

# A Table Demonstrating the Contrast Between Calvinism and Arminianism in their Five Points of the Doctrines of Grace Formulated at the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort, 1618-19)

Calvinism	Arminianism
Summary of position: <b>God is absolutely sovereign in salvation</b> (monergism).	Summary of position: <b>Man co-operates with God in salvation</b> (synergism).
<b>1. <u>Total Depravity</u></b> of man's nature. Man cannot do any spiritual good, he is dead in sin and cannot reach up to God. He inherits guilt from Adam's sin. <small>See: Eph 2:1; Col 2:13; Ps 51:5; Jn 3:5-7; Gen 6:5</small>	<b><u>Free Will</u></b> . Man is not totally depraved but is weakened, he can accept or reject God; he can believe. The fall did not destroy all his spiritual powers.
<b>2. <u>Unconditional Election</u></b> . God elects (chooses, foreordains, predestinates) part of the human race to salvation in Christ before the world is made. <small>See: Rm 8:28-33, 9:10+, 11:28; Eph 1:4-5; 2 Tim 1:9</small>	<b><u>Conditional Election</u></b> . God chooses those whom he foresees will accept the Gospel in the future.
<b>3. <u>Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption)</u></b> . Christ only dies for those who have been elected by God, those who are his sheep, his people. Yet his death has infinite value. It is sufficient for all but only effective for some. <small>See: Isa 53:11; Rm 8:30, 9:24; Acts 20:28; Heb 9:28</small>	<b><u>Universal Redemption (or General Atonement)</u></b> . Christ's atonement is universal in scope. Christ died for every single person. Enabling grace is given to all.
<b>4. <u>Irresistible Grace</u></b> . Those whom God has chosen are drawn by him in the ('effectual') Gospel call by the Holy Spirit. The 'general call' of the Gospel only hardens those who are not elect. <small>See: Rm 8:14; 1 Cor 12:3; Jn 1:13; 1 Jn 5:4; Heb 9:15;</small>	<b><u>Resistible Grace</u></b> . Grace can be resisted since man can accept or reject the Gospel message by using his free will. Salvation comes by the Spirit after only a response of the sinner's will.
<b>5. <u>Preservation (Perseverance) of the saints</u></b> . The elect are kept by the power of God to the end. <small>See: Jn 3:36, 5:24, 6:35, 10:27+; Rm 5:8+, 8:1, 8:29+</small>	<b><u>Perseverance depends on obedience</u></b> . Believers can fall away from grace and be damned.

The mnemonic *TULIP* is formed from the first letter of the Calvinistic position.

## Questions about Arminian position

### Total Depravity

1. Since the Bible states that faith is a gift from God (Eph 2:8), how can man have faith in his natural state, without prior aid from heaven?
2. If man is not corrupt in *every part* of his nature, what happened at the fall of Adam? Surely the key result of the Fall was man's removal from fellowship with God?
3. If man is dead in sin (i.e. spiritually dead, dead towards God), how can he do any spiritual good? A dead man cannot do anything.
4. Total depravity does not mean that everyone is as evil as he can be, but that every part of man's nature is corrupted. If no part of man is pure and perfect, how can any of it be offered as acceptable to a holy God? Even our faith is weak, sinful and polluted.
  - *There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.* (Rm 3:10-12 also Ps 53:1-3)
  - *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* (Eph 2:1)
  - *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,* (Col 2:13)
  - *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it?* (Jer 17:9)
  - *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.* (Isa 64:6)

### Unconditional Election

5. Where does the Bible say that God elects men on the basis that they will ultimately have faith and respond to the Gospel? Answer - it does not say this anywhere.
6. Since God gives the only faith that saves, how can it be possible that God chooses men on the basis of a foreseen human faith (which cannot save)?
7. The word 'foreknow' in the New Testament means 'foreordain'. God foreordains some men to election (1 Pt 1:2 the same word is used in v20). If so, How can God choose on the basis of something in man?
  - The Bible states that God chooses the elect on the basis of his 'good pleasure', not something man does (such as believe or 'decide for Christ'): *having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,* (Eph 1:5).
  - *For whom He foreknew, (i.e. foreordained) He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.* (Rm 8:29-30)
  - *God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel,* (2 Thess 2:13-14)

### Limited Atonement

8. If Christ died for everyone who ever lived, why do many go to hell?
9. If God only elects some to salvation, why would Christ die for those who will never repent?
10. If Christ died for all, why is God said to hate certain people?
11. How can Christ do something that fails? God is perfect and can never fail to achieve his desired end. Those whom Christ died for will certainly be saved.
12. If Christ dies for folk who reject him, his blood was wasted on those people. How can this be possible?
  - *My righteous Servant shall justify many* (NB not 'all'), *For He shall bear their iniquities.* (Isa 53:11)
  - *Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.* (Heb 9:28)
  - *Whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.* (Rm 8:30)  
God only justifies (pardons) those whom he predestines and calls.

### Irresistible Grace (the effectual call)

13. If grace can be resisted, then God can be resisted. This puts man in the place of withstanding God - which is impossible.
14. The Bible states that God draws those to Christ whom he has chosen (Jn 6:44,65). If Almighty God gives the grace which draws and saves us, how can he be resisted?
15. Conversion is described in the Bible as being 'born again'. If so, how can a man engineer to be born again in his own strength?
  - The Gospel is God's power to those who believe (Rm 1:16). The elect receive this power, are drawn by God (Jn 6:44,65), are given faith and repentance (Eph 2:8; Acts 5:31; 2 Tim 2:25-26) and become children of God (Jn 1:12). The non-elect (reprobate) do not receive this power when they hear the Gospel preached. *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* (1 Cor 1:18)
  - *... no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.* (1 Cor 12:3) In other words, men cannot submit to Christ without the gracious power given by God.
  - *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (Jn 1:12-13)
  - *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water<sup>1</sup> and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'* (Jn 3:5-8) Salvation comes by the power of the Spirit, not the actions of man.

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<sup>1</sup> Either a reference to the Word of God (water is a common Biblical symbol of the Word), thus the meaning is: 'You must be born of the Gospel word and the Spirit's power'. Or possibly it is a reference to natural birth (via the waters of childbirth, amniotic fluid); thus the meaning is: 'You must be both born naturally and again spiritually to enter heaven'.

### **Preservation (perseverance) of the saints**

16. If salvation is becoming a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), how can a person suddenly become an old creature again and fall from grace?
17. If salvation is being placed into Christ by God, how can a believer be taken out of being in Christ?
18. If I am saved by the power of God, how can the power of man remove me from God's side?
  - *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (Jn 10:28-29)*
  - *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Rm 8:1)*
  - *But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Saviour'. (Isa 43:1-3)*
  - *'For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,' Says the LORD, who has mercy on you. (Isa 54:10)*

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