

What is Arminianism?

Arminianism is named after the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). His main error was the denial of God's sovereignty in salvation, which led to a rejection of predestination and election. After his death his followers drew up five points to summarise their objections to Calvinism. In response, a synod of theologians drew up the 'five points of Calvinism' (the Doctrines of Grace, or TULIP).

The essence of the Arminian five points

1. *Man's fall*: Arminianism teaches that although man fell in the Garden of Eden, he still retained some spiritual power or ability in himself. So by his own strength he can believe in the Gospel; man has free will to accept or reject the universal Gospel. Thus salvation is a joint effort: God provides a universal salvation; man decides to accept or reject it. In other words, man takes the initiative, as is seen in so-called 'decisions for Jesus' or 'the sinner's prayer'. [This denies TOTAL DEPRAVITY, Rm 3:9-18. Note that when Paul speaks about 'persuasion' in evangelism he is not referring to modern evangelistic methods which give the impression that the Lord cannot save a sinner who does not choose him first by his own free will.]
2. *God's foreknowledge*: Because God knows the future, he therefore knows who will decide to become Christians. Thus God chooses those who first choose him. [This denies that faith is a divine gift, Eph 2:8 and UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION, Eph 1:4.]
3. *Christ died for all*: therefore it is possible for all men to be saved if they choose to. The Christ of Arminianism offers salvation to all and does all in his power to bring men to salvation but doesn't actually save anyone definitely. [This denies LIMITED ATONEMENT, Isa 22:14; Matt 1:21.]
4. *God's call can be rejected*: meaning that man has sufficient power to make God's will ineffective (man can reject the Gospel by which God wants to save him). [This denies God's IRRESISTIBLE GRACE; Jn 5:21, 6:44, 65.]
5. *Man can lose his salvation*: and therefore will be lost forever. This means that he must hold fast to good works to maintain his salvation and receive his reward. [This denies FINAL PERSEVERANCE; Rm 8:1, 29-39.]

Famous Arminian teachers

John Wesley was an Arminian, although some of his hymns do not reflect this. Charles Finney was an even more extreme Arminian revivalist preacher.

The Five Doctrines of Grace are in complete opposition to the above.

1. Man is a sinner with no power to do good or obey the Gospel command.
2. God chooses those who will be his people ('the elect').
3. Christ died for those people alone.
4. God only enables those to believe the Gospel by giving them faith.
5. God preserves those people to the end.

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