

The Doctrines of Grace: a summary

Preface

This is my attempt to summarise my book upon the Doctrines of Grace, itself based on a number of short papers initially published in the early 1990s. These are all available on my website individually (though this book supersedes them by far). I have also adapted some other relevant papers published over the years. This is my opportunity to edit, rearrange, augment and improve these old papers. What has emerged is a new exposition with very many additional pieces of information.

There are many good books summarising these essential teachings of Calvinism and I make no claim that mine is any better. However, a number of people look to me for information and my job is to help them. I have tried to be as concise as possible, but leave out no important matter; thus I have endeavoured to write the best possible examination of the Doctrines of Grace that I can, even with details of subsidiary issues and history, adding multiple diagrams for clarification. In addition, I deal with a number of associated, but often ignored, topics.

Without doubt, these doctrines are vital for the believer to comprehend; without them he is going to be a boat on the sea without a sail or a rudder. It is crucial that young converts grasp these teachings as soon as possible.

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by the nickname CALVINISM, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus.¹

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, From a sermon on 2 Thess 2:13-14, 'Election'.

A simple theological introduction to the systems of Calvinism and Arminianism

These theological systems relate to those doctrines expounding salvation, called the 'Doctrines of Grace'. The controversy between them seeks to answer the question: is God's provision of salvation best explained in Calvinistic or Arminian terms?

Calvinism

It is necessary that we clarify titles. By Calvinism I mean the doctrines set forth by the Reformer John Calvin, and developed by his successors in the Protestant church worldwide. This has come to be called Reformed Theology.² The distinctives of Calvinism centre on five key points, which explain the doctrinal basis of the Gospel. Although nicknamed Calvinism by opponents, these five points were held by most the Reformers.

Historic Christianity has mainly been Reformed in its formal theology since the mid-1500's. Certainly all its key confessions were Calvinistic, whether they were Anglican,³ Presbyterian,⁴ Baptist⁵ or Congregational.⁶ Even the early Brethren movement was largely Calvinistic in Gospel truths (though what's left is now Dispensational and Arminian).⁷

Calvinism expresses the faith of the martyrs, confessors and reformers, the faith in which the majority of Christ's true people have lived and died ... it is the truth of God.⁸

Arminianism

Arminianism stems from the teachings of Jacob Arminius [1560-1609], who diverged from the Reformed view of predestination. His followers (the Remonstrants) took these views even further and solidified their position in five points in the early 1600's, which led to their denunciation by the Synod of Dort in 1619. It was here that the Calvinistic five points were clearly spelled out in distinction to the Arminian theology: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption),⁹ Irresistible Grace (i.e. effectual calling) and the Perseverance of the Saints.

Methodism is the main Arminian representative in history (although even portions of that were Reformed like the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales¹⁰). From Methodism stems the Holiness Movement and the Revivalist¹¹ movements, which were strongly Arminian, or even Pelagian in the case of Finney and his successors, and from this comes the modern crusade evangelistic movements and Pentecostalism. Roman Catholicism is also a works based, semi-Pelagian religion and history shows that Jesuits have encouraged Arminianism to undermine Protestantism at various times.¹²

The influence of Arminianism in modern times is enormous, mainly due to the influence of various

² Originally a term owned by the Dutch Presbyterian churches but now applied to Calvinists of all denominations.

³ The 39 Articles.

⁴ Westminster Confession, Belgic Confession etc.

⁵ The 1689 Baptist Confession.

⁶ The Savoy Declaration.

⁷ So said Brethren leader GH Lang in 'The Tongues Movement'.

⁸ John L. Girardeau, Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism, Sprinkle Pub. pvii.

⁹ Some people don't like the concept of God's atonement being described as 'limited'; but by definition it is limited in its participants.

¹⁰ The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists started before Wesleyanism but are often viewed as stemming from it.

¹¹ We should note a clear difference between the subject of Revival as opposed to man centred Revivalism.

¹² Most notably in the time of Archbishop Laud.

evangelistic organisations and the effects of popular preachers. The average Evangelical Christian is probably Arminian in his understanding of the Gospel.

Salvation

Today there are many forms of salvation on offer, just as there are many available gods. We have seen a return of civilisation to a pagan culture where idols and false religions abound upon every corner. Even man himself is said to be a god by some of these, and this idea is popularly taught by New Age cults. It is the original satanic lie.

We need not study the variety of salvific systems being presented since we are looking at Christian doctrines. This means we can ignore Universalism, which states that everyone will be saved, and also Pelagianism (see 'history') which denies the Fall of man and believes that man can save himself.

Universalism	False Religion	New Age	Pelagianism
Everyone is saved.	A variety of salvation methods (Buddha, Hinduism, Islam, Taoism, Shinto etc.).	A variety of ways to salvation based upon realising the god in you (mysticism).	Man saves himself through good works.

A study of the Bible gives us only two possible options concerning the Gospel:

- Salvation is something which God provides, initiates and controls totally.
- Salvation is only potentially provided by God; man must initiate his personal conversion and co-operate with God to complete it.

There are no other Biblical options.

These in turn lead to two different pictures of God:

- An all powerful, completely sovereign God in total control of everything, past, present and future, who loves man so much that he actually saves those he has chosen and brings them through to the end.
- A God who loves indiscriminately (i.e. everyone), but not enough to guarantee the salvation of anyone; who has left the initiation of salvation to mere man; who hopes that people will respond to his gracious offer and who cannot control the destiny of those that do respond to his Gospel so that they could still be lost.

This is not an unfair caricature; the first point is Calvinistic, the second is Arminian.

Calvinism	Arminianism
God totally controls salvation.	God only initiates salvation and makes it possible.
Man is dead in sin.	Man is alive and can respond.
Man is lost in sin.	Man's will is not lost.
Man cannot contribute to salvation at all.	Man must help God by free will choice.
God is totally sovereign.	Man can resist God.
God predestines to salvation.	God picks those with faith. Thus man initiates his own conversion.

Monergism or synergism?

The crux of the matter is: to what degree is man able to save himself? There are various views.

Throughout the ages a key struggle in theology has been between those that stressed the sovereignty of God in salvation (monergism¹³) and those that elevated man's co-operation (synergism¹⁴).

The Bible shows us a balance between the provision of God and the responsibility of man in many areas, but in salvation, even man's responsibility is activated by God. Man must respond to the Gospel, but God in his grace enables man to respond by changing his heart (more of this later).

In history, movements began which elevated man, even to the position of being able to provide his own salvation (e.g. Pelagianism). True Bible believers could not accept this, but some weakened the Gospel by saying that man initiates or contributes to his salvation, apart from God (i.e. Semi-Pelagianism). Augustine of Hippo contended against Pelagius in the 5th century, and re-emphasised the New Testament teaching that salvation is all of God. God predestines those who are to be saved and ensures that they are saved. Although the Gospel is declared to all, i.e. the command to repent is universal, only those whom God has chosen will respond. (Similar controversies took place in the 3rd and 4th centuries).

The Reformers, starting with Martin Luther, rediscovered what Augustine taught and went to the Bible to search out the truth. This current controversy is not modern, but ancient. Throughout history, God has taught men to proclaim the truth (monergism) in the face of opposition. That truth was then established and initiated periods of consolidation in the church. This happened, for instance, in the times of the Puritans in England, Knox in Scotland or Spurgeon in Victorian London.

These are the systems that abound in the church today:

Universalism

This is the view that everyone will be saved. Christ becomes simply a good example of mankind. His death is tragic. Example: Unitarians, the Society of Friends (Quakers) and many liberals.

Pelagianism

This is the view that man can save himself. He can determine his future for good (i.e. self-determinism); he can reach God by his own efforts. Example: various sects, those influenced by CG Finney, Socinians, Open Theists, and extreme Arminians.

Arminianism

This is a sort of Semi-Pelagianism. It teaches that man co-operates with God, who provides grace, but man chooses and makes the first move towards salvation. God doesn't definitely save anyone, but provides a potential salvation and leaves it up to man to grasp it for himself. Of course, the corollary of this is that man can fall from grace if he does not continue in faith. This view is more or less official in Roman Catholicism and Methodism, but it has recently become common amongst Evangelical Christians. Probably the most famous 'Christian' advocate of this theology was John Wesley.¹⁵

¹³ A single energy; we could say, sovereignty.

¹⁴ Greek: *synergos*, 'working together'. The interaction of two or more separate energies summarised in the principle of co-operation.

¹⁵ Wesley's theology is certainly not Biblical Christianity; indeed he hated doctrines such as predestination and vehemently attacked Calvinists of his time (such as Augustus Toplady). Furthermore, he espoused many heretical concepts, believed in ghosts and mysticism, believed people in false religions would be in heaven and near his death declared that he never loved God.

Calvinism or Reformed Theology

This is the belief that salvation is wholly of the Lord. Man is lost in sin and cannot save himself. The death of Jesus is a penal substitute for man's sin; he died in man's place. This death definitely saves a specific number of people, called the elect, who are predestined by God to be the Bride of Christ. Those who are called by God are then justified, sanctified and glorified; as such they can never fall away. God is their Father, he will never fail them, though he will discipline them.

This has been the historic Christian viewpoint for hundreds of years. It was the view of Paul, Augustine and codified in the Reformation by Martin Luther and more fully by John Calvin. It is represented in all the major historic Christian creeds and confessions (e.g: the Westminster and Belgic Confessions). It was the doctrine of the Puritans and the 39 Articles of the Church of England. It was championed by the giants of history like John Knox, George Whitefield, John Newton, John Bunyan, John Owen, and Charles Spurgeon, and more recently by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.



The nub of the question

We have seen, then, that the central issue is: is salvation all of God; or is salvation partly of God and partly of man?

God saves totally	God saves in principle only
Man is powerless.	Man co-operates.
Grace can't be resisted.	Man can resist God and reject the Gospel.
Those who are truly converted will persevere to the end in God's grace.	Salvation can be lost.
Man is depraved and unable.	Man is not totally depraved and unable.
God elects those to be saved in eternity in his good pleasure.	God only chooses those whom he sees in the future will respond to the Gospel.
Christ's death is for the elect (chosen) only.	Christ's death is for all without exception.

Arminianism is, therefore, a sort of Semi-Pelagianism, which emphasises man's free will and ability to choose, to make a decision to be saved. The question is: does the Bible show that man can accept and reject the Gospel, or is even his coming to Christ controlled by God? Does man choose or is he drawn? Is God in control of everything, or are some things beyond his power? Is God truly God?

Man's problem

The essence of Man's problem is selfishness. The Bible implies that the fall of Satan was due to pride (Isa 14:12-15), and his original temptation to Adam and Eve was towards self-determination; to control their own destiny and be like God (Gen 3:5). This selfishness and pride is seen in alternative salvation dogma.

In Pelagianism, man wants to control his salvation totally; he feels that he is not that bad and certainly not totally depraved. He can, therefore, determine his own future. This is so clearly

unbiblical that Christians can see through it. However, it is harder to spot the watered down version, Semi-Pelagianism.

In Semi-Pelagianism (e.g. Arminianism or Roman Catholicism) man has power to determine his own future. Salvation is provided by God but it must be appropriated by each person for themselves. It must also be continued by man's own strength or he will lose it. Any mention of God's foreknowledge must, therefore, mean that God looks down the window of time and searches for those who will have faith.

Such a view brings presuppositions to the Biblical text before it is interpreted. Jesus said that you must lose your life to save it (Matt 10:38). The Arminian seems to be saying that you must use your life to save it. The Christian, by definition, is a follower of Christ; as such we should come to his word in submission, not presupposition.

It is hard for us to accept that we cannot contribute anything to a salvation, which is all of God. It goes against the grain of our rebellious independence to accept that the only thing I bring to God in salvation is my utter need for mercy. The Bible does not say that my salvation is dependent upon my decision, my accepting Christ, my opening the door of my heart, my praying a certain type of prayer or anything else that arises from my life. In fact, what the Gospel does demand, faith and repentance, are specifically said to be given to us by God as a result of a heart regenerated by God (Eph 2:8; 2 Tim 2:25).

Man: dead in sins

Without referring to many scriptural arguments to prove the issue, we will simply look at one; the argument of Paul in Ephesians 2, since this alone clears up the confusion.

And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience... But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead ... made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) ... for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God-not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph 2:1-10

Could anything be clearer than this? Let us list its component items.

God's salvation	Man's condition
Makes alive (regeneration, repeated twice).	Dead.
Rich in mercy.	Following the world.
Loves us with a great love.	Following the Devil.
Joins us to Christ.	Living in the passions of flesh.
Saves us by grace (repeated twice).	Following desires of body & mind.
Raises us up with Christ.	Children of wrath (God's judgment hanging over us).
Seats us with Christ.	
Saved through faith.	
Not of our doing.	
Not of our works.	
We are his workmanship.	

How can we study such a passage carefully and come to the conclusion that we contribute towards our salvation?

In ourselves, we are dead; not sick, not mortally wounded, not terminally ill - but dead. As far as

God, or spiritual life, is concerned man is dead. He died with Adam in the Garden of Eden (Rm 5:12, 15). Can a dead man do anything, let alone raise himself to life? Can a dead sinner contribute and help a Holy God in the act of salvation?

Even if we were alive, we are said to be following, not only the world, but Satan too. Will he help us aid God? Can we resist him without God's assistance? The world doesn't know God and is antagonistic to God; can its followers suddenly change and co-operate with God?

The world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 1 Jn 3:1

For all that *is* in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. 1 Jn 2:16

In addition, we were following sensual desires of body and mind, lusts. Does the sinful nature know how to follow God? Would it want to if it did know? Of course not!

He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Jn 3:18-19

For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Rm 8:6-8

We were described as sons of disobedience. Will the disobedient suddenly obey God? Obviously not; that is why we were said to be children of wrath by nature (Rm 8:7-8). God was angry with us (Ps 5:5). God's judgment and wrath is hovering over every unjustified man like a sword of Damocles (Jn 3:36)

This picture is of a man that can do nothing to assist in his salvation.

To emphasise this, the apostle then explains God's part (in Eph 2).

- First he has to make us alive before anything can occur (Jn 3:3). Regeneration, a sovereign act of God, is the initial point in the process of salvation (not necessarily a process in terms of time but of consecutive acts of God).
- This salvation is of grace, it is something given to a poor man. It is kindness which is unmerited. It is love given which is undeserved. Paul highlights this by mentioning it twice, three times if you include v7 (in Eph 2:1-7).
- It is an act of mercy. There is nothing in the object of salvation requiring that God should act this way. He does it in mercy. It is not a response in God to a decision, a prayer or an attitude. It is something God originates (Jonah 2:9).
- It involves God raising us up with Christ and seating us with him in heaven. How can we contribute to this?
- It is a gift of God. Does a person contribute to their own gifts? It is something offered freely by God.
- It is through faith, which itself is said to be the gift of God. It specifically states that this is not of our own doing. It is not a work of man in any way. The workmanship is of God and it began in eternity.

Many passages could be added to show that this is the teaching of the whole Bible. God is totally sovereign in salvation, but this passage (Eph 2) alone makes the point crystal clear.

God's love

Everything God does involves total commitment and a finality of expression.

I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does *it*, that men should fear before Him. Eccles 3:14

God is God, he doesn't act like man. What he starts, he finishes. When he loves, he loves fully and finally. If God just loved in a vague sort of way, he would not be God. If he put his love on some, and then they fell away, he could not be God.

God only does what will end in a full expression of his glory. His love is totally focused upon his Son. In this universe, it is only the Son that is the object of God's love, and that love is poured upon Jesus in fulness. Everything else is tainted by sin and is corrupted. God will not tolerate impurity or mixture, and all is consigned to wrath and judgment. Only that which is in Christ will not only survive, but experience the expression of God's love. Therefore, those loved by God are the elect **in Christ**, loved from eternity (Eph 1:4-5), chosen **in the beloved**. We are loved as the elect that are placed **into** Christ.

God does not put his love upon an object destined to wrath. The sinner is said to be hated by God (Ps 11:5-7, 5:5; Prov 3:33) and predestined to judgment (Rm 9:22, called 'the reprobate' by theologians.)

This selection of some to life and the passing by of others is called election. It is the eternal starting point of salvation. Our salvation began when Jesus agreed to die in our place as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and God chose a bride to give to his son (Jn 17:2,6,9). The church alone is that bride (Eph 5:23-33), not some earthly nation.

This leads the believer to overflowing worship that God should choose us in his mercy. Yet many Christians abhor this doctrine and demand 'fair play'. If we were to demand that God only acted in justice, we would all be damned since God had no obligation to choose to save any of the race that rebelled against him and joined forces with his enemy. God decreed to reveal his love as well as his justice by choosing a portion of the human race to be saved in his son. These were loved from eternity and are seen as perfect and complete in Jesus by the God who is not limited by time (Rm 8:30; 1 Cor 1:30).

Just as we cannot import our feelings into the Biblical concept of salvation, neither can we insist that God loves like us. He does not. We love in fits and starts, and even cease loving when injured. We only treat love glibly and superficially at best. God loves for eternity. This means that his love is not on the reprobate or his love would be in hell - the place of his wrath, the expression of his justice in the universe. Such an idea also ruins the Gospel. Why should anyone repent or seek God after being told that God already loves them?

The call of the Gospel

At this point we should consider the actual proclamation of the Good News of salvation. If there is a limit to those who are saved, i.e. the elect, then how should we preach?

There is an extreme form of Calvinism (called Hyper-Calvinism) which does not preach the Gospel to all indiscriminately. It falsely concludes that: if only the elect will be saved, then we should not preach good news to reprobates. Only when you see signs of God working in a person can you then share the Gospel with them. This is wrong. It is a false rational conclusion, which flies in the face of Biblical commands. We are to: '**Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation**' (Mk 16:15 see also Matt 28:19; Lk 24:47).

The opposite error is to tell everyone that God loves them and will give salvation to all; you only have to pray and exercise your natural faith to receive it. This is Arminianism, and it is also false. There is no Biblical precedent to preach this way. The examples given to us in Acts never once use the term 'the love of God'; in fact the word 'love' does not appear in the Greek text of Acts at all.

What, then, is the Biblical way forward?

Firstly, we must obey the clear word of scripture, which tells us to preach God's word to everyone. We cannot segregate people into elect and non-elect because we do not know who they are! But what is it that we preach?

We must explain that God is the creator who has claims upon all people; we belong to him and cannot live to please ourselves (Acts 17:23-27). We then explain the demands of God's law, the means he has given man to live in this world, and that everyone has fallen short of these demands (Acts 17:30-31; Gal 3:24). As a result, all men are enemies of God (Rm 5:10) and will face his judgment on sin. However, Jesus has been sent to rescue those that come to him for salvation. Everyone that repents of his wrong way of life and believes in Jesus Christ as saviour, whose heart is changed and who confesses in his life that Jesus is Lord, will surely be saved from the wrath that is to come. Those that come to confess this can be encouraged to expect mercy and counselled to receive Christ as Lord (Jn 1:12) and be baptised (Acts 2:38).

So we explain that God commands repentance (Acts 17:30) and faith (Acts 16:31). Those who obey are those whom God has enabled to do so by his grace. We cannot broadcast a global love of God or state that Jesus died for everyone in that room at that time. How can we do such a thing if many in that room will die in their sins? We can encourage all those that respond that they have been drawn by God (Jn 6:44).

Jesus said that many are called (to repentance i.e. God's prescriptive will, what God commands man to do), but only few are chosen (God's decretive will, what God effectually plans, those that God elects in this case), Matt 22:14.

There is a difference between the prescriptive, universal calling and the choosing (decree of election) of God. The Gospel call is a general command to repentance and faith, but it must not give indiscriminate assurance of life. Only the elect receive the effectual call of God within the universal proclamation of the Gospel.

General call	Effectual call
To everyone.	Contained within the general call - to the elect.
Is external.	Is inward.
Applies law.	Applies grace.
Command to believe & repent.	Ability to believe & repent.
Results in obligation.	Results in life to the elect.
Can be rejected.	Cannot be resisted.

Interim conclusion

We have seen that Calvinism exalts God and Arminianism exalts man. Calvinism honours the Bible, Arminianism fails to do justice to the tenor of scripture and a great many clear texts.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The result of many years of an Arminian emphasis in the preaching of the Gospel in the UK has led to an 'easy believism' where almost anyone can be accepted as converted despite no evidence of repentance or conviction of sin. The dreadful problems in our churches stem directly from this where dubious converts are being treated as Christians and require all sorts of ministry and healing techniques to resolve deep issues in their lives; often a fruitless exercise.

In days gone by, the Gospel comforts were only applied to those who clearly showed signs of God's working as revealed in: an awareness of sin, a seeking of the Saviour, a desire for forgiveness and a deadly earnest to find peace with God. Our Calvinistic forefathers loved God and people too much

to dispense with the rigours of the law and the threat of hell before they applied the good news. They were doctors who sought to reveal the disease before they applied the medicine. Only the truth sets us free. Weakening and falsifying the Gospel by making it sound attractive but unbiblical has dealt a severe blow to this country. A revival of true Biblical preaching is urgently required.

Quotes

That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree [singular] ... According to which decree, He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in His just judgment. The Canons of Dort [1619]; First Head, Article 6.

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. The Westminster Confession; 3:6.

The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice. The Westminster Confession; 3:7

The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. The Westminster Confession; 33:2.

Comparison of doctrines: a summary

The crucial element behind the whole controversy is this: is God sovereign or not in salvation? With this in mind, we now briefly compare the two systems of Arminianism and Calvinism.

Total Depravity

Arminianism

Men are not affected by Adam's sin and can respond to the Gospel of their own free will.¹⁶ Everyone who hears the Gospel can receive grace and power to be regenerated.

Calvinism

Man is born in sin and under the wrath of God. As such he is unable to respond to the Gospel in his own strength. Righteousness is impossible.

Eph 2:1-3; Rm 9:15-16; Jn 1:12-13.

Unconditional Election

Arminianism:

God elects (chooses) those whom he foresees will have faith.

Calvinism:

God chooses (selects) according to his good pleasure. It is an act of sovereign love and is not dependent upon any condition met by the individual. Election is the origin point of salvation, the source of calling, faith and repentance. God did not need to choose anyone, but he shows his mercy by electing a remnant of fallen humanity.

Acts 13:48; Rm 9:11-13; Eph 1:4-5; 1 Cor 1:26-27; 1 Tim 1:9.

Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)

Arminianism:

Christ died for all men and loves all men. Everyone can be saved if they believe. Christ's blood is, therefore, ineffective for those who fail to believe.

Calvinism:

Christ died for his people, a specific group given to him in eternity by the Father as a Bride. These are the elect, those for whom Christ's blood is fully effectual.

Matt 20:28 ('many' but not 'all'); Jn 17:2,6,10,11; Acts 20:28.

Irresistible Grace (Effectual Calling)

Arminianism:

Man can successfully resist God's grace. His will is free to believe or not.

Calvinism:

There is an effectual call for some within the outward, general call of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the elect through the call of the Gospel to impart a power to believe and repent. He regenerates the heart, brings conviction of sin and a desire to believe in Christ for mercy - in these people only.

Jn 6:37, 44-45, 65; Rm 8:29-30; Eph 2:4-5, 8; Titus 3:5.

¹⁶ Arminians differ somewhat in this. Wesleyans accept depravity.

Final Perseverance of the saints

Arminianism:

One can never be sure of one's salvation and it is possible to fall away from grace and be lost if one does not continue in faith.

Calvinism:

Man cannot continue in faith by his own strength at all, God must work in him to complete the work. This grace is continued to the end.

Jn 4 :14, 10:27-28; Rm 5:9-10; Phil 1:6; 1 Pt 1:5.

These five points (Tulip) are not the whole scope of Calvinism, but they do form the essential core of the Doctrines of Grace and the argument against Arminianism. These doctrines are crucial to a proper understanding and experience of the Christian life. If these are not properly understood, your walk will falter and you will be unable to combat other errors effectively.

Historically, those that have yielded to an unbiblical view of these doctrines, have later succumbed to even worse errors. The issues here control your views on: God, sin, salvation, man, providence, grace and your daily walk. Is God in control of your life or not? One system declares that there is a God who saves, the other speaks of a God who helps man to save himself and then leaves him to fend for himself. One theology gives all the praise to God for salvation, the other divides the glory between God and man.

The five points of each system hang together. You cannot take bits of one and bits of another without being inconsistent. They both result from a specific conception of God's decrees. It is folly and misleading to be an Arminian regarding conversion, but a Calvinist regarding perseverance; i. e. man saves himself but God keeps him. A commitment to part of one commits you to the whole unless you are happy to be theologically inconsistent. The important issue is: what does the Bible teach?

Let us now examine a cursory summary of the controversies in church history regarding salvation doctrine.

Historical overview of the rise of Arminianism and Amyraldism

Preface

Truth is of God; truth is God and the truth is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

In this world, the truth will always be attacked because the world lies under the influence of the devil (God's enemy) through sin and corruption. He works in man's total depravity. Thus the truth is always under attack, as part of the spiritual warfare between God and Satan, and it is only on rare occasions that the church throughout history has had a few decades of peace without controversy or persecution.

We can go even further and affirm that only infrequently has the church faithfully maintained the teaching of the sovereignty of God in salvation and expounded the doctrines of particular grace. When this was zealously taught the church experienced periods of strengthening: morally, spiritually and/or numerically. Here one can compare the repeated occasions of apostasy in the NT churches or the continual falling away of Israel, despite prophetic guidance.

Arminianism is not the first, nor the chief enemy of the truth; but it is one of the most universal errors that has proliferated during the last 300 years and particularly during the last century.

The focus of most errors concerns the sovereignty of God. The devil seeks, above all, to thwart God's sovereignty and elevate man. In his depravity, man loves to bring God down and elevate himself.

This is the basis of Arminianism; it denies God's sovereignty in salvation and history and also denies man's utter powerlessness regarding redemption.

Introduction

The Bible is a book about salvation. It gives us clear teaching about the method of this salvation because it is vital that all Christians understand what God has done for them so that he might have all the glory. The scriptural view is that salvation is all of God. Man is in a hopeless condition by nature; without God reaching down to save him, he would be utterly lost

There has always been a vociferous debate centred upon the equal truths of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation. The Bible states both. God provides salvation sovereignly; he predestines, calls and gives grace. Man is responsible for his sins, he is to act righteously and is commanded to repent; yet, he is unable in his natural strength to do either. Some have felt that responsibility must imply ability,¹⁷ yet the Bible clearly shows that natural man is totally unable to act right or even respond to the Gospel without grace. Where is free will in all of this?¹⁸

Thus the controversy about God's sovereignty in salvation is often centred upon whether man was able to obtain salvation by good works (Pelagianism) or could initiate a prior salvation obtained for all by Christ and co-operate with God (Arminianism, Semi-Pelagianism).

Early church

The Apostolic Age [30-95]

During the apostolic age, the truths of the Doctrines of Grace were properly expounded and taught in all churches; it was apostolic teaching. However, heresies arose even then as the NT

¹⁷ E.g. Pelagius or Charles Finney.

¹⁸ I discuss the question of free will in detail in an appendix.

demonstrates.¹⁹ The truth is always under attack in every age. It just happens that Arminianism is, historically, one major source of that attack; but there are many forms of opposition.

The Post Apostolic Age [95-140]

After the death of the apostles, the church gradually lost or abandoned certain Biblical doctrines and practices, causing controversies, debates and the necessity to regain what was lost and affirm the truth in church council decisions. Not only were the Doctrines of Grace compromised, the church lost its way on the doctrines of the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, conversion, the sacraments, as well as confusion about the structure and leadership of the church.

The age of the church fathers [140-476]

For several hundred years, and particularly the first five centuries, the early church fathers had various debates on these matters, seeking to overcome philosophical influences from the Greek and Roman world, individual heretics and the attacks of Gnosticism and other sects.

Arguments continued for centuries, with some clarity being formulated in certain church councils, such as the Council of Nicea [325] to combat Arianism,²⁰ which led to the Nicene Creed. However, heresies continued, despite ecumenical church councils, while some issues (such as Biblical ecclesiology) were never properly settled.²¹

The greatest theologian (Father) of this era is Augustine of Hippo. He is recognised as such even by the Roman Catholic Church (who call him the '*Doctor of Grace*'), though they deny his theology in many areas and adopted meritorious works early on. Augustine wrote voluminously on many subjects but an analysis of his theology demonstrates that he taught all the five points of Calvinism (the Doctrines of Grace). Though it is often denied, Augustine even taught the doctrine of reprobation, just as Calvin did.²² In his 'Institutes', Calvin refers to Augustine more than any other Church Father.

Pelagianism

The first major conflict, regarding the Doctrines of Grace, was between Augustine of Hippo [354-430] and a British Celtic lawyer monk called Pelagius.²³ Augustine argued that the will of man is bound, as regards salvation. The Fall has rendered man depraved and unable to rise above sin. God's grace is supreme in salvation and man cannot add his own efforts to it.

Pelagius was originally orthodox, but became convinced that man's responsibility required ability of free will to choose salvation. In other words, man's will is neutral, not bound. In his system sin was watered down and the effects of the Fall eradicated. Men can avoid sin even without Christ; the will, not grace was supreme. [In the 19th century, CG Finney developed a very similar view.]

Augustine's view became the official church position but as the years went by the churches drifted into Pelagianism in practice; there were also various shades of Semi-Pelagianism and even Semi-Augustinianism.

Semi-Pelagianism

Semi-Pelagianism championed human free will in salvation and denied predestination. Key

¹⁹ In particular we see the heresies of Judaising and Gnosticism.

²⁰ Arianism (after Arius) denied that Jesus was eternally begotten as the Son; God the Father is eternal and the Son was the first created being. Nicea affirmed that Christ is of the same substance as the Father. Nicea was upheld in 381 by the Council of Constantinople.

²¹ Such as the rule of multiple churches by monarchical bishops, the establishment of a clerical hierarchy and the squashing of the laity, the inclusion of the church in the state, etc.

²² Herman Hanko; '*[Augustine] saw that reprobation was a necessary part of the truth of election*'. Hanko & Engelsma; *The Five Points of Calvinism*, British Reformed Fellowship (2008).

²³ Pelagius was active in Rome about 383-409. Details of his birth and death are unknown.

influences in this amorphous movement were the ascetic monastic, John of Cassian (d. 433) and Faustus, bishop of Riez (d. 490). This set the foundation for many future compromises on free grace.

It taught that man, though fallen, was not spiritually dead and has some power to do good but needs grace as well which is found through the Bible. Man has free will and can do good. Man's will co-operates with the Spirit in regeneration (synergism) and initiates it by free will. Man's decision is supreme and election is denied. The initiative in conversion is the will of the sinner, the Spirit then assists him.

This synergistic system (the basis of Arminianism) forms the essence of all future synergistic errors, as we shall see. All such systems deny election, total depravity, limited atonement, irresistible grace and justification by faith alone.

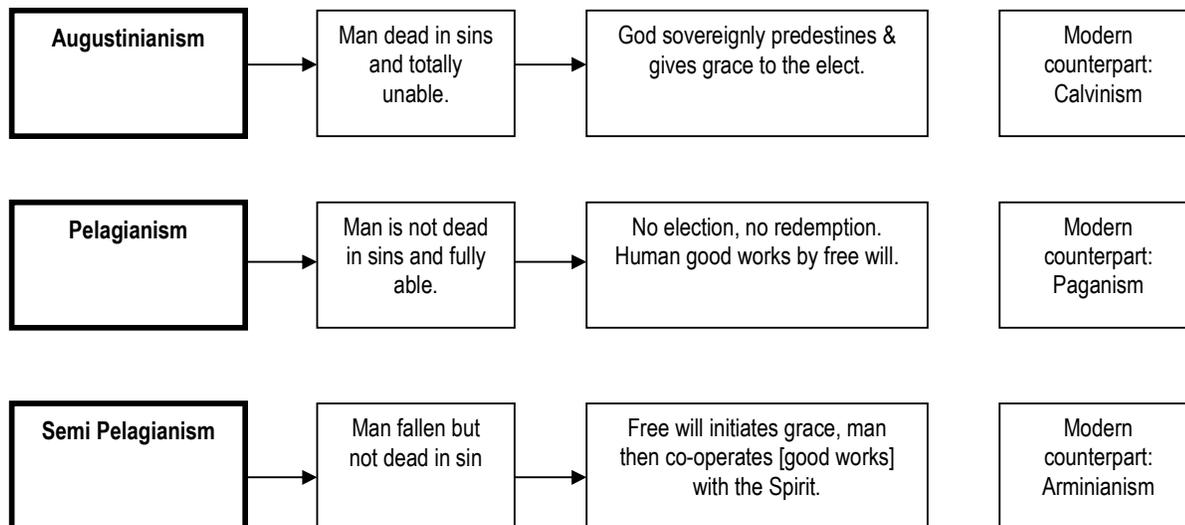
Pelagianism:	considers that man is well.
Semi-Pelagianism:	considers that man is just sick.

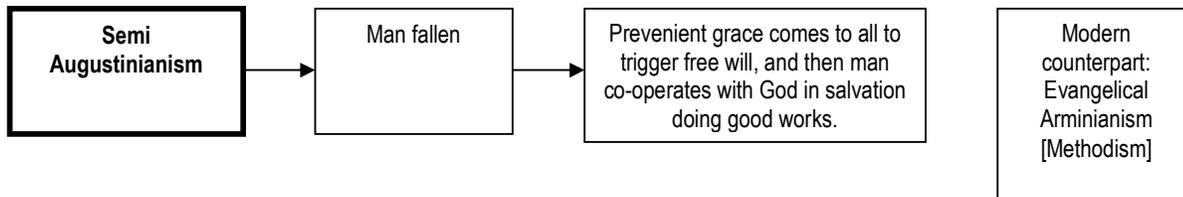
Semi-Augustinianism

This was opposed by Augustine and Prosper of Aquitaine (c.390-c.463). The 2nd Council of Orange (529), condemned Semi-Pelagianism along with Pelagianism but proposed a Semi-Augustinianism. This system gradually became the basis of Roman Catholicism and the later form in Arminianism.

Semi-Augustinianism was a reaction, during the Pelagian controversy, in 5th century Gaul (France) which condemned both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism. It was mainly proposed by Caesarius, the bishop of Arles (470-543). It taught a moderated Augustinianism at the Second Council of Orange (529), which became the foundation of Roman Catholic views on the atonement for the Middle Ages. [The separation of Semi-Pelagianism and Semi-Augustinianism is a historical fact as evidenced in Roman Catholic monastic squabbles, but the doctrinal tenets are somewhat confused and interlocking. Both are Semi-Pelagian but the latter is more moderate.]

Main teaching: Grace comes to all, enabling man to choose God and perform good works necessary for salvation. It also teaches: the denial of reprobation and affirmation of baptismal regeneration. Essentially it teaches that an unbiblical prevenient grace enables men to exercise free will to then co-operate with God in salvation by good works, rather than the Semi-Pelagian view that free will initiates grace. To clarify:





The Dark Ages [477–1066]

During the Dark Ages²⁴ much truth was lost and the Bible became unavailable for common people; thus society was riddled with superstition and legalism while the dominant Roman Church taught a meritorious salvation.²⁵ Occasionally a courageous man spoke up for the truth, such as the monk Gottschalk [805-869] who taught double predestination, election and sovereign grace, but was persecuted for it, dying in prison.

This period manifested: a belief in the power of witches, demons and local spirits (animism); asceticism; monasticism; legalism and salvation by works; the domination of the Roman Church; multiple superstitions; mysticism; belief in relics of dead saints, angelic guidance, the power of visions and dreams, and many other aberrations.

The heresies of the Roman Church also abounded: that it was the only true church and source of salvation; that it was infallible; only the church has the power to interpret Scripture; the pope has the authority of Christ; church tradition equals the Bible; works are necessary for salvation; veneration of angels and dead saints (375); prayers to saints (600); the Mass, (394); worship of Mary (431); purgatory (593); fasting on Friday (998) etc.

The Middle Ages [1066-1517]

The errors of the Roman Church continued: transubstantiation (1215); indulgences (see later, 1190); the rosary (1090); celibacy of priests (1079); regular confession to a priest (1215) and many more.

Theology became the province of the Scholastics, or ‘Schoolmen’, where reason and faith were discussed and a balance sought. They are famous for infinite hair-splitting, legalism and trying to join philosophy with Biblical faith, often in contradictory propositions. The multitude of academic positions only confused ordinary people (and still does). The teaching of the subsequent Reformers was a breath of fresh air in comparison.

Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274]

The high point of the Middle Ages in theology was the massive work of Thomas Aquinas²⁶ who tried to unify a theological system based upon Biblical faith combined with Aristotelianism. The result was a highly legalistic system.

²⁴ The period in western Europe between the fall of the Roman Empire and the high Middle Ages (usually designated as roughly 500–1100) during which Germanic tribes swept through Europe and North Africa, often attacking and destroying towns and settlements. It was judged to have been a time of relative unenlightenment, though scholarship was kept alive in the monasteries and learning was encouraged at the courts of Charlemagne and Alfred the Great. For Christians, it mainly refers to the lack of a readable Bible by ordinary folk and a dearth of sound teaching.

²⁵ Salvation based upon human works.

²⁶ An Italian philosopher, theologian, and Dominican friar. Regarded as the greatest figure of scholasticism, who devised the official Roman Catholic tenets sanctioned by Pope Leo XIII. His ‘Summa Theologica’ was his greatest scholastic work, a refined organisation of knowledge. Essentially Aquinas explained Biblical theology in terms of Aristotelianism; thus his metaphysics, study of the human mind, and moral philosophy were a development of Aristotle’s. For Aquinas, the Aristotelian order in the universe is but a reflection of the divine mind that orders it rationally.

Aquinas is somewhat confused about salvation. In many respects he is theologically close to Augustine on paper, yet avers that grace enables man to do good works and these works enable him to gain eternal life. He also affirms unconditional election and reprobation, yet still claims that man has free will in salvation! As so often with the scholastics, there is constant fudging, with ‘therefores’ that twist previous affirmations to their opposites.

Some theologians summarise Aquinas’ theology of salvation as follows:

- Infusion of grace into the human soul which gives men faith and the ability to do good works. This grace is sovereign but insufficient for salvation.²⁷
- Man must now perform good works to have a faith formed by charity.
- ‘*Condign merit*’: God then judges and awards eternal life on the basis of good works. This merit is, thus, deserved.

The Ockhamists (William of Ockham, Duns Scotus and Gabriel Biel) denied Aquinas’ system for destroying man’s free will (because grace was first necessary for good works). Good moral and rational works were first necessary before an infusion of grace. Grace was given on the basis of ‘*Congruent merit*’ as a reward for man doing his best. This merit is not fully deserved; it includes a measure of grace from God. In other words, God rewards with grace when a man does the best he can.

Supporters of Aquinas (the *Thomists*) accused the Ockhamists of Pelagianism. They responded by saying that God was not bound to respond to man’s good works but awarded grace as a gracious act. The Roman Church decreed that the Ockhamists were Semi-Pelagian.

At the level of the common man, religion was founded in membership of the Roman Catholic Church that was based upon meritorious works and legalism, Roman sacraments, fear of purgatory and the requirement of prayers of dead saints, relics and other nonsense. More pious souls were drawn to severe asceticism²⁸ and mysticism, often living in seclusion in monasteries.²⁹ Most ordinary folk were still very superstitious, had no access to a Bible and were very gullible.

Anselm of Canterbury [1033-1109]

Anselm was the first of Medieval theologians to affirm that the atonement was necessary to satisfy the majesty of God rather than the view that had been maintained since Origen³⁰ that Christ paid a ransom to the devil. This laid the basis of substitutionary atonement, later fully articulated by Calvinist theologians. His treatment of the atonement was written in the book, ‘*Cur Deus Homo*’ [‘Why [did] God [become] man’]. His argument also explained the necessity of God becoming man so that the vicarious sacrifice has infinite value (as God) to deal with human sin (as man).

Abelard [1079-1142] and Moral Influence Theory

Peter Abelard was a famous French scholastic theologian and philosopher whose love story with Hèloise has been portrayed in books and plays. A brilliant debater and lecturer, he gained a large following. He sought to reconcile faith and reason and is thus the father of theological rationalism.

However, contrary to Anselm, Abelard taught that the atonement was a moral example or moral

²⁷ This sort of idea has been taught by many, in various forms, such as John Wesley or modern Common Grace.

²⁸ The practice of severe self-discipline and abstention from all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons: an ascetic life of prayer, fasting, and manual labour.

²⁹ Monasticism was based upon withdrawing from the world and living in seclusion with other committed people. Most were ascetics who were reacting against the increasing laxity and episcopal domination. The practice began in the late 3rd century with the eastern hermits or ‘anchorites’ (both mean a religious recluse). Many orders of male and female monks / nuns developed.

³⁰ Origen [c.185–c.254] Church Father (scholar and theologian), probably born in Alexandria. His most famous work was the *Hexapla*, an edition of the Old Testament with six or more parallel versions. His Neoplatonist theology was ultimately rejected by Church orthodoxy.

influence rather than penal substitution. Essentially Abelard denies the existence of the atonement. He avers that there is nothing in God that requires satisfaction for sin (which is what atonement is). Therefore, the death of Christ did not satisfy divine justice and was not a propitiation for sin. It was merely a manifestation of God's love as Christ suffered for his creatures. God thus pardons sinners without any satisfaction. All sinners need to do is be penitent. This denies the many Scriptures, which show that Christ's death was a propitiatory sacrifice, 'a ransom for many'.

This view laid the foundation for many subsequent theological systems, which denied the atonement as a substitutionary penal sacrifice, such as Socinianism and Grotianism.

Molinism

The major loci of Catholic thought on salvation are Thomism and Molinism.

Molinism is a theology developed by the Jesuit Luis Molina in the 16th century. This has been popularised by some supposed evangelicals in recent years and is formally accepted by theologian William Lane Craig and American analytic philosopher Alvin Plantinga.

The main tenet of Molinism is the striving to reconcile the providence of God with human free will. It does this by considering the knowledge of God as three steps:

- The first is God's knowledge of necessary truths (natural knowledge that is non-contingent³¹, i.e. not dependent upon anything).
- Middle knowledge: a range of possible things that would happen in certain circumstances.
- God's free knowledge: contingent truths that are dependent upon God's will.

The purpose of middle knowledge was to allow man free will while allowing God a measure of sovereign providence and predestination. Thus, using middle knowledge, God organises a world where a man will do of free will what he wants him to do. This system seeks to unite both Arminian free will and Calvinistic election.

However, Molinism affirms that God gives salvation but man has the choice to freely accept it or not. This is a denial of irresistible grace and unconditional election.

Proto-Reformation leaders

A number of great and godly men are considered as pioneers of the later Reformation because they preached and taught many of the later truths of Protestantism, such as justification by faith or that salvation is all of grace alone. Often such were burned as martyrs for doing so. These would include, John Wycliffe [c.1331-1384], Jan Hus [c.1372-1415], Jerome of Prague [1379-1416] and Girolamo Savonarola [1452-1498].

The Reformation [1517 +]

At the time of the Reformation, the matter of salvation by grace came to a head in Germany, beginning with a rejection of papal indulgences in 1517.³²

Martin Luther, God's vessel for initiating the Reformation, wrote a book explaining that the will is totally bound regarding choice to serve God; but free in daily choices on ordinary issues.³³ Our sinful state has ruined us from initiating our salvation, God must reach down and save us or we

³¹ 'Contingent' means, occurring or existing only if certain other circumstances are the case; 'dependent on'.

³² These were certificates, signed by the pope, which enabled people to buy salvation for a price, even for dead relatives. It was supposedly based upon surplus merits gained by Christ, Mary and dead saints. The original cause was the need of the pope to raise money to pay for works of art and architecture in Rome. Luther famously burned these in a big bonfire in Wittenberg and castigated the pope's Dominican representative Johann Tetzel, submitting his theological argument in '95 Theses' nailed to the church door.

³³ In opposition to a book by the scholar Desiderius Erasmus.

perish.

Luther went on to affirm the importance of justification by faith and the other doctrines of grace, accidentally starting a movement that spread all over Europe. Multiple Reformers appeared such as Melancthon, Bucer, Farel, Zwingli and, later, Calvin. Princes adopted this faith and supported the Reformers, ensuring their safety against Catholic opposition.

The Protestant churches adopted Luther's position of man's inability and the need of God's sovereign grace, which all the Reformers and Reformed creeds and confessions accepted at that time. The Reformation was about much more, especially justification by faith alone and Bible translations, but the key issue is that it exalted God's sovereign position in salvation in line with his word.

Frenchman John Calvin arose slightly later than Luther and became the main systematiser of the theological claims of Protestantism. Eventually based in Geneva, his systematic theology, '*Institutes of the Christian Religion*' became a best-seller and dominated the thinking of Europe and, later, America. Calvin, above all else, highlighted the foundational import of the sovereignty of God in salvation in his final edition in 1559 and in his preaching generally.

Though based upon Augustinianism, Calvin's theology was attacked from the beginning by people that hated sovereign predestination, and especially reprobation (as is the case today).

Calvin's doctrine of predestination met with strong opposition, which drew from him some able defences. The first assault came from an eminent Roman Catholic divine, Albertus Pighius, 1542, who taught the freedom of will almost to the extent of Pelagianism, and conditioned predestination by foreknowledge. Calvin wrote a reply to the first part (1543), and dedicated it to Melancthon, who in the second article of the Augsburg Confession had expressed the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity. A more troublesome opponent was Jerome Bolsec, formerly a Carmelite monk from Paris, then a fugitive Protestant and physician at Geneva and Lausanne. He denounced Calvin's doctrine of predestination as godless and blasphemous, and tried to break down his influence, but was publicly refuted and admonished, and at last expelled from Geneva (1551) and from Berne (1555). He returned to France and to the Roman Church (1563).³⁴

Time after time papers, tracts, articles and confessions were drawn up to deal with these attacks to defend sovereign grace and these should be consulted (as well as the *Institutes*) to understand Calvin's teaching. One of the most important of these was the '*Consensus Genevensis*' (1552); which was written to defend particular grace and sovereign election against the railings of Jerome Bolsec in Geneva against election and reprobation. Calvin drafted the document, which was formally approved by church in Geneva; the Reformer William Farel also approved.

To suggest that Calvin did not teach sovereign election and reprobation is merely ignorance of historical fact. Other important articles were Calvin's '*Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God*' (1552) and '*A Defence Of The Secret Providence of God*' (1558) dealing with the errors of people like Pighius, Castellio and Bolsec.³⁵ Late in life in 1564 Calvin also preached a number of sermons on Jacob and Esau, which have been issued in a book as '*Sermons on Election and reprobation*'.³⁶ These show that Calvin's mature thinking still affirms sovereign election and reprobation.

To this day the affirmation of reprobation is a test of whether a person is truly a Calvinist and most supposed 'Calvinists' deny the doctrine. Yet it is in the first Head of the Canons of Dort.

The essence of Protestantism is summed up in the five solas:

³⁴ Philip Schaff, 'Creeds of Christendom', Vol 1. §60. The Consensus of Geneva. A.D. 1552.

³⁵ These can be seen in 'Calvin's Calvinism' published by RFPA and others.

³⁶ Old Paths Publications (1966).

- *Sola Gratia* Grace alone
- *Sola Fide* Faith alone
- *Solos Christos* Christ alone
- *Sola scriptura* Scripture alone
- *Soli Deo gloria* Glory to God alone

Salvation is, therefore, by grace, through faith, is in Christ alone, is based upon the word of God and is to the glory of God alone. In other words, the Reformation promoted the total sovereignty of God.

Calvinistic scholasticism after the Reformation

After Calvin's death his successor, Theodore Beza, began the scholastic formulation of Calvinism, which is entirely natural in the development of a young theology. However, there have been no shortage of foolish folk that sought to affirm that Beza began a hardening of Calvinism that centred on absolute predestination, claiming that Calvin did not teach this as firmly, or limited atonement. While his Institutes centres upon God's sovereignty and not predestination, per se, Calvin's polemic tracts teach just as firm an assertion about predestination as Beza.³⁷ Beza, the student, and Calvin, the master, were of one mind.

Calvinism, or Reformed Theology, then became formally codified in a series of church confessions, creeds and catechisms, which all teach predestination and limited atonement; as we shall prove, item by item.

Arminius and the Remonstrants

About a hundred years after Luther's birth,³⁸ a Dutch Protestant minister called Jacobus Hermann ('Hermandszoon'; known to us from the Latin as Jacob or James Arminius)³⁹ revived the concerns of Pelagius and the Semi-Pelagians and was also influenced by Roman Catholicism.⁴⁰ He focused mainly upon the question of the sovereign grace of God in salvation, and taught that God decrees to save all who repent, believe and persevere, i.e. God does not choose anyone specifically of his good pleasure in eternity, but foresees those who will choose him in the future. This is the affirmation of man's free will over divine sovereignty and election.

In 1610 (one year after Arminius' death) his followers took these issues further and set forth their views in a document called '*Remonstrance*' (i. e. 'protest', this led to them being called 'Remonstrants'). This contained five main points:

- God elects people on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.
- Christ died for all men, loves all men, but only believers are saved.
- Man is so depraved that grace is necessary for faith or good deeds.
- But this grace may be resisted.
- Whether all who believe persevere to the end is uncertain.

³⁷ See these collected in 'Calvin's Calvinism', RFPA.

³⁸ Arminius was born in 1560 and became a Reformed minister in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1588; Luther was born in 1483.

³⁹ In those days authors wrote in Latin (the Lingua Franca) and so gave themselves Latin versions of their name. This includes Calvin who was Jean Cauvin (or Chauvin), a Frenchman.

⁴⁰ '*Arminianism came from Rome, and leads thither again*', Augustus Toplady. '*How do they (the Arminians) and their fellows, the Jesuits ...*'. John Owen, 'Display of Arminianism', Works Vol 10, p16. '*The Jesuits found their whole system of grace and free-will; agreeing with the Semipelagians, against the Jansenists and St. Augustine.*' Bower's 'History of the Popes', Vol 1, p350. Arminius' doctrine of scientia media is Molinist (i.e. from Jesuit Luis Molina) according to Prof. Richard A. Muller, 'God, Creation, and Providence in the thought of Jacob Arminius', Baker, Grand Rapids. 1991. Arminius was also accused of recommending to his students many Romanist works and emphasising a Jesuit theology, particularly Molina and Suarez. In his printed works, Arminius refers to these Jesuit influences, but does not reference them! See my paper, 'The Roots of Arminianism'.

Further drift

Later these doctrines were developed further to emphasise man's role in salvation -

- The will is one of the causes of regeneration.
- Faith is a good work of man.
- Christ's righteousness is not imputed to a believer.
- Men can become perfect.
- Adam's guilt is not imputed to men. Only the pollution, not the guilt, of Adam's sin is imputed to his descendants. Thus man's depravity is not total; he has the ability to incline his will towards God.
- There is no assurance of salvation in this life; believers may fall away.

Present day Remonstrants are Pelagians who also have a low view of inspiration and the Trinity. Some of the Remonstrants were led further astray and denied the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (e.g: Simon Episcopus). Others developed a governmental theory of the atonement (e.g: Hugo Grotius) which denies that Jesus' death paid the penalty of sin. (How could it if he died for everyone, or everyone would be saved?) Somehow, Jesus' death permits the Father to forgive all who repent and believe. Jesus death is no longer essential because God is so loving, it was simply the means he used.

Other errors of Arminianism include:

- God's knowledge of the future acts of free agents is mediate (i.e. God is not sovereign; this is Molinism).
- God's decrees are conditional (i.e. God is not sovereign).
- God created Adam innocent not holy. His will was in a state of balance between good and evil.
- Sin merely consists in acts of the will.
- The atonement, which was not necessary, is but one way for God to show his love to all men, without prejudicing his righteousness.
- The atonement does not effect salvation but merely makes it possible. Salvation becomes effectual when it is accepted by the penitent sinner whose repentance and faith precede his regeneration (i.e. God is not sovereign).
- The will causes regeneration (i.e. God is not sovereign).
- Faith is a human work and a reason for acceptance with God (i.e. God is not sovereign).
- There is no difference between common grace and saving grace. The external call of the Gospel is accompanied by a universal sufficient grace, which enables man to believe, though it may be resisted.

The Synod of Dort

To respond to the Remonstrants' five articles, Reformed theologians convened a synod at Dort (or more fully, Dordrecht in the south of The Netherlands) in 1618-19. As well as 62 Dutch representatives, there were 24 international delegates (including John Davenant from Britain). They condemned the Remonstrant articles and removed the Remonstrant ministers, who were seen to have adopted a Semi-Pelagian view of grace and had destroyed assurance and God's sovereignty in salvation.

The conclusions of the Synod were set out in the Canons of Dort in four chapters on: sovereign predestination, definite atonement, radical depravity, effectual grace and the perseverance of God with the saints. (The third and fourth of the five Calvinistic points were combined in one chapter.) There were also a number of articles. From this document grew the famous five points of Calvinism which were popularly known under the mnemonic Tulip i.e.:

Total Depravity; **U**nconditional Election; **L**imited Atonement; **I**rrresistible Grace; **P**erseverance of the Saints.

It is safe to say that this was an agreed European creed since the international delegates all contributed to it. This is a key document in understanding what Calvinism is and it defined the Doctrines of Grace in the five points. However, most modern Calvinists have never read it and many know nothing of it.

The Reformed view of the doctrines of grace was taken up by the Church of England (notably: Cranmer, Tyndale, Ridley and Latimer) and later was particularly championed by the Puritans, Presbyterians and many Baptists. In America it flowered with Jonathan Edwards and later Charles and Archibald Hodge, BB Warfield, RL Dabney, WGT Shedd etc. In Holland it spawned theologians like Herman Bavinck, Wilhelm à Brakel, Louis Berkhof and Abraham Kuyper (who became Prime Minister). Many church / doctrinal reform movements were Calvinistic, such as: the Puritans, the Pilgrim Fathers, the Huguenots, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, the Sovereign Grace Union, the Banner of Truth Trust and so on.

Respected monarchs held this view; such as: Alfred the Great, Gustavus Adolphus, Edward VI, William and Mary, (William III of Orange). Many famous British preachers espoused Calvinism; for instance: William Perkins, William Ames, John Knox, Thomas Goodwin, Charles Spurgeon, Samuel Rutherford, Thomas Watson, John Newton, John Owen, Matthew Henry, John Gill, John Bunyan, Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland, and JC Ryle.

It inspired hymn-writers; such as: Theodore Beza, Horatius Bonar, Augustus Toplady, Joseph Hart, Isaac Watts, William Williams, John Newton and Philip Doddridge. It characterised the teaching of modern church leaders, such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, James Montgomery Boice, DA Carson, AW Pink and many more. It also prompted many missionaries beginning with William Carey and later Adoniram Judson. In fact the first missionaries were sent by John Calvin to South America.

Amyraldism

About 50 years after Calvin's death another attack on Calvinism appeared in the liberalism of the Saumur School, which I will explain in a later appendix. For our purposes here, we can say that the incipient universalism that was foundational in Amyraldism became attractive to preachers wishing to make God appear to love all men. Amyraldism was a means of affirming the universalism typical of Arminian evangelism but keeping the particularism of election.

In the UK after Dort certain British church leaders adopted forms of Amyraldism, such as the followers of John Cameron,⁴¹ John Davenant⁴² (who had been present at Dort), Bishop Ussher,⁴³ Richard Baxter,⁴⁴ Heinrich Heppé,⁴⁵ Samuel Hopkins,⁴⁶ AH Strong,⁴⁷ LS Chafer⁴⁸ and others. However, it has always been a tendency of some to avoid consistent Calvinism and weaken the doctrines of election and limited atonement (as in Amyraldism), especially affirming a universal love of God to all. Such folk were often Amyraldian without even knowing it; such is still the case today.

⁴¹ Amyraut's professor at Saumur; a Scottish theologian.

⁴² Anglican Puritan.

⁴³ Anglican.

⁴⁴ Nonconformist Anglican Puritan.

⁴⁵ Reformed theologian.

⁴⁶ American Congregationalist pastor.

⁴⁷ US Baptist theologian.

⁴⁸ US Dispensational theologian.

4-Point Calvinists

This is a type of Amyraldism since it claims that limited atonement is unbiblical and was never taught by Calvin or the Synod of Dort (untrue). Thus they can preach that God loves everyone (which denies unconditional election and the immutability of God).

While some British Puritans followed Amyraut, others accepted a distinction, made by Peter Lombard and subsequently Aquinas, that the atonement was '*sufficient for all but efficient only for the elect*'. The most notable advocate of this was the eminent Richard Baxter who was criticised by John Owen. Others also followed this line later on, such as Andrew Fuller and the Marrowmen.

The Stuarts

James I initially was a staunch supporter of the Synod of Dort and tried to keep Arminians out of Britain. When the Thirty Years War began in 1618 many Puritans and Parliament wanted James to go to war to support his son-in-law Frederick V, the Elector of Palatine. However, James preferred diplomacy and British Arminians supported this decision resulting in many being promoted by the king.

When Charles I ascended the throne in 1625, he continued supporting Arminianism, probably because they were considered to be closer to the Catholics than Calvinists; in fact, Charles tended to only promote Arminians. The following impact of Laudianism⁴⁹ was also identified with Arminianism. This particularly angered the Scottish Presbyterians and resulted in the Bishops' Wars⁵⁰ (1639-1640), which also triggered the English Civil War.

The Marrow Controversy

This was a debate in the Scottish church that included the principles of Amyraldism. There is a debate today as to how far the Marrowmen were Amyraldian, but the facts speak for themselves.

The problem began with the publication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in 1718.⁵¹ This is believed to be the work of lay theologian Edward Fisher in 1645; it included numerous quotes by Reformed theologians. Thomas Boston read the book and had it reprinted with a preface by James Hog.

Immediately people began critiquing the work, accusing it of antinomianism because it taught that the believer is not under the law as a rule of life. In 1720 a committee of the General Assembly of the church reported that the book was indeed antinomian. Boston and 11 others ('Marrowmen') argued that the book was scriptural and complied with doctrinal standards. Their petition was rejected in the Assembly of 1722 and the work was condemned, though further reprints appeared with an introduction by Boston. Ministers who supported the book ('Marrowmen') suffered discrimination in church posts; one of them, Ebenezer Erskine, later led a secession from the Church of Scotland.

Although the controversy formally centred on antinomianism, the real issue was the free offer of the Gospel based on a universal love of God, with an implied unlimited atonement. Although it was essentially Calvinistic, it emphasised that the Gospel offer was free and empowering; i.e. an emphasis on Amyraldian universalism (see later).

49 I.e. the theology and actions of William Laud (1573–1645), made Archbishop of Canterbury 1633–45. His attempts to restore Catholic practices and sow Arminianism via Jesuit conspiracies in England and Scotland aroused great hostility and were a contributory cause of the English Civil War. He was executed for treason.

50 Political and military conflicts centred on the nature of the governance of the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and the powers of the Crown. Charles favoured an episcopal system (bishops) while the Presbyterian system had no bishops.

51 'Marrow' was often used in those days to refer to getting to the core of an issue, such as 'The Marrow of Theology' by William Ames (a Calvinist work).

While denying that they taught universal atonement, the Marrowmen did teach that it was universal in one sense. They distinguished between a giving of Christ in possession (to the elect) and a gift of Christ as ‘warranted’ men to receive him (to all). Thus they said that while the statement ‘*Christ died for all*’ is heretical, it is sound to say that ‘*Christ is dead for all*’ (i.e. available for sinners if they will receive him). The Marrow free-offer affirms that God loves all, desires to save all, and grants that all who believed (man’s act) will gain eternal life. This is Amyraldism. Some have claimed that the Marrow position is a direct result of the teaching of Amyraldian John Davenant on the atonement and offer.

Thus the real problem with the Marrowmen is not antinomianism but the preaching of the Gospel. Today it is supported by 4-Point Calvinists and denied by Consistent Calvinists.

Key statements from the Marrow:

God their Father, as He is in His Son Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but His free love to mankind lost, has made a deed of gift and grant unto them all, that whosoever of them shall believe in His Son shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Go and tell every man without exception that here are good news for him; Christ is dead for him, and if he will take Him and accept his righteousness he shall have him.

In 1742 the Marrowmen also stated, ‘*There is a revelation of the Divine will in the Word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all mankind without exception, and a warrant to all freely to receive Him*’.⁵² These statements are clearly universalistic. The free offer was not just a proclamation but a ‘warrant’ to believe in Christ, positing a separate kind of grace. Every man has the right or ability (not just the obligation) to believe in Christ. The Marrowmen also taught a contradictory will in God as Amyraldians (a secret will, or desire to save all, versus a revealed will, i.e. election).

AA Hodge criticises the Marrowmen for: 1) claiming a universal love of God to all; thus God has a separate general love to all as well as a particular electing love. 2) Claiming that the atonement had a general reference to all sinners. 3) Teaching that Christ is dead for all, that is available for sinners if they will accept him; i.e. there is a universal redemption to be claimed by all on condition of faith. This is Amyraldism.

The Jansenists

Jansenism was a Roman Catholic reform movement (mostly in France) which championed Augustinian teaching on salvation. It emphasised original sin, total depravity, the necessity of grace and predestination.

The movement originated with the Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen (d. 1638). This continued as a distinct movement within Catholicism throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, even though the Jesuits opposed it. In 1653 Pope Innocent X condemned the five cardinal doctrines of Jansenism⁵³ and in 1713 Pope Clement XI terminated toleration of the movement. Blaise Pascal [1623-1662] was a notable Jansenist.

Despite persecution, Jansenism remained strong in Holland and Tuscany.

The Socinian connections

Socinianism used to be well understood but is now completely ignored by most people, but its seeds are in a number of other movements, such as: Latitudinarianism, Unitarianism Anglican Arianism, the Cambridge Platonists and modern Open Theism.

⁵² M’Crie; ‘The Confessions of the Church of Scotland’, Macrievan & Wallace (1907), p125.

⁵³ 1) It is impossible to fulfil God’s commands without grace. 2) Grace is irresistible. 3) Only freedom from compulsion is needed for merit, not freedom from necessity. 4) It is Semi-Pelagian to teach that grace can be resisted. 5) It is Semi-Pelagian to teach that Christ died for all men.

While a detailed analysis of it can be complex, it can be thought of as a mixture of Arminianism and Arianism leading to a liberal theology.

It developed initially from the teaching of Lelio Sozzini [1525-62] and his nephew Fausto [1539-1604], which began as a reaction against Romanism with liberalism and humanism. A church movement was organised by Fausto in Poland after 1578. [See the 'Racovian Catechism' revision of 1605.] This movement was virtually destroyed by the Counter Reformation, but the adherents spread throughout Europe.

Socinianism teaches (in brief):

- A rationalist interpretation of the Bible.
- Denial of the Trinity.
- A denial of the divinity of Christ (like Arianism or Adoptionism) but an affirmation of Christ as the revelation of God.
- Denial of the atonement as penal substitution, teaching the Example Theory - Christ's death was merely an example of faith and obedience (see Abelard). There is no punishment for sin; men repent from their own power. Socinian atonement was universal. It teaches that there is no divine retributive justice at all, therefore sin does not need to be punished. God can pardon people without satisfaction. The cross did not atone for sin, nor did it move God to pardon sin. Christ saves men by showing an example of faith and obedience in his life and death. There is no real connection between the death of Christ and the salvation of sinners. However, Socinianism teaches that Christ expiated sins in the sense that, as a reward for his obedience to death, he was given power to give eternal life to believers. In other words, this is just a rehash of Pelagianism; man saves himself and there is no depravity.
- Denial of the person of the Holy Spirit, predestination, original sin, total depravity and hell.
- Denial of God's sovereignty, making God subject to the free decisions of men, insisting that he neither foreordains nor foreknows anything. In a way, he was the first liberal theologian. [NB Open Theism similarities.]
- The separation of church and state.
- The death of the soul with the body except for a few who persevere in obeying God.

In the 17th-18th centuries Socinianism had a significant influence in Britain and this can be traced in the rise of Latitudinarianism,⁵⁴ the Anglican Arians and the Cambridge Platonists;⁵⁵ all of which opposed English Calvinism. It is noteworthy that many who succumbed to Andrew Fuller's radical Amyraldism later succumbed to Socinianism.

This is a severe anti-Calvinistic heresy that combines Arminianism, Pelagianism, Arianism and liberalism. Yet it has had significant influence in various church movements up to today with Open Theism (which itself began as a radical Wesleyan Arminianism).

Governmental theory of the atonement

Influenced by Abelard [1079-1142] and propounded by Hugo Grotius [1583-1645; sometimes 'Grotianism'] to make a bridge between Reformed doctrine and Socinian teachings. It states that

⁵⁴ Latitudinarian means allowing latitude in religion; showing no preference among varying creeds and forms of worship. It is applied to 17th century Anglican theologians who used human reason as a prime source of authority. These were opposed to the Puritans and Calvinism and influenced the later Broad Churchmen (such as the contributors to *'Essays and Reviews'* 1860, the poet ST Coleridge and novelist C Kingsley and others).

⁵⁵ A group of 17th century Anglican Cambridge theologians who reacted against Puritan Calvinism and sought to unite religion and philosophy, especially that of Plato and Neoplatonism. It affirmed the rationalism of 'natural light' and 'natural conscience' (i.e. a denial total depravity coupled with Neoplatonic mysticism). NB *'the spirit in man is the candle of the Lord'* (Prov 20:27) applied to sinners not saints. The Bible is a mere supplement to natural reason and natural truth. The emphasis upon the 'Inner Light' may well have influenced the Quakers. It also led to 18th century Deism.

Christ did not die as a substitute for man's sin, did not suffer God's wrath for sin, but suffered as a perfect example of a man who honoured the law. This death is then accepted by God to satisfy the law that sin demands death; Christ's death being accepted instead of man's death. As a result of the cross, God relaxed the rule that men should die for sin and the cross also becomes a deterrent. The cause of the cross was God's sense of right and wrong, not the need to propitiate wrath. God's justice does not require all the demands of the law to be met, he can alter his requirements as he sees fit.

Grotius emphasised (like Andrew Fuller) the use of natural, moral law; i.e. law as a feature of human nature (rules governing actions) and not a manifestation of God's perfect will. Thus the law is not a reflection of God's nature and will for man. Salvation becomes understanding what to do, and doing it after seeing the cross. The combination of Abelard's Moral Influence theory and Grotius' Governmental Theory is the Moral Government theology evidenced in heretics like Charles Finney, where salvation becomes completely Pelagian.

Wesleyanism

In the 18th century there were heated debates between Arminians and Calvinists and Amyraldians and Calvinists. Whitefield debated Arminianism with his friend John Wesley and Wesley broke with Calvinism in 1740. This caused a rupture with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists under Howell Harris in 1742-3, followed by the creation of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in 1756, about the time Wesley separated from James Hervey. In the 1770s a virulent controversy began between John Wesley and Augustus Toplady, during which Wesley stooped very low, even resorting to fraud.

To make matters more theologically complicated, the Arminianism of John Wesley [1703–91] differs from that of the Remonstrants and is called Evangelical Arminianism by theologians as it is slightly more Biblical than the continental version.

Unlike the Remonstrants, Wesley affirmed the guilt of Adam's sin to his descendants and thus total depravity. Instead of being able by nature to believe the Gospel (as the Remonstrants), Wesley affirmed the doctrine of prevenient grace, a universal grace that enables those who grasp it to overcome their weakness and believe. Thus human faith and will leads to conversion.⁵⁶

Throughout the 18th century, there were numerous debates between Arminians and Calvinists, some of them quite vehement, such as between John Wesley and Augustus Toplady. It was also a period of revival but many thousands of the converts gained by the itinerant preacher George Whitefield were transferred to his friend John Wesley for local instruction. Sadly many of these became Arminians by instruction in Methodist churches. Consequently, Arminianism thrived in this time.

Arminianism Post Wesley

For almost a century after the death of John Wesley in 1791, UK Arminianism was chiefly centred in Methodism and small groups of universalistic General Baptists. The English Baptists had begun in 1612 under Thomas Helwys at Spitalfields.⁵⁷ By 1660 there were up to 300 hundred Baptist churches in England. Prior to the rise of the Methodists and Baptists, only a handful of independent preachers adopted Arminianism, such as the Puritan John Goodwin (1594-1665; not to be confused with the Congregational Puritan Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

In early 19th century America, Methodism flourished in multiple local revivalist movements and some famous large revivalist conventions, such as that of Cane Ridge. In many of these, mystical and sinful excesses were prominent. Circuit riders, such as 'Bishop' Francis Asbury [1745-1816]

⁵⁶ In Roman Catholic theology, prevenient grace is necessary to receive the benefit of the church sacraments. Salvation thus results from church actions, such as baptismal regeneration.

⁵⁷ The first Particular Baptist church appeared in 1633 as a secession from an independent church.

and Peter Cartwright [1785-1872], also promoted the growth of Wesleyanism in the expanding American territories in the west.

Wesleyan Arminianism received a further shot in the arm when first the Holiness Movement developed in the mid-19th century, followed by the rise of Pentecostalism, which was also Wesleyan in its origins.

In the UK the Holiness Movement had less effect, but Britain was more pre-occupied with the Higher Life Movement, which was a mixture of Arminian, Quaker and Reformed influences through the prominent leaders, such as at the Keswick Conference. As Pentecostalism took hold in Britain, it remained a suspect sect for many decades, so its Arminianism had little influence in the churches.

What had more influence were the large evangelistic campaigns begun by Moody and Sankey around the turn of the 20th century. Moody is chiefly responsible for the rise of Arminian ideas in Britain, and especially for the popularity of the idea that God loves everybody. Subsequent revivalist evangelistic campaigns thrust other Arminian leaders to the forefront, such as RA Torrey⁵⁸ and Billy Graham.⁵⁹ Through the widespread publicity and huge influence of these campaigns, Arminianism began to get a stronghold on British churches.

UK Calvinism got its own shot in the arm in the 1950s and early sixties with the formation of the Banner of Truth Trust, the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the establishment of IVF (later IVP) and some other groups. As reprints of classic Calvinist works became available, many young believers became Calvinists. Numerous young people turned to Calvinism after reading Spurgeon's sermons.

However, the start of the Charismatic Movement brought a resurgence of Neo-Pentecostalism, both in independent churches and institutional churches (the 'Renewal Mvt.'). Gradually this swept all before it. Although a few Charismatic churches claimed to be Reformed (in fact they were Amyraldian), the vast majority were Arminian. Most of the chief Charismatic leaders in the 70's and 80s were Arminian.⁶⁰ Some (such as followers of Charles Finney) were Pelagian.⁶¹

Over the previous hundred years there had also been a long battle with liberal theology and modernism. Many churches and denominations succumbed to these and became Christian in name only; but this is outside the scope of our analysis here. With this capitulation to liberalism, coupled with the predominance of Arminianism in supposedly evangelical churches, Calvinism became a minority view in the UK.

Calvinistic churches and denominations collapsed; some disappeared, others merged with unorthodox groups. Reformed theology continued in the few remaining Strict Baptist chapels, the few Particular Baptist churches, some independent Reformed or Congregational churches and a small reform movement within Anglicanism.

Genuine historic Calvinism is found almost nowhere in Britain today. Strict Baptists tend to be Hyper-Calvinists. Most other Calvinists are Amyraldians (such as 4-Pont Calvinists). Calvinists within the Church of England tend to be Amyraldians and are hopelessly compromised anyway by

⁵⁸ Though ordained as a Congregationalist (i.e. originally Reformed) Torrey's evangelism was Arminian and he taught that God loved everybody in the world, even wicked sinners who never repented.

⁵⁹ Billy Sunday, an important American evangelist, was a Presbyterian. Billy Graham was both Arminian and ecumenical.

⁶⁰ Such as Gerald Coates, John Noble, Bryn Jones, Keri Jones, Roger Forster etc. Terry Virgo's Coastlands (later NFI) claimed to be Calvinistic and shunned Coates' groups but were very weak theologically and either Arminian or Amyraldian in their evangelism.

⁶¹ Finney was championed by folk such as Melody Green.

swearing an oath to support a heretical church. While ‘Calvinists’ in independent churches tend to be at least Amyraldian, many are also Charismatic-lite and ecumenical.

So, the situation in Britain today is that genuine Calvinists are very hard to find. Only a few isolated Presbyterian, independent and Baptist churches can be said to be genuine, historical Calvinists.

In America many more claim to be Calvinists but most are Amyraldian and/or Charismatic. Some, like John MacArthur, also claim to be Dispensational (which is theologically impossible). Many of the American ‘New Calvinists’ are hopelessly comprised, being mostly Amyraldian and Charismatic, but other errors are also to be found. True Calvinism regarding the Doctrines of Grace is found in small denominations like The Protestant Reformed Church (which tend to elitism) and some churches within historic Presbyterian denominations that otherwise apostatised. There are also some Baptist churches that have held out for Reformed truth.

In many places around the world, true consistent Calvinists have become isolated and meet alone or in small groups at home. This is a sign of the times. Arthur Pink could bewail the state of the church and the prevalence of false doctrine in the 1940s (he died in 1952); he could never envisage the appalling decline that followed his death.

Summary

The fundamental doctrine of God’s sovereignty in salvation naturally leads to the five points of the Doctrines of Grace, even though these were only codified as a response to the five complaints by the Remonstrants. These doctrines have been attacked ever since they began to be articulated after the death of the apostles and time after time God raised up champions to teach the truth, such as Augustine, Gottschalk or Calvin.

A very simple way to summarise the attacks is as follows:

Attacks on the doctrine of total depravity

Examples: Pelagianism, Unitarians, CG Finney and Oberlin Theology, New England Theology, Eastern Orthodox Church, Arminianism, Roman Catholicism, Decisionism and all who assert human free will ability to choose salvation.

Attacks on sovereign predestination, election and reprobation

Examples: the heresies of Bolsec and Pighius in the Reformation. The heresies of John Wesley in Methodism (and those who follow Wesley, such as the Holiness Mvt., Pentecostalism, some Higher Life ideas). Arminianism, Roman Catholicism, Open Theism. All who deny double-predestination.

Attacks on limited atonement

Examples: Arminianism, Amyraldism, the Marrow Controversy, Richard Baxter, Andrew Fuller, Alan Clifford or the modern 4-Pont Calvinism and the Free Offer – as codified by John Murray, Louis Berkhof and other US and Dutch Presbyterians. [This attack rests mainly on the message of the preaching of the Gospel. In the desire of preachers to tell sinners that God loves them (to make the Gospel more attractive), this has to depend upon a) a prior desire of God to save all men (which ruins the doctrine of God), and b) an unlimited atonement so that all men who believe can be saved.]

Attacks on irresistible grace

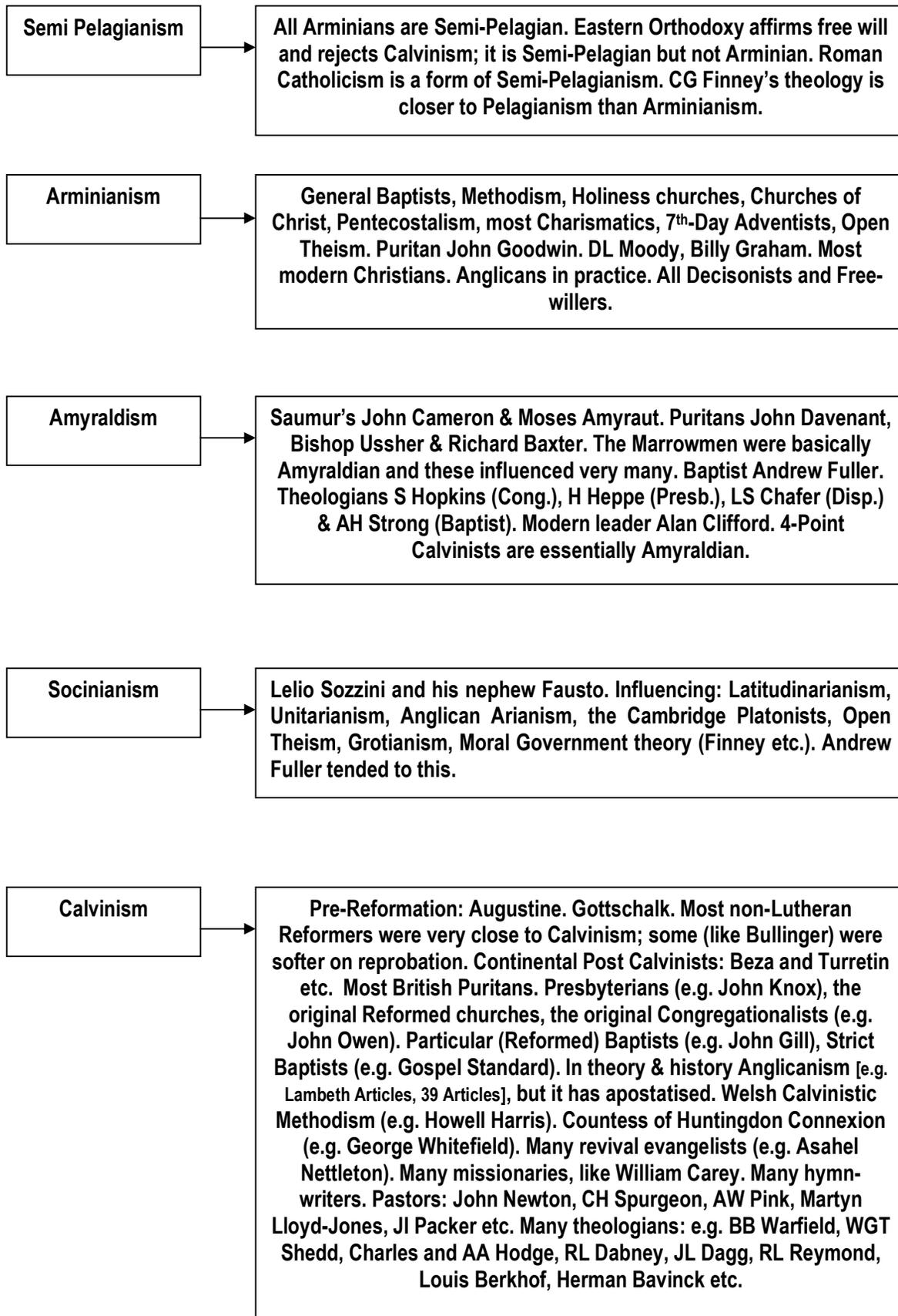
Examples: the heresy of Common Grace in modern times (initiated by Abraham Kuyper and developed by Louis Berkhof and other US and Dutch Presbyterians). There are many forms of Common Grace; Kuyper’s was originally to enable believers to work with sinners in politics. The heresy of Wesley’s universal Prevenient Grace. Arminianism and all forms of Decisionism, Roman Catholicism Eastern Orthodoxy.

Attacks on the perseverance of the saints

Examples: Arminianism, Wesleyanism, the Holiness Mvt., Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, David Pawson.

Themes of heretical attacks on the Doctrines of Grace

- Man can achieve his own salvation through good works unaided. [E.g. Pelagianism]
- Man can achieve his own salvation through good works aided by a universal grace, which is initiated by free will. [E.g. Semi-Pelagianism, Remonstrants, Arminianism]
- Man can achieve his own salvation through good works where universal grace empowers free will. [E.g. Semi-Augustinianism, Thomism, Wesleyanism]
- Natural law can be obeyed [E.g. Pelagianism, Finney]
- Man is not totally depraved. [Pelagianism, Socinianism, Arminianism]
- Adam's guilt is not imputed to men [E.g. Remonstrants, Arminianism, Socinianism, Pelagianism]
- God knows who will believe in the future and chooses them in eternity so as not to destroy man's freedom. [E.g. Arminianism, Remonstrants, Socinianism, Orthodox Church]
- Grace is resistible by human will. [E.g. Socinianism, Arminianism]
- The atonement is universal (Jesus died for everyone). [E.g. Socinianism, Arminianism, Amyraldism, Semi-Pelagianism]
- The atonement is merely a good moral example. [E.g. Socinianism, Moral Government theory, Grotianism]
- Man is not assured of perseverance to the end. [E.g. Arminianism, Socinianism]
- Regeneration is an act of the human will [E.g. Pelagianism, Remonstrants, Finney]
- Faith is a human good work [E.g. Remonstrants, Pelagianism, Finney]
- God's knowledge of the future acts of free agents is mediate. [E.g. Molinism, Arminianism]
- God's decrees are conditional. [E.g. Arminianism, Remonstrants]
- God created Adam innocent, not holy. His will was in a state of balance between good and evil. [E.g. Arminianism, Remonstrants, Orthodox Church]
- Sin merely consists in acts of the will. [E.g. Pelagianism, Arminianism, Remonstrants]
- God loves everybody [E.g. Arminianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Amyraldism]
- Anyone can be saved if they believe but in the end only the elect believe [E.g. Amyraldism, Fullerism, 4-Point Calvinists]
- God has two wills, one secret (i.e. election) the other visible (i.e. the Gospel). [E.g. Amyraldism, Fuller]
- The church is necessary for salvation. [Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism]
- The sacraments are necessary for salvation [Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism]
- Priests are necessary for salvation. [Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism]
- Dead saints and Mary aid believers in salvation. [Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism]
- Salvation is achieved using human reason [Socinianism, Latitudinarianism, Cambridge Platonists]
- Salvation is by deification [Eastern Orthodoxy]
- Justification is by faith and works together. [Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism]
- Common Grace means that God favours sinners and cares for them. [Arminianism, 4-Point Calvinists, the Free Offer]
- You cannot preach the Gospel indiscriminately to all. [Hyper Calvinism]



Appendix One

Simplified time-line: Augustine to the Synod of Dort

Important theologians in bold	
354	Augustine born in Thagaste, Numidia (now Algeria).
383+	Pelagius active in Rome.
387	Augustine converted. Baptised in Milan by Ambrose.
395	Augustine ordained bishop of Hippo (North Africa).
410	John Cassian wrote against arbitrary predestination. Seen as an influence for Semi-Pelagianism.
411+	Augustine entered into vehement conflict with Pelagius.
411	Celestius (a disciple of Pelagius) condemned by the church for teaching that Adam's mortality was independent of his sin
415	Celestius condemned at the Palestinian synod of Diospolis.
417	Pope Innocent I excommunicated Pelagius and Celestius. Later lifted by Pope Zosimus.
418	Pelagians banished from Rome by Emperor Honorius and condemned by Zosimus.
426+	Opposition to Augustine's views on free will and predestination build up (Semi-Pelagianism).
430	Death of Augustine.
435	Death of John Cassian.
470	Caesarius , the later bishop of Arles, born - who taught Semi-Augustinianism.
529	Council of Orange . Defeat of Semi-Pelagianism. Over time Augustinianism is eclipsed by Semi-Pelagianism on the ground.
805	Gottschalk born.
848	Gottschalk teaches double predestination, denies universalism, free will and Semi-Pelagianism and is condemned by the Synod of Mainz and Synod of Quiercy (849).
862	John Scotus' work on predestination condemned by church. Also tried to unite theology with Neo-Platonism.
869	Gottschalk dies in prison.
1079	Abelard born [1079-1142]; beginnings of atonement as a moral example: 'Moral Influence theory'.
1093	Anselm becomes Archbishop of Canterbury; writes <i>Cur Deus Homo?</i> Key work on atonement.
1225	Thomas Aquinas born.
1274	Thomas Aquinas dies.
c.1380	Wycliffe (Wyclif) exiled from Oxford; oversees translation of the Bible into English. Proto-Reformer.
1415	Jan Hus burned at the stake for preaching reform in Bohemia. Proto-Reformer.
1483	Martin Luther born at Eisleben.
1509	John Calvin born.
1517	Martin Luther nails 95 <i>Theses</i> on Wittenberg Church door.
1521	Diet of Worms . Luther on trial, refuses to recant, protected by Frederick, the Elector of Saxony.
1521	Luther excommunicated.
1523	Martin Bucer leads the Reformation in Strasbourg.
1523	Zwingli begins Swiss Reformation in Zurich.
1529	Publication of Luther's Catechisms.
1530	Diet of Augsburg. <i>Augsburg Confession</i> of Lutheranism drafted by Melancthon.
1531	Heinrich Bullinger succeeded Zwingli in Zurich.
1532/3	Calvin's conversion.
1535	<i>First Helvetic Confession</i> .
1536	Calvin publishes <i>The Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (1st edition).
1537	Luther writes <i>Smalcald Articles</i> .
1538-41	Calvin learns from Bucer at Strasbourg. Calvin was also the pastor of the French refugee church.
1541	John Calvin returns to Geneva and stays.
1542	Peter Martyr involved in a movement in Tuscany similar to Protestantism including evangelical preaching.
1545-1563	Council of Trent initiates the Counter Reformation.
1546	Death of Luther.
1549	<i>Consensus Tigurinus</i> (Zurich & Calvin agree about the Lord's Supper & baptism).
1551	<i>Consensus Genevensis</i> (Calvin).
1555	Peace of Augsburg gives religious freedom in Germany to Lutheran Protestants. Each prince allowed to determine his state's religion. Augsburg Confession applied, thus Reformed left out. Denounced by pope.
1559	<i>Galic (French) Confession</i> . By Huguenots based on draft by Calvin.
1559	Last of five growing editions of <i>Calvin's Institutes</i> .
1560	Jacobus Arminius born.
1561	<i>Belgic Confession</i> (Guido de Brès).
1563	<i>Heidelberg Catechism</i> of Reformed churches published (Ursinus & Olevianus)..

1564	<i>2nd Helvetic Confession</i> (Bullinger).
1564	Death of Calvin.
1596	Moses Amyrald [Amyraut] born (founder of Amyraldism).
1526	<i>Tyndale's NT</i> published at Worms.
1543	John Knox converted by Thomas Gwilliam; then influenced by George Wishart.
c. 1546	Thomas Cranmer , archbishop of Canterbury, denied doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Influenced by Nicholas Ridley, bishop of London, who had read Ratramnus' <i>De Corpore et Sanguine Domini</i> .
1571	Parliament approves <i>Thirty-Nine Articles</i> for English church.
1572	John Knox , founds Scottish Presbyterian Church, separates from Lutherans.
1583	Hugo Grotius born [1583-1645] – Governmental Theory of atonement.
1588	Arminius became a Reformed minister in Amsterdam.
1595	<i>Lambeth Articles</i> (Whitgift).
1609	Death of Jacobus Arminius.
1618	Synod of Dort begins in Dordrecht, The Netherlands.
1619	Synod of Dort condemns Remonstrants (Arminians) in 'the Canons of Dort'.

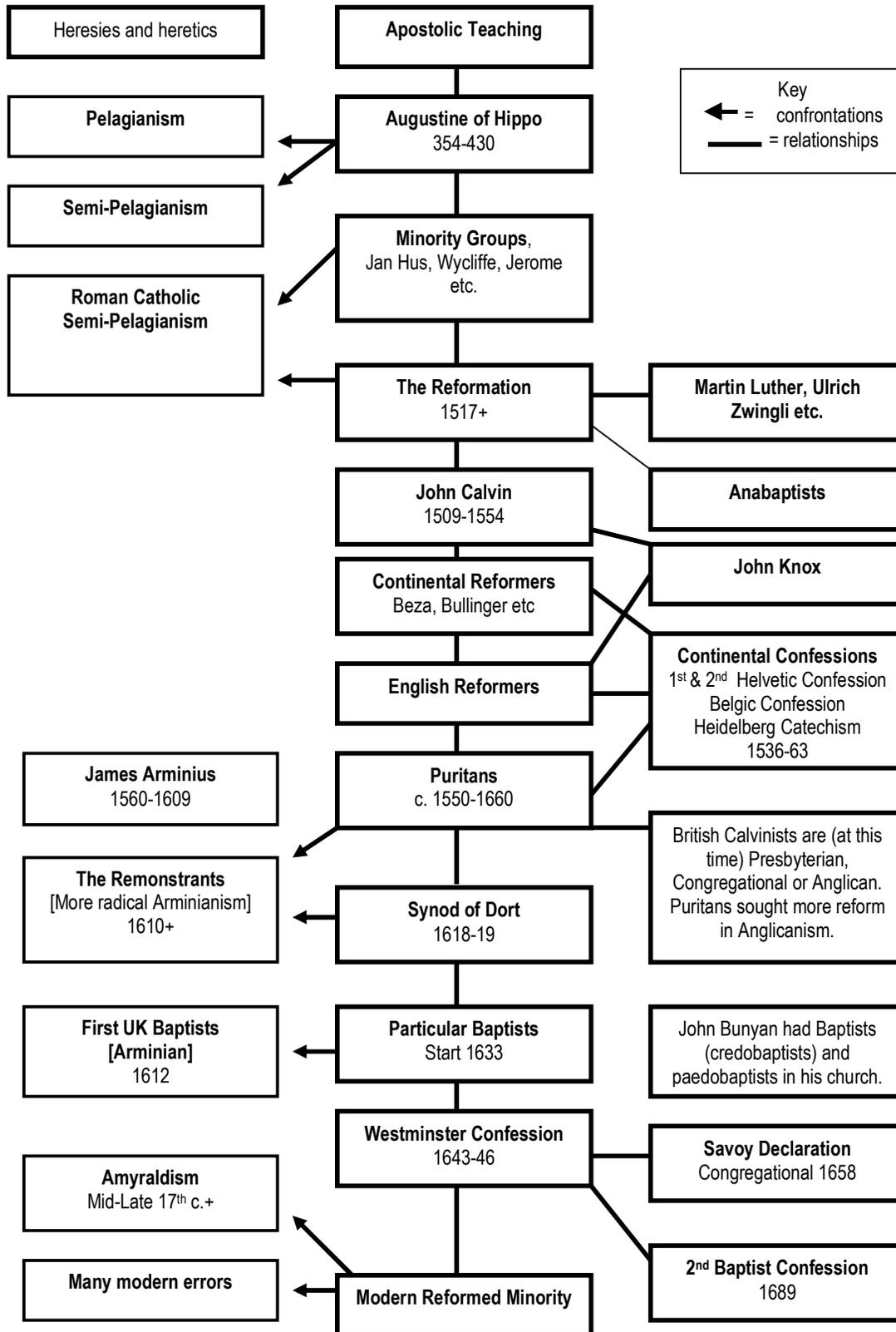
Concise timeline: Dort to recent times

Strong Arminian / Amyraldian influences in bold	
1620	Mayflower Pilgrims. Plymouth Colony founded in Massachusetts.
1624 / 33	Elzevir's Greek NT published [<i>Textus Receptus</i> , or 'Received Text'].
1628	John Bunyan is born.
1628	William Laud is made bishop of London; persecutes Puritans.
1632	John Goodwin vicar in London. In 1638 causes controversy preaching Arminianism.
1633	William Laud appointed Archbishop of Canterbury; persecutes Puritans. 'Great Migration' of Puritans to New England. Plans with Jesuits to infiltrate Arminianism into England.
1633	Moses Amyraut a professor of theology at Saumur.
1634	Amyrald writes, ' <i>A short treatise on Predestination</i> '.
1637	Jansenism begins; an Augustinian reform movement in Catholicism. Blaise Pascal was a convert.
1638	Scottish National Covenant was signed in opposition to Charles I's Romanist 'Laud's Liturgy'.
1640-53	The Long Parliament.
1641	Richard Baxter [Amyraldian] becomes pastor in Kidderminster.
1642	First English Civil War starts until 1645. There were three civil wars that blended into one between 1643-1652.
1643	Parliament calls assembly of Puritan leaders, who produce Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Directory of Worship.
1644	<i>First London Baptist Confession</i> of Faith.
1651	Final defeat of Royalist forces at Worcester, Cromwell becomes Protector.
1658	<i>Savoy Declaration</i> (Congregational).
1658	Death of Oliver Cromwell; succeeded by son Richard.
1661	Charles II passes series of repressive laws against Nonconformists.
1664	Moses Amyraut dies.
1675	John Bunyan wrote <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> in prison.
1675	<i>Formula Consensus Helveticae</i> (Heidegger). Written to counter Amyrald and his colleagues.
1677	William III, ruler of the Netherlands, marries Mary, daughter of James, Duke of York, heir to the English throne.
1688	'Glorious Revolution'; William III of Orange is invited to save England from Roman Catholicism.
1689	Second London <i>Baptist Confession of faith</i> (based on Westminster Confession).
1727	Moravian Awakening (Moravian Brethren) begins at Herrnhut.
1730-1749	The Great Awakening begins in the American Colonies. In broad strokes, it lasted from 1725-1760 in a series of awakenings; earliest under TJ Frelinghuysen & Gilbert Tennent. Arminian as well as Calvinist evangelists.
1735	Welsh Methodist revival; a Calvinistic movement separate to Wesleyanism.
1737-1741	George Whitefield preaching in America dominates Great Awakening.
1738	John Wesley's supposed conversion. Beginnings of later Methodist Movement .
1745	Birth of Methodist bishop Francis Asbury , who later established the precedent for circuit riding.
1754	Andrew Fuller born [1754-1815]; Amyraldian and almost Grotian ideas.
1770	George Whitefield dies, one of the greatest ever preachers.
1784	Beginning of the US frontier ' Circuit Rider ', itinerant Methodist ministers covering large areas on horseback.
1793	William Carey sails to India.
1801	Cane Ridge revival ['Camp Meeting'], initially prompted by a Presbyterian (Barton W Stone). Many (mostly Methodist) frontier revivalist exuberant conventions follow as part of the 'Second Great Awakening'.

1827	John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) began to meet with others in Dublin, leading to the Plymouth Brethren. The Brethren began as Calvinist Anglicans but the movement later became Arminian and Dispensational .
1830	Charles Finney starts urban revivals; begins crusade evangelism. Semi-Pelagian.
1830s	Sarah Lankford & Phoebe Palmer start weekly prayer meeting; one of the foundations of the American Holiness Mvt.
1850	CH Spurgeon converted in a Primitive Methodist Chapel in Colchester.
1854	Hudson Taylor starts China Inland Mission.
1854	CH Spurgeon becomes a pastor in New Park St Baptist Chapel, London.
1865	William Booth begins meetings in London's East End.
1873	DL Moody / Ira Sankey begin two year evangelistic tour of UK. Attendance at London meetings over 2.5 million.
1875	The Salvation Army born.
1875	Charles Finney and Asa Mahan develop Oberlin theology, a unique understanding of sanctification. Moral Government theory of atonement.
1875	Higher Life teachings centre in Keswick Conference annually. Teachings vary from person to person; some erroneous others more evangelical. FB Meyer [Baptist], AT Pierson , J Elder Cumming, and George HC Macgregor [Presbyterians], Andrew Murray [Dutch Reformed Church], HCG. Moule, HW Webb-Peploe, HW Griffith Thomas, and J Stuart Holden [Anglicans]. Others include: Evan Hopkins, CI Scofield, AW Tozer , Alan Redpath, Stephen Olford, Major Ian Thomas, Ruth Paxson, Harry Ironside , Vance Havner, Theodore Epp, Lewis Sperry Chafer , James O Buswell III, John Walvord, Kenneth Wuest, Charles Feinberg, Arthur Glasser , LE Maxwell and Harold J Ockenga. [Some of the 'Calvinists' in this list were actually Amyraldian.]
1875+	Holiness Movement centred in the post-Wesleyan revivalism in the US (Holiness Movement) and Higher Life in Britain.
1880	Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter , Holiness preacher / prophetess, has unusual manifestations in her meetings.
1892	CH Spurgeon dies.
1901+	Topeka 'revival' under Charles Parham; first popularised tongue speaking (Agnes Ozman).
1904	The Welsh Revival . Good and bad effects. Emotional manifestations helped kick-start Pentecostalism.
1905	William Seymour accepts Pentecostal doctrine from Parham in Houston, Texas.
1906-09	Azusa Street 'revival' initiates Pentecost revival. Led by William Seymour. Totally chaotic, fleshly, sinful meetings that even had witches and mediums present without control.
1910-1915	<i>The Fundamentals</i> are published to counter Modernism in USA.
1913	Stephen and George Jeffreys conducting Pentecostal missions in Wales.
1923	J. Gresham Machen writes <i>Christianity and Liberalism</i> .
1923	Aimee Semple McPherson built Angelus Temple.
1933-45	Campbell Morgan's (Congregational) second period at Westminster Chapel. Many books published.
1935	Billy Sunday, US radio evangelist, active.
1939	Campbell Morgan succeeded by Martyn Lloyd-Jones in Westminster Chapel.
1947	William Branham initiated the post WWII healing revival in 1947, being greatly influenced by Hall and Kenyon.
1948	Neo Evangelicalism begins when Harold Ockenga uses term in speech at Fuller Seminary.
1949	Billy Graham's first Los Angeles Crusade.
1954	Billy Graham Crusade in Haringey, London. Controversy about sharing Graham's Arminian platform.
1964	Michael Harper formed the Fountain Trust to promote renewal in the churches.
1968	Martyn Lloyd-Jones retires from pastorship of Westminster Chapel. Concentrates on books and preaching.
1970+	House church movement ; an ad hoc explosion of UK house churches; some orthodox, most not.
1975	Bryn Jones starts <i>Restoration</i> magazine. The formal start of Restorationism (Charismatic apostolic authority).
1981	Death of Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Appendix Two

A Simple History of UK Monergism



Appendix Three

Quotes from Arminians to show their level of heresy

Arminius

God would have all men to be saved, but, compelled with the stubborn malice of some, he changeth his purpose, and will have them to perish.

The providence of God doth not determine the free-will of man to this or that particular.

No such will can be ascribed unto God, whereby he so would have any to be saved, that from thence his salvation should be sure and infallible.

It is perversely spoken, that original sin makes any one guilty of death.

The immediate effect of the death of Christ is not the remission of sins, or the actual redemption of any. [John Owen, *A Display of Arminianism.*]

Welsingius

It is no wonder if men do sometimes of elect become reprobate, and of reprobate, elect. [Welsin. *de Of. Ch. Hom.*]

Episcopius

Many decrees of God cease at a certain time. [Episcop. *Disp. de Vol. Dei., thes. 7*]

Vorstius

Those things God would have us freely do ourselves; he can no more effectually work or will than by the way of wishing. [Vorstius *de Deo*, p.451.]

Venator

To this question, Whether the only way of salvation be the life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ? I answer, No. [Venat., *apud Fest. Hom. et Peltium.*]

Bertius

I deny this proposition, That none can be saved that is not ingrafted into Christ by a true faith. [Bert, *ad Sibrand.*, p. 133.]

Corvinus

We nothing doubt but many things which God willeth, or that it pleaseth him to have done, do yet never come to pass. [*Corv. Ad Molin.*, cap. v. sect. 2.]

Remonstrants

As men may change themselves from believers to unbelievers, so God's determination concerning them changeth.

God hopeth and expecteth divers things that shall never come to pass.

We retain still after the fall a power of believing and of repentance, because Adam lost not this ability.

We deny that God's election unto salvation extendeth itself to singular persons.

We profess roundly that faith is considered by God as a condition preceding election, and not following as a fruit thereof.

It may be objected that God faileth of his end: this we readily grant.

It is false to say that election is confirmed from everlasting.

Men may make their election void.

The efficacy of the death of Christ depends wholly on us.

There is no place in the Old Testament whence it may appear that faith in Christ as a Redeemer was either enjoined or found in any then.

Appendix Four

Important Reformation and Post Reformation Standards

Continental standards

1st Helvetic Confession (1535).

Consensus Tigurinus (Zurich, 1549) Calvin.

Consensus Genevensis (1551) Calvin.

Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536-1559 (5 Editions).

The French (Gallic) Confession (1559).

The Belgic Confession (Netherlands, 1561) Guido de Brès. One of the 'Three Forms of Unity'.

Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Ursinus & Olevianus. One of the 'Three Forms of Unity'.

2nd Helvetic Confession (1564) Bullinger.

Synod of Dort (1619). One of the 'Three Forms of Unity'.

Formula Consensus Helvetici, (1675) Heidegger.

British standards

Cranmer's 42 Articles of the Church of England (1551 rev. to 39 articles 1562).

Scots Confession (1560) Knox & 5 others.

39 Articles Anglican (1571).

Whitgift's Lambeth Articles (1595). Never formally accepted.

English Separatists Confession (1596).

Irish Articles (Usher, 1615).

London [Baptist] Confession (1644).

Usher's Body of Divinity (1645).

Westminster Confession of Faith (1647). Plus the Longer and Shorter Catechisms.

Savoy Declaration (Congregational, 1658) Owen, Goodwin & others. Based on Westminster.

Baptist Confession of 1689. Based on Westminster.

Sound interpretation

A proper foundation

In order to understand what the Bible teaches, we must apply sound rules of interpretation. False teachers can make scripture say anything at all. To avoid this we must look at all the relevant verses on a given subject and study them in context, not in isolation. We must properly evaluate the meaning of words and their place in a sentence. We must explain obscure texts in the light of clear ones. We must interpret figures of speech according to their nature, e.g: not apply metaphors literally; and so on.

Some Biblical statements seem to contradict one another. There are various ways that this problem has been dealt with. Some ignore the contradiction and side with one or the other (e. g. emphasising human responsibility). Others try to harmonise the two extremes by advocating a middle view, a compromise, thus weakening both teachings. Yet others teach both extremes by explaining them as paradoxes (apparent but not real contradictions) but their application can make them inconsistent. One day they teach an Arminian message, the next day they preach a Calvinistic one. This will not strengthen the church.

The way forward is to understand the plan of God first, then confusing doctrines can be placed in that system, even if not fully understood by our finite minds. Having understood this, we teach doctrines that the Bible teaches, in the way the Bible emphasises them. Some difficulties solved in this way include:

- God is one, yet also three persons.
- Man is responsible, yet man is unable.
- God is sovereign in salvation yet man is also responsible for his own sins.
- The kingdom is here now, but it is not yet fully consummated.
- Jesus is fully God and yet fully man.
- Death and evil are overcome, yet still reign.
- Christians are said to be glorified, yet they will be glorified at a later stage.
- Christians are righteous in Christ, yet they still sin.

All these can be explained within a system that follows Biblical teaching. We all have a system whether we call it one or not. What is necessary is that we develop a system that is Biblical. Great minds have struggled with this for centuries and, as we have already affirmed, there are only two Christian options available as regards salvation:⁶²

- God is in total control of salvation, a *monergistic* system (Calvinism).
- God is partially in control but man initiates and co-operates in various ways, a *synergistic* system (e.g. Arminianism).

These two systems cannot be mixed; they are mutually incompatible. We have to choose one or the other. Some have developed systems which claim to be a *via media* between Calvinism and Arminianism (like Amyraldism - see later) but they still fall into the second category, a synergism, though not as severe as Arminianism.

Power to save

Why does God tell man he must repent if he cannot without grace? Why does the Bible say that you must be born again if only God can regenerate? A key to understanding why God says certain things, which seem impossible, is seen in the ministry of Jesus.

⁶² The other systems are either unbiblical (e.g. Pelagianism), or utterly inconsistent, (e.g. Amyraldism).

In his ministry, Jesus continually commanded men to do the impossible. He tells a man with a withered arm to put out his hand. He tells a dead Lazarus to come forth out of the tomb. He tells a crippled man to walk. All of these people obeyed. The word of Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit, imparted power to those it was intended (not everyone at the Pool of Siloam were healed).

Similarly, the Gospel message contains power (Rm 1:16). It brings life to the elect. An elect sinner hearing that he must repent and be born again receives grace to believe and turn towards God. A sinner not chosen by God hears the same message and is hardened in sin. A theology that eradicates this supernatural element and reduces it down to a human level is unbiblical.

We will now examine the details of the Doctrines of Grace. I intend to do this in as simple and summary a form as possible.

Total depravity

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Gen 6:5

Introduction

This doctrine has been given various names: human depravity, radical depravity, pervasive depravity and total inability; but the phrase 'Total Depravity' best sums up the Biblical perspective. Man is not just unable to reach for salvation and is not just pervaded by a sinful tendency; man is corrupt and under the wrath of God due to the original sin of Adam, as well as his own specific sins. Hard as this is to swallow, it is a clear teaching of the Bible (Rm 5:12-19). In all the Doctrines of Grace, we must not be dominated by our feelings but by the word of God if we are to know the truth.

What total depravity is not

- It is not conduct but state; not behaviour but condition.
- It is not that all men are as bad as they can be.
- It is not our estimation of others, but God's estimation of us.
- It is not that man is unable to recognise God's will or the need to do good.

What it is

See Ps 14, the only Psalm repeated - Ps 53.

'Depravity' refers to sinfulness and wickedness. In God's eyes, our situation is one of complete corruption and ruin (God's standard = Rm 14:23; 1 Cor 10:31). We are dead in sins (Eph 2:1).

'Total' refers to completeness. Man is depraved in every part of his life: thoughts (Gen 6:5), will (Eph 2:3, 4:22), emotions / heart (Jer 17:9), as well as deeds. If the will is ruined, then man is unable to choose salvation or believe without God's help.

It also means that the depravity is total, i.e. every part of the nature is affected. We are not partly depraved, that would only require a partial atonement. There is no good in man as far as God is concerned:

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment [filthy rags AV]. Isa 64:6

Definition

The doctrine of Total Depravity states that every area of man's life is affected by the Fall; he is spiritually dead, cut off from God and tainted by sin in every part of his life. Man fell totally with Adam. He is self-centred, lacking in genuine love to God and to man, and unable to fulfil God's law. It is exactly the opposite of evolution (man is getting better and better). It is illustrated in children who from an early age do not have to be taught to be bad but have to be taught to be good.

Key Scriptures

Eph 2:1-10; Gen 6:5, Isa 64:6; Jer 17:9; Rm 7:18,23, 8:7; Eph 4:18; Titus 1:15; Jn 5:42; 2 Tim 3:2-4; Heb 3:12, Ps 14.

Why is man totally depraved?

The Scripture has confined all under sin. Gal 3:22

1 Personal Sin

This refers to our conduct; our acts.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Rm 3:23

Man's sins demonstrate his depravity. People sin from infancy without any guidance.

Words for sin:

- Transgression (*parabasis*): overstepping bounds, breaking law (Gal 3:19).
- Trespass (*paraptoma*): a false step, a blunder, deviation from truth (Mt 6:14).
- Law-breaking (*paranomia*): (2 Pt 2:16).
- Iniquity (*poneria*): wickedness, perversity (Mt 7:23).
- Error (*plane*): disregard of the right, to go astray (Rm 1:27).
- Error (*agnoema*): a sin of ignorance (Heb 9:7).
- Sin (*Harmartia*): falling short of the mark as an arrow, failure (Rm 4:7-8).
- Evil (*kakos*): actual wrong, opposition to God's righteousness, base (Mt 21:41).
- Evil (*poneros*): evil that causes labour, pain, sorrow; bad, worthless (Mt 7:11).
- Ungodliness (*asebeia*): no fear of God, no likeness to God (Rm 1:18).
- Disobedience (*harmartema*): unwillingness to be led in truth, rebellion (Mk 3:29).
- Disobedience (*apeitheia*): un-persuadable, obstinacy, rejection of truth (Eph 2:2).
- Disobedience (*parakoe*): refusal to hear (Rm 5:19).
- Unbelief (*apistia*): refusing to have faith (Mt 13:58).
- Lawlessness (*anomia*): contempt of law, authority (1 Jn 3:4).
- Unrighteousness (*adikia*): lit. 'not rightness' (Lk 16:8).
- Wrong-doing (*adikema*): wrong, injury, misdeed, concrete act of unrighteousness (Acts 18:14).

Many other words could be added to this list, man's behaviour is also: loveless, rejection of God, illegal, sensual, anarchy, etc.

This is God's view of the sinner!

2 The effect of the Fall

IT CREATED THE SINFUL NATURE (THE SOURCE OF SINFUL ACTS).

In the Garden of Eden, Adam was warned that disobedience would result in immediate spiritual death (Gen 2:16-17). At that time Adam was in some respects like Jesus. He was the federal head of a (potentially spiritual) race, he was sinless, he had communion with God, he was Lord of creation (under God), he would not die (death results from sin).

But Adam disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit (not apple) and lost all the above benefits. He not only died towards God (i.e. spiritual death), but all men died with him. He became the head of a race of people alien to God; a different race than that which God had created; a race with sin in the core of it's being, the very antithesis of all that God is. Adam's nature changed from being innocent and clean to rebellious and sinful.

As our father we are the fruit of his loins. As our representative federal head, he was on probation for us all. Therefore, we all fell with him, we cannot rise higher than the source of our life (Ps 51:5; Rm 5:12,15,19; 1Kg 8:46; Rm 3:10; Ps 14:2-3; Col 2:13; Ps 58:3). To recover fellowship with God man now needs a new source of life to restore the nature as well as a means of forgiveness for sins committed.

Results

- We are evil from this evil root (Job 14:4).
- We have a corrupt nature (Eph 4:22; Rm 7:25, 8:2).
- The law of sin and death works in the flesh (Rm 3:10-18, 7:2, 8:2; Gal 5:19-21).
- We have an evil heart (Prov 4:23; Jer 17:9; Matt 15:19-20; Lk 6:45; Heb 3:12; Eccles 9:3; Mk 7:21-23).

3 We are placed in a state of sin (Gal 3:22)

Man is not only guilty, not only has a corrupt flesh life, but God has placed him in the state of sin (Rm 3:9) as a result of the fall (Rm 11:32).

The effects of sin

- Destroys life (Rm 6:23, Ezek 18:4, note that sinners killed Jesus, the Prince of life).
- Makes blind (Eph 4:17-18; 2 Cor 4:4).
- Makes deaf (Mk 4:11+).
- Makes unclean (Rm 1:28+).
- Enslaves (Rm 7:18,24).
- Makes hopeless (Eph 2:12).
- Makes lonely by making selfish.
- Makes one unteachable (1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:17-19).

Sin is essentially pride (the root of which is Satan), shown in:

- Unbelief – this started in Eden when man believed ‘The Lie’ (Rm 1:25) and refused to believe God. NB no sin is small; all have great consequences: *‘No grain of sand is small in the mechanism of a watch’*.⁶³
- Disobedience - doubt is the forerunner; first the thought then the deed, resulting in rebellion, refusal of God’s rule, lawlessness, self determination, self-sufficiency. (NB 2 Tim 3:2: ‘lovers of self’ comes first.)

Therefore, man is spiritually dead

Let the dead bury their own dead. Matt 8:22

[You] Who were dead in trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1

We were dead in trespasses. Eph 2:5

Physical death is the result of spiritual death

The soul who sins shall die. Ezek 18:4

For the wages of sin *is* death. Rm 6:23

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. Rm 5:12

Therefore, man is under condemnation

Man is guilty (Jn 3:18, 36; Rm 1:18; 1 Thess 5:9; 2 Thess 1:9).

Man is under wrath because:

- He is fallen in Adam (passive guilt).
- He commits sins (active guilt).

⁶³ Jeremy Taylor.

Therefore, man is under the power of Satan and in bondage

1 Jn 3:10, 5:19; Jn 8:44; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:1-3, 12; Col 1:13; 2 Tim 2:25+.

Therefore, man is lost

Job 14:4; Jer 13:23; Mt 7:16-18; Jn 6:44, 65; Eph 2:12; Lk 15 (parables of lost sheep, coin, son).

Man is outside the covenant, needs a deliverer, has no hope, and is without God.

God gave man up (Rm 1:24, 26, 28).

Conclusion

It can be clearly seen that man is spiritually unable to do good because every part of his nature is polluted. The Fall damaged man so that the root of his life is sinful, hence the fruits of his best efforts are sins in comparison to God's perfections.

What is man that he can be clean? Or he that is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water! Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one. Job 15:14-16, 14:4

Note: the question of the freedom or bondage of the will is closely allied to this doctrine; see later excursus.

Quotes

Every man born of Adam is by nature the child of wrath and God's enemy: this is true of all without exception; high and low; rich and poor; noble and simple... and furthermore, by being an enemy of God, he is therefore born subject to hell, to damnation, and to all other curses... In every man are all sins; more plainly, that in every man by nature are the seeds of all sins: and that not in the worst but in the best-natured men ... Not the practice of all sins, but the seeds; for all men practice not all sin: but the seeds are in their nature. The practice is restrained (by education, laws, etc as well as the grace of God). William Perkins; Works, Vol 111, p416.

(Total Depravity) is the opposite to what is required by Divine Law. The sum of Divine Law is love. The essence of depravity then must be the lack of love toward God and our neighbour... Love for ourselves seems to be the root of depravity. Andrew Fuller.

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto ... The guilt of this sin (Adam's) was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity ... from this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to evil. Westminster Confession of Faith; IX, 3; VI, 4.

Q: Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate into which man fell?

A: The sinfulness of that estate into which man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the lack of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called 'Original Sin', and from which do proceed all actual transgressions. The Westminster Larger Catechism; Question 25.

Q: Can you keep all these things (of the law) perfectly?

A: In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbour. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day II, Question 5.

Q: Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

A: Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day III, Question 8.

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin. Canons of Dort; 1:1.

Unconditional Election

Blessed *is the man* You choose, and cause to approach *You, that* he may dwell in Your courts. Ps 65:4

God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess 2:13-14

This doctrine is absolutely critical in the Christian life. If we fail to understand this we will misunderstand a great deal. Many unnecessary doctrinal problems will arise if we are not clear on this.

As with the other doctrines of grace, the key is a high view of God's sovereignty. If you believe that God is God then election poses no real problem to your understanding. Those who have a high view of man cannot cope with this doctrine at all.

This is a hard doctrine to accept. It strikes right at the heart of man's pride and understanding. It touches the heart of God's decrees. We should also tread carefully here, it is an awesome doctrine. We must not allow ourselves to be either complacent or dismissive. To accept this doctrine gives us continual cause for praise and thanksgiving, not smug satisfaction. To reject this teaching puts us at odds with God.

[The larger doctrine that God predestines all classes of events in history will not be discussed here. Unconditional election forms a part of the greater teaching. The word 'predestine' in the NT always refers to election (Rm 8:29-30; Eph 1:5, 11). Predestination (i.e. God's sovereign rule over all things for his eternal pleasure and plan) serves the purpose of election.]

The doctrine simply stated

We saw in the last lesson that man cannot save himself. Left to his own devices, man would be doomed, certain of damnation. God, in his great love, determined (decreed) to choose (elect) a portion of the human race to be saved. The word election means: to pick out, to choose out, to select from a larger mass. God did this out of his own mercy. He was under no compunction to do so, neither does he need us to praise him; we add nothing to his greatness.

He did this out of his own sovereign good pleasure (Eph 1:11); it was not due to any foreseen goodness or faith in the recipients (the elect). He did not look into the future to see who would respond to his gospel, he chose them before time began. This indeed is grace; totally undeserved favour given to people before they were born, who only deserved hell.

This means that some were not chosen, called the reprobate. In choosing the elect, God passed by those not chosen who will be punished for their sins. He was under no obligation to choose any. His justice would have been satisfied if he had left us all in our sins; yet he chose us to show his mercy. The remainder is left in sin to show his wrath and justice.

This is what unconditional means, the choice is not conditioned or determined by our potential responses. It is unconditional. An act of God's will alone.

Choice

In the systems of men (e.g. Arminianism) human responsibility is prominent; God provides a general atonement available for everyone (universalism) and leaves it up to men to choose. But this is not Biblical? If man can accept or reject salvation, man is stronger than God; he can comply with or resist God's offer of grace. It is also unbiblical in that scripture says that man is dead, not

only unable to choose God, but unwilling to as well. A corpse cannot resurrect itself. (See Total Depravity.)

If election was based upon what men are foreseen to be able to do (i.e. accept grace, believe) then God isn't doing the choosing; man is. Yet the Bible everywhere ascribes the choice of the elect to God e.g.:

You HAVE NOT chosen me but I HAVE chosen you ... I have chosen you out of the world. Jn 15:16, 19

There are scores of passages that teach this clearly, some of these we will look at shortly; but there are many more passages that state this doctrine, which we would usually miss as we casually read. So deeply woven into scripture is this truth. For example:

God is our salvation. (Selah) Our God is a God of salvation; and to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death. Ps 68:20

In these two short sentences, God is named four times as well as stating that he is the Lord, he is in control. Salvation is clearly shown to belong to God, not man. He is a God of salvation and he is our salvation. Not only that, but escape from death belongs to him alone, whether that is rescue from dire circumstances of life or the resurrection of a person out of the spiritual death of sin's control.

Let's take another example from the book of Jonah, at the end of Jonah's prayer in the belly of the fish he says:

Salvation is of the Lord (AV)

Deliverance belongs to the Lord (RSV)

and immediately God commands the fish to spit Jonah out, not into the sea, but on to dry land (Jon 2:9-10).

If salvation is of God, and if faith is a requisite of that salvation, then faith must be given by God; and so it is (Eph 2:8). If salvation belongs to God and repentance is also necessary, then God must also give repentance; and so he does (2 Tim 2:25; Acts 5:31). Now, if God gives these to us, how can he chose on the basis of foreknowing one will believe or repent? Spurgeon says: *'To say that God elected men because he foresaw they would have faith ... would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment. Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from him. Therefore it can not have caused him to elect men, because it is his gift.'* (From a sermon on 2 Thess 2:13-14.)

Salvation belongs to God. We cannot deliver ourselves. If God is God, then all of salvation must be his. This not only makes sense but it is the clear teaching of scripture, as we will see. Any attempt to suggest that man makes the choice, makes the decision on his own, detracts glory from the God of salvation.

Who are elected by God?

Angels

... the elect angels. 1 Tim 5:21

Part of the angelic host fell as they joined Satan in his rebellion against God. Those that did not were given the ability to resist and were thus elect angels able to remain faithful to God.

Israel

Because the Lord loves you ... the Lord has brought you out ... and redeemed you from the house of bondage. Deut 7:8

Israel my chosen, I call you by your name. Isa 45:4

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers. Acts 13:17

Israel is an object lesson in election for the church. In Israel we see the basic principles of God's choice at work. It helps us understand our election. The election of Israel continues in the idea of a remnant (Rm 9:6-6, 27, 11:1-7). The Bible shows us clearly that Israel was not chosen for any merit of her own, far from it, she was the least of the nations (Deut 7:7, literally the off-scrapings) and failed completely (read God's damning words in Ezek 16).

The Messiah (Christ)

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. Isa 42:1 see also 1 Pt 2:4-6; Lk 23:35

This points to the unique office which the Son accepted from the Father in redemption; it also points to the special delight of the Father in the Son.

Christians

For the sake of the elect, whom he chose. Mk 13:20

You did not choose me, but I chose you. Jn 15:16

For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you. 1 Thess 1:4

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. Col 3:12

The word chosen = the Greek word *eklektos* meaning elect, chosen, favourite. It is from a root word meaning: to select. In Isa 45:4 it is the Hebrew word *bachiyir*, with the same meaning. In 2 Thess 2:13 the word *haireomai* is used meaning to take, choose for oneself, elect to something.

God's decree

The origin of our salvation springs from the decrees of election and redemption made within the Godhead in eternity. In this the three persons of the Trinity each took a specific role in accomplishing salvation:

Election

The Father elected a number of individuals to be saved and gave them as a gift to his son (1 Pt 1:2; Jn 17:6).

Redemption

The Son agreed to be a substitutionary sacrifice to pay for the sins of these people.

Sanctification

The Holy Spirit accepted the role of applying the benefits of this salvation to the elect and bringing them through to the end.

Salvation could not, therefore, be achieved without the prior choosing of the elect for whom, and only for whom, Christ died. Predestination of these individuals was necessary and is a key constituent in this decree.

Texts

The Elect

God's counsel is sovereign:

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Ex 33:19; Rm 9:15

I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel (plan) shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.' Isa 46:9-10, see whole chapter.

See further: Acts 2:23, 4:27-28 17:24-26; Lk 22:22; Prov 16:1, 21:1; Isa 19:17; Eph 1:11; Job 14:5.

Man cannot contribute:

It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Rm 9:16 (AV)

God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago. 2 Tim 1:9

Chosen in Christ in eternity:

He chose us in him (Jesus) before the foundation of the world. Eph 1:4

The election of Jacob and reprobation of Esau:

Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call ... Jacob I have loved, but Esau I hated. Rm 9:11-13

All the elect believe because they are elect.

Jn 6: 37-39, 10:16, 27-29, 17:2,9,4; Acts 2:47, 13:48.

The Reprobate

Esau I hated. Rm 9:13

Vessels of wrath made for destruction. Rm 9:22

... some who were long ago designated for this condemnation. Jude 4

They disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 1 Pt 2:8

You do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. Jn 10:26

You shall die in your sins. Jn 8:22, 24

Prov 16:4; Rm 9:18,21; Rev 13:8; Mt 11:25.

It should be remembered that God is totally just, he will always do right (Gen 18:25). God is not obligated to rescue anyone and his judgment must be manifested. Also the reprobate do not want to be saved, do not want to be holy, and have no desire to honour Christ. Unregenerate men have no claim upon the blessing of God, therefore, there can be no injustice.

What does hardening mean? (Rm 9:18; Jn 12:40)

It is best understood as God withdrawing from sinful men (whom has not elected to eternal life, for the just punishment of their sins) all gracious influences, and leaves them to the unrestrained tendencies of their own hearts, and to the uncounteracted influences of the world and the Devil.⁶⁴

The natural tendency of human depravity is that the heart grows harder under the general mercies God gives to creation unless he adds the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit to change the heart.⁶⁵

The meaning of 'foreknow' in Rm 8:29

Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined.

Election of grace is personal. It is not an election of nations (Rm 11:5) but is specific: 'God has from the beginning chosen you' (2 Thess 2:13). It is a foreknowledge of persons meaning more than mere knowledge (Rm 11:1-2). God gave us as individuals as a gift to his son (Jn 17:2,6). We are

⁶⁴ A A Hodge.

⁶⁵ J L Dagg.

personally called by name and are known individually by God (Jn 10:14-15).

The word foreknow is used in the Biblical sense of known in a loving relationship, just like Adam knew Eve (Gen 4:1, i.e. had an intimate relationship). It is those whom God knew, loved, that were predestined. The verse does not say it was those who God knew something about (i.e. would have faith). To make the verse mean this you have to add a phrase like: those whom he foreknew would believe. The example of Israel is pertinent here; she was not chosen for what she would do, but in spite of it (i.e. act faithlessly). Israel was chosen because God chose to love her.

There are many cases in the Bible where the word 'know' is used to refer to a loving relationship, e.g.: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth' (Amos 3:2). Obviously God knows all families, all people, his knowledge is perfect; but Israel was known to God as a lover, a bride (that is why resorting to idols is called spiritual adultery in the prophetic books). See also Jer 1:5; Mt 7:22-23; 1 Cor 8:3; 2 Tim 2:19.

Eminent commentators see no reason in the Greek construction of the words to add qualifying words to the sentence. They translate it as 'whom he set regard upon' (John Murray) or 'whom he selected' or 'whom he particularly loved' (Charles Hodge).

God knows all people, but these predestined people are known in a special way differently to others; they are loved by God.

To suggest that this passage teaches that God predestines those whom he foreknew would believe is wrong because:

- It cannot be made to mean that from the Greek words used.
- It is a thought alien to the context.
- It is a doctrine alien to Paul's express teaching elsewhere.
- It opposes the clear Biblical teaching everywhere.
- Faith is the fruit of predestination (Acts 13:48), therefore, it cannot be the cause of foreknowledge.

Analogy

As so often in the Bible, God gives us a picture to learn the truth from as well as clear teaching. In Rm 9:21-23 we are shown election in the figure of a potter and the clay. From one lump the potter makes a vessel for glory and mercy and another for wrath and destruction. It is up to the potter what he does with his own clay. The clay has no rights in this.

Obviously the potter here stands for God and man is the clay (after all he is made from dust of the earth). Note that the clay will get harder and harder if left on its own and out of the hands of the potter. The hardening of man's heart does not have to be a positive act of God. The vessels fitted for destruction are not said to be fitted specifically by God in this. The clay hardens on its own. It is the work of natural depravity.

Conclusion

All Christians become Calvinists when they pray. They ask God to make men repent and believe. If there is sufficient grace for men to choose salvation and some choose while others do not, then praying is futile, it is up to each individual. Yet everyone agrees that it is right to ask God to intervene and to thank him when he has.

It should be added that God did not make men (or angels) in order to damn them. They were made to glorify him. Those that fell did so due to their own evil. God in his mercy decrees to rescue some. In these his love will be glorified, in the others, God will be glorified in his justice against sin.

Practical

- God's purpose in electing a certain people was that they should represent him in the flesh. This means that holiness results. This was supposed to be true of Israel (Deut 7:6) and is certainly true of the church of Christ (Eph 1:4). How has this doctrine affected you?
- Another response to this teaching is worship. What better reason is there for giving God all the thanks and praise possible if not this?
- Election gives us no grounds for presumption or license to do what we like, rather we are to make our calling sure (2 Pt 1:10) i.e. show that our election is real by living right.

Quotes

As long as that remains in the Bible (Rm 9) no man shall be able to prove Arminianism; so long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the doctrine of election.⁶⁶

[Some] maintain that God elected those whom he foresaw would believe (some say). I answer, this is a total denial of election. And it is dishonesty or ignorance to call this by such a name. God elects those whom He foresaw would believe, you say? And who were they? None! Absolutely none! He foresaw that none would believe, not one. And because He foresaw this, He elected some to believe. Otherwise not one would have!⁶⁷

The Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day XXI, Answer 54.

[God] delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just in leaving others in the Fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves. The Belgic Confession; Article XVI, Of Eternal Election.

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world, he has, out of mere grace, according to his sovereign will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of their salvation. The Canons of Dort; 1:7.

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the pre-requisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to obedience of faith, holiness etc., therefore election is the fountain of every saving good. The Canons of Dort; 1:9.

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation; but that he was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to himself, as it is written, 'For the children being not yet born neither having done any good or evil,' etc., it was said (namely to Rebecca): 'the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated' (Rom. 9:11-13). 'And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed' (Acts 13:48). The Canons of Dort; 1:10.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good

⁶⁶ C H Spurgeon, From a sermon on Election, 2 Thess 2:13-14.

⁶⁷ Horatius Bonar, The Five Points of Calvinism.

pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto and all to the praise of His glorious grace. The Westminster Confession; 3:5.

God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit does, in due time, actually apply Christ to them. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter XI, Of Justification, art. 4.

11. God from all eternity did, by his unchangeable counsel, ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass; yet so, as thereby no violence is offered to the wills of reasonable creatures ...

12. By the same eternal counsel God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death ...

14. The cause moving God to predestinate unto life, is not the foreseeing of faith or perseverance, or good works, or anything which is in the person predestinated, but only the good pleasure of God himself ... it seemed good to his heavenly wisdom to choose out a certain number toward whom he would extend his undeserved mercy. The Irish Articles; 'Of God's eternal decree, and Predestination', [1615]⁶⁸

We cannot give suffrage to the opinion of those who teach:

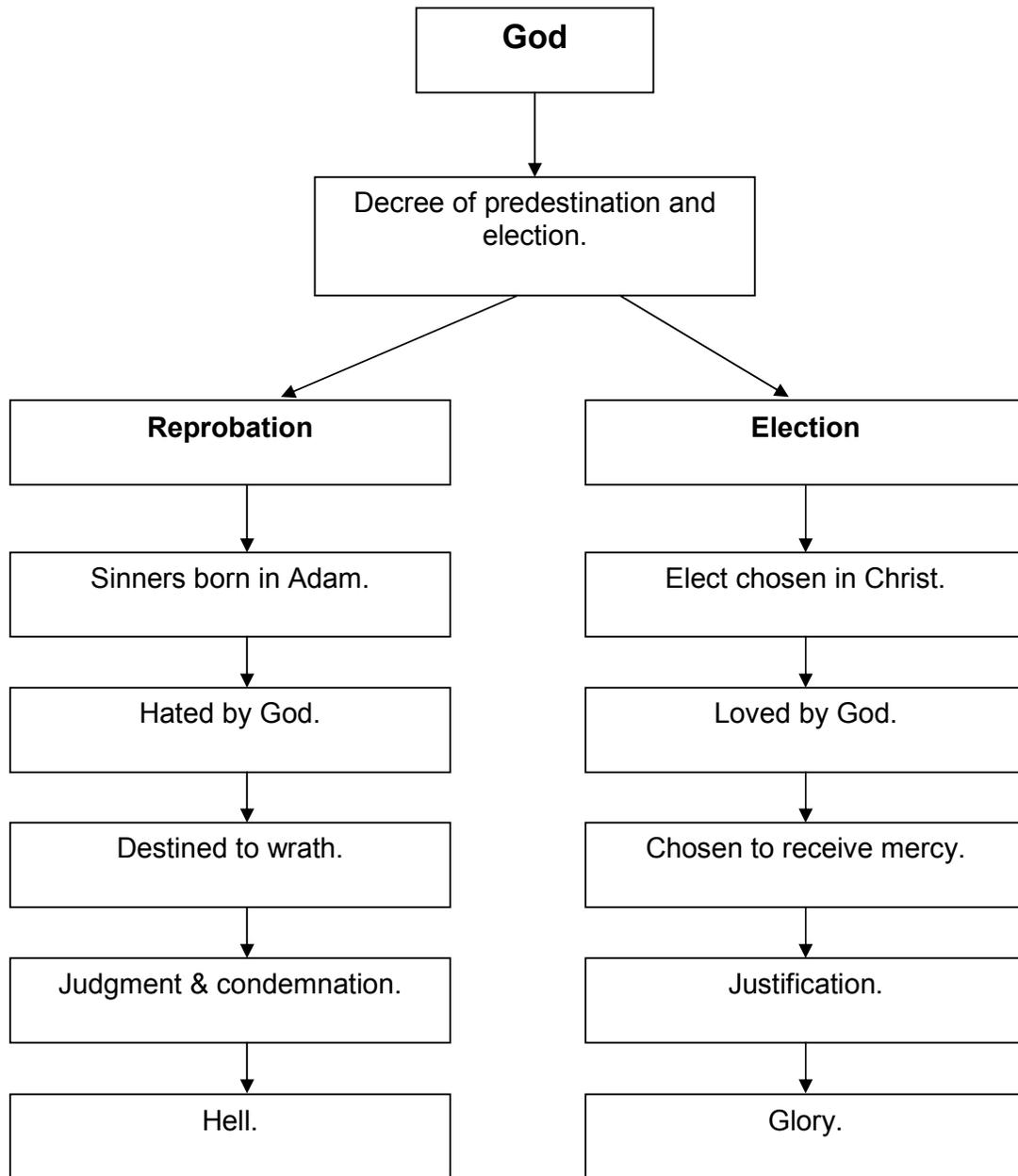
(1) That God, moved by philanthropy, or a sort of special love for the fallen human race, to previous election, did, in a kind of conditioned willing (i.e. willingness) first moving of pity ... purpose the salvation of all and each, at least conditionally, i.e., if they would believe. The Helvetic Consensus Formula; Canon vi, 1.

The Scriptures do not extend unto all and each God's purpose of showing mercy to man, but restrict it to the elect alone, the reprobate being excluded even by name, as Esau, whom God hated with an eternal hatred (Rom 9:10-13). The Helvetic Consensus Formula; Canon vi, 3.

⁶⁸ Also quoted in BB Warfield; *Studies in Theology*, Baker, 1991, p204.

Appendix One

Overview of election



Appendix Two

Predestination summarised by Scripture

The basis of salvation is God's eternal plan (decree) and that plan is based upon the doctrine of election; the divine choosing of a portion of the human race to obtain mercy in Christ and be God's people. We have seen that without this no one would be saved at all. This is sometimes called 'double predestination' (often by critics), which refers to the election of the chosen and the reprobation of the wicked.

The predestination of all things is a separate matter which serves the doctrine of election. God predestines all things in order to control history and secure the elect. Nothing is left to chance; God is in complete control of all things, the good and the 'bad'. Thus predestination is the doctrine that affirms the sovereignty of God throughout all time over all things, determining what will occur according to his plan. Though this doctrine is hated, it is the clear teaching of Scripture; *'from eternity God has foreordained all things which come to pass'*.⁶⁹

This is not the place to analyse and evaluate this doctrine in detail. What I will do is show that it is the clear teaching of Scripture.

God does what pleases him

Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases. Ps 115: 2-3

According to the purpose of Him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will. Eph 1:11

Proof of predestination

Thou dost beset me behind and before and layest thy hand upon me. Ps 139:5

In thy book were written every one of them the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them. Ps 139:16

[Formed = squeeze into shape, mould into form like a potter, fashion, determine.]

Surely you did not hear, Surely you did not know; Surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb. Isa 48:8

Listen, O coastlands, to me, and take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called me from the womb; from the matrix of my mother He has made mention of my name. Isa 49:1

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations. Jer 1:5

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Lk 2:21

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace. Gal 1:15

God's sovereignty over salvation

Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. 1 Chron 16:23

Salvation *belongs* to the LORD. Ps 3:8

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Ps 18:2

⁶⁹ Lorraine Boettner.

The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Ps 27:1

But the salvation of the righteous *is* from the LORD. Ps 37:39

O Lord, my salvation! Ps 38:2

Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God. Ps 50:23

Truly my soul silently *waits* for God; from Him *comes* my salvation. Ps 62:1

The God of our salvation! Ps 68:19

Our God *is* the God of salvation; and to GOD the Lord *belongs* escapes from death. Ps 68:20

For God *is* my King from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Ps 74:12

Show us Your mercy, LORD, and grant us Your salvation. Ps 85:7

The LORD has made known His salvation; his righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Ps 98:2-3

Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD -- your salvation according to Your word. Ps 119:41

Behold, God *is* my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'for YAH, the LORD, *is* my strength and song; he also has become my salvation.' Isa 12:2

The LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel. Jer 3:23

It is good that *one* should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. Lam 3:36

Salvation *is* of the LORD. Jonah 2:9

Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. Acts 28:28

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation. Rm 1:16

... and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. Phil 1:28

God from the beginning chose you for salvation. 2 Thess 2:13

Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Rev 7:10

Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honour and power *belong* to the Lord our God! Rev 19:1

Also there are multiple references to: 'Your salvation', God's salvation', 'his salvation', 'the salvation of the Lord', 'the salvation of our God', 'the rock of our salvation', 'the strength of my salvation', 'the horn (power) of my salvation' etc.

God's sovereignty over all things

Animals

He spoke and there came a swarm of flies and gnats in their territory. ... He spoke and locusts came. Ps 105:31, 34

Apostasy

O LORD, why have You made us stray from Your ways, and hardened our heart from Your fear? Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes of Your inheritance. Isa 63:17

'Bad' circumstances

(They) comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. Job 42:11 [NB in 2:7 it is caused by the action of Satan.]

That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity (Heb = 'evil'); I, the LORD, do all these things. Isa 45:6-7

Indeed with my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. Isa 50:2-3

Who has commanded and it came to pass, unless the Lord has ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come? Lam 3:37-38

Does evil befall a city unless the Lord has done it? Amos 3:6

And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do his people. Ex 32:14

Thus says the Lord, 'Behold I am shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you'. Jer 18:11b

['Evil' = Rah (7451), adversity, affliction, bad, calamity, evil, harm, displeasure, trouble etc. It is from the root word Ra'a' (7489): to spoil by breaking to pieces, to make something evil, shatter, destroy.]

The hand of the Lord has gone forth against me (ie the loss of Naomi's husband). Do not call me Naomi ('pleasant, grace') call me Mara ('bitter'), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. Ruth 1:13, 20

God let him fall into his hand (i.e. unintentional manslaughter). Ex 21:13

Bad Counsel

So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel'. For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom. 2 Sam 17:14

Delusion

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess 2:11-12

Destruction

Therefore you shall speak to them this word: 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Every bottle shall be filled with wine." ' And they will say to you, 'Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?' Then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land -- even the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem -- with drunkenness! And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together," says the LORD. I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will destroy them'. Jer 13:12-14

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God. You turn man to destruction, and say, 'Return, O children of men'. Ps 90:2-3

False prophecy

If the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. Ezek 14:9

Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all **his** prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you. 1 Kg 22:21-23

Illness & disease

The Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I the Lord. Ex 4:11

If you are not careful to do all the words of this law ... then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting ... Deut 28:61

And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him'. Jn 9:2-3

When Jesus heard *that*, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it'. Jn 11:4

Judgment on sin

I the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the Father's upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. Exod 20:5b

['The Iniquity' = *Ávôn*, i.e. a depraved action, perversity, mischief, punishment, penalty, misery. It refers to God visiting the penalty for evil committed by fathers upon their children, i.e. something evil happens in the future.]

You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do ... I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. Ex 22:22-24

But they (Eli's sons) would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to slay them. 1 Sam 2:25

He also struck down all the first-born in their land. Ps 105:36

Whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, you shall be left few in number; because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God. Deut 28:63

Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I am shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Return from your evil way'. Jer 18:11

Thou O God has tested us ... thou didst bring us into the net; thou didst lay affliction on our loins; thou didst let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water. Ps 66:10-12

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting. Rm 1:28

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess 2:11-12

Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. Rm 9:18

Natural Conditions

He sent darkness and made it dark. Ps 105:28

He gave them hail for rain and flaming fire in their land. Ps 105:32

He struck down their vines also and their fig trees and splintered the trees of their territory. Ps 105:33

He called for famine in the land; he destroyed all the provision of bread. Ps 105:16

He turned their waters into blood and killed their fish. Ps 105:29

He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Ps 107:29

You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, *with* storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire. Isa 29:6

He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasuries. Jer 51:16

The LORD *is* slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Nahum 1:3-4

'You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.' Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Consider your ways! ... *You* looked for much, but indeed *it came to* little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?' says the LORD of hosts. 'Because of My house that *is in* ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labour of *your* hands.' Hag 1:6-11

Thus all weather conditions and great calamities are under God's sovereign hand; this includes hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic activity. These affect the righteous and the wicked.

Plague

'Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.' So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made. Ex 32:34-35

Pride

Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah'. 2 Sam 24:1

[NB in 1 Chron 21:1 it is attributed to Satan.]

Politics and national boundaries

And he made from one every nation ... having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation. Acts 17:26

He gave them also the lands of the nations that they might take possession of the fruit of the people's labour. Ps 105:44

Problems

You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Ps 71:20

Prosperity and meeting daily needs

He caused His people to be very fruitful, and he made them stronger than their adversaries. Ps 105:24

They asked and he brought quail and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. Ps 105:40

Protection

I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. Ps 4:8

He permitted no man to oppress them and he reproved kings for their sakes. Ps 105:14

Suffering

JESUS' DEATH

For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Acts 4:27-28

SUFFERING OF JOSEPH

Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive'. Gen 50:19-20

SUFFERING OF ISRAEL

He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants (God allowing the Egyptians to enslave the Israelites). Ps 105:25

The actions of men

If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David', who shall then say, 'Why have you done so' ... let him curse for the Lord has bidden him. 2 Sam 16:10

He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal craftily with His servants. Ps 105: 25

The oppression of Enemies

Thus says the LORD: 'Though *they are* safe, and likewise many, yet in this manner they will be cut down when he passes through. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. Nahum 1:12

Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Isa 10:5-6

In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. 2 Kg 15:37

Predestination needs to be understood by the Lord's people. So many today are fighting against what God has pre-ordained instead of first acknowledging that God is Lord and seeking his will in their circumstances.

For example, it is clear that our sicknesses are ordained by God. While it is right to ask God for healing, in submission to his will, it cannot be right to rage against this on the basis of all sorts of false doctrines that God wants everybody to be fit and well. Those false preachers that rebuke and attack all sickness as being fundamentally demonic need to read their Bible and reconsider this blasphemy.

Quotes

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, art. 3.

As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, art. 6.

God, the great creator of all things, does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to

the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter V, The Providence of God, Article 1.

Q: What are the decrees of God?

A: God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he has, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men. The Westminster Larger Catechism; Question 12.

Q: What do you mean by the providence of God?

A: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty. Yes, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day X, Question 27.

All creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day X, Question 28.

[God] rules and governs [all things] according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without his appointment: nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can he be charge with, the sins which are committed. The Belgic Confession; Article XIII, Of Divine Providence.

Limited Atonement (Part 1)

The doctrine of Christ's atonement is a huge subject. It has been called the heart of the Gospel and is the place where God's love and justice meet. It relates to our discussion of Calvinism in terms of the scope of this atonement. Just whom did Christ die for? Did he die for everyone or just for some? In order to understand the concepts properly, we must first understand what atonement is, why it's necessary and what it does. This first section is to evaluate the Biblical teaching on atonement and in the next to move on to examining the scope of this atonement.

Overview of Biblical Atonement

This subject can only be dealt with in a cursory manner; although I intend to cover most of its aspects revealed in the Bible, I cannot do justice to this subject in a short paper. For those interested in further reading I suggest:

The Atonement - Hugh Martin

The Atonement - A A Hodge

Redemption, Accomplished and applied - John Murray

Why the cross? - H E Guillebaud

Christ our penal substitute - R L Dabney

Knowing God - J Packer

The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross - Leon Morris

These are all short(ish) books examining aspects of this subject. Standard Reformed systematic theologies and confessions could also be examined. (Note: not A H Strong, a Baptist theologian of great esteem who was weak at this point, also the great Puritan Richard Baxter blurred the edges of Calvinism on this subject due to his Amyraldism. These were good men whose work we read with profit and whose lives we honour, but we must test all we read and be wise.)

The problem - The need for atonement

The moral perfection of God requires that his justice, as well as his love, be satisfied. Sin must be punished. God cannot love sinners without the price being paid for their disobedience.

What does 'atonement' mean?

Definition:

Atonement is the legal satisfaction of the wrath of God by the punishment of a substitute - the penal sacrifice of Christ - to secure the redemption and reconciliation of the elect people of God.

Words used to denote atonement

HEBREW

Kippûr - atonement (or expiation in pl.); derives from *kâphar* whose primary root means: 'to cover', figuratively it means to expiate, appease, atone, forgive, be merciful, pardon, reconcile etc. The expression 'to make atonement' is frequent in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, but the idea is common in the whole OT, i.e. sin is dealt with by sacrifice.

Note: the 'mercy seat' is in Hebrew *kappôreth*, meaning a lid; this word derives also from *kâphar*.

GREEK:

Katallage (only Rm 5:11 but this word really means reconciliation).

The NT majors on terms like: propitiation, reconciliation, blood, justification etc. The corresponding words to *kippûr* are: *hilasmos* and *hilasterion* (see later).

Note: Some have said that the essence of atonement is revealed in the word itself, i.e. that it is an 'at-one-ment'; i.e. it is a reconciling process. Whilst reconciliation results, this is not comprehensive enough to explain the term. If any word could be substituted, it would have to be propitiation or redemption, but even then they, individually, only refer to one side of the concept. Both are required (both appear with justification in Rm 3:24-25). It is best then to stay with 'atonement' and understand what it means.

Key Verse:

Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. Rm 3:23-25

The concept of sacrifice

- Provided by God (Lev 17:1).
- The result pleased God, his anger was turned away (Lev 3:16).
- There was a variety of offerings for different breaches of the law and to offer oneself to God (e.g. burnt offering Lev 1, peace offering Lev 3, sin offering - unwitting sin Lev 4, guilt offering - deliberate sin Lev 6, cereal offering Lev 2).
- A priest was necessary Lev 4:20, 7:7 .
- The great symbol of atonement is the Day of Atonement (Lev 16, *Yom Kippur*).
- The sacrifice is the price paid for atonement; *Kipper* essentially means 'redemption price', i.e. the price paid to cancel the sin - a life shed (blood Lev 17:11).
- The shedding of blood is substitutionary (Lev 17:11). The law stated that the soul that sinned was to die (Ezek 18:4); the sacrifice of an offered animal died in the place of the sinner. The blood of the offering represented a life given up in death, this death atoned for the sinner's soul (Heb 9:22). The sinner identified himself with the animal personally, by laying his hands upon its head (Lev 1:4). The Israelite was very clear that this animal died in his place.
- Sacrifices do not avail of themselves (Heb 10:4), but rely on faith in God's final provision on Calvary. God chose that way for Israelites to get right with him. In his love he provided a solution to the breach of fellowship. This was initiated at the beginning (Gen 3:21, 4:4).
- Note: there was no global sacrifice. The OT offerings were specific. Particular sins required particular offerings.

Propitiation - the basis of atonement

Relates to what Christ accomplished towards God by his death

Definition:

Propitiation means to turn away wrath as a result of appeasement by an offering.

Words:

- *Hilaskomai* - verb; (Lk 18:13 = be merciful; Heb 2:17 = to make propitiation).
- *Hilasterion* - noun; (Rm 3:25; although it only appears once in Paul, the thought is frequent e.g. 1 Cor 5:7; Rm 5:9-10; Eph 5:2; 1 Cor 11:25, 10:16).
- *Hilasmos* - noun; (1 Jn 2:2, 4:10).
- In Hebrew the main word used is *Kipper*, translated in the Greek LXX as *exilaskomai*.

'Cover'

This thought is particularly noticeable in the Hebrew words based on *Kâphar*.

In the case of sacrifices, the blood would cover the object being cleansed (see Heb 9:18+); the picture is that the blood covers and remits the sin, either by figuratively hiding it from God's sight or by washing it away in the process or the blood is interposed between God and the sinner and turns the wrath of God aside.

Some have suggested that as the reality of atonement only came at the cross, the OT method of sacrifice only figuratively covered sin over, awaiting the real removal when Christ died (note Rm 3:25-26). The example of the ark provides a good illustration of atonement being a covering: the flood was God's judgment against sin and sinners, the pitch sealed the ark from the flood and, therefore, saved the occupants. The word for pitch is *Kâphar*. It turned away the wrath against sin. The covering of pitch safeguarded those chosen.

Why is propitiation necessary?

God's wrath is against sinners (Rm 1:18,24,26,28, Rm c1-3).

God provides the means of averting his own wrath in order to show his love to the elect (Heb 9:26, 10:5-10).

How is this done?

- Jesus is given as an offering for the sin of the elect (1 Jn 4:10) as a result of the love of God. (Jn 1:29, Heb 9:26, 28, 10:12, 14; 1 Pt 1:19; Eph 5:2; 2 Cor 5:21).
- Jesus is also the priest that offers the sacrifice (Heb 2:17). The priest effected the sacrifices and intercession (Heb 5:1-3; Num 6:22+). He represents man to God (Heb 5:1); he brings men near to God (Num 16:5). Jesus' fulfils all the qualifications of a priest (see Heb), and discharges all the functions of a priest (Dan 9:24-26; Eph 5:2; Heb 9:26, 10:12; 1 Jn 2:1).
- Matt 27 :51 - On completion of the work of atonement on the cross, the temple curtain (which separated men from the presence of God) was ripped apart to show that:
 - The whole typical sacrificial system was abolished.
 - God was moving out towards men.
 - Man now had access to God in Christ.

The concept of redemption and ransom

Relates to what Christ accomplished towards us by his death.

Ransom

This has to do with prisoners and slaves. The OT has many examples, and even specific laws regarding the setting free of slaves. It is not just deliverance, but the payment of a price to legally give a slave liberty.

The NT concept is drawn heavily from OT practices. Note particularly:

- The duty of a Kinsman-redeemer, e.g. Boaz; (Lev 25:47-55, word = *goel*).
- The redemption of the first-born (Ex 13:11-14; Num 18:15-16, word = *padah*).
- The ransom price e.g. of an ox which has killed someone Ex 21:28-32, word = *kopher*).
- The example of Hosea's wife Gomer (Hosea 1:2-3, 3:1-3 etc).

It was also a common practice in the NT contemporary Greek period, particularly regarding the redemption of prisoners of war or slaves.

The NT itself stresses the price paid in Christ's redemption, it is not simply a deliverance that is in

mind but ransom (e.g. 1 Pt 1:18-19; Matt 20:28; Titus 2:14).

There are three ways in which an Israelite might become enslaved, each of these applies to us:

- Firstly - he could be born that way, we were born in sin (Ps 51:5).
- Secondly - he could be captured by brigands or in war; sin rules over us in Adam. We are under its dominion by nature (Ps 19:13).
- Thirdly - he could sell himself as a slave to pay off a debt; sin is indebtedness and only death can pay the bill (Rm 6:23).

We need to be ransomed out of slavery to sin and the kingdom of the enemy.

Redemption

Further OT ideas include:

- The redemption / deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery (Exodus).
- Redeeming family members sold into slavery (Lev 25:47).
- Redeeming family land that had been sold (Lev 25:25-26).

DEFINITION:

Redemption is the deliverance of sinners from sin and death into liberty and relationship with God as a result of the payment of the blood of Christ as a ransom.

Like propitiation, redemption is a price God pays to himself. God's justice must be fully satisfied, therefore, the cost of our sin to God's law must be exacted.

GREEK WORDS:

- Root- *luo* - to loosen, e.g. the loosening of bonds (as in prisoner), it can sometimes mean to release by payment of a ransom price.
- *Lutron* - the actual ransom price (Matt 20:28; Mk 10:45; 1 Pt 1:18).
- *Antilutron* - (*anti* = instead of) a ransom paid instead of others having to pay it, i.e. Jesus died in place of the elect sinner (1 Tim 2:6). This stronger word is what Paul uses to describe our salvation by a substitute.
- *Lutroo* (vb)- specifically meant to release by payment of a price (Titus 2:14).
- *Lutrosis* (n) - redemption, liberation, the act of freeing (Lk 2:38; Heb 9:12).
- *Apolutrosis* (n) - (above, with prefix *apo* - from) a release on payment of a ransom, set free, forgive, (Rm 3:24; Eph 1:7; Heb 9:15).
- *Agorazo* - to buy (1 Cor 6:19-20, 7:22-23; 2 Pt 2:1; Rev 5:9-10), i.e. the elect are purchased by the death of Christ.
- *Exagorazo* (vb) - i.e. above with *ek* (out of) as a prefix, to buy out.

The root word *agora* means 'the market place', therefore, these last two words have in mind purchasing out of the market so that the one purchased might not return, (Gal 3:13, 4:5).

TEACHING

- Jesus redeems us but propitiates God; God can then justify us.
- The price is Jesus' blood (Heb 9:22).
- Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all the elect (1 Tim 2:5-6, Titus 2:14).
- Jesus said this himself (Mk 10:45, Mt 20:28). Note: his ransom is for 'many', not 'everyone'.
- We are redeemed from the law (Gal 3:13, 4:5).
- The key thought is a substitutionary death to set others free.

Payment

NB that Scripture does not specifically indicate to whom the price was paid. Redemption emphasises that salvation was costly and that God's justice must be satisfied. In that sense God paid the price of his own righteous judgment or wrath. The sufferings of Christ are a penal satisfaction to the demands of the law. It is a matter of grace by the sovereign God that the penalty due to sinners is transferred to a substitute (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21). Historically, foolish ideas have been developed, for instance that Jesus paid Satan or demons to rescue his people (Satan does not own the elect or even the world).

The nature of atonement

As a result of these studies, we can see atonement as:

1. Substitutionary (vicarious)

- Man could only pay the penalty of breaking God's law by dying eternally; only eternal suffering adequately recompenses for his sin.
- In love, God appoints a saviour to die in the place of man, a vicar (substitute). This vicar atones for sin and obtains redemption for man.

Man → sin transferred to innocent party as substitute → the substitute suffers the wrath of God's judgment → man receives the innocence and righteousness of the substitute: 1 Pt 3:18.

Proof:

- The example of the identification of the sinner with the OT sacrifice.
- Our sin is laid upon Christ (Isa 53:6, 12; Jn 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pt 2:24). Our sins are imputed (reckoned, accounted) to Christ. He did not become sinful in his nature, he carried our sins; the guilt (liability to punishment, penalty) of our sin was imputed to him.
- Christ died instead, or on behalf, of us (Gal 3:13; Jn 11:50; 2 Cor 5:15; Mt 5:38, 20:28; Mk 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6).
- This means that there is a mystical union between Christ and those he died for. In eternity, a legal union was made in the plan of redemption. The mediator of the New Covenant undertook to be the representative of his people, the elect, given to him by God. This established a federal relationship. Christ could, therefore, act as the legal representative of his own and convey the blessings of salvation.

2. Penal

I.e. it concerns crime and person. The penalty of sin is death of the sinner. The satisfaction of justice requires the death and suffering equivalent to the crime.

3. Satisfaction (Christ's passive obedience)

Christ paid the full penalty for our sins by his suffering and death, thus discharging our debt. His infinite value as a divine man easily meets the full cost of all the elect's sinfulness. God's justice was, therefore, fully satisfied. (Isa 53:6; Rm 4:25; 1 Pt 2:24, 3:18; 1 Jn 2:2).

Atonement affects the person wronged (i.e. God), not the wrongdoer (the sinner is not atoned or propitiated). God must be appeased and reconciled to the sinner (the sinner is also reconciled to God, however, Rm 5:10; 2 Cor 5:19-20, since the reconciled God justifies the sinner).

Jesus → propitiates God. → God justifies the sinner.
 Jesus → redeems the sinner.



God and Man
reconciled.

4. Elevation (*Christ's active obedience*)

Salvation is more than a clean slate. We do not start afresh like Adam in Eden, we have '*more blessings than our father lost*'. The law has its positive demands as well as penal sanctions.

Christ's earthly obedience to the law was as vicarious as his suffering. Jesus fulfilled the law in all its positive requirements. He fulfilled all righteousness, not just in his acts, but in all the thoughts, words, intent, disposition, will and motivation of his human nature. His active obedience merited eternal life for the sinner. This is his full observance of the law and the inheritance of all its promises. I.e. the value of Christ's sufferings is greater than the value of man's sinful penalty. It is the basis of our justification (Heb 2:10-18, 5:8-10).

We do not revert to Adam's state before the fall, but are carried to a higher level of oneness with Christ. We receive more than forgiveness of sins (e.g. Gal 4:4-5 - set free from law, Gal 4:7 - sonship and adoption).

See Mt 3:15, 5:17-18; Jn 15:10; Gal 4:4-5; Heb 10:7-9; Rm 10:4; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9; Gal 3:13-14; Eph 1:3-12, 5:25-27.

Note: Arminians reject this idea that Christ merited for us positive acceptance with God, adoption and everlasting life. They make it a work of man.

Summary

[Christ] suffered the penalty of (man's) transgression [and] rendered that obedience which was the condition of 'life'. ... His 'active' obedience embraces his entire life and death viewed as vicarious obedience. His 'passive' obedience embraces his entire life, and especially his sacrificial death, viewed as vicarious suffering.⁷⁰

In other words, Christ discharged the penalty of sin begun by Adam and earns the reward of the covenant law, eternal life. The imputation of this righteousness and life is justification and is all of grace.

The source of this atonement is the love of God to save sinners (Jn 10:15; Gal 2:20; Rm 5:8; 1 Jn 3:16); it is given to us in free grace.

Nature of Atonement ⁷¹	Effects of Atonement
Jesus assumes legal responsibility for his people as a man.	Atonement is the effect, not the cause, of God's love.
He obeyed and suffered as their substitute.	It satisfied justice; i.e. it propitiated God.
His obedience and suffering were vicarious.	It expiated the guilt of sin and reconciled God to us.
The guilt of our sins was imputed (accounted) to Christ and punished in him.	It secured salvation for the elect and all its applications by the Holy Spirit (grace).
He suffered the due penalty for this as demanded by God's justice (he did not suffer exactly in kind, degree or duration as we would; i.e. eternal damnation).	It was a vicarious, penal satisfaction which motivates us to love and serve God.
His suffering was as a divine person in human nature.	It dissipates fear.

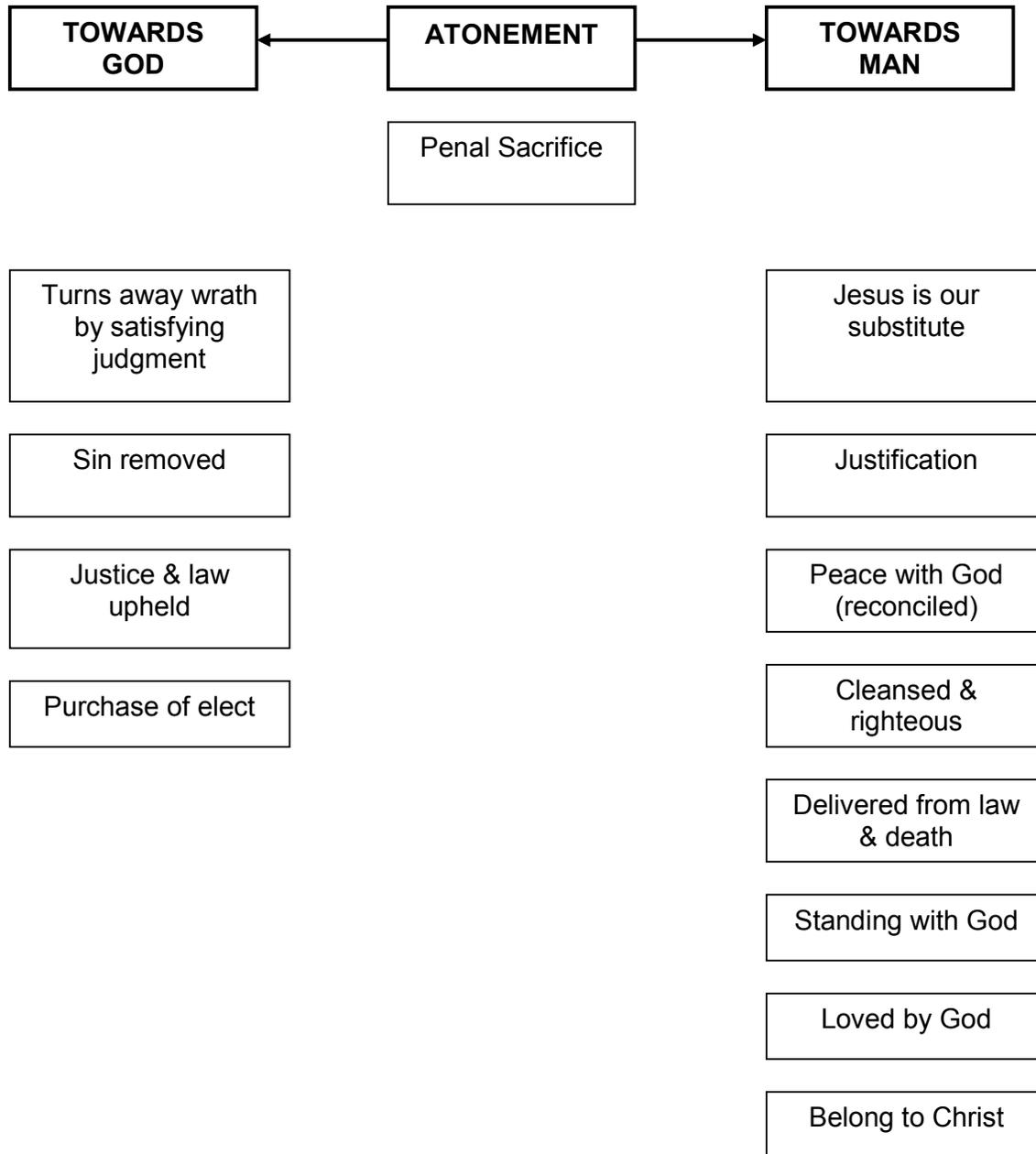
⁷⁰ AA Hodge; *Outlines of Theology*, Thomas Nelson & Sons, Edinburgh, (1883) p 401,405.

⁷¹ Adapted from thoughts by AA Hodge; '*Outlines of Theology*'.

Aspects of atonement

- Redemption / Ransom. (Jn 8:31-36, Gal 3:13, Mk 10:45)
- Reconciliation. (Rm 5:10-11, 2 Cor 5:18-20, Eph 2:16, Col 1:20-22)
- Propitiation. (1 Thess 1:10, 5:9; Rm 3:25)
- Justification. (Rm 4:25)
- Discharge from law. (Rm 7:4, Col 2:14)
- Freedom from death. (Rm 6:23, 1 Cor 15:52-57)
- Crucifixion of the flesh. (Gal 5:24; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Col 3:1-3; 1 Pt 4:1-2)
- Deliverance from world. (Gal 6:14)
- Deliverance from the power of sin. (Rm 6)
- Deliverance from Satan. (Heb 2:14-15; Eph 6:10-12; Jn 12:31)
- Penal sacrifice. (Eph 5:2, 1 Cor 5:7, Rm 8:3, Heb 9:7+)
- Bearing the curse. (Gal 3:13)
- Substitution. (Mk 10:45)

We can view this diagrammatically as:



Limited Atonement (Part 2)

We have seen that sin requires a substitutionary sacrifice for forgiveness. Sin must be paid for. God must be atoned (appeased) and his wrath and justice satisfied. Jesus is the one who pays that price with his own blood. His sacrifice results from the love and mercy of God in grace to unworthy sinners.

But whom did Christ die for? Did he die for everyone? Can the love of God and the blood of Christ be upon people in Hell because Christ died for them? Can God fail in anything he does (i.e. die for sinners who then go to Hell)? These are the questions raised by this subject.

Definition of limited atonement:

Jesus, as God's son, gave his life as a sacrifice to redeem only those who were given to him by his Father in the eternal decree. These are the elect.

Options on the extent of the atonement

1. *Universalism*

Christ died for everyone and all are saved.

Examples: Karl Barth, William Barclay, C.H. Dodd.

2. *Unlimited or General Atonement*

- Christ died for everyone; salvation is secured for the whole human race because God loves everyone.
- This is not affected by the lack of faith in individuals. Christ's death is even for those who do not believe.
- Those who believe receive the benefits of Christ's salvation.
- Those who do not believe are lost.

Examples: Arminianism (e.g. Methodism), Amyraldism, and Lutheranism. Examples in the UK: Alan Clifford (an Amyraldian) and RT Kendal (a 4-Point Calvinist).

3. *Limited or Definite Atonement (or Particular Redemption)*

- Christ's death was efficient for every elect person.
- Christ did not die for the lost who are sinners.

Examples: Augustine, The Reformers, The Puritans, The 39 Articles (Anglican), Calvinism, The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, Presbyterian confessions of faith (including the Westminster Confession and Catechisms).

Some like Peter Lombard, the Marrowmen and Andrew Fuller, taught that Christ's death was sufficient for all (i.e. its scope was infinite) but only efficient for some, the elect (i.e. its application). In reality, this always tended to Amyraldism or worse.

4. *The Mediate Position: Amyraldism (Hypothetical Universalism/Redemption)*

- Proposed by Moise Amyraut [1596-1664] and colleagues at the Saumur Academy in France. (See Appendix)
- Favoured by some Reformed theologians (H. Heppel, R. Baxter, S. Hopkins, A. H. Strong, L. S. Chafer). It was stringently resisted by the great Reformed theologians (C. Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, B.B. Warfield, A. A. Hodge, A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck etc). It was condemned in the Swiss Formula Consensus Helvetica of 1675.

- Amyraut tried to soften the edges of orthodox Reformed theology to relieve difficulties with the Roman Catholics and particularly the Lutherans. He thought that it would also reconcile scriptures speaking of God's compassion for sinners with passages which taught that God was angry with reprobates.
- It explained double predestination by softening the harsher aspects. Grace is made universal in the provision of salvation, but is particular in the application; i.e. selective in reality. This provides the basis for a hypothetical universal predestination and opens the door to Arminianism, despite the fact that Amyraut condemned it.
- It is a weakened form of Reformed theology which is popular today. Amyraut desired to maintain the standards of the Synod of Dort but show that God loved everyone. The result was heresy, which spawned a number of other evils. It demeans Christ's work in that it opens a possibility of salvation instead of Christ actually saving individuals (like Arminianism).

In other words, God loves everyone and appoints all men to be saved, but they must repent and believe. No one is excluded, there are no reprobates as such. Jesus died to make this possible. However, man cannot and will not believe without assistance, so God gives the Holy Spirit to some only (the elect). The inconsistency is obvious.

Limited Atonement

The key issue is: does Christ save all those he intends to save; all those he desires to have eternal life? Again, the question of the character and attributes of God is at stake. Is it possible for God to desire something and not achieve it? Of course not! The God of the Bible is omnipotent, all-powerful; he knows the end from the beginning. It is impossible that this God should desire something and then fail to implement it (Eccles 3:14).

But what of Christ's death? As well as demeaning the personality of God, how can we slight the death of Christ? Jesus' sacrifice is the most important event in the universe. It caused angels to shudder and interrupted the praise of God in heaven by causing silence for 'half an hour' (Rev 8:1). Let's be clear, on the cross God died for a rebellious and sinful creation. The death of Christ is an awesome matter.

Now how can that death be wasted? How can the blood of Christ, the most precious object in the Cosmos, be wasted? If you believe in unlimited atonement then this is the outcome: Christ died for people who were not saved. If God loves everyone, and provides the blood of Christ for everyone (as some say) then God's love and Christ's blood will be present in Hell upon the sinners who refused to believe the Gospel. This is an appalling thing to conceive.

The problem

Everyone who maintains a Biblical-based faith believes that not everyone will be converted. This is simply a Biblical fact, which is accepted by all true Christians. How then do we explain this? There is a limit on those being saved. Who controls this limit, God or man?

The Arminian criticises the Calvinist by deriding the term 'limited atonement'. Though not the best term that could have been chosen, the intention was to show that Jesus' death was selective or particular. He died for a specific group of people only. It is not limited in power but in scope. In the Arminian system, however, the power of God is what is limited. God exerts power to save men, only to be rejected by some. Jesus dies for all men only to have the value of his death wasted by some. It makes salvation only possible. It does not actually save anyone. That is a real curtailing of God's power. God's design and purpose is both unlimited, but also indefinite in this system.

If the value of every soul's sinfulness was placed on Christ and then he died for that universal value, then that portion of his suffering represented by those in Hell, was wasted. He died for nothing. But further, this portion of suffering would then be required twice: once by Jesus and once by the soul in Hell. This is unjust and cannot be true. Jesus could not die for people in Hell.

Arminianism logically leads to Universalism

- Atonement is satisfaction for sin, it restores the relationship between man and God by paying our debt of sin. If Christ did this for everyone, i.e. paid everyone's debt, then everyone must be saved!
- Jesus died as our substitute. If he did not die as the representative of the elect only, then he died vicariously for all men. Everyone must, therefore be saved!
- If the texts which speak of Jesus dying for 'the world' are interpreted in an Arminian way, then everyone must be saved.
- If the verses teaching that Jesus died for 'all' are interpreted in an Arminian way, then all men must be converted - including all the people in the past whom God said died in condemnation (e.g. the Canaanite nations, Sodom etc) and also including those whom Jesus specifically condemned (e.g. the Pharisees, Chorazin and Capernaum).
- Jesus' death is the only medication for sin. If this is applied in an unlimited fashion to all men, then all men must be cured of their sinfulness. If they are not cured, then Christ's blood is not an effective treatment!

The value of Christ's sacrifice

No sound believer doubts that the value of Jesus' life is not minimised by the term 'limited atonement'. Jesus' life's value is infinite and easily able to cover the cost of every human being. Limited atonement is not suggesting that Christ's sacrifice had only enough value to save a portion of the human race. No! It is simply that God, in his eternal purpose and good pleasure chose to apply the value of Jesus' sacrifice to a specific number of people.

The true scope of Jesus' death

In a word, Jesus died for his people.

- This redemption is actual and not potential. It certainly saves those it intends to save.
- The atonement was intended for the elect only.
- God's plan cannot be frustrated, he will have his people, chosen from eternity.
- Christ's intercession is the other half of his sacrificial offering; the extent of one must equal the other. Christ's intercession is clearly limited even by Christ himself (Jn 17:9). He could not have paid the price for everyone, but then only pray for some.
- Scripture clearly identifies the design of atonement and the application of it to men. The purpose of God in salvation was not to make it merely possible, but to actually redeem a people and provide a bride for Christ. (Matt 18:11; Rm 5:10; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4, 3:13; Eph 1:7). The design was not conditional upon faith and repentance in man since both were purchased by Christ in his death and are applied by the Holy Spirit. This was necessary to make actual salvation a certainty for the people it was intended for (Rm 2:4; Gal 3:13-14; Eph 1:3-4, 2:8; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:5-6)

Scriptures

Jesus died for a limited specific number:

You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt 1:21

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Jn 10:11, 15

Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock ... which he obtained with the blood of his own son. Acts 20:28

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all ... Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? Rm 8:32-33

Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Eph 5:25-27

For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Rev 5:9 [Atonement is only for the redeemed out of every tribe and nation.]

Jesus definitely saves all those he intends to save:

He shall see his seed. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Isa 53:10-11

All that the Father gives me, will come to me ... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. Jn 6:37, 39

Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am. Jn 17:24

Behold, I, and the children which God has given me. (Heb 2:13, note that this scene takes place in the glory.) See also Heb 9:11-12, 10:14

Christ has redeemed us (not potentially) from the curse of the law. Gal 3:13

Objections

The only possible question in the light of all this is how to explain the universalistic texts, i.e. those verses which seem to imply that salvation is for everyone.

I have looked at this in depth in other papers, also see 'Excursus Two'. Without going into depth here, a few words are in order.

First, if the verses are explained universally, then the logical outcome is universalism, i.e. everyone must be saved. This is clearly not the case and proves more than the Arminian would want, neither is it Biblical, so these verses must have limitations.

The verses break down into groups based on the words: world and all.

A simple study with a good concordance will show clearly that 'world' does not always mean all men but is used in various restrictive senses, and likewise, 'all', 'all men' does not always mean everyone (e.g. check Lk 2:1; Jn 1:10, 7:4, 12:19, 14:22; Acts 11:28; Rm 1:8, 11:12-15). If 'world' means everyone on earth in John 3:16-17 then there will be no one in Hell, all will be saved. It simply cannot mean everyone. The same applies to 1 Tim 2:4-6. There are various explanations: for instance the world of the elect (a purified race to inhabit the new world), all types of people not just Jews (this was hard for the early Jewish Christians to accept).

The main passages in question are:

- *World* - Jn 1:29, 3:16-17, 6:33,51; Rm 11:12,15; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 Jn 2:2.
- *All* - Rm 5:18; 1 Cor 15:22; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Tim 2:4-6; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; 2 Pt 3:9.

Students wishing to look at these more deeply can refer to good commentaries, good systematic theologies or my booklet *Does God Love Everyone*.

The offer of the Gospel

If the atonement provided by God is only intended for the elect, then it is clear that the Gospel message is also only applicable to the elect. There have been many disputes recently about the word 'offer'. Is the offer of the Gospel open to all or only some?

Firstly, the word 'offer' is unhelpful and not scriptural in the sense many people use it. The Gospel is not offered to all and sundry as a product to be bought. It is not to be marketed. The Gospel contains commands to believe and repent. As such, the Gospel is to be 'proclaimed' to all (Mk 16:15). Everyone is to hear the Gospel proclamation. Those that are elect will respond with faith and repentance which is given by God. Those that reject the Gospel truth seal their fate.

Our job as witnesses is to preach the truth of the Gospel to all, but this will never include an offer or a promise to every individual that the blessings of salvation are surely theirs. Only God knows who the elect are. Our job is to be fishers of men, to put out the net and catch the fish God gives us. Never should we tell everyone indiscriminately that God loves them, that salvation is theirs if they will only choose God, or that Jesus has died for them specifically. The promise is to all who believe, to all who receive, to all who repent, to all who confess Jesus as Lord. In other words, the blessing of the Gospel is to the elect, because these are the ones for whom Christ died.

[See Excursus Six.]

Quotes

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world, he has, out of mere grace, according to his sovereign will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of their salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God has decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them, The Canons of Dort; 1:7.

The quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing on them alone the gift of justifying faith. The Canons of Dort; 2:7-8.

As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, art. 6.

The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, art. 7.

The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself ... has fully satisfied the justice of his Father and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto him. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter VIII, Of Christ the Mediator; art. 5.

To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, he does certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, making intercession for them ... The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter VIII, Of Christ the Mediator; art. 8.

God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter XI, Of Justification; art. 4.

Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ has purchased it. The Westminster Larger Catechism; Question 59.

Appendix 1

Overview of Amyraldism

Basic theology

Most modern Calvinists, especially the ‘New Calvinists’, are not historical Calvinists at all. They claim to believe in the Doctrines of Grace but in their evangelism they preach Arminianism. They do this by proclaiming that God loves everyone, that Christ died for all and that man must decide to believe in Christ. Ordinarily, this would simply be Arminianism; but when these people also affirm particular election (denied by Arminians), then their theology has become Amyraldism. Also when 4-Point Calvinists deny Limited Atonement, they too adopt a form of Amyraldism.

Amyraldism is a theological system which seeks to affirm the Calvinistic concept of election while at the same time trying to make God look more acceptable to sinners, claiming that he loves everybody and that Christ died for everybody.⁷²

Amyraldism derives chiefly from a French theologian called Moise Amyraut⁷³ (1596-1664) of the Saumur Theological School, taking his lead from the Scot John Cameron who taught there for a while. Amyraut sought to unify Calvinists and Lutherans (and even Roman Catholics if possible) and developed a compromise between Calvinistic particularism (the elect singled out) and Lutheran universalism (which is similar to Arminian universalism).

This was based upon a universalistic Gospel (God loves everyone and desires to save everyone) tacked on to the particularism of Calvinism (God elects only some to eternal life in practice).

The essence of Amyraldism is:

- *Universalism*: salvation is hypothetically offered to all and available for all on the condition that they believe. Thus, God wills all men to be saved. But people are not saved as a result of their sin and rejection of the Gospel. The universalism does not result in the salvation of men and is thus merely hypothetical.
- *Particularism*: salvation is certain for the specific people chosen by God since men do not believe the offer.

Thus God loves everyone and decrees the salvation of everyone if they believe. However, since men don't believe God gives faith to the elect. This is a confused and contradictory system - all men can be saved by their own faith, but only the elect are actually saved by the gift of God's faith.

The doctrine was developed to avoid the impression that God is unfair, hateful or unjust in the doctrine of election; but it completely ignores many clear scriptures, such as that God does hate the wicked, or that the reprobate are chosen to condemnation from eternity.

Historically, Amyraldian pretexts have been the way that Arminianism and Calvinism have been welded together by some erroneous Reformed teachers, such as Richard Baxter, John Davenant and Andrew Fuller; as well as modern 4-Point Calvinists. It has been called ‘Hypothetical Universalism’ because it is a theological impossibility: it tries to unite two opposite and contradictory things.

Basic details of the system

The Covenant

Amyraldism views God's covenant as successive steps:

⁷² It also taught some other matters, such as mediate regeneration and a denial of verbal inspiration.

⁷³ In those days scholars took Latin names (as they wrote in Latin which was the universal language) so Amyraut becomes Amyrald.

- A 'Covenant of Nature' with Adam - involved obedience to divine law in the natural world.
- A 'Covenant with Israel' - involved obedience to Mosaic Law.
- A Covenant of Grace - which required faith. This is in two parts:
 - A conditional covenant of universal grace – it required fulfilment of the law as a condition of faith.
 - An unconditional covenant of particular grace which is God's good pleasure, which creates faith in the elect. Since men will not believe by their own initiative, God chooses some (elect) for a special measure of his Spirit.

We need not dwell on this matter here.

The decrees

If we look at it on the basis of God's decrees we see:

- God motivated to redeem men by a general love to all men.
- God sent Jesus to make the salvation of all men possible.
- God makes a universal hypothetical decree to save all men if they believe.
- All men have a natural ability to repent and believe (see next).
- However, this ability is counteracted by moral inability.
- So God gives efficacious grace to the elect only to secure their salvation.

The watering down of total depravity

Amyraut made a distinction between 'natural ability' and 'moral ability'; i.e. the power to believe and the willingness to believe. Man possesses the natural ability, but not moral ability. Thus man can exercise faith to salvation but is hindered by moral inability.

Mediate regeneration

This is the theory that in regeneration the Spirit illuminates the intellect but doesn't act directly on the will, contradicting Reformed teaching of the immediate operation of the Spirit on the will.⁷⁴

Grace

Faced with the problem of inherent depravity, Amyraut was inclined (like Zwingli and John Wesley) to extend the grace of God beyond the church. He averred that as God by his general providence operates upon the heathen, so he may produce in them a sort of unconscious Christianity, a faith without Biblical understanding.

Wesley took this to the point of averring that the heathen can be saved if sincere. Moderns, such as Robert Schuller and Billy Graham have also stated this.

Mediate imputation

The denial of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity (hereditary sin) and the concept of mediate imputation was not a teaching of Amyraut but of his colleague at Saumur Joshua Placaeus.

Amyraldism opposes Arminianism

It opposes Arminianism and agrees with many key points of Calvinism. Amyraut did not support Arminianism at all, in fact he opposed it and affirmed the Canons of Dort; but he was a sort of liberal that sought to soften what he considered to be the harsher edges of election and limited atonement. He wanted to say that God loved everybody.

⁷⁴ Another form of mediate regeneration teaches that the Spirit uses the preaching of the word as an instrument to regenerate the soul. This is wrong. The Holy Spirit acts directly on the will as a creative word to bring change. 'Regeneration is a creative act', (Berkhof). Regeneration is first necessary before a person can receive the truth of the Word unto salvation (Acts 16:14; Jn 6:64-65).

This then became a foundation for many subsequent lapses of Reformed theology, such as the Marrow Controversy in Scotland.

Historically, Amyraldians faded away by either joining the ranks of Calvinists or Arminians. However, it has resurfaced (along with many historic errors) in modern so-called 'New Calvinists' and 4-Point Calvinists.

Objections to Amyraldism

- It shows God decreeing contradictions. First, God decrees to send Christ as redemption for all because he loves everyone. Then, suddenly realising that this offer will be rejected, God decrees to elect only some to salvation.
- This in turn suggests that a decree of God can fail. God can never intend what will not be accomplished. If men are not saved, God did not intend that they should be saved.
- It does not represent Christ as purchasing the grace of effectual calling for his people. God is shown to confer this separate from, and subsequent to, Christ's redemption. Yet scripture reveals that this is given us in Christ (Eph 1:3; Phil 1:29; Heb 12:2).
- Foreknowledge precedes predestination (Rm 8:30). Christ is the means of accomplishing what is predestined. Therefore, predestination must precede the gift of Christ. (Eph 1:4-5)
- The love of God shown in salvation is not a vague, generalised benevolence indiscriminately aimed at everyone; but is a specific, powerful, mysterious and infinite love in which God gives his Son to procure a people.
- It ignores the case of the heathen completely; having no knowledge of Christ, they could not avail themselves of the supposed benefit of the hypothetical decree.

One of Amyraut's students (Pajon) took things further by suggesting that the Spirit's work in regeneration is only an illumination of the mind which changes the direction of the will (mediate regeneration).

Amyraldism is, therefore, a doctrine which opens up a possibility of salvation, instead of Christ atoning for anyone particularly. Christ, therefore, did not die for a specific people, but God elected a specific people. It wants to show God desiring the salvation of all but runs into the problem that not all are actually saved so it limits universal redemption to a possibility only.

This teaching is similar to much being taught today. Calvinists who wish to avoid the error of Arminianism generally, but feel that God must love everyone, fall into an Amyraldian type of doctrine. Some call themselves 'Four Point Calvinists' (i.e. they do not hold to Limited Atonement), yet do not realise that this is totally inconsistent and is the basis of Amyraldism, rejected as heresy by our wiser forefathers. It is also surprising that very few systematic theologies even list Amyraldism in their indices, presumably being of the view that this position is now irrelevant.

Analytically, it reverses the order of decrees by making Christ a saviour for everyone and then electing some, i.e. there is no limit to the atonement. Amyraldism teaches that:

- God decrees to save all men in Christ on condition of faith.
- Since no one will believe, God decrees to save some by giving special grace to believe.

It can seem at first to be a small matter that redemption precedes election instead of election preceding redemption; but it is of great importance. One is Biblical, the other is not.

Amyraut maintained the Calvinistic premises of an eternal foreordination and foreknowledge of God, whereby he caused all things inevitably to pass—the good efficiently, the bad permissively. He also admitted the double decree of election and reprobation. But in addition to this he taught that God foreordained a *universal salvation* through the universal sacrifice of

Christ offered to all alike, on condition of *faith*, so that on the part of God's will and desire the grace is universal, but as regards the condition it is particular ... The universal redemption scheme precedes the particular election scheme, and not *vice versa*. He reasons from the benevolence of God towards his creatures; Amyraut distinguished between objective grace which is offered to all, and subjective grace in the heart which is given only to the elect.⁷⁵

We can summarise the various positions on the decrees like this:

Universalism	Arminian Methodism	Lutheranism	Amyraldism	Calvinism
Permission of the Fall.	Permission of the Fall: guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of the Fall: guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of the Fall: guilt, corruption, <u>moral</u> inability.	Permission of the Fall: guilt, corruption, total inability.
Predestination of everyone to life.	Christ atones for everyone.	Christ atones for everyone.	Christ makes salvation possible for all.	Election of some to eternal life.
Christ atones for all.	Remission of original sin to all & gift of sufficient grace.	Gift of means of grace to communciate saving grace.	Election of some for the gift of moral ability.	Christ redeems the elect.
Holy Spirit applies atonement to all to life.	Predestination for all those who improve sufficient grace.	Predestination to life for those who do not resist the means of grace.	Gift of the Holy Spirit to work moral ability in the elect.	Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed.
Everyone saved.	Sanctification of all who co-operate with sufficient grace.	Sanctification through the means of grace.	Sanctification by the Holy Spirit.	Sanctification of all the redeemed.
Adapted from BB Warfield.				

Summary of the matter regarding the Doctrines of Grace

Many writers make their analysis of Amyraldism very complicated, but the matter can be summed up in this way:

Hypothetical Universalism (Amyraldism) teaches that the motive for redemption is that God loves all men, the whole world. As a result, God sent Jesus to make the salvation of all men possible and offers salvation to all people. All they have to do is believe in Christ, which they have a natural ability to do. However, this natural ability is counteracted by moral inability, so God determined to elect certain people to redemption to assure their salvation.

Regarding atonement, Christ dies for all men. He dies conditionally for some if they believe (which they can't). He dies absolutely for the elect, whom God gives grace to believe and repent.

To simply summarise the objections:

- God loves the elect in Christ from eternity and no one else. In fact, Scripture shows us that he hates sinners and even specific people.
- The Bible testifies that those in Christ have all the promised blessings of salvation.
- The Bible nowhere teaches that Christ's death was for all people.
- The work of Christ achieves its end and does not fail (Isa 53:11; Matt 1:21). He died for a specific people identified as 'his people', 'his sheep', 'his flock' etc.
- Election precedes redemption and is not an afterthought.
- Amyraldism proposes either change or failure in God's plans (God purposed to save all but does not).
- Heathen people have no opportunity to believe and repent.

⁷⁵ 'The Helvetic Consensus Formula. A.D. 1675.' No author cited.

- It does not remove the difficulties regarding the sovereignty of God in salvation which it proposed to do.

Note:

Luther himself, and Melanchthon in the early days (his follower), taught strict Augustinian doctrine (i.e. essential Calvinism). Later, Melanchthon taught that men co-operate with God in conversion. This was later rejected by the Formula of Concord, but this document allowed for man to resist God's grace. Later Lutheran theologians rejected this document also. They now teach that the objects of election are those God foresaw would believe and persevere to the end (i.e. Arminianism). In this the means of grace, imbued with spiritual power, assists the unbeliever to be saved, if he does not resist. Thus Lutheranism succumbed to universalism.

Quotes

The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675)

The Helvetic Consensus Formula (*Formula Consensus Helvetica* - Latin) was the last Swiss Reformed confession that closed the period of Continental Calvinistic creeds. This document was produced specifically to deal with the errors of the Saumur School and Amyraut in particular. The Saumur School departed from the orthodoxy that prevailed in the Lutheran and Reformed Churches (at that time) in three chief points: 1) the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures; 2) particular predestination (election), and 3) the imputation of Adam's sin. The Formula was intended as an appendix to earlier standards to expose the heresy of Saumur.

Due to its specific relevance to this subject, I will include large portions of this standard.

Canon IV: Before the creation of the world, God decreed in Christ Jesus our Lord according to his eternal purpose, in which, from the mere good pleasure of his own will, without any prevision of the merit of works or of faith, to the praise of his glorious grace, to elect some out of the human race lying in the same mass of corruption and of common blood, and, therefore, corrupted by sin. He elected a certain and definite number to be led, in time, unto salvation in Christ, their Guarantor and sole Mediator. And on account of his merit, by the mighty power of the regenerating Holy Spirit, he decreed these elect to be effectually called, regenerated and gifted with faith and repentance. So, indeed, God, determining to illustrate his glory, decreed to create man perfect, in the first place, then permit him to fall, and finally pity some of the fallen, and therefore elect those, but leave the rest in the corrupt mass, and finally give them over to eternal destruction.

Canon VI: Wherefore, we can not agree with the opinion of those who teach: 1) that God, moved by philanthropy, or a kind of special love for the fallen of the human race, did, in a kind of conditioned willing, first moving of pity, as they call it, or inefficacious desire, determine the salvation of all, conditionally, i.e., if they would believe, 2) that he appointed Christ Mediator for all and each of the fallen; and 3) that, at length, certain ones whom he regarded, not simply as sinners in the first Adam, but as redeemed in the second Adam, he elected, that is, he determined graciously to bestow on these, in time, the saving gift of faith; and in this sole act election properly so called is complete. For these and all other similar teachings are in no way insignificant deviations from the proper teaching concerning divine election; because the Scriptures do not extend unto all and each God's purpose of showing mercy to man, but restrict it to the elect alone, the reprobate being excluded even by name, as Esau, whom God hated with an eternal hatred (Rom 9:11). The same Holy Scriptures testify that the counsel and will of God do not change, but stand immovable, and God in the heavens does whatsoever he will (Ps 115:3; Isa 47:10); for God is infinitely removed from all that human imperfection which characterises inefficacious affections and desires, rashness repentance and change of purpose. The appointment, also, of Christ, as Mediator, equally with the salvation of those who were given to him for a possession and an inheritance that can not be taken away, proceeds from one and the same election, and does not form the basis of election.

Canon XI: For a double reason, therefore, man, because of sin, is by nature, and hence from his birth, before committing any actual sin, exposed to God's wrath and curse; first, on account of the transgression and disobedience which he committed in the loins of Adam; and, secondly, on account of the consequent hereditary corruption implanted to his very conception, whereby his whole nature is depraved and spiritually dead; so that original sin may rightly be regarded as twofold, imputed sin and inherent hereditary sin.

Canon XII: Accordingly we cannot, without harm to the Divine truth, agree with those who deny that Adam represented his posterity by God's intention, and that his sin is imputed, therefore, immediately to his posterity; and under this mediate and consequent imputation not only destroy the imputation of the first sin, but also expose the doctrine of hereditary corruption to grave danger.

Canon XIII: As Christ was elected from eternity the Head, the Leader and Lord of all who, in time, are saved by his grace, so also, in time, he was made Guarantor of the New Covenant only for those who, by the eternal election, were given to him as his own people, his seed and inheritance. For according to the determinate counsel of the Father and his own intention, he encountered dreadful death instead of the elect alone, and restored only these into the bosom of the Father's grace, and these only he reconciled to God, the offended Father, and delivered from the curse of the law. For our Jesus saves his people from their sins (Matt 1:21), who gave his life a ransom for many sheep (Matt 20:24, 28; John 10:15), his own, who hear his voice (John 10:27-28), and he intercedes for these only, as a divinely appointed Priest, and not for the world (John 17:9). Accordingly in expiatory sacrifice, they are regarded as having died with him and as being justified from sin (2 Cor 5:12): and thus, with the counsel of the Father who gave to Christ none but the elect to be redeemed, and also with the working of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and seals unto a living hope of eternal life none but the elect. The will of Christ who died so agrees and amicably conspires in perfect harmony, that the sphere of the Father's election, the Son's redemption. And the Spirit's sanctification are one and the same.

Canon XVI: Since all these things are entirely so, we can hardly approve the opposite doctrine of those who affirm that of his own intention and counsel and that of the Father who sent him, Christ died for each and every one upon the condition, that they believe. We also cannot affirm the teaching! that he obtained for all a salvation, which, nevertheless, is not applied to all, and by his death merited a salvation and faith for no one individually but only removed the obstacle of divine justice, and acquired for the Father the liberty of entering into a new covenant of grace with all men. Finally, they so separate the active and passive righteousness of Christ, as to assert that he claims his active righteousness as his own, but gives and imputes only his passive righteousness to the elect. All these opinions, and all that are like these, are contrary to the plain Scriptures and the glory of Christ, who is Author and Finisher of our faith and salvation; they make his cross of none effect, and under the appearance of exalting his merit, they, in reality diminish it.

Canon XIX: ... Although these "all" are the elect alone, and God formed no plan of universal salvation without any selection of persons, and Christ therefore died not for everyone but only for the elect who were given to him; yet he intends this in any case to be universally true, which follows from his special and definite purpose. But that, by God's will, the elect alone believe in the external call which is universally offered, while the reprobate are hardened. This proceeds solely from the discriminating grace of God; election by the same grace to those who believe, but their own native wickedness to the reprobate who remain in sin, who after their hardened and impenitent heart build up for themselves wrath for the Day of Judgment, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Canon XXII: We hold therefore that they speak inaccurately and dangerously, who call this inability to believe moral inability, and do not say that it is natural, adding that man in whatever condition he may be placed is able to believe if he desires, and that faith in some way or other, indeed, is self-originated. The Apostle, however, clearly calls [salvation] the gift of God (Eph 2:8).

Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling

[Who chooses those who are saved?]

Definition

God's call is a summons in grace by the preaching of the Gospel to believe in Christ. It is a sovereign act of God to impart power by the Holy Spirit to draw those who are elect and enable them to believe and repent effectually. It actuates in time that which is part of his plan and purpose for us from eternity to be in Christ (Rm 8:28-9; 2 Tim 1:9).

God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago. 2 Tim 1:9

The origin of this call is God the Father: Rm 8:28-30; Gal 1:15; Eph 1:17-18; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tim 1:8-9. There are two calls or two aspects to the calling of God.

1. External and General Call

- This is the call of the Gospel to everyone to repent and believe.
- Comes from the Holy Spirit via ministers of the Gospel.
- Is resisted by men:
 - I will destine you for the sword ... because when I called you did not answer, when I spoke you did not listen but you did what was evil. Isa 65:12
 - You always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did. Acts 7:51
 - I have called and you refused to listen. Prov 1:24
 - Many are called but few are chosen. Matt 22:14
- Example of external call:
 - Come to me, all who labour. Matt 11:28
 - Preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Mk 16:15

Note:

Some Reformed preachers, like many others, suggest that this call is well meant, or a sincere offer. They base this on scriptures like Ezek 18:23, 33:11; Mt 23:37 etc). More consistent scholars (including Calvin) explain that:

- First, the Gospel is not an offer, the apostles issued commands to believe or repent.
- Secondly, God cannot possibly offer life to someone whom he has decreed is reprobate. It would be callous, not to mention lying, to promise life to someone God knows can never obtain it.
- The Gospel must be proclaimed in Biblical terms only.

See Excursus Six for a discussion of the free offer.

2. Internal and Effectual Call

- The Holy Spirit powerfully applies the external call as an inward call to the elect.
- This is an internal grace, which renders the call effective.
- It always produces repentance and faith by opening the heart and giving ability.
- It is a powerful operation of the Holy Spirit to apply the word to the heart and involves moral persuasion. He gives insight to the understanding and influences the will so that the sinner turns to God.

- The Holy Spirit convinces of sin, enlightens about Christ, renews our wills and persuades us to accept Jesus.
- God does not provide a work of salvation for us to take for ourselves (i.e. Arminianism), he applies it to our souls (i.e. Calvinism): 'Salvation is of the Lord', (Jonah 2:9). We do make a choice, we are responsible, but the ability and the motivation to make that choice derives solely from God's grace (Phil 2:13).
- Compare Gen 1 (Creation): here we see a word of divine power whereby God calls into being things that do not exist. The act of creation is a picture of the new creation (regeneration) in salvation. (Cf. Rm 4:17, God gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.)

Scriptures

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and him who comes to me I will not cast out. Jn 6:37

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Jn 6:44

No one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father. Jn 6:65

The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name. Jn 10:3

For the promise is to ... everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him. Acts 2:39

As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Acts 13:48 [Note that this follows the external call in v47.]

The Lord opened her (Lydia) heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. Acts 16:14

The gifts and call of God are irrevocable. Rm 11:29

Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. Rm 8:30 also v28; see Rm 9:14-18

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son. 1 Cor 1:9

We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Cor 1:23-24, see also 2:14

(God) who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose. 2 Tim 1:9

But you are a chosen race a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. That you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Pt 2:9, see 2 Pt 1:10

Words used in the Bible

- *Kaleo* - call .
- *Klesis* - call, invitation.
- *Kletos* - called, invited.
- *Epikaleomai* - call, appeal to.
- *Proskaleomai* – summon.

Paul uses *Kaleo* 29x, *Klesis* 8x, *Kletos* 7x, almost always with the sense of divine calling. He does not use *Proskaleomai* (except in the pastorals; it is also in Hebrews and 1 & 2 Peter).

Note that the church is *Ekklesia*, a body of people called out, called together.

Effectual Calling results in

- Fellowship with Christ 1 Cor 1:9 (Union with Christ).
- Blessing 1 Pt 3:9.

- Liberty Gal 5:13.
- Peace 1 Cor 7:15.
- Eternal life 1 Tim 6:12.
- Participation in God's kingdom and glory 1 Thess 2:12.
- Following Christ in suffering 1 Pt 2:21.
- Winning the prize Phil 3:14.
- Holiness 1 Thess 4:17.

I.e. a distinctive NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.

Objections

1. Is it not unjust for God to pick some to be saved and call them only?

This really is a question about election, which we have already covered, however:

- On the basis of justice we all deserve hell.
- Mercy is the province of God, since it is mercy - it must be based upon his sovereign choice. We have no prior claim on God's mercy.
- Hell is for people who refuse to repent (Rm 3:10-20).
- People are saved by grace but condemned by justice; election is gracious.
- Man is responsible to God but is not capable of pleasing him, just as a bankrupt can't pay his debts but is still responsible.
- Rejection of the Gospel is always ascribed to human refusal to believe.

2. Is God's general call sincere since the sinner is unable to obey?

- The call itself is a motive to obey but sinners refuse to obey.
- It is no more insincere than God's command to love him with all your heart.
- If it is proper to publish the commands of the law, it is also the same for the Gospel.
- You can still give an invitation sincerely even if you know that it will be refused. Some theologians split the offer of the Gospel into God's desire for all men to be saved as his revealed will, but his purpose to save some only as his secret will. This is inconsistent. To start with it is not a secret that God only purposes some to be saved. The Bible makes this clear for all to see. A better analysis is that God commands all men to believe and repent which is his prescriptive will, his will of command; but elects only some to salvation which is his decretive will, his will of decree, purpose.
- Preachers must not proclaim the Gospel in a way that makes God insincere, i.e. by stating that God loves everyone or that Jesus has died for everyone (see last study).
- God is true. Scripture shows God commanding Pharaoh to let his people go despite knowing that he will not obey (Ex 5:1 with 7:3-4). God sends the good things of providence (rain and sun) on the unjust as well as the just (Acts 14:17).

3. Is this call really irresistible?

- It is better to say that it is effectual, i.e. it accomplishes its purpose, it is not compulsion.
- The elect can resist for a while (cf. Paul).
- Note Ps 110:3: 'Your people will offer themselves freely'.
- Note Phil 2:12-13.
- The Holy Spirit gives new dispositions by which the sinner accepts Christ. God changes the will (Jn 1:12-13).

Quotes

God's saving grace and effectual calling are irresistible, not in the sense that they can never be resisted, but in the sense that they are never successfully resisted. A H Strong; Syst. Theol. p 436.

No one will dedicate himself to God till he be drawn by his goodness and embrace him with all his heart. He must therefore call us to him before we call upon him. J Calvin; Inst. 2.74.

This calling of Abraham is a signal example of the gratuitous mercy of God. J Calvin; Comm. Gen 1. 343.

Abraham was justified many years after he had been called by God. J Calvin; Comm. Gen 1.408.

Only when God shines in us by the light of his Spirit is there any profit from the word. Thus the inward calling, which alone is effectual and peculiar to the elect, is distinguished from the outward voice of men. J Calvin; Comm. Rm 10:16.

What is effectual calling? A. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit. The Westminster Larger Catechism; 67.

All those whom God has predestined to life and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit. Westminster Confession; 10.1.

Views on the call of God

PELAGIAN	SEMI-PELAGIAN	ARMINIAN	REFORMED
Man has the full ability of free will to cease from sin. The Holy Spirit does not change man morally.	Grace is necessary for man to turn to God but he must first desire to be free from sin and choose God. Man has natural ability to accept the Gospel.	Christ died for every man, and man can respond to the external call on the basis of sufficient grace granted to all. As man works with God this grace becomes efficient.	<i>Man is dead in sins, depraved totally and unable to respond. (Eph 2).</i>
Man is morally neutral.	Morally sick but can respond.	Depraved but grace given to co-operate with God by exercising free will.	<i>Man is spiritually dead. His will is bound from doing spiritual good.</i>
God is not in control, does not determine outcome of the external call, but man does.			<i>God is sovereign</i>

Appendix One

The Plan of Salvation

We have noted before that different persons in the Godhead have different responsibilities in salvation. Effectual calling is the action of the Holy Spirit i.e. it is accomplished in time by him; the origin is the Father because he elected the people to be called.

FATHER (*Election*) j **SON** (*Redemption*) j **HOLY SPIRIT** (*Effectual Calling*)

The order of salvation (*Ordo Salutis*)

There are differing opinions on this and always have been. The benefits of this study can be pressed too far and certainly should not be a cause of division. However, it does help us to grasp the plan of salvation if we can identify the components and put them into some order just as a doctor examines the physiology and operations of a human body, even though he doesn't understand them all. His knowledge of how it fits together helps him to treat people.

Example 1

1 Effectual Call.

2 Regeneration.

3 Conversion (i.e. faith & repentance) based upon Rm 8:29-30.

Held by John Murray, AA Hodge (US Presbyterians).

Example 2

1 External Call.

2 Regeneration.

3 Effectual Call.

4 Conversion.

Held by J.L Dagg (US Baptist), Louis Berkhof (Dutch-American Presbyterian).

Example 3

1 Regeneration.

2 Calling.

3 Faith.

4 Conversion.

5 Justification.

6 Sanctification.

7 Preservation.

8 Glorification.

Held by Herman Hoeksema (Dutch-American Presbyterian).

In practical terms, regeneration, effectual call and conversion all coincide. In children, the seed of regeneration can be received before the age of reason, i.e. before they hear the external call in their consciousness.

Eternal Security

Introduction

This doctrine is also known as the Final Perseverance (or preservation) of the Saints. Like the other distinctives of the five points, this follows naturally from election. If God has chosen a select group of people for salvation, paid for their iniquities, and given them grace to respond to his call, it is only to be expected that these people will endure to the end. Why? Because salvation is all of God. If he has inspired it, empowered it and engineered it, he will also fulfil it. How could God do all that we have seen so far in redemption, and then let those he loved from eternity fall away?

Definition

Those whom God has chosen from eternity to be the bride of Christ, whom he has called by his grace and saved with by the atonement of Christ, will assuredly be kept by his power to the end, and will stand redeemed to be presented to Christ at his return.

What this doctrine does not teach

Eternal security does not teach that:

- All who profess to be Christians will be saved (Matt 7:21).
- All who can prophesy or work signs and wonders in Jesus' name will be saved (Matt 7:22-23).
- All who are baptised will be saved.
- All who attend a Christian church will be saved.
- All who prayed the sinner's prayer will be saved.

[In view of this, the popular phrase: '*once saved always saved*' is unhelpful. It is misleading, since many who profess faith and appear to be steadfast actually fall, and in some cases, fall throughout their lives never to regain the first position. Secondly, it gives the appearance that a Christian need not worry about his conduct since his eternal safety is assured. This is far from the truth.]

What is the basis of this security?

The unchangeable purpose of God.

He elected those who would be saved.

The provision of God.

He did not choose on the basis of works or foreseen faith. In fact, he did foresee all our disobedience and yet chose us. So God is not surprised by our failures and continues to give us grace to continue in faith. Jesus purchased the means as well as the end of our redemption. He obtained not only eternal life, but sufficient grace to help his people in time of need (Heb 4:16, 10:14; Eph 5:25-27; Titus 2:14).

God's decree

Jesus chose to die for a specific people. Our names are written on the palms of his hands. He will not fail to deliver up his people to his Father.

God's covenant

God has covenanted to do good to his people, to give them a new heart so that they will not depart from him. (Isa 55:3, 61:8; Jer 32:40; Ezek 37:26-7; Heb 8:10).

The death of Christ

We were reconciled whilst enemies to God, how much more shall we be protected now that we are in Christ (Rm 5:8-10).

The ascension of Christ

Jesus is at the Father's right hand interceding for us always. Will his prayer for our protection (Jn 17:20) fail to be answered? Of course not.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit

Eph 1:14, Christians are regenerated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 3:9). God's life is in us. This is also called a 'sealing' or an 'earnest' (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5). The presence of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of our final salvation. We are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph 4:30).

God's seal (has been) affixed to his covenant of grace. This, then, is the blessed assurance of hope which the true believer is privileged to attain. Dabney

God promises to complete that which he begins

Phil 1:6; Heb 6:16-18.

The word of God

See scriptures below.

We are now new creatures

With eternal life which is incorruptible (2 Cor 5:17; Jn 11:25-26; 1 Pt 1:23).

Scriptures

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (See all verses) Isa 43:1-3

My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you. Isa 54:10

It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that any of these little ones should perish. (Lost Sheep parable) Matt 18:12-14

He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Jn 5:24

Him who comes to me I will not cast out ... this is the will of him who sent me; that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. (See all) Jn 6:35-40

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one is able to snatch them out of my hand, ... no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (See all) Jn 10:27-30

Holy Father, keep them in thy name ... I have guarded them, and none of them is lost ... keep them from the evil one. (See all) Jn 17:11-15

If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (See all) Rm 5:8-10

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rm 8:1

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (See all) Rm 8:35-39

Who (Jesus) will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See all) 1 Cor 1:7-9

Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Col 3:3-4

May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 1 Thess 5:23-24

Who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See all) 1 Pt 1:3-5

See also: Jn 4:14; 2 Cor 4:14,17; Eph 1:5,13,14, 4:30; Heb 7:25, 9:12-15, 10:14; 1 Jn 5:4,11-13,20; Jude 1,24,25; Jer 32:40; Ps 37:28.

Illustrations

A father walks along some cliffs with his son. He holds his son's hand very tight yet he says to him, 'Hold my hand tightly son, for if you loose and slip you will fall off the cliff and die.' Does this statement mean that he will let his son go? Does the child's safety rely upon his own holding of his father's hand? Of course not. The warning is necessary for the son's training, but the father will not loose the son that he loves.

A mother is busy in the kitchen with her young daughter playing nearby. She tells the girl not to go near the fire or she will get burned. Does this mean that the mother will let the child burn herself unless she is careful to stay away from the flames? It is right to warn the child of the dangers of fire. It is part of her training. If she ignores her mother and touches the flames she will be burned. But will her mother leave her to this fate? If the daughter ventures too near the fire, the mother would drop everything, run to the girl and prevent her from being harmed. The warning does not imply the lack of love and protection from the parent.

Difficult texts

Matt 10:22, 24:13; Mk 13:13

[Various passages teach that only the one that endures to the end will be saved.]

There is no problem here. This is a true statement. The only way to be sure that one is a genuine Christian is to endure to the end and remain faithful. However, the power that keeps a Christian to the end is the power that God gives; it is not our own strength and effort. God will ensure, for he has promised, that all his people will, indeed, endure to the end, because his Spirit is with them to preserve them as Jesus prayed (Jn 17).

Heb 6:1-8

There are two ways to explain this passage. The first is to identify the persons mentioned as not born again people. Judas Iscariot is a good example of this. He experienced all the things mentioned here and yet was not saved. They are people who have come close to the Gospel and experienced the power of God in church life but are not born again.

The second is to show that this passage is a hypothetical argument used to make a point. The passage is not about salvation but progress. The logical conclusion of continually going over the foundational issues is to repent and be converted each time you fall aside. This is impossible. You cannot resurrect your old nature and die again. To do so is to re-crucify Christ. If a true Christian fell from grace, he could not be renewed again (the writer does not say that this is possible but in fact, implies the opposite). Since there is no point in continually digging up the foundations of the Christian life, the writer insists that these people must move on to better things.

(For further explanation of this, please refer to my study on Hebrews 6.)

Heb 10:26-29

The writer does not say that anyone has committed this sin. The general context of this letter is about the danger of not going on in Christianity but returning to Judaism. If someone renounces Christ and returns to a false religion, there is no hope for salvation since there is no salvation anywhere else. This is a simple fact. If we reject Christ and spurn the Son of God, we are lost;

however, a true Christian will never do this.

Ezek 18:24

This passage is not concerning perseverance, apostasy or even salvation. It concerns the vindication of God's justice when the Jews claimed that they were being unfairly punished for the sins of their fathers'. The word 'righteous' here is used to denominate the man as an Israelite in the land. It is an outward or legal righteousness, not the result of justification. The whole chapter shows Ezekiel calling Israel to repentance. Although God does visit the father's sin on the children (usually the sin affects the family detrimentally), Ezekiel explains that God does not impute the guilt of it to righteous children. Nationally, prosperity comes to the obedient nation, even if it succeeded a rebellious generation.

There is an essential difference in the very nature of the righteousness of those who persevere and those who fall away. The one is a lasting sort, the other is not. Jonathan Edwards

Theological tension

At this point we have to be faithful to scripture and not hold arbitrarily to preferred theological sheepfolds. Honesty declares that we must consider the fact that there are many passages which imply that the consummation of salvation is the responsibility of the convert. They do not so much state that salvation can be lost as exhort to endurance. Passages like:

We are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope. Heb 2:6

Take care brethren lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. Heb 2:12

For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end. Heb 2:14

These passages are clearly addressed to believers (Heb 3:1) and cannot be fobbed off. What does all this mean?

The issue of Divine Sovereignty versus Human Responsibility has taxed Bible students for centuries. It is not good enough to stress one and ignore the other. The Bible emphasises both at once. Calvinists who fail to teach the urgency of good works following salvation are failing God and their flocks. Arminians who teach that Christians can lose their salvation totally dishonour God and ignore the strength of many texts which state the opposite.

What we have to teach is a theological tension which God has designed for character building and faith. This is seen in the doctrine of conversion as well as eternal security.

1. Conversion

- God originates and empowers (Jn 6:44, 65; Eph 2:8).
- Man is responsible for repentance and accountable for rejection of the Gospel (Acts 2:38, 17:30).

2. Perseverance

- God empowers and completes (Phil 1:6).
- Man is responsible for his actions and accountable for conduct [settlement is by rewards at the Day of Judgment] (Heb 3:14).

These two aspects of salvation must be held in balance together. In doing so we uphold the sovereignty of God in our salvation and insist upon ongoing sanctification in believers.

Final warning

We cannot be sure of our salvation by looking inwardly. Nothing we do, however spiritual, is the

ground of our security. Only by looking to Jesus and trusting and obeying him can we make our calling certain (2 Pt 1:10).

Judas Iscariot is an example of someone who moved with Jesus and the disciples, preached the good news, and performed signs and wonders (Lk 10:17) and yet was a son of perdition (Jn 17:12).

Final encouragement

The thief on the cross had no time to develop any practical sanctification but was assured by Jesus of his salvation. The thief had genuinely believed in Jesus' lordship and Messiahship and had trusted him for a place in his kingdom.

Practical

God preserves his people through their perseverance. He does not magically spare them suffering or persecution, his people are to use the means that God has provided for their own good and avoid those things which scripture warns about.

There are two sides to this security, God's provision and our obedience. This is best summed up in Philippians

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Phil 1:6

God will ensure that a true believer will persevere to the end.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Phil 2:12-13

God works in the believer the desire and will to do his good pleasure. The source is God. However, the believer must still work out this salvation with fear and trembling.

Some scriptures emphasise the one side (e.g. Jude 21) while others emphasise the other (e.g. Jude 24). Without God giving us grace, we could do nothing to keep ourselves secure. Although we have a responsibility, all the glory goes to God.

We are kept through faith (1 Pt 1:3-5). God's power shields us as we believe. God continues to supply the necessary faith so that we endure. He keeps us believing. Yet faith must be exercised by us (Heb 10:35). *'There is no such thing in scripture as perseverance without faith ... but those who have faith will persevere.'* (Sinclair Ferguson)

God's purposes always achieve their end; in salvation, someone who is justified will continue on to be sanctified and ultimately glorified. This means that justification leads to holiness. Growth in holiness is the only means by which we can ascertain that a genuine work of God has taken place in a person's life. There is no such thing as someone being converted and then feeling free to do as they please and habitually sin. Someone who continues to sin without grief has not been saved.

Quotes

Q: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

A: That I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered, from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yes and all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day 1, Question 1.

Q: What profit is this glory [of Jesus' exaltation] of Christ, our Head, to us?

A: First that by his Holy Spirit he pours out heavenly graces upon his members; and then that by his power he defends and preserves us against our enemies. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day XIX, Question 51.

What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' [i.e. universal church] of Christ?
That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain, a living member thereof. The Heidelberg Catechism; Lord's Day XXI, Question 54.

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace, if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms, and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end, Canons of Dort; V:3.

They whom God has 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 certainly persevere, therein to the end, and be eternally saved. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter XVII Of the Perseverance of the Saints, Art. 1.

This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding Spirit, and the seed of God within them. The Westminster Confession of Faith; Chapter XVII Of the Perseverance of the Saints, Art. 2.

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Excursus One

To What Extent Does Man Have Free Will?

It has been an age-old question: where is the balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility? In the realm of conversion we can be sure that regeneration precedes repentance and faith since the Bible declares that faith is a gift of God (Eph 2:8) and that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him (Jn 6:44). Unless God does something inside a man's heart, there can be no conversion. The effectual call of the Holy Spirit must precede any action of man in deciding for Jesus. The responsibility of man is, therefore, to repent and believe as a result of being enabled by God. Naturally we have no will to surrender to God, being lost in our sins and depravity. Paul makes this clear in Romans; quoting Psalms he declares that no one seeks for God

(Rm 3:10). Despite the testimony of God being plainly seen in creation men do not honour God, rather they suppress the truth and have become futile in their thinking (Rm 18 ff). God must supply the will to repent. He radically changes our disposition to turn us from our sins.

In the case of the elect then, free will is not really an issue. Man has a responsibility to repent but does so as a result of God's action in his heart. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are combined, but the source of the initial action is God. Salvation is of the Lord.

But what about ordinary men? To what degree is man's will free generally? If he didn't have free will then he would be a zombie. We know that this is not the case. God created man to make choices. But man cannot chose to be saved, as we have seen. His free will cannot be a will to chose life, or salvation would cease to be of the Lord and would be of man. This is the case in Arminianism and Pelagianism. In evangelical Arminianism, salvation is a vague entity that has been procured by Jesus awaiting the decision of men to accept him - anyone can do it at any time. The scriptures already quoted show that this cannot be true (and there are a great many more). As regards salvation, man's will cannot be free. Man is not capable of self-determination to good because he is depraved. Man has been given up by God to a base mind, improper conduct, filled with all manner of wickedness, deserving to die, (Rm 1:28-32).

So, man's will is free and yet bound. How do we explain this?

Responsibility

Firstly, we must establish that man is indeed responsible for his sin and his need to turn to God.

- God commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30).
- Man is lost in sin (Rm 1-3).
- Man is responsible for his own sin, he is guilty (Rm 3:19, 20, 23, 5:18; Jm 2:10; Jude 15; Jn 3:18-20,36).

First conclusion

Man is responsible for the sins he has committed. He also has an evil nature that he cannot change.

Inability

Secondly, the Bible shows clearly that natural man is unable to respond, unable to repent, unable to believe because he is so lost in sin. In addition to the texts already quoted we add:

- No one can come to Jesus unless the Father grants it (Jn 6:65).
- Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31, 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25).
- Man is dead towards God with no spiritual ability (Eph 2:1).
- Man must be raised to new life (Eph 2:5a; Jn 3:3, 6).
- Salvation is by God's grace alone (Eph 2:5b, 8).

Second Conclusion

Sin has so totally corrupted man that he is completely unable to even respond to the Gospel by nature. Without God's assistance all men would be hopelessly lost and doomed to perdition. The demand to obey is still in force, however, and all men are under condemnation. Free will cannot include the ability to believe in God without the prior work of the Holy Spirit.

Why is man unable?

What has made man dead towards God? The answer is the Fall.

God warned Adam, man's representative head, that the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die (Gen 2:16-17). Now Adam did not physically die that day; unless you take it that from that point he was made mortal. What is more likely is that on that day Adam's

spirit became dead towards God. As a result, he no longer enjoyed fellowship with God and, in fact, feared him (Gen 3:8-10).

All of mankind was tested in Adam, he represented the entire race. As a result, all men fell with him (Rm 5:12).

Fallen man is totally depraved

The condition of the state of man after the fall is clearly spelled out in Genesis 6:5

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Jeremiah goes further:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. (Jer 17:9-10)

There is no propensity to good in these statements: no ability to find peace with God; no self-determination to good. Every part of man's nature is radically corrupt. Any seeming goodness is, at best, superficial and only seems 'good' in comparison to other depraved people, not God. In traumatic circumstances, like war or tragedy, the veneer is often peeled away and 'good' men change. Man's own actions and statements will be enough to judge him (Rm 2). Even without a moral code he judges the actions of others while doing the same things. This testimony from his own mouth is enough to damn him.

Third conclusion

The reason for man's inability is due to the Fall of mankind, represented by Adam in the garden of Eden. As a result all men are totally depraved, that is:

- Every aspect of man's nature is affected; the extent is total.
- It does not mean that every man is as evil as he can possibly be, but that all his faculties are affected by the Fall.
- This has led to the death of man's spirit towards God.
- Man has no propensity to good in terms of God's standards of righteousness.
- Man is responsible for his actions, which are evil even by his own judgment, and will suffer the wrath and condemnation of God as a result.

Spiritual effects of the fall

Man's spiritual condition is often pictured in terms of physical sickness or inability. For instance Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us that Jesus has carried our sicknesses and pains, that he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and we, as a result are made whole and healed. 1 Pt 2:24 uses similar language to describe our forgiveness in the cross. (It is also applied to Jesus' healing ministry in Mt 8:17.)

- Man is blind (Eph 4:18; Acts 26:18).
- Man is deaf (Jn 8:43, 8:47).
- Man is sick (Rm 7:5; Gal 6:7; typified by leprosy Lev 13).
- Man is dead (Eph 2:1).
- Man is racially unfit i.e. belongs to a race that can't be saved as it stands (1 Cor 15:50).

Man is also said to be:

- Alienated from God (Eph 4:18).
- An enemy of God (Rm 5:10).

- Unable to discern truth (1 Cor 2:14).
- A slave (Rm 6:20; Jn 8:34-36).
- Deceived to depend upon his own strength (Hos 10:13).

Fourth conclusion

Man is in a very serious state indeed. There is no hope for him left to his own strength and will. His condition is terminal. He is lost. His will can have no power for salvation, either to choose it or to gain it.

What is the nature of man's salvation?

- It gives life (Jn 1:4; Eph 2:1).
- It is a sonship (Jn 1:12).
- It is an adoption (Rm 8:15).
- It is a creation (2 Cor 5:17).
- It is a conception or birth (Jn 3:3).
- It is becoming a part of a new race (1 Cor 15:20-23,42-50).
- It requires a choosing i.e. election (Eph 1:4-5).
- It requires a gift of grace (Eph 2:8).
- It requires a gift of faith (Eph 2:8-9).
- It requires a gift of repentance (Acts 5:31).
- It requires a gift of justification (Rm 4:1-5, 5:1).
- It requires an effectual calling (Rm 8:30).

Fifth conclusion

The gift of salvation is a huge affair involving many acts of God. It is totally dependent upon God, not only as the first cause, but to see the work through (sanctification, perseverance, glorification). The very best of men have no hope of attaining this. A dead man cannot bring himself to life, he requires a resurrection.

The will is not a constituent of the initiation of salvation.

We can argue about the place of the will in conversion. It is obviously involved in the act of repentance and faith, but we have seen that this is not the initial act in salvation. It is not Biblical doctrine to say that the first act in the salvation of a sinner is his decision, his choice for Jesus. Prior to any action of man there is (at the very least): the elective choosing of God, the decree of predestination, the decision to atone, the sending of the Holy Spirit to call, the drawing of the Father and the gifts of regeneration, faith and repentance.

Since this is true, is there any place for the will in the initial stages of salvation? No!

So it depends not upon man's exertion (will), but upon God's mercy. Rm 9:15

So then he (God) has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills. Rm 9:18

God made us alive ... by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works (e.g. the will of man), lest any man should boast. Eph 2:5-9

It is wrong to suggest that anyone can believe in Jesus. The will cannot choose faith, faith must be given. Not everyone has faith (2 Thess 3:2) because not everyone is given it, only the elect. In salvation, man can only receive (1 Cor 4:7). Thus all the glory goes to God. It is not shared.

Salvation must be understood in terms of election. The apostle Paul makes this the first cause and continually refers to it in opposition to any suggestion that man determines his own salvation (eg Rm 8:9; Eph 1). He even uses a dramatic image to drive the point home, that of a potter who chooses to make a vessel of honour with one piece of clay and destroy another from the same lump.

Sixth conclusion

The will of man is not the prime mover in salvation. The Bible specifically states that it is not dependent upon the will of man. Only God can supply the power to draw a man to himself.

To what degree is man's will free?

Man has the power of choice within his natural remit. He is a free agent among other men in the world. He can wake up and choose whether to wear a suit or jeans. He can paint his house whatever colour he likes. Jonathan Edwards described the will as: '*that by which the mind chooses anything*'. What we choose is determined by the mind.

Man has volitional power at a soulish (Greek: psuche, 'psyche') level, i.e. a psychological level. The mind's choice is determined by motives, i.e. what it thinks is best. Only an insane person would do what he didn't chose for his best, what is against his inclination. [Some make the case that the will isn't free at all being under the direction of the intent or disposition of the mind. A rational human being can't have freedom to deny intelligent considerations. However this is splitting hairs, whether it is the mind or the will; the soul (the person, the psyche) chooses at a basic sub spiritual level.]

Man has no power to will at a spiritual (pneuma) level. Man can only will to comparative evil (i.e. compared to the righteousness of God not man; man is capable of philanthropic works). The heart is corrupt, and everything springs from the heart (Prov 4:23). Good fruit cannot arise from a bad tree (Matt 12:33-35).

Being saved means coming to God. This is what the human will cannot and will not do. Being sinful, it is not motivated to do it. Coming to God means acknowledging his sovereignty, man does not accept this, he feels that he is in control. Coming to God means approaching someone who is holy, man does not want to come and confess his sin and lack of holiness. The will of man is morally unable. It can only will within the realm of sin.

If man's will was free, salvation would be of man, not of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). Man would be controlling grace not grace controlling him. Man would be able to thwart God.

Seventh conclusion

Man can exercise free will in terms of soulish or psychological choice. There is a natural ability to choose in everyday things. As far as moral good (godly righteousness) is concerned, man's will is bound and unable He cannot choose faith or life.

But what about 'Whosoever will may come'?

This oft-quoted sentence is actually from a hymn and a chorus. The sentiments are, however, Biblical. The nearest approximation to this in the Bible is Rev 22:17b,

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (AV)

Similar ideas are found in Matt 7:7-8, 11:28; Jn 3:16, 7:37.

Now we have seen that the Biblical teaching is that man cannot come of his own free will but must be drawn by God. This is the clear statement of truth. The rules of interpretation insist that Rev 22:17 is interpreted in the light of the clear teaching and not made to mean something else.

No man will ever stand at the day of judgment and declare that he longed to come to Christ but

was refused. The will to come in a man is the expression of the inward working of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. The Spirit works upon the will to change a man's inclinations to respond to the gospel. The general offer of the Gospel is to all without discrimination; we are to go into all the world to preach it. However, only those called and predestined will respond to that offer (Rm 8:29-30).

Eighth conclusion

It is true that whosoever will may come to Jesus but those are the ones that God has drawn, elected from eternity. It is God's power that draws, not man's will. Gospel presentations which emphasise that people must decide to be saved or that they can be saved at any time or that it lies within man's power must be avoided as false. Enquirers should be shown God's demands in the law, their state in sin, the provision of a Saviour in Christ and be advised to seek God for mercy. If it is judged that the person is under conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, then they should be directed to repent and believe in Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

Other views

Pelagianism: responsibility implies ability.

This stated that the will is neutral. If man is responsible, then he must be able. Man is free to choose good and do it. Sin is only when we deliberately choose to do evil. There is no total depravity. Adam's sin affected no one else. Men are born in innocence. Man can live free of sin even without knowing Christ. The law and Christ's example are given to encourage man to choose good. A limited gracious influence is given to those who deserve it by the faithful use of their own powers, but it can be resisted.

Augustine countered this by saying that this destroyed the Biblical doctrine of sin and the grace of God. There is an inherited depravity and, therefore, a man cannot stop sinning. A person is not able to choose God; in the fall he lost himself and his will. The will is enslaved so that it has no power for righteousness. Grace is essential; not just for conversion but for continuance in the Christian life. The church accepted Augustine's view but gradually drifted into Pelagianism over the following centuries.

Erasmus

During the Reformation, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam entered into controversy with Martin Luther over this issue. He declared that the will must be free, for similar reasons to Pelagius. Luther accepted the psychological fact that people make choices, but in the area of choosing God Luther denied free will, denied self-determination, vigorously. His reply, 'The Bondage of the Will' is still a classic. We are wholly given over to sin, must acknowledge it and cry to God for mercy; and even that requires God's grace to convict us of our sin.

Council of Trent

All the Reformers took essentially the same position of Luther (i.e. Calvin, Zwingli, Bucer etc.). In retaliation, the Roman Catholic Church set up the Council of Trent to respond to the Reformation and try to regain ground. They took a semi-Pelagian position, i.e. that man can co-operate with God: a blend of human will and divine assistance.

Arminianism

In Holland Jacob Arminius, and his more radical Remonstrant followers (a party formed by his disciples a year after his death), revived versions of Pelagianism. In this system, which is essentially semi-Pelagianism, election becomes conditional; i.e. God chooses to save those whom he foreknows will have faith. Man is able to use his free will to latch on to grace provided by Jesus whose death does not actually save a specific number of elect but only provides a potential salvation for those who decide to accept him as saviour. Salvation, therefore, becomes a joint effort between God and man. Man is not dead but able to choose and repent without grace to do so.

As a result of this man centred gospel, the Christian life also becomes a journey of effort. There is no guarantee of salvation and it therefore becomes possible to fall away from grace. The synod of Dort (in Holland) was convened (in 1618) to repudiate this heresy and formulated the five points of Calvinism (known by the mnemonic TULIP). The five points are not the whole of Calvinistic doctrine but simply key points in response to Arminius' theories. Much of the modern church is Pelagian or Arminian. (Although only the Methodists formally state this in their creed.) The failure of both is not that they ignore grace but that they elevate the will to an unbiblical position and make it the first cause of salvation.

This Biblical view is historically attested.

The exposition given here is not novel but is the same as all the historical Reformed standards of faith (e.g. the Synod of Dort, the Belgic confession). It also appears in the 39 Articles of the Church of England (Article 10), and the answer to question 25 of the Westminster Larger Catechism and section 10:1 of the Westminster Confession.

Conclusion

The case is made. Surely no more proof is needed.

Man can exercise a certain amount of free will in choosing according to his desires and inclinations. The will is conditioned by the mind (and to some degree by the emotions) to decide for what is best for the person. This is the level of the soul (volition, emotions, mind), the psychological level.

Since the fall, man's will has been bound in sin. His being is completely corrupted, totally depraved, and man cannot choose spiritual good. It cannot rise above sin.

Man cannot choose faith or repentance. He cannot decide for Christ on his own. A person can only come to Christ when he is drawn by the Father. Those who are drawn are those who are elect from eternity.

Of the theological schools, the Biblical doctrine is taught by Augustinianism, Calvinism and the Reformed faith. Protestant churches that adhere to Reformed standards also believe this (e.g. the original Anglican and Lutheran churches). In these days many Evangelicals fail to hold this truth, having succumbed to Arminianism.

Excursus Two

Universalistic Texts

There are a few texts which seem to support the Arminian position by suggesting that God's love is universalistic and not particular; i.e. God loves everyone equally. Other verses seem to imply that Jesus dies for everyone indiscriminately. There is not space here to deal with these in detail, my other studies on the Doctrines of Grace look at these more specifically. However, it behoves us to at least evaluate this theme.

Must be interpreted in context

Firstly, sound rules of interpretation insist that we should judge the meaning of the few and unclear texts in the light of the whole teaching of the Bible, and texts which explain the position more fully. If we have judged the matter rightly, and the Bible's teaching is essentially Calvinistic, then these texts cannot contradict the weight of scripture, they must mean something else. We cannot construct a theology on a few obscure verses and overturn the bulk of the Bible's clear teaching. The analogy of faith⁷⁶ must guide our interpretation.

The tendency to imply universalism

Secondly, some of these texts prove more than the Arminian would wish. If understood in the way suggested by Arminian apologists, they actually teach universalism.

'All' is rarely 'everyone'

For instance, 1 Tim 2:4: states that God desires all men to be saved. Does this suggest that God has provided a global salvation, which is left for man to grab hold of? No! If 'all men' is interpreted as every man and woman, then it clearly teaches that God will save every single person. This is strengthened by verse 6, which states that Jesus gave himself as a ransom for 'all'.

We know that not everyone is saved, the Bible's doctrine of salvation is not universalistic. Jesus even specifically said some of his hearers would be damned. If only one person was in hell, then this makes God a liar. So these verses cannot apply to everyone on earth!

The usual Reformed interpretation of this passage is to identify the all men as all types of men. Paul has suggested that thanksgivings be made for all men in verse one. This must mean all types, since it would be impossible to pray for everyone in the world. This is made clear as he begins to identify different types beginning with kings and those in high places. In other words, pray for those in authority in society, for God desires all sorts of men to be saved, even these kings and princes who were oppressing the church at the time.

So 'all' does not necessarily mean 'everyone who ever lived'. A concordance will show that all can be very restricted in its meaning (e.g. Mk 11:32, 5:20; Lk 3:15; Jn 3:26 etc.). This also explains Titus 2:11.

'World' does not always mean everybody on earth

A similar situation applies to the word 'world', particularly in John 3:16. John often uses this word in a restrictive sense (e.g. Jn 12:19). His use of it in 1:29 and 3:17 would again imply universalism if he meant everyone on the earth. John records Jesus as specifically not praying for the world, but only a portion of it who would be saved (17:3-9). John also tells believers not to love the world in 1 Jn 2:15-17. How can we not love the world that God loves? We must obviously tread carefully here.

⁷⁶ The general thrust of the doctrinal teaching of Scripture.

God so loves the world of men that he wants a world of people to be saved and love him. To this end he has decreed that a portion of the current world's population will be saved. In the end, God will have a world of people, a populated earth who are in Christ. It is not everyone or it would include those God has already damned, like the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the Pharisees that Jesus said were going to hell.

John, like other writers (especially Peter) uses universalistic terms to make the point to Jews that salvation is now being made available to Gentiles as well. Jews found this a difficult concept to grapple with as they believed that only they were saved. Salvation is now available to all the nations of the world.

Context applied to the elect alone

2 Pt 3:9 and Ezek 33:11 are more difficult and have led to a variety of interpretations. The simplest solution is to see these verses as applying only to the elect. This makes eminent sense and complies with the analogy of the Bible. Others have said that God's revealed will (better-prescriptive will, what we are commanded to do) is to call to repentance but his secret will (better-decretive will, God's effectual plan, decree) is that only some will actually repent. However, I don't feel that this fully solves the problem.

What do these verses actually say? God does not delight in anyone dying. He would prefer that all men would repent. That is not really a problem. Faced with the Fall of man and everyone rushing headlong to destruction, God was not willing for everyone to die and decreed to save some, the elect. It does not imply a universalistic love of God or salvation. The emphasis is on the need for repentance, not on the love of God.

In Rev 22:17 it says: '*he that will, let him take of the water of life freely*'. This is often confused with the hymn which says: '*whosoever will unto the Lord may come*'.

Is this a problem? Not at all. We have no objection to the teaching that whoever wants to come may come to Jesus. This is entirely Biblical. However, only those that are drawn by God will come. The sinner has no desire for Christ naturally; he wants to stay in enjoyment of his sins. All may come, indeed all are commanded to come; but only those that God empowers actually will come.

John 6 is a clear commentary on this. In verse 35 there is the promise of Jesus that all who come will never thirst. In v 36: he confirms that, however, people do not believe. Then Jesus explains that only those whom the Father gives to Jesus will actually come (v37, 39). In verse 44 it is again forcefully stated that unless the Father draws a person, no one can come at all in their own volition.

Wrong context

Finally, what about Jesus knocking at the door of our hearts? Is not this a picture of God needing our permission or decision to save us? The passage in question is in Revelation 3:20. This statement of the Lord is specifically aimed at Christians not unbelievers. It forms part of a letter addressed to the church at Laodicea. The Lord takes this church to task in the strongest terms but then offers comfort for those who repent. The invitation is directed to those believers who respond to their Lord's chastening. They are not words to be used in Gospel preaching.

Other seemingly universalistic passages are simply explained if read carefully; commentaries will help. They do not constitute any real difficulty.

Excursus Three

Calvinism vs. Arminianism reduced to concise terms with texts

The five points of Calvinism, sometimes known under the mnemonic *'TULIP'*:

Total Depravity

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement

Irresistible Grace

Perseverance of the Saints

Total Depravity

As a child of Adam, man is born in sin and is full of corruption; even infants are sinful.

I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Ps 51:5

The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born. Ps 58:3

Since the root is sinful, the tree is sinful and death resulted from the fall of Adam.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Rm 5:14

A man may not express all of that corruption, but the seed of it is in his heart.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. Gen 6:5

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Jer 17:9

Man is not just a slave to sin,

You were slaves of sin. Rm 6:20

but is dead in sins.

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

This sinful, Adamic, nature puts all men under God's wrath and means that they are spiritually dead. Since men are dead they can contribute nothing to their salvation; even their best works are sinful in God's eyes

'All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. Isa 64:6

Unconditional Election

Election means choice or selection and refers to the fact that God chose those who would be saved.

Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. Ps 65:4

This selection was decreed from eternity, before the world was made.

God from the beginning chose you for salvation. 2 Thess 2:13

Christians were loved by God, in Christ, before time began.

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Eph 1:4

Those whom God chooses, he saves, justifies and glorifies.

Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Rm 8:30

We were chosen to express the good works God predetermined we should perform.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10

The cause of this choosing is nothing good in the believer. God did not look into the future to see who would believe the Gospel; the choice is based simply on God's good pleasure.

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Eph 1:5

When scripture mentions the elect being 'foreknown' (Rm 8:29), it means that they were loved in eternity, not that God knew what they would believe and so chose them. God predestines all men's gifts anyway, people only believe when God grants faith to them.

Ps 139

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Eph 2:8-9

If God elects some and some only, it follows that others are not chosen. These 'reprobates' (non-elect) will face judgment without a saviour, but they are only being judged for sins they chose to commit. Predestination does not mean that God makes people sin; people want to sin because they are totally depraved. The wonder is not that some are chosen to be saved, but that any are chosen at all. God could justly condemn all mankind to hell for rebellion.

The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. Prov 16:4

It is a terrifying but true fact that God chooses some from eternity to manifest his divine wrath and just condemnation against sin in hell. These vessels of wrath cannot be loved by God, neither do they love God, have any desire to serve him and do not seek righteousness or heaven.

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.' Rm 9:22-23

Limited Atonement (or Deliberate Atonement or Particular Redemption)

Since God only chose some, God only loves some and Christ only dies for some, not everyone. Those who benefit from Christ's death are variously called: his sheep (Jn 10:15), his people (Matt 1:21), the many (not all Matt 20:28, 26:28), the flock (Acts 20:28) and the called (Rm 1:6).

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Matt 20:28

Many are called, but few chosen. Matt 20:16

The Bible never states that Christ died for everyone. Some verses (e.g. Jn 3:16, 1 Tim 2:4) have been interpreted this way but this is not a good exposition of these texts (we cannot go into this in detail here, see excursus on the universalistic texts).

The Bible never states that God loves everyone. In Jn 3:16 the 'world' here is the world of the elect, those who are rescued from this world to be God's people called to populate a purified new world, otherwise v17 would support universalism (i.e. the unbiblical idea that everyone is saved, and that there is no hell). There is no verse which states that 'Jesus died for all men' (or 'for all', or 'for everyone').

The Bible frequently states that God hates certain people and sinners generally.

You hate all workers of iniquity. Ps 5:5

The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Ps 11:5

Esau I have hated. Mal 1:3

As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'. Rm 9:13

God even hates the works, house, prayers and worship of the non-elect. Therefore, there is no way that they can avail themselves of the blood of Christ.

The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just. Prov 3:33

The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright *is* His delight. Prov 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination; how much more *when* he brings it with wicked intent! Prov 21:27

The ploughing of the wicked *are* sin. Prov 21:4

One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *is* an abomination. Prov 28:9

God never does anything imperfectly, he only does things fully and forever. If he loves someone, he loves them to the end. He cannot love someone whom he later condemns to hell.

I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it.

God does *it*, that men should fear before Him. Eccles 3:14

Neither is there any waste in God. The blood of Jesus is the most precious substance in the universe; God will not waste that on people he has already decided will not be saved.

You were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ. 1 Pt 1:18-19

The death of Jesus is of infinite value and would be sufficient for everyone, but it is never applied to everyone. It is only applied to those whom God has chosen.

Since grace comes from the cross, it is wrong to say that there is a 'common grace' available to all men. Grace is only given to the elect as a result of the cross. The cross is never applied to the reprobate (non-elect). Neither is 'common grace' a Biblical term. God gives sun and rain to all men in his bountiful providence. He grants that people have what they need to survive, but this is not grace, it is providence overruling circumstances. This goodness affects the just and the unjust, but the prime cause is to see the elect come to repentance. When the last elect person is saved, God will wind this world up.

The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. 2 Pt 3:15

All God's love and goodness is directed to the elect, the church. God is sovereign over all things for the church because Christ's death was only granted to be effective for them alone.

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Eph 1:4

He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Eph 1:22-23

Those saved are prayed for by Jesus, who only prays for the elect and not the non-elect world.
I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. Jn 17:9

Irresistible Grace (or Effectual Call)

Since God chooses only some, and since Christ only dies for some, this means that only some are effectively called and empowered to believe by the Gospel.

The outward call is the Gospel preaching to all but within this is an inward calling which changes only some people's hearts.

Many are called but few are chosen'. Matt 20:16, 22:14

In the Gospel message, the Holy Spirit especially touches the hearts of some people and changes them. People do not open their own hearts to the Gospel.

The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:14

This is why people are born again by God, not because they make a decision.

Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Jn 1:13

In fact, no one can come to Christ unless God the Father draws them to him

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ...

Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father. Jn 6:44, 65

Conversion, therefore, is not decided by man. We cannot choose to be saved by our free will, God calls us and saves us. Our free will cannot choose spiritual good because we are dead in sin and slaves to Satan's kingdom in the flesh.

The Son gives life to whom He will. Jn 5:21

God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. 2 Tim 1:9

Only those who are called receive God's inheritance.

Those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Heb 9:15

We cannot accept or reject Christ by choice. By nature everyone would reject God's offer of life and choose to sin. Only those God calls can receive the gift of grace.

A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. Jn 3:27

Repentance and faith (conversion is repentance and faith) are both gifts from God. This is why salvation is of grace (undeserved kindness and heavenly provision), (Jn 6:29; Acts 11:18, 14:27; 18:27).

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Eph 2:8-9

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but ... Phil 1:29

God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance. Acts 5:31

God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth. 2 Tim 2:25

Repentance cannot always be gained even if sought diligently and with tears.

For you know that afterward, when he [Esau] wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. Heb 12:17

Perseverance of the Saints (or Preservation of the Saints, or Eternal Security)

Since we are chosen by God, since Christ died for us alone, since God calls us through the Gospel, it follows that those who are chosen will be preserved unto the end; otherwise God would have failed to bring his elect people through (Matt 18:12).

We must still lead responsible lives or God will chasten us as sons. This is fatherly discipline and not divine judgment like that of the wicked.

For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. Heb 12:6

Those who are truly saved will bear fruit and progress in faith; they will be and more conformed to Christ.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rm 8:29

Those who are truly saved have (not 'will have') eternal life. This is stated to be certain even now on earth.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. Jn 3:36

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Jn 5:24

Once you are in the hands of Jesus, no one can snatch you away.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me and 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 10:27-29

Once we are in God's family, God is working for us and no one can overpower his decrees.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Rm 5:10

Nothing can separate us from God if we truly believe in Christ.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Rm 8:35. '... Our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 1:7-8

However, only those who are called will be preserved. Professing Christians who did not really believe on Christ or submit to his lordship will not bear fruit and will not be saved.

To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ. Jude 1

The sovereignty of God

The key difference between Calvinism and Arminianism concerns the sovereignty of God.

Arminians do not believe that God is sovereign in salvation; they believe that God has made salvation possible, that Christ died for everyone, that a generalised grace is available and that man must decide, believe and keep going by his own strength. At best they teach that man co-operates

with God. God is also supposed to be unable to change a man's heart if that man is set on rejecting the Gospel. This is not the God of the Bible for whom nothing is impossible (Lk 1:37).

Calvinists believe that '*salvation is of the Lord*' (Jonah 2:9; Ps 68:20; Ps 37:39). God initiates everything from the act of regeneration (new birth) onwards. He: gives grace, faith and repentance; he changes a man's heart; he calls and empowers; he justifies (pardons sin and makes righteous); he adopts us as sons; he brings us into the body of Christ after uniting us with his Son; he leads us forward; he fills us with His Spirit and sees us safely to our journey's end. The aforementioned scriptures make this plain to see.

Man is obviously responsible for his actions, but the initiative rests with God. Man does not believe from his own volition; God gives faith to his people. Man does not decide to repent; God grants repentance. The key is: '**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**' (Phil 2:12-13). God works within us, giving us grace and strength, but we are responsible to work that out into the practicalities of life.

Calvinism can be clearly seen to be the essence of the Biblical message of salvation. It was preached by the apostle Paul and championed by the great church fathers like Augustine. After the world had been confused by the platitudes and errors of Romanism, God broke forth with the original Gospel message in the Reformation, beginning with Martin Luther in 1517. Luther spearheaded the breakaway movement from the Roman Church but Calvin was the main exponent of Reformation Biblical theology up to the latter half of the 16th century. It is due to the greatness of Calvin's impact upon the Western world that the Biblical doctrines of God's grace, the emphasis upon God being God, being sovereign, is now widely known as Calvinism.

The fact that modern church people are unaware of them, and that most church leaders either ignore or spurn these teachings is a tremendous loss. The best times of church history were seen when men and women not only believed this Biblical Gospel but practised it with godliness and righteousness. Countries that originally encouraged Calvinism were blessed and became prosperous, like: America, Holland, Britain, Switzerland. Countries that persecuted the truth lost civil liberties and remained in darkness (e.g. Muslim occupied territories); some (like France) descended into bloody revolution after killing thousands of true Christians.

It is vital that believers understand these truths, and walk in them, in order for God to be glorified and for people to be soundly converted. The results of preaching a mutilated Gospel are plain to see around us in the multitude errors and aberrations in modern churches as well as the large numbers of confused believers with no assurance. May God's truth once more prevail in the church so that he is glorified.

Excursus Four

DOCTRINES OF GRACE TEXTS

This is just a small sample of the multitudes of proof texts to support what I have taught in this book.

Total Depravity

- Gen 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.
- Gen 8:21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.'
- Ps 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
- Ps 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
- Ps 143:2 Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no one living is righteous.
- Eccles 9:3 This *is* an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing *happens* to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness *is* in their hearts while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead.
- Isa 64:6 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.
- Jer 17:9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?
- Mk 7:21-23 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.
- Jn 3:5-7 Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water 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".'
- Jn 8:44 You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.
- Rm 3:9-12 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: '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 8:7-8 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- Eph 2:1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

- Col 2:13 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.
- Titus 1:15-16 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.
- 1 Jn 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *ours* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
- 1 Jn 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.

Unconditional election

- Deut 10:15 The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and he chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.
- Ps 65:4 Blessed *is the man* you choose, and cause to approach *you*, *that* he may dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, of your holy temple.
- Mt 11:27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.
- Mt 22:14 For many are called, but few *are* chosen.
- Mt 24:22-24 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.
- Lk 18:7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?
- Jn 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.
- Acts 13:48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.
- Rm 8:28-33 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, 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. What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies.
- Rm 9:10-13 And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'
- Rm 11:28-29 Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable.

- Eph 1:4-5 Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.
- 2 Thess 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.
- 2 Tim 1:9 [God] who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Reprobation

- Job 21:30 For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath.
- Prov 16:4 The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.
- Jn 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition [Judas], that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
- Rm 9:22 *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.
- 2 Tim 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour.
- 1 Pt 2:8 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.
- 2 Pt 2:3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.
- 2 Pt 2:9 The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the Day of Judgment.
- Jude 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Jude 13 ... wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Limited atonement

- Isa 22:14 'Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you, Even to your death,' says the Lord GOD of hosts.
- Isa 53:11 He shall see the labour of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.
- Mt 1:21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name JESUS, for he will save his people from their sins.
- Mt 20:28 The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.
- Mt 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

- Lk 1:68 Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed His people.
- Jn 6:35-37 And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.'
- Jn 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd; and I know my *sheep*, and am known by my own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- Jn 17:1-11
- 1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you,
- 2 'as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as you have given Him.
- 3 'And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
- 4 'I have glorified you on the earth. I have finished the work which you have given me to do.
- 5 'And now, O Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was.
- 6 'I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours, you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.
- 7 'Now they have known that all things which you have given me are from you.
- 8 'For I have given to them the words which you have given me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from you; and they have believed that you sent me.
- 9 'I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.
- 10 'And all mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.
- 11 'Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through your name those whom you have given me, that they may be one as we *are*.'
- Jn 17:20-21 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, Father, *are* in me, and I in you; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.'
- Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'
- Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.
- Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- Rm 1:6-7 ... among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be saints*: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Rm 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- Rm 9:23-24 ... that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Heb 9:28 ... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Irresistible Calling

- Jn 1:12-13 ... 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 3:27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.
- Jn 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.
- Jn 6:44, 65 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ... And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."
- Rm 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- Rm 9:16 So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
- 1 Cor 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.
- Eph 2:1-9 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- Eph 4:4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
- 2 Tim 1:9 [God], who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.
- Heb 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
- Jm 1:18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.
- 1 Pt 1:15 but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct.
- 1 Pt 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.
- 1 Pt 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.

- 2 Pt 1:3 His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.
- 1 Jn 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith.
- Jude 1 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:
- Rev 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful.

Perseverance of the saints

- Ps 30:5 His favour *is for* life.
- Isa 43:1-2 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.'
- Isa 54:10 '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.
- Jer 32:40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.
- Mt 18:12-14 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
- Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Jn 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
- Jn 5:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.
- Jn 6:35-37 And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.'
- Jn 10:27-29 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And 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.
- Rm 5:8-10 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- Rm 8:1 *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 8:29-31 For whom He foreknew, 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. What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?
- Rm 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 1 Cor 1:7-9 ... so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.
- Jude 1 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:

The gift of faith

- Jn 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'
- Acts 14:27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
- Acts 18:27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.
- Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- Phil 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.
- Heb 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith.

The gift of repentance

- Acts 5:31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

- Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'
- Rm 2:4 The goodness of God leads you to repentance.
- 2 Tim 2:25 ... correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.
- Heb 12:17 For you know that afterward, when he [Esau] wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. [I.e. man cannot find repentance without divine help.]

Excursus Five

Is there such a thing as ‘common grace’?⁷⁷

For about 100 years many Bible teachers have taught that there is a grace that is common to all men to do them good. It was not taught by Reformed evangelicals before Abraham Kuyper [1837-1920]; however, since he was a supporter of particular redemption, Kuyper’s ideas were not as radical as those today, now accepted by many.

This modern teaching avers that ‘common grace’ means:

- God restrains evil in society.
- God provides good things for all (food, rationality, seasons etc.).
- This grace enables evil men to do good works and please God (find favour with God).
- This grace arises from a general love to all; but it does not lead to salvation.
- Some (Arminians) add that it also gives man sufficient power to accept or reject the Gospel.
- Items 3 & 4 are the chief problems, while 2 & 3 need qualifying.

Although this general grace does not save, it is claimed as evidence that God loves everyone, since he provides for all. This is to mistake providence for grace. In his providence God provides all the things that man requires to live (Acts 17:25), but even then the purpose is to safeguard the elect who live amongst the wicked (Eph 1:22). But this providential ordering of the world is not grace.

There is no such phrase in the Bible as ‘common grace’; indeed the thought is preposterous – grace can never be common. Grace from God to men is the outworking of the cross and the beneficiaries are only those whom God calls and draws to Christ. Thus grace always results in salvation and eternal life. It is never given to the reprobate (those not elect).

Good gifts are given to all but God has different purposes in this for the elect and the wicked. God’s gifts increase the condemnation of those who spurn him. These gifts become destruction to those who do not love God (Rm 11:9; Prov 3:33; Ps 73:18, 92:7). Indeed, wicked men use God’s gifts to increase their sin. The gifts God gives such merely prove that God is just in cursing them.

If sun, rain, food and life are grace and love to all, then what about sickness, famine, hurricanes and so on? If common grace results from love to all, then the evil things that befall us (that God is sovereign over) would result from his condemnation and hate to all. The truth is that God sends good and bad things to all, but in these he always does good to his people (Rm 8:28), but hardens the reprobate and increases their condemnation (Prov 23:4).

Common grace ignores the Bible’s teaching on total depravity; natural man can do no good at all (Rm 3:10ff), including believe in the Gospel. It is also the breeding ground for the Free Offer.

⁷⁷ This is a paper in my series ‘Question cards’.

Excursus Six

What is the Free Offer?⁷⁸

The 'Free Offer' (also known as 'The sincere Offer' or 'Well-Meant Offer') is a term to describe most modern, evangelical Gospel preaching. It is based upon a proclamation that God loves everyone and that anyone who hears the Gospel message can be saved, if they choose to believe it. In other words, the Gospel is God's sincere invitation that all may believe since God desires the salvation of everyone. The basis for this preaching must be the following:

- God desires the salvation of everyone. [Universal grace.]
- God loves everyone. [God's universal love.]
- Christ died for everyone. [Universal atonement.]

Therefore, the initiative for conversion is man's free-will decision. Note that it emphasises universalism. This is the teaching of 4-Point Calvinists.

The similarities with Arminian universalism are obvious, yet many Reformed preachers use this message. They claim to be Reformed by using contradiction and confusion, which amounts to the old heresy of Amyraldism; thus God's grace is universal, but is only applied to the elect in the end. Thus they teach that God has two contradictory wills: a secret will that only the elect will be saved, and a revealed will that God desires the salvation of all. This dishonours God's attributes, placing contradiction in God's character.

The Free Offer denies the following Biblical doctrines:

- God does not love all but hates the wicked (Ps 5:6, 11:5, Rm 9:13).
- God does not change (Mal 3:6), therefore he does not love some and then hate them later when they do not believe. When he loves, he loves forever (Eccles 3:14).
- Jesus did not die for all but only redeemed the elect (Matt 1:21; Isa 53:11). The cross was not sufficient for anyone who accepts it, but definite for those God gave to Christ (Jn 17:2, 9).
- The elect are chosen by God in eternity (Eph 1:4-5), therefore God does not desire the salvation of those he predetermined to damnation (Prov 16:4).
- Grace is not common or universal but only ever comes from the cross and is applied to the elect (2 Tim 1:9). Grace results in salvation (Eph 2:5).

Confusingly, there is a form of genuine Gospel preaching which some call 'The Free Offer' who do not follow the erroneous scheme. By this term these folk mean that the Gospel is available to every man, 'whosoever will may come'; i.e. the message is indiscriminate and universal. But they do not teach that all will come since God has only called the elect and Christ only died for these people.

⁷⁸ Another 'Question card'.

Excursus Seven

Quotes on the Doctrines of Grace

With particular reference to the love of God for the elect alone

Theologians

*Augustine of Hippo [354-430]*⁷⁹

“He wills all men to be saved,” is so said that all the predestinated may be understood by it, because every kind of men is among them. Just as it was said to the Pharisees, “Ye tithe every herb;” where the expression is only to be understood of every herb that they had, for they did not tithe every herb which was found throughout the whole earth.⁸⁰

He who said, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,’ loved Jacob of His undeserved grace, and hated Esau of His deserved judgment.⁸¹

*Martin Luther [1483-1546]*⁸²

The love and hate of God towards men is immutable and eternal, existing, not merely before there was any merit or work of ‘free-will’, but before the world was made; [so] all things take place in us of necessity, according as He has from eternity loved or not loved ... faith and unbelief come to us by no work of our own, but through the love and hatred of God.⁸³

John Calvin [1509-1564]

(The God Who fed me all my life long unto this day...):

Though God causes His sun to shine indiscriminately on the good and evil, and feeds unbelievers as well as believers: yet because He affords only to the latter the peculiar sense of His Paternal love in the use of His gifts, Jacob rightly uses this as a reason for the confirmation of his faith, that he had always been protected by the help of God.⁸⁴

*John Knox [c.1514-1572]*⁸⁵

[God] will destroy all the speak lies. He hateth all that work iniquity; neither will he show himself merciful to such as maliciously offend. But all the sinners of the earth shall drink the dregs of that cup which the Eternal holdeth in his hands. For he will destroy all those that traitorously decline from him. They shall cry but he will not hear.⁸⁶

*Jerome Zanchius [1516-1590]*⁸⁷

When hatred is ascribed to God, it implies (1) a negation of benevolence, or a resolution not to have mercy on such and such men, nor to endure them with any of those graces which stand connected with eternal life. So, ‘Esau have I hated’ (Rom. 9), *i.e.*, ‘I did, from all eternity, determine within Myself not to have mercy on him.’ The sole cause of which awful negation is not merely the unworthiness of the persons hated, but the sovereignty and freedom of the Divine will. (2) It denotes displeasure and dislike, for sinners who are not interested in Christ cannot but be infinitely displeasing to and loathsome in the sight of eternal purity. (3) It signifies

⁷⁹ One of the greatest early church fathers; the key defender of Augustinian monergism, which was proto-Calvinism.

⁸⁰ Treatise on Rebuke & Grace, Chapter 44, *Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Volume 5.

⁸¹ *Enchiridion*, xcvi.

⁸² The initiator of the German Reformation and founder of Lutheranism.

⁸³ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, p226, 228-229.

⁸⁴ Calvin on *Genesis* 48:15.

⁸⁵ The builder of the Scottish Reformation.

⁸⁶ *An Answer to a Great Number of Blasphemous Cavillations Written by an Anabaptist and Adversary to God's Eternal Predestination*, Thomas Charde, London, 1591, p403-404.

⁸⁷ Continental Presbyterian and key writer on the covenant.

a positive will to punish and destroy the reprobate for their sins, of which will, the infliction of misery upon them hereafter, is but the necessary effect and actual execution".⁸⁸

*Francis Turretin [1623-1687]*⁸⁹

Since his love cannot be vain and inefficacious, those whom he loves unto salvation he ought to love fully and even unto the end. ... The love treated in John 3:16 ... cannot be universal towards each and every one, but special towards a few.⁹⁰

The mercy of God ... has its own objects and vessels into which it is poured out (viz., the elect and believers upon whom he determined to have mercy from eternity, who are distinguished from others whom he decreed to pass by and are therefore called "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rm 9:22).⁹¹

The question is not whether God is borne by a general love and philanthropy towards men as his creatures, and also bestows upon them various temporal benefits pertaining to the things of this life. We do not deny that God has never left himself without witness with regard to this (Acts 14:17). And we are ready to grant that there is no one who does not owe some gratitude to God and who, whatever he is or can do, is not bound to give thanks to his creator. But the question concerns the special and saving love which tends to spiritual benefits, and by which God willed to have mercy upon them to salvation. We think this is particular to the elect alone, not universal and common to all.⁹²

For as he who loves a person or thing wishes well and, if he can, does well to it, so true hatred and abhorrence cannot exist without drawing after them the removal and destruction of the contrary.⁹³

*William Perkins [1558-1602]*⁹⁴

The decree of reprobation is that part of predestination whereby God ... determined to reject certain men unto destruction and misery, and that to the praise of his justice ... Further, whom God rejecteth to condemnation, those he hateth.⁹⁵

This hatred of God is whereby he detesteth and abhorreth the reprobate when he is fallen into sin for the same sin. And this hatred which God has to man comes by the fall of Adam and is neither an antecedent nor a cause of God's decree, but only a consequent and followeth the decree.⁹⁶

*John Owen [1616-1683]*⁹⁷

We deny that all mankind are the object of that love of God which moved him to send his Son to die; God having 'made some for the day of evil' (Prov. 16:4); '*hated them before they were born*' (Rom. 9:11, 13); 'before of old ordained them to condemnation' (Jude 4); being 'fitted to destruction' (Rom. 9:22); 'made to be taken and destroyed' (II Pet. 2:12); 'appointed to wrath' (I Thess. 5:9); to 'go to their own place' (Acts 1:25).⁹⁸

⁸⁸ *Absolute Predestination*, p. 44.

⁸⁹ The greatest Continental Calvinist theologian after Calvin; systematiser of doctrinal thought. He exercised a major influence on later Presbyterians, such as Charles Hodge.

⁹⁰ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol 1, p400, 405.

⁹¹ *Institutes*. P&R Pub. Phillipsburg, 1992, p244.

⁹² *Institutes*, p396-397.

⁹³ *Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2, p237-238.

⁹⁴ One of the greatest British Puritans and architect of the British Reformation.

⁹⁵ William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, Sutton Courtenay Press (1969) p250-251.

⁹⁶ *A Golden Chain*, chapter 53.

⁹⁷ One of the greatest later Puritan intellectuals.

⁹⁸ John Owen, John Owen, *Works*, Vol 10, Banner of Truth Trust (1967), p227; AGES CD Rom, p297. Note all Owen's other arguments in this section.

It is, therefore, incorrect to translate, as in Psalm 145:9, 15-16 that God is 'merciful' not only to all men but to his whole creation ... These all feel the benefits of God's general goodness in his providential upholding of his creation ... [but] true mercy ... is the fount of all saving faith and repentance, we can distinguish this from all loose and mistaken concepts of 'mercy' displayed by the general work of God in providence.⁹⁹

But those who deny this hatred of sin and sinners, and the disposition to punish them, to be perpetually, immutably, and habitually inherent in God, I am afraid have never strictly weighed in their thoughts the divine purity and holiness.¹⁰⁰

Reprobation ... [is] the issue of hatred, or a purpose of rejection (Rom. 9:11-13).¹⁰¹

This love is not universal, being his "good pleasure" of blessing with spiritual blessings and saving some in Christ, Ephesians 1:4,5; which good pleasure of his evidently comprehendeth some, when others are excluded, Matthew 11:25,26. Yea, the love of God in giving Christ for us is of the same extent with that grace whereby he calleth us to faith, or bestoweth faith on us: "he hath called us with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus," 2 Timothy 1:9; which, doubtless, is not universal and common unto all.¹⁰²

Innumerable other reasons there are to prove, that seeing God hath given his elect only, whom only he loved, to Christ to be redeemed; and seeing that the Son loveth only those who are given him of his Father, and redeemeth only whom he loveth; seeing, also, that the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and the Son, sanctifieth all, and only them, that are elected and redeemed.¹⁰³

*James Henry Thornwell [1812-1862]*¹⁰⁴

'Sinners are by nature odious and loathsome to God, and are under a righteous sentence of condemnation and death'.¹⁰⁵

The plain doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is that God has no purpose of salvation for all.¹⁰⁶

'The love of God is always connected with the purpose of salvation ... unconverted sinners have no lot nor part in it'. God is angry with them every day; "he hateth all workers of iniquity". The special love of God is confined exclusively to the elect.¹⁰⁷

*BB Warfield [1851-1921]*¹⁰⁸

But just because God is God, of course, no one receives grace who has not been foreknown and afore-selected for the gift; and, as much of course, no one who has been foreknown and afore-selected for it, fails to receive it. Therefore the number of the predestinated is fixed, and fixed by God.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁹ John Owen, *Biblical Theology*, p74.

¹⁰⁰ John Owen, *Works*, vol. 10, p514.

¹⁰¹ *Works*, vol. 10, p149.

¹⁰² John Owen, *The Display of Arminianism*, (*Works*, Vol 10) p119.

¹⁰³ John Owen, *The Display of Arminianism*, (*Works*, Vol 10) p119.

¹⁰⁴ American Presbyterian theologian.

¹⁰⁵ Thornwell, *Works*, Vol 2, p158.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p161.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p162.

¹⁰⁸ One of the most influential American Presbyterian theologians.

¹⁰⁹ BB Warfield, *Introduction To Augustin's Anti-Pelagian Writings*; Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 5, p106. See also, *Augustine & The Pelagian Controversy*, Works Vol 4, (Baker, 1991), p408.

What lies at the heart of his [Calvin's] soteriology is the absolute exclusion of the creaturely element in the initiation of the saving process.¹¹⁰

The Biblical Writers are as far as possible from obscuring the doctrine of election because of any seemingly unpleasant corollaries that flow from it ... (in the election of some) others are passed by and left without the gift of salvation; the whole presentation of the doctrine is such as either to imply or openly assert ... the removal of the elect by the pure grace of God, not merely from a state of condemnation, but out of the company of the condemned ... the discrimination between men in the matter of eternal destiny is distinctly set forth as taking place in the interests of mercy and for the sake of salvation ... God is represented as in his infinite compassion rescuing those chosen to this end in his inscrutable counsels of mercy to the praise of the glory of his grace; while those who are left in their sins perish most deservedly, as the justice of God demands.¹¹¹

John L Girardeau [1825-1898]¹¹²

The love involved in election - a peculiar, free, inalienable, saving love of Complacency towards the elect ... (He then quotes in full the following texts which should be consulted: Ex 30:19; Rm 9:13-18; Mal 1:2-3; Deut 7:7-8, 10:15; Isa 43:4, 63:9, 16; Ps 89:19,20,28,30-35, 94:18; Isa 54:8-10, 49:15; Mic 7:20; Jer 31:3, Zeph 3:17; Jn 17:23, 26; Rm 5:5, 8, 9, 8:38-39; Eph 2:4-5; Tit 3:4-7, Heb 13:5; 1 Jn 4:9, 10, 19; 2 Thess 2:16-17) ... The testimonies from Scripture clearly reveal the nature of God's electing love. It is expressly declared to be eternal. It is peculiar: it is directed to the people of God. It is free, that is, sovereign and unconditioned upon any good quality or act in its objects ... There are two distinct aspects of the divine love or goodness. One of these, in the form of benevolence, terminates on men indiscriminately, the just and the unjust, the evil and the good; and, when it is directed to them as ill-deserving and miserable, it assumes the special form of mercy. The other, the love of complacency, is a peculiar affection, supposing the existence in its sinful objects of a saving relation to Christ as mediator, Federal head and Redeemer. Now let it be supposed that the infinite benevolence of God, in the form of mercy contemplating the lost and wretched condition of man, into which he was conceived as having plunged himself by his sin and folly, suggested his salvation ... That suggestion was checked by the demands of infinite justice, ... For although the attributes of God are all infinite, and cohere in his essence in, perfect harmony with each other, the exercise of mercy ... was checked by wisdom and justice, ... The Father ... elected some of mankind to be redeemed. This, while it was a sovereign act of his will, involved the exercise of infinite love and mercy ... those thus designated became the Father's elect ones, his sheep ... conceived as in Christ the elect became objects of a complacential love, measured only by the regard of the Father for his well-beloved Son ...

The love of complacency towards the elect is not to be confounded with God's love of benevolence towards all men. It includes the love of benevolence, but it is inconceivably more. It differs from it in important respects. In the first place, it supposes a peculiar relation of the elect to God's only-begotten Son, and is, according to scriptural representations, analogous to the love the Father bears to him. In the second place, the gift of Christ ... is infinitely more costly and precious than that of sunshine, rain and other mere providential blessings which benevolence indiscriminately confers upon the general mass of men. In the third place, the elect, although in themselves unlovely, are conceived as in Christ intrinsically possessed of the graces of the Holy Spirit, which render them appropriate objects of complacential regard. It is this love, this peculiar, intense, unutterable love, which the scriptures declare to be manifested towards the elect in the actual execution of God's eternal purpose of salvation. ...

In connection with this aspect of the subject of election, the Arminian doctrine is open to the charge of being entirely unscriptural ... the Arminian ... reduces the intense, inexpressible, unchangeable affection which God from eternity entertained for his own people to a general regard for all sinners of the human race - his love for his sheep to a love for goats.¹¹³

110 Warfield, Calvinism, *Works*, Vol 5, p359.

111 BB Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, Baker 1991, p64-5.

112 American Presbyterian theologian.

113 John L Girardeau; *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, Sprinkle Pub. Harrisonburg 1984, p54-66.

*William G T Shedd [1820-1894]*¹¹⁴

Sinful men are the objects of God's providential care, as well as renewed men. Even Satan and the fallen angels are treated with all the benevolence which their enmity to God will admit of ... God's benevolent interest in the sentient creature, and his care for its welfare, is proportioned and suited to the nature and circumstances to the creature. It extends to the animals: (Ps 145:16, 104:21, Job 38:41, Matt 6:26, Ps 36:6). It extends to man (Acts 14:17). It extends to sinful man (Matt 5:45, Acts 14:17, Neh 9:17).. Sinful man is deprived of a full manifestation of the Divine benevolence, only by reason of his sin. God manifests to the sinner all the benevolence that he is qualified to receive. He sends him physical and temporal good: rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons ... but he cannot bestow upon a sinful and hostile man his approving love ... Grace is an aspect of mercy. It differs from mercy, in that it has reference to sinful man as guilty, while mercy has respect to sinful man as miserable. The one refers to the culpability of sin, and the other to its wretchedness ... Both mercy and grace are exercised in a general manner, towards those who are not the objects of their special manifestation. All blessings bestowed upon the natural man are mercy, in so far as they succour his distress, and grace, so far as they are bestowed upon the undeserving. (Matt 5:45, Ps 145:9, 15, 16). This general manifestation of mercy and grace is in and by the works of creation and providence ... Special grace and mercy are exercised only in redemption.¹¹⁵

*Dr. William Cunningham [1805-1861]*¹¹⁶

Calvin consistently, unhesitatingly, and explicitly denied the doctrine of God's universal grace to all men, -that is omnibus et singulis, to each and every man,- as implying in some sense a desire or purpose or intention to save them all ... That Calvin denied the doctrine of God's universal grace or love to all men, as implying some desire or intention of saving them all, and some provision directed to that object, is too evident to any one who has read his writings, to admit of doubt or require proof. ... The fact of Calvin so explicitly denying the doctrine of God's universal grace or love to all men, affords a more direct and certain ground for the inference, that he did not hold the doctrine of universal atonement.¹¹⁷

Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all whom the gospel is preached, and that all who can be reached should be invited and urged to come to Christ and embrace him, deny that this flows from, or indicates, any design or purpose on God's part to save all men.¹¹⁸

*Augustus Hopkins Strong [1836-1921]*¹¹⁹

The immanent (or absolute, i.e. an attribute which respects the inner being of God, independent of his connection to the universe - PF) love of God is not to be confounded with mercy and goodness toward creatures. These are its manifestations and are to be denominated transitive (or relative, i.e. an attribute of God that refers to his outward revelation of being, related to the creation - PF) love... The imminent love of God therefore requires and finds a personal object in the image of his own infinite perfections. It is to be understood only in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity ... So the love of God is shown in his eternal giving ... This he does eternally in the self-communications of the Trinity; this he does transitively and temporarily in his giving of himself for us in Christ, and to us in the Holy Spirit.¹²⁰

By mercy and goodness we mean the transitive love of God its twofold relation to the disobedient and to the obedient portions of his creatures ... Mercy leads him to seek the good of sinners (pre-conversion elect) i.e. compassionate grace or benevolence, goodness leads him to communicate his life and blessedness to those who are like him, i.e. complacency. (sic)

¹¹⁴ Maverick American Presbyterian theologian.

¹¹⁵ *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol 1, Nelson, Nashville, 1980, p386-391.

¹¹⁶ Scottish theologian and writer on history.

¹¹⁷ William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh (1962), p398-399.

¹¹⁸ William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol 2, p396.

¹¹⁹ American Baptist theologian; weak on atonement.

¹²⁰ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p127.

Notice, however, that transitive love is but an outward manifestation of immanent love. The eternal and perfect object of God's love is his own nature. Men become subordinate objects of God's love only as they become connected and identified with its principle object, the image of God's perfections in Christ. Only in the Son do men become sons of God.¹²¹

God's love for us ... dates back to a time before we were born, - aye, even to eternity past. It is a love which was fastened upon us although God knew the worst of us. It is unchanging, because founded upon his infinite and eternal love to Christ.¹²²

God is not only benevolent but holy, and holiness is his ruling attribute. The vindication of God's holiness is the primary and sufficient object of punishment. This constitutes a good which fully justifies the infliction (of hell - PF) ... Love for holiness involves hatred of unholiness ... holiness conditions love.¹²³

The benevolence of God, as concerned for the general good of the universe, requires the execution of the full penalty of the law upon all who reject Christ's salvation.¹²⁴

Archibald Alexander Hodge [1823-1886]¹²⁵

God's love for holiness and hatred of sin is represented in Scripture as essential and intrinsic. He loves holiness for its own sake. He hates sin and is determined to punish it because of its intrinsic ill desert. He hates the wicked every day - Ps 5:5; 7:11.¹²⁶

The facts prove that God's general benevolence is not inconsistent with allowing some to be damned for their sins. This is all that reprobation means. Gratuitous election, or the positive choice of some does not rest upon God's general benevolence, but upon his special love to its own.¹²⁷

Herman Bavinck [1854-1921]¹²⁸

But also in that negative event of rejection there is frequently present a positive action of God, consisting in hatred (Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13), cursing (Gen. 9:25), hardening (Exod. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4; Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; Ps. 105:25; John 12:40; Rom. 9:18) infatuation (1 Kings 12:15; 2 Sam. 17:14; Ps. 107:40; Job 12:24; Isa. 44:25; 1 Cor. 1:19), blinding and stupefaction (Isa. 6:9; Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; Rom. 11:8).¹²⁹

John Murray [1898-1975]¹³⁰

[Divine hatred can] scarcely be reduced to that of not loving or loving less ... the evidence would require, to say the least, the thought of disfavour, disapprobation, displeasure. There is also a vehement quality that may not be discounted ... We are compelled, therefore, to find in this word a declaration of the sovereign counsel of God as it is concerned with the ultimate destinies of men.¹³¹

¹²¹ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p137-138.

¹²² Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p433.

¹²³ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p597.

¹²⁴ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, A C Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899, p598.

¹²⁵ Son of Charles Hodge, popular American Presbyterian theologian.

¹²⁶ *Outlines of Theology*, Nelson, New York, 1883, p156-7.

¹²⁷ *Outlines of Theology*, Nelson, New York, 1883, p228-9.

¹²⁸ One of the greatest Dutch Reformed theologians.

¹²⁹ *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, p393.

¹³⁰ Famous American Presbyterian theologian.

¹³¹ *Romans*, vol. 2, pp. 22, 24.

*Herman Hoeksema [1886-1965]*¹³²

God cannot be merciful to the reprobate wicked... His mercy toward his people must be founded in his sovereign election, according to which he beholds them eternally as perfectly righteous in the beloved.¹³³

One must choose between these two: either Jesus purposed to save all men and He is only a possible saviour who does not actually save; or Jesus came to save the elect unto eternal life and them he actually saves... It follows from the nature of the atonement, that he died, not for all, but for the elect, that is, for a certain number in whose stead He died and for whom He arose. Atonement is satisfaction. And satisfaction is the actual payment of our debt with God. If Christ paid the debt for all, all are righteous and saved, which is absurd. If, nevertheless, you maintain that He died for all men without distinction, you must deny the truth of atonement, namely, that He actually satisfied fully for all our sins. However, such is not the truth. Christ's death is a real and full satisfaction for the sins of those for whom he died. Hence He only died for the elect. You must choose between an actual satisfaction for the elect only and the denial of this satisfaction through the blood of Christ. You can express this same truth in another way. Jesus' death was vicarious; He died instead of those whom He represented, whose head He is. Now either He vicariously represented all men and then all are surely saved, which no one believes, or He represented a certain number and these are the elect. And, secondly ... the sinner is dead. He must be raised to life. He must be born again. Therefore, the actual realisation of the salvation which Jesus merited cannot depend on his will, for he will not and cannot will.¹³⁴

Preachers*John Robinson [c.1576-1625]*¹³⁵

Lastly, seeing it cannot be denied, but that Jacob as a faithful and godly man was in time actually beloved in God, and Esau, as godless and profane, actually hated; it must needs follow, that God before the world was, purposed in himself accordingly, to love the one and hate the other: seeing whatsoever God in time doth, by way of emanation or application to, and upon the creature, that he purposed to do, as he doth it, from eternity [Rom. 9:13] ... [In Romans 9:18], 'whom he wills he hardens,' [God] speaks of that will, according to which he himself works in ... hatred.¹³⁶

*David Dickson [1583-1663]*¹³⁷

However he giveth the wicked and violent persecutor to have a seeming prosperity, while the godly are in trouble, yet that is no act of love to them: for *the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth* ... All the seeming advantages which the wicked have in their own prosperity, are but means of hardening them in their ill course, and holding them fast in the bonds of their own iniquities, till God execute judgment on them: *upon the wicked he shall rain snares* ... Whatsoever be the condition of the wicked for a time, yet at length sudden, terrible, irresistible, and remediless destruction they shall not escape: *fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest is the portion of their cup*.¹³⁸

*George Gillespie [1613-1649]*¹³⁹

I cannot understand how there can be such a universal love of God to mankind as is maintained [by some]. Those that will say it must needs deny the absolute reprobation; then a

¹³² Able theologian and founder of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

¹³³ *Reformed Dogmatics*, Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids 1985, p116.

¹³⁴ *Jesus saviour and the Evil of Hawking Him*, Tract of First Prot. Ref. Church; 1986, p13-14.

¹³⁵ The leader of the Congregationalist pilgrim settlers who emigrated to Plymouth Colony, New England

¹³⁶ Ref. lost.

¹³⁷ Puritan pastor and commentator.

¹³⁸ *Commentary on the Psalms*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1985, p51.

¹³⁹ Scottish Presbyterian Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly.

love to those whom God hath absolutely reprobated both from salvation and the means of salvation.¹⁴⁰

*Samuel Rutherford [1660-1661]*¹⁴¹

[Spoke of..] God's hatred of the reprobate and love and peace on the elect...[since God's love is] simple not contradictory.¹⁴²

The love in the iii of *John* 16 is restricted to the church. . . . It is an actual saving love, and therefore not a general love.¹⁴³

*Jonathan Edwards [1703-1758]*¹⁴⁴

But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are what God sometimes bestows on those whom he does not love, but hates.¹⁴⁵

Pastor / Commentators

*Matthew Poole [1624-1679]*¹⁴⁶

But as for the wicked, let them not rejoice in [David's] trials, for far worse things are appointed for them; God hates and will severely punish them ... *His soul hateth*; [God] hateth [*him that loveth violence*] with or from his soul, i.e. inwardly and ardently ... *For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright*; This is given as the reason why God hateth and punisheth wicked men so dreadfully.¹⁴⁷

*Robert Haldane [1764-1842]*¹⁴⁸

Nothing can more clearly manifest the strong opposition of the human mind to the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty, than the violence which human ingenuity has employed to wrest the expression, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' By many this has been explained, 'Esau have I loved less.' But Esau was not the object of any degree of the Divine love ... If God's love to Jacob was real literal love, God's hatred to Esau must be real literal hatred. It might as well be said that the phrase, 'Jacob have I loved,' does not signify that God really loved Jacob, but that to love here signifies only to hate less, and that all that is meant by the expression, is that God hated Jacob less than he hated Esau. If every man's own mind is a sufficient security against concluding the meaning to be, 'Jacob have I hated less,' his judgment ought to be a security against the equally unwarrantable meaning, 'Esau have I loved less' ... hardening [is] a proof of hatred.¹⁴⁹

*John Kennedy of Dingwall [1813-1847]*¹⁵⁰

Nor is it by concluding that because God is love, therefore He loveth all, that you can have before you the view of His character presented in the text. Beware of being content with a hope that springs from believing in a love of God apart from His Christ, and outside of the shelter of the cross. It may relieve you of a superficial fear. It may excite a feeling of joy and gratitude in your heart. It may beget in you what you may regard as love to God. This love, too, may be the mainspring of very active movements in the bustle of external service; but it leaves you, after

¹⁴⁰ Cited in David Blunt, 'Debate on Redemption at the Westminster Assembly,' *British Reformed Journal* [January-March, 1996], no. 13, p8.

¹⁴¹ Beloved Scottish divine.

¹⁴² Samuel Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph of Faith*, p348-350.

¹⁴³ David Blunt, 'Debate of Redemption at the Westminster Assembly,' *British Reformed Journal*, January-March 1996, p10.

¹⁴⁴ Leading American theologian and revivalist pastor.

¹⁴⁵ *Charity and Its Fruits*, p38.

¹⁴⁶ Esteemed British whole Bible commentator.

¹⁴⁷ *Commentary on Ps. 11:5, 7*.

¹⁴⁸ Scottish evangelist and writer.

¹⁴⁹ *Romans*, pp. 456, 457.

¹⁵⁰ Scottish church leader and critic of Moody's campaigns.

all, away from God, ignoring His majesty and holiness, dispensing with His Christ, and enjoying a peace that has been secured by a cheating, instead of a purging, of your conscience. The time was when men openly preached an uncovenanted mercy as the resort of sinners, and laid the smoothness of that doctrine on the sores of the anxious. 'Universal love,' in these days in which evangelism is in fashion, is but another form in which the same 'deceit' is presented to the awakened. This is something from which an unrenewed man can take comfort. It is a pillow on which an alien can lay his head, and be at peace far off from God. It keeps out of view the necessity of vital union to Christ, and of turning unto God; and the hope which it inspires can be attained without felt dependence on the sovereign grace, and without submitting to the renewing work of God the Holy Ghost. 'God is love;' but when you hear this you are not told what must imply the declaration that He loves all, and that, therefore, He loves you. This tells us what He is, as revealed to us in the cross, and what all who come to Him through Christ will find Him to be. It is on this that faith has to operate. You have no right to regard that love, which is commended in the death of His Son, as embracing you if you have not yet believed. It is only with the character, not at all with the purpose, of God that you have in the first instance to do. What right have you to say that He loves all? Have you seen into the heart of God that you should say He loves you, until you have reached, as a sinner, through faith, the bosom of His love in Christ? 'But may I not think of God loving sinners without ascribing to Him any purpose to save?' God loving a sinner without a purpose to save him! The thing is inconceivable. I would reproach a fellow-sinner if I so conceived of his love. Love to one utterly ruined, and that love commanding resources that are sufficient for salvation, and yet no purpose to use them! Let not men so blaspheme the love of God. 'But may I not conceive of God as loving men to the effect of providing salvation, and to the effect of purchasing redemption for them, without this being followed out to the result of His purpose taking actual effect in their salvation?' No, verily. For the love of God is one, as the love of the Three in One. The one love of the One God is the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If that love generated in the person of the Father a purpose to provide, and in the person of the Son a purpose to redeem, it must have generated in the person of the Holy Ghost a purpose to apply. You cannot assign one set of objects to it, as the love of the Father, and a different set of objects to it, as 'the love of the Spirit.' And there can be no unaccomplished purpose of Jehovah. 'My counsel shall stand,' saith the Lord, 'and I will do all my pleasure.' 'The world,' which the Father loved and the Son redeemed, shall by the Spirit be convinced 'of sin, righteousness, and judgment,' and thus the Father's pleasure shall prosper, and the Son's 'travail' be rewarded, through the efficient grace of God the Holy Ghost.¹⁵¹

*A W Pink [1886-1952]*¹⁵²

That God loves everybody, is, we may say, quite a modern belief. The writings of the church-fathers, the Reformers or the Puritans will (we believe) be searched in vain for any such concept. Perhaps the late DL Moody ... did more than anyone else last century to popularise this concept.¹⁵³

One of the most popular beliefs of the day is that God loves everybody. . . . So widely has this dogma been proclaimed, and so *comforting* is it to the heart which is at enmity with God we have little hope of convincing many of their error. . . . To tell the Christ-rejector that God loves him is to cauterize his conscience as well as to afford him a sense of security in his sins. The fact is, the love of God is a truth for the saints only, and to present it to the enemies of God is to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.¹⁵⁴

Thou hatest all *workers* of iniquity'—not merely the works of iniquity. Here, then, is a flat repudiation of present teaching that, God hates sin but loves the sinner; Scripture says, 'Thou

¹⁵¹ *The Pleasure and Displeasure of God*, Eze. 33:11.

¹⁵² Initially a British Presbyterian pastor then an independent theologian and commentator. His works are highly beloved.

¹⁵³ A W Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, Baker, p200. The Banner of Truth edition ruthlessly extracted large portions of this work (up to 40%, including key appendices) which condemn such universal notions as God loving everyone without any notification or explanation.

¹⁵⁴ A W Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, (Full Edition) p210-211.

hatest all workers of iniquity' (Ps. 5:5)! 'God is *angry* with the wicked every day.' 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God*—not 'shall abide,' but even now—'abideth on him' (Ps. 5:5; 8:11; John 3:36). Can God 'love' the one on whom His 'wrath' abides? Again; is it not evident that the words 'The love of God *which is in Christ Jesus*' (Rom. 8:39) mark a limitation, both in the sphere and objects of His love? Again; is it not plain from the words 'Jacob have I loved, *but Esau have I hated*' (Rom. 9:13) that God does not love everybody? ... Is it conceivable that God will love the damned in the Lake of Fire? Yet, if He loves them now He will do so then, seeing that His love knows no change—He is '*without variableness* or shadow of turning!'.¹⁵⁵

*Cornelius Hanko [1907-2005]*¹⁵⁶

God loves His people in Christ, but He hates all the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5). Since God loves holiness, that very love turns in hatred against unholiness and sin. Since He is righteous, He burns with righteous indignation against all wickedness. Since He loves Himself as the sole Good, He banishes from His presence all that is in conflict with His Holy Name. God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. No one has ever dared to deny that God hates the devil. And yet also the devil is one of God's creatures, who was created as a holy angel. If God hates the devil and his host, does He not hate those who are branded in Scripture as the very seed of the serpent, a generation of vipers? Nor can we distinguish between the deed and the person, as if God hates the sin but loves the sinner. For the deed can never be separated from the depravity of the one who commits the sin, nor can the guilt be reckoned to anyone but the guilty party. Therefore God does not banish sin to hell, but the sinner. The Word of God never hesitates, therefore, to declare that God's very soul hates the wicked and him that loveth violence (Ps. 11:5). "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13). See also verses 17 and 18.¹⁵⁷

*Arthur C. Custance [1910-1985]*¹⁵⁸

If God does not love everyone indiscriminately, what then is his attitude towards those who are not the objects of his love? Does He hate them? ... we have a few passages of Scripture which seem to state in no uncertain terms that God does hate some of his creatures. We are tending increasingly to ignore the other side of God's love towards his creatures. Sermons more and more emphasise the love of God to the exclusion of his justice, and to speak of God's hate is completely unacceptable to our sensitive ears.¹⁵⁹

*John H Gerstner [1914-1996]*¹⁶⁰

We must sadly admit that the majority of Reformed theologians today seriously err concerning the nature of the love of God for reprobates ... Most Reformed theologians also include, as a by product of the atonement, the well meant offer of the gospel by which all men can be saved.
161

*Homer C. Hoeksema [1923-1989]*¹⁶²

All history, in which vessels unto honour or unto dishonour are formed, is the revelation and realisation of the counsel of God according to which He loved Jacob and all His elect people, but hated Esau and all the reprobate.¹⁶³

155 *The Sovereignty of God*, p248.

156 Pastor in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

157 'Particular Love, Particular Atonement, and Missions', *Standard Bearer*, vol. 42, issue 4.

158 Canadian anthropologist and scientist; writer of many maverick but esteemed studies on Biblical subjects.

159 *The Sovereignty of Grace*, P & R Publishing, New Jersey (1979) p294, 297.

160 American Presbyterian theologian.

161 John H Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p125.

162 Pastor in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

163 cf. A Scriptural Presentation of God's Hatred.

*James Montgomery Boice [1938-2000]*¹⁶⁴

Although hatred in God is of a different character than hatred in sinful human beings—his is a holy hatred—hate in God nevertheless does imply disapproval ... [Esau] was the object of [God's] displeasure ... Since the selection involved in the words love and hate was made before either of the children was born, the words must involve a double predestination in which, on the one hand, Jacob was destined to salvation and, on the other hand, Esau was destined to be passed over and thus to perish.¹⁶⁵

*John MacArthur, Jr.*¹⁶⁶

In a very real sense, God hated Esau himself. It was not a petty, spiteful, childish kind of hatred, but something far more dreadful. It was divine antipathy—a holy loathing directed at Esau personally. God abominated him as well as what he stood for.¹⁶⁷

*David J Engelsma*¹⁶⁸

That which is objectionable in the 'free offer of the gospel,' or 'well meant gospel offer' ... and the reason why a Reformed man must repudiate it, is its teaching that the grace of God in Jesus Christ, grace that is saving in character, is directed to all men in the preaching of the gospel. Inherent in the offer of the gospel is the notion that God loves and desires to save all men; the notion that the preaching of the gospel is God's grace to all men, an expression of God's love to all men, and an attempt by God to save all men; and the notion that salvation is dependent upon man's acceptance of the offered salvation, that is, that salvation depends upon the free will of the sinner.¹⁶⁹

The scriptures know of only one grace of God and one love of God, His grace and love in Jesus Christ. This is the grace and this is the love revealed in the gospel.

The doctrine of the offer, therefore, teaches that the love of Christ is universal ... this is the denial of the Reformed, biblical doctrine of election and the sell-out of the Reformed faith to Arminianism. For the meaning of the doctrine of election is that the love of God in Christ is eternally directed towards some definite particular men, willing their salvation and efficaciously accomplishing it. Election is simply the choosing love of God (Deut 7:6-8; Rm 8:28-29). Universal love is universal election, and that was the position of the Arminians.¹⁷⁰

Reformed preaching will not approach the audience with the declaration: 'God loves all of you.' It will not say to every man: 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.' It will not proclaim to all hearers: 'God is gracious to all of you and sincerely desires your salvation.' This message is a lie. Not only are these statements false, but they are also the bane of effective missions. Never did the apostles take this approach or proclaim this message to the unconverted. Such a message is incipient universalism, which assures the sinner that all is well with him in his sin - God loves him, and Christ died for him! - so that there is really no need for him to repent and believe. Arminianism, which blusters of its concern to save the lost, peters out in universalism, which blesses all religions, as well as the irreligious ... Biblical preaching assures the sinner of God's love for him personally only in the way of his faith in Christ crucified... a preacher does not call a man to believe some *thing*, but calls him to believe on someone. He presents Christ and calls the hearers to believe on that Christ.¹⁷¹

164 American Presbyterian pastor and author.

165 *Romans*, vol. 3, p. 1062.

166 Current famous pastor of a large American Presbyterian church and prolific author.

167 *The Love of God*, pp. 86-87.

168 Emeritus theologian and former pastor of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

169 *Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994) p41-42.

170 *Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994), p45.

171 *Hyper Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*, The Reformed Free Pub. Assoc. Grand Rapids, Michigan (1994), p87-88.

*D. A. Carson*¹⁷²

Fourteen times in the first fifty psalms alone, we are told that God hates the sinner, his wrath is on the liar, and so forth.¹⁷³

*Louis F. DeBoer*¹⁷⁴

The Scriptural position is that God hates sinners and intends to put them in hell where the smoke of their torment will ascend for all eternity. The only sinners that a Holy God can love are his elect in Jesus Christ who are clothed with his righteousness and cleansed by his blood.¹⁷⁵

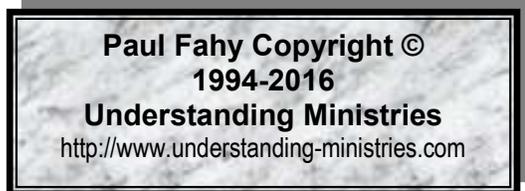
*Tom Wells*¹⁷⁶

The difficulty over the free offer may be put like this: since God has chosen to save some and pass others by, how can it be said that he offers salvation to those he has decided not to save? Doesn't this make God of two minds, wanting all to be saved on the one hand, and desiring only his elect to be saved on the other? Anyone who cannot see that there is some difficulty here must have done very little thinking about theology.¹⁷⁷

*W. Gary Crampton*¹⁷⁸

When Calvin speaks of the universal call of the gospel, he does not mean to say that God 'earnestly desires' that all who hear the invitation will be saved ... God only desires the salvation of the elect ... The same God who wills to save the elect also wills not to save the reprobate.¹⁷⁹

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
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¹⁷² Esteemed Canadian theologian and author.

¹⁷³ *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, p. 79.

¹⁷⁴ Baptist writer.

¹⁷⁵ *Hymns, Heretics and History*, p. 119.

¹⁷⁶ American pastor and writer of the New Covenant Theology school.

¹⁷⁷ Tom Wells, Notes on the Free Offer Controversy, p5. Quoted from *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, vol XXXV, no. 2, p37.

¹⁷⁸ American pastor.

¹⁷⁹ W. Gary Crampton, *What Calvin Says*, p73.