make His grace efficacious

**5) Possibility of falling away from grace**

This is the supposition that our sin as believers can result in God's judicial displeasure. Many Arminians teach that our judicial standing before God must be maintained by holy living. Justification, in other words can be gained and lost. **The Reformed Tradition**, by contrast, maintains the biblical teaching that our judicial standing before God is through Christ's blood, which alone is sufficient to maintain our justification. Holy living and perseverance springs from our new nature received in regeneration which now delights in God's law, and will not fall away.

**These Five Points of the Remonstrance of 1610 are virtually identical (prima facie) with Catholic Molinism**

**Source:** <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/arminianism.html>